

**118<sup>th</sup> Great Lakes Policy Forum**

*“The Long and Winding Road to Democracy: Choices and Challenges in the DRC's Election Process”*

Meeting Report – May 4, 2006

Panelists:

Reverend Appollinaire Muholongu Malumalu  
President, Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Ambassador Donald Yamamoto  
Deputy Secretary of State, Bureau of African Affairs United States Department of State

Mr. Joel Charny, Vice President of [Refugees International](#) and facilitator of the forum, began by welcoming the Reverend Appollinaire Muholongu Malumalu, President of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, Deputy Secretary of State, [Bureau of African Affairs United States Department of State](#). Mr. Charny expressed that he was encouraged by the turnout of the 100+ attendees to the forum, remarking that it had been some time since such a senior level State Department person had been on a GLPF panel. In his introduction of the speakers, Mr. Charny noted that after his ordination, Reverend Malumalu completed a doctorate degree in political science at the University of Grenoble II before his appointment in 2003 as the President of the IEC. In Mr. Charny's introduction of Ambassador Yamamoto, he shared that Ambassador Yamamoto has been a Foreign Service officer since 1980. Mr. Yamamoto has served as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti from 2000-2003, and Human Rights Officer during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989

Prior to Reverend Malumalu's and Ambassador Yamamoto's presentations, Mr. Charny invited all attendees to briefly give their names and the organization they represented. In addition to the significant number of representatives from the Congolese community, attendees represented several non-governmental organizations, government agencies, and members of the media.

**Part I**

On June 23 and 24, the Commission plans on publishing the list of Presidential, and National Assembly candidates prior to the elections scheduled for July 30, 2006. It was reported that the IEC faces several challenges as it carries out its mandate including:

- 1. Funding:** Overall 52% of the IEC's budget comes from the international community. The total budget of the IEC is 422 million of which 45 million has been allocated by the Congolese government. The IEC is responsible for securing

- funds from both international and domestic donors who have pledged to pay for the electoral process. Although the IEC has secured many of the promised contributions from the domestic and international community, there have been several bureaucratic challenges that have delayed the delivery of such funds.
2. **Election Calendar:** The IEC has previously had to delay the Presidential and National Assembly elections in order to adequately register voters and candidates. While there was continual delay and rescheduling of the election date, the IEC maintains that this was necessary in order to ensure the success and legitimacy of the election. It is further believed that all hindering factors have been alleviated and the election will take place on July 30, 2006 as scheduled.
  3. **Transportation/Logistics:** There are 166 electoral centers and at least 10,000 polling stations located throughout the country that all require the relevant materials and equipment in order to conduct the elections. The delivery of said materials has been problematic due to the limited resources available to the IEC for disbursement of the necessary materials.
  4. **Security:** Security is a concern, but should not be overemphasized and overshadow the election process. It was indicated that elections would take place regardless of the security situation. It was also reported that \$50 million was earmarked for the National Police who are expected to play a key role along with international monitoring groups.
  5. **Civic Education:** The IEC has had to assume the responsibility of educating the general public and civil society of the IEC's mandate and the electoral process. According to the IEC, the education of civil society was overlooked when the DRC government and donor community negotiated the electoral process and, as result, has contributed to the delay in the election process.

It was noted that in addition to securing the success of the election process the government and international community must remain vigilant to address other important issues plaguing the country. There still exist major problems with the economy and poverty and in order to win the trust of the people these issues must be addressed by the party that is elected.

## **Part II**

Part II of the forum reiterated that the upcoming elections are only part of the DRC transition towards peace. The U.S. is committed to honoring the goals of the Tripartite meeting that took place in April 2005 between Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The speaker emphasized that the U.S. government wants internal and external security in the DRC. In addition, the U.S. would like to see increased coordination between the DRC and its neighbors to ensure that the revenue generated from DRC's natural resources is appropriately allocated to the Congolese people. The U.S. is not discouraged by the previous delay of elections in DRC and expects elections will lead to security and stability within the DRC and the region.

## **Additional Comments**

Following individual presentations from the speakers, members of the audience were invited to ask questions. As noted by the panel, many of the questions were passionately

articulated by members of the audience and often political in nature. Although the questions were diverse, it was clear that many attendees wanted to hear more about how the IEC is planning to ensure that elections will address the political aspirations of the overall Congolese community. One major concern common throughout the questions was what effect will boycotts from opposition parties like the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) have on the election process. Furthermore, many questions were fraught with underlying sentiments of disillusionment and doubt about the effectiveness of the IEC, the upcoming elections, as well as U.S. engagement, or lack thereof, in the region.

**END**

**Reverend Apollinaire Muholongu Malumalu**

An ordained Roman Catholic Priest, has served as President of the Independent Electoral Commission since 2003. After his ordination, Fr. Malumalu completed a doctorate degree in political science at the University of Grenoble II. Before being appointed President of the Independent Electoral Commission following the Sun City Accords, Rev. Malumalu was Rector of the Catholic University of Graben in his hometown of Butembo in eastern DR Congo.

Rev. Malu Malu is currently on an official visit to the United States to meet with representatives of the UN and US administration, members of Congress, public policy experts, recognized non-governmental organizations involved in the DRC and with members of the Congolese diaspora. On the agenda are the election process, concerns with pre-election and post-election security and long-term reconstruction challenges confronting the Congolese people. Mr. Sylvestre Somo Mwaka, Assistant, and Mr. Oswald Wanzalughendo Musavuli, Adviser, participate in this visit. The Central Africa Policy Forum in New York was responsible for arranging his visit.

**Ambassador Donald Yamamoto**

Currently serves as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of African Affairs. He served as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti from 2000 to 2003. Prior to this appointment, he was the Deputy Director for East African Affairs from 1998 to 2000. Ambassador Yamamoto entered the Foreign Service in 1980. Former assignments include U.S. Embassy Beijing as Ambassador's staff aide and Human Rights Officer during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations in 1989; Japan as Principal Officer of the Fukuoka Consulate; and Eritrea as Chargé d'Affaires at U.S. Embassy Asmara in the Horn of Africa.

He attended the National War College in 1996 for senior training and received a Congressional Fellowship in 1991. Ambassador Yamamoto is a graduate of Columbia College and did graduate studies at Columbia University, receiving a Masters degree in International Affairs. He has studied Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, and French. During his Foreign Service career, he has received three individual Superior Honor awards and two group awards. Donald Y. Yamamoto was born in Seattle, Washington and raised in New York City. He is married with two children

**For more information:**

Refugee International

<http://www.refintl.org/>

Bureau of African Affairs United States Department of State

<http://www.state.gov/p/af/>