

### “Assessing MONUC”

The Great Lakes Policy Forum convened on December 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss MONUC, its shortcomings in the DRC conflict and offer recommendations for policy changes that will raise its effectiveness and curb the violence inflicted on Congolese communities by the CNDP, in particular, and the FDLR rebels and poorly-trained MONUC forces, by proxy.

Key challenges facing MONUC as it struggles to fulfill its mandate were identified as follows:

1. A lack of physical resources
2. A lack of clarity:
  - a) within the mission itself as to its actual mandate;
  - b) among the Congolese population; and
  - c) between MONUC and the FARDC, as to their relationship with one another.
3. A lack of political engagement and support from mission country governments.

MONUC troops constitute the largest peacekeeping mission in the world, but only 6000 were in North Kivu before the October crisis. In addition, the troops are not well-equipped to protect civilians, as most cannot speak the local languages where they operate. The lack of clarity has led both police and MONUC forces to take advantage of and deceive civilians, which only incites more anger toward the supposed peacekeepers. Unfortunately, the mission has repeatedly asked the UN Security Council for help and support over the years, to no avail.

In empowering MONUC to complete the task ahead of it, it is vital to remember that the fight over resources is not at the center of this conflict, though Congo's valuable natural resources have certainly fueled the violence. On the contrary, this conflict is rooted in the completion of the DRC's transition from military dictatorship to democratic rule, and it continues because the FARDC lacks the capacity and training to control rebels in the east, and in many areas, contributes to the rampaging of the countryside. Nevertheless, the majority of the Congo, it must be remembered, is stable and at peace.

At present, MONUC remains the only legitimate force that has the potential capacity to contain the militia groups in eastern Congo. Alan Doss must be prepared to make an immediate recommendation that requires FARDC troops to stop being part of the problem, and provides long-term training to create an empowered nucleus of Congolese soldiers and police.

In the interim, MONUC must be prepared to use the Chapter 7 mandate against CNDP militias and other Congolese rebel groups, within reasonable limits of aggression. No political agreements will hold so long as eastern Congo remains lawless, and though MONUC has been empowered to secure the region against the FDLR, it cannot assert control over Congolese groups, which compromises its ability to work effectively. Furthermore, the DDR process should focus on mining and local infrastructure development, as demobilization will be the result of a combination of vetting war crimes and creating employment.

It is generally agreed that the cost of doing nothing will almost certainly be regional war – again – as the FDLR and Interahamwe troops grow more powerful in the Congo.