



The Republic of Congo on the Brink

Mission of the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue
to the Republic of Congo
on behalf of the
Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working-Group
5-15 April 2000

C. Andrew Marshall

“Tell the world how we are now fighting for peace.”

Colonel Moukanda, Cocoye Militia Commander, Sibiti, Lékoumou Province, 7 April 2000

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Background

During the Review of Country Issues at the meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working-Group (IASC WG) in Rome, 17-18 February 2000, eight recommendations were adopted for the Republic of Congo (ROC). The third recommendation stated:

“The IASC WG recommended that an independent review should be commissioned to provide an objective and balanced analysis of the evolving situation in the country.”

Shortly thereafter the Humanitarian Co-ordinator for the Congo, Mr William Paton, visited the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HDC) in Geneva to ascertain whether the HDC would undertake the recommended independent review. Subsequently, the Humanitarian Co-ordinator drew up, in consultation with the HDC, the Terms of Reference for the report (see Annex A).

On 6 April, Mr C Andrew Marshall, Programme Manager at the HDC, arrived in the Republic of Congo to undertake a 10-day mission and prepare the said report. During his mission Mr Marshall travelled to cities the of Nkayi and Dolisie in Bouenza Province, Sibiti in Lékoumou Province and Pointe-Noire in Kouilou Province. He accompanied General Moukoki, president of the Follow-up Committee of the Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities Accord and Chief of Staff of the Ground Forces of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Congo (FAC) to Sibiti, Lékoumou Province, to participate in discussions with the leaders of one of the armed opposition forces (Cocoye), to witness the ceremonial handover of weapons, the return of the FAC and to review the humanitarian situation. In addition, Mr Marshall travelled to Pointe-Noire to meet with the local authorities and representatives of the private sector. In between his travels, Mr. Marshall conducted in-depth discussions with representatives of the humanitarian and diplomatic communities, officials of the Armed Forces and the Government of the Congo (GOC) as well as a number of informed Congolese interlocutors based in Brazzaville.

The following report will set the scene of how the ROC has come to the brink of peace and stability following a lengthy civil war. It will also highlight the fragility of the current peace process and identify different threats to its continuation. Finally, it will identify a number of measures which, if implemented, would help to make peace a sustainable reality.

Acknowledgements

The Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue would like to thank the many interlocutors who met with Mr Marshall and shared their experiences and their views on the future of the ROC. Special thanks go to Mr William Paton, Humanitarian Coordinator and his team, for their strong support throughout the mission.

Introduction

No one wins a civil war

Despite the recent fratricidal turmoil in the ROC, it has been difficult to focus the attention of the international community on the needs of this small African country. A number of factors have contributed to this situation, not least of which are the overshadowing size of its immediate neighbour the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its war, of more significant regional, international and economic implications. Difficult therefore to allot a great deal of importance to the ROC, its smaller neighbour with limited exploitable resources and a civil war with no significant implications outside its own borders. The result has been that the international community, in general, has remained either blissfully ignorant or poorly informed of the recent events and their profound consequences.

Conducted primarily in the four southern provinces of Niari, Lékoumou, Bouenza and the Pool, the war of 1998-99 shattered the political capital Brazzaville, knocked out the vital railway link from the economic capital at Pointe-Noire, forced more than 810,000 people (UN estimate), or approximately 35 per cent of the population, to flee their homes and has further damaged an already decaying system of educational, medical and other social and logistical infrastructure. Across the southern regions of the ROC people poured across borders, the displaced fled to the forests or to any other sanctuary they could find.

If peace is now breaking out - and it looks as if it is - it is because the belligerents have decided among themselves that there is nothing to be gained from a war that has affected each and every Congolese family. While difficulties may well lie ahead, the cornerstone of stability has been laid.

The opposing armed forces are working assiduously to ensure that their ongoing efforts contribute to a lasting and sustainable peace. The result of these labours has been a new sense of optimism, the return of hundreds of thousands of displaced people to their areas of origin and a new and welcome level of security in most parts of the country. These dividends of peace have permitted the international humanitarian community to expand its reach into areas and communities that had hitherto been inaccessible for two or more years and thus to effectively increase the provision of humanitarian assistance. Finally, this cessation of hostilities calls for the design and elaboration of programmes aimed at supporting the important demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants and the socio-economic rehabilitation of the fragmented and ravaged country.

The post-conflict programmes now required in the ROC will need to be designed as much for their ability to transform society as for their socio-economic benefits. Both elements will be essential in preventing a return to hostilities. The international community now has the opportunity to support the people of the ROC to establish themselves among the peaceful and democratic nations of the world.

We hope that this report will shed a ray of light and possibly even spark debate on the plight of the Congolese people, their traumas, their aspirations, and the manner in which the international community can best assist by responding to their needs, but more importantly to their emerging opportunities. On the one hand the peace process has led to a significant decrease in humanitarian requirements, on the other it has created opportunities in which minimum investments in preventive actions in healthcare infrastructure, and well-prioritised rehabilitation and demobilisation programmes, could ensure that the process of peace succeeds. The actual costs of the proposed programmes are small in comparison with the human and economic costs associated with a relapse into conflict. Isn't it always better to pay a little for prevention than a great deal more for the cure?

The War and the Accords

Not unlike most civil wars, the 1997 and 1998-99 conflicts in the ROC were about the control of political and economic power by a small number of people. The three main protagonists, each equipped with a private militia, have all had a long-standing association with the politics of power in the ROC. In 1997, the President, Mr Pascal Lissouba and his Cocoye militia and the Mayor of Brazzaville, Mr Bernard Kolelas, and his Ninja militia were pitted against the former President Mr Denis Sassou-Nguesso and his Cobra militia. In 1997, Mr Nguesso was able to unseat President Lissouba and defeat the combined Ninja and Cocoye forces. Nevertheless both defeated men and their respective forces returned in 1998-99 to resume the struggle for their respective political and economic ambitions.

While the civil war of 1997 saw a concentration of military activities in and around Brazzaville and in the north of the country, in contrast the 1998-99 war largely spared the north. During this most recent conflict one of the main aims of the rebel forces was to prove the inability of the Nguesso government to effectively control the country. To do so they began to systematically destroy all vestiges of political, economic and social life. As the political capital, Brazzaville, was sacked, repeatedly. Oddly enough, however, an invisible cordon sanitaire was placed around the economic capital Pointe-Noire which, with the exception of the arrival of large numbers of displaced people, emerged unscathed from the war.

The railway line and other essential logistical infrastructure such as bridges, roads and airports were blown up or otherwise made unusable, fragmenting and isolating large sections of the country. As one senior military official stated, "Once the railway was broken the country was broken." Electrical pylons were felled like so many trees, plunging the country into darkness. Travel of any kind, other than by foot, was out of the question, while systems of communication broke down completely. All economic activity between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire stopped. With the country paralysed, the culture of war took hold.

In much of the four southern provinces all symbols of the state, including schools, hospitals, health posts and administration buildings were looted and ruined. As the intensity of the war grew and the levels of animosity rose, so did the attacks against civilians and their property. Not only were politically and regionally segmented communities turning one against the other, the belligerents often turned on their own communities. Into this situation the GOC introduced several foreign military forces including Angolan troops and elements of the ex-FAR and Interhamwe from Rwanda. Little within the grasp of the various armed forces was spared.

These foreign troops played a major role. In particular, Angolan troops were a decisive element in turning the tide in favour of President Nguesso's forces. Today the presence of the Angolan forces in the ROC represents a guarantee of professional military support

for the President and a thorny issue with regard to the peace process. Despite repeated calls for the Angolans to leave, they remain.

In addition, an unknown number (thought to be between 1,000 and 1,500) of irregular Rwandan forces, ex-FAR and Interhamwe, were brought to bear on the side of the President. Today the presence of these irregular forces is seen by the population as completely unacceptable not only because of their brutality during the war, but because they abused the welcome extended on their arrival from ex-Zaire. According to one cleric who witnessed their activities during the war “they were among the most brutal”. Their presence in the ROC has been a long-standing problem and in spite of the provocative nature of this presence, no GOC official measures have been taken to address the issue.

It was the fear of complete chaos and confusion that forced one-third of the population to uproot themselves and seek safety wherever it could be found, and there they stayed. Near the end of 1999, a series of high-profile events demonstrated to the population that there were prospects for peace. Four such public events encouraged the cessation of hostilities and what has been an extraordinarily rapid and extremely successful return of over 600,000 people (to date) to their homes, villages and towns.

Firstly, in mid-August 1999, President Nguesso called on the armed opposition forces to renounce violence, commit themselves to peace and relinquish their arms; in turn he would grant a general amnesty. In addition, all opposition combatants who had previously held positions within the state structures, whether in the military, the police or other state sectors, would be reinstated immediately. One caveat was attached: those who were deemed responsible for directing and financing the war were not eligible for an amnesty. This was a clear signal that political opponents, in particular Lissouba and Kolelas, could not benefit from the amnesty.

On 16 November 1999, a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed in Pointe-Noire by the FAC and five leaders of armed opposition militias. This initial agreement was followed by the signing in Brazzaville of the Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities Accord of 29 December 1999 to which 14 additional militia commanders affixed their names. Finally, on 31 December, President Nguesso repeated his promises of amnesty and announced the reintegration of youth as being his immediate priority.

The 16 November Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, which was signed by General Moukoki, is a military accord between belligerents. As General Moukoki stated to a gathering of some 400 men in the opposition stronghold of Sibiti, Lékoumou Province, on 7 April 2000, “Where the politicians were unable to stop the war, we the belligerents were able to do so. Congratulations!” The Accord as such does not refer to any political compromises or concessions. The opposition signatories represented two militia factions of the Cocoye aligned to the former President, Pascal Lissouba, and the Ninja allied to Bernard Kolelas. Both men denounced the agreement and those who signed it a clear sign of the divergence of political and military interests.

Without at least the tacit endorsement of exiled political leaders (Kolelas and Lissouba) and with only a handful of militia commanders backing it, the 16 November Accord was immediately recognised as only a partial settlement to the civil war. Therefore, the FAC pursued the task of realising a more comprehensive agreement by fostering relations and building confidence with militia groups hitherto not party to the 16 November Accord. This they did by abiding by their promises to halt attacks against militia posts and through discreet and continuous channels of dialogue. Their efforts paid off on 29 December when the Ceasefire and Cessation of Hostilities Accord was signed in Brazzaville.

The Accords foresee a three-step process to peace. The first and most essential step is the launching of a national dialogue on all aspects of the country's reconstruction. This will take place during a period of transition in which a series of activities, including institutional and social rehabilitation, community-level integration, the reintegration of ex-combatants and the collection of arms, will take place. In addition, a pre-election census and the preliminary moves towards free and fair elections will be undertaken.

Watching belligerents greet each other warmly and publicly commit themselves to peace is an extraordinary event. The process underway has created a high degree of optimism, but there also remains a certain amount of scepticism. This is not the first time that belligerents in the ROC have committed themselves to renouncing violence and surrendered weapons only to resume military activities shortly thereafter. Nevertheless, this time people believe that it will be different. As one senior military official said, "We are soldiers who have been trained for war, but never knew war with all its atrocities. Only the belligerents know about the war. Never again! Never again should the politicians be permitted to use the army and the youth to fight their wars."

The transition

Contributing to measures of prevention

The civil war itself has done little to change the prevailing political culture, which is the continuation of a 30-year-old political system, variously referred to as Communist or one-man rule with no unifying national political platform, and involving politicians pitting regions and tribes one against the other in a “winner takes all” environment.

Today the same political players and divisions dominate the political spectrum as twenty years ago and they continue to perpetuate a system which creates imbalances and divisions among groups and regions. One stark example of this in the post-conflict or transition period is how inclusive the promised national dialogue will be. The threatened exclusion of politicians such as ex- Prime Minister Bernard Kolelas and ex-President Lissouba bodes ill for the future. As one interlocutor stated and was echoed by many others, “who can honestly judge another at this point?” While the fighting has stopped, there has been no political settlement which includes the three protagonists, and without an inclusive national dialogue there will be no peace

The timeframe associated with the period of transition and the resultant elections also remains a controversial point. According to the President of the Transitional National Assembly, Mr Justin Koumba, the transition period will culminate at the end of 2001 with elections. Over the next three to four months, once the authority of the state has been re-established throughout the war affected zones, the debate on the new constitution and a pre-election census will start. This should be followed by a referendum on the constitution in the middle of 2001 and by elections at the end of that year.

By any definition this is an ambitious schedule. Four months after the signing of the peace accords, many feel that progress on the political and socio-economic fronts has been too slow and that windows of opportunity are closing quickly. Mr Koumba disagrees. According to him, rather than rush through a process with which not everyone is in agreement, the necessary efforts must be made to co-opt the dissenters. Better to get it right the first time than rush through it and end up with greater problems.

What the current situation in the ROC tells us is that the peace among the belligerents does not necessarily mean there will be a sustainable peace. However, what they have achieved (and it is a commendable achievement) is a good platform from which to invest in peace. So, while the immediate political divisions are being sorted, there are a number of activities which the GOC, with the support of the international community should begin right away. These activities might include:

- encouraging the political transition
- providing alternatives: demobilization and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants
- supporting economic recovery

- investing in humanitarian action as a form of prevention.

I. Encouraging the political transition

According to Mr Koumba, the war has left the state without the required resources to move the national debate and pre-election activities toward a fully fledged election. Financial support will be needed to strengthen institutional capacities to fulfil the requirements of the transition period. Although there has yet to be an official request put to the international community to support the transitional process, noises to this effect have been made in a number of official circles. It will not be long in coming if the GOC is sincere in its promises, promises the international community should encourage the GOC to keep.

The support required by the GOC to fulfil its transition promises must come from outside, but with a strong message of concern for concrete changes. A demonstration of interest in the peace process and the events of the transition by the international community would enhance the confidence of the Congolese people to pursue their national dialogue and encourage a well-structured and inclusive political process. The international community could assist with the preparation of new legislation, the pre-election census, the drafting of the new constitution and the holding of elections which would ensure a more transparent and acceptable political process and outcome. Finally, the encouragement of the international community might ensure the inclusion of bona fide legislation on such controversial issues as the use of national resources, fiscal management, human rights, international humanitarian law and proper procedures for holding elections.

Four months after the signing of the Accords ex-militia pressure is mounting for concrete demonstrations of GOC sincerity. A number of measures should immediately be taken by GOC to re-establish confidence. These might include:

- drop insistence that weapons must be collected before post-conflict activities can start
- take decisive action with regard to the presence of armed ex-FAR and Interhamwe elements
- take steps for the return of Angolan forces to Angola
- initiate large-scale labour-intensive rehabilitation activities employing youth
- take measures to begin integration into FAC of qualified ex-militiamen from all major militias
- make initial investments in the education sector
- actively support implementation of the demobilisation and reintegration programme
- officially announce the all-inclusive nature of the promised national dialogue.

II. Providing alternatives - demobilization and reintegration

The 1999 Consolidated Appeal for the ROC described two possible scenarios, both of which are valid today. The first scenario described “further stabilisation and an opening humanitarian access to the rural interior.” Today this is exactly what is happening. The second hypothesis described “re-escalating hostilities, limited humanitarian access and exacerbating rural/urban exodus”. In the current circumstances, this second scenario is still valid. If limited preventive measures are not forthcoming the level of disenchantment, particularly among the youth, many of whom were involved in the war, could lead to a return to hostilities. Perhaps not a full-scale war, but as a minimum the fragile calm will be shattered.

According to UNICEF, more than 75 per cent of the population of the ROC are under the age of 21. This mass is impatient: to be acknowledged; to participate in the decision-making process; to regain a pride in their actions; and to take part in the rebuilding of the country. If keeping the peace and providing security is the main priority, the next most difficult and immediate challenge facing the ROC is the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants who form a significant block within this volatile dangerous element of society.

A traditional chief in Lékoumou Province, speaking on behalf of the regional elders, made a plea for the integration of the youth into society at all levels adding “We are scared of our youth.” By their sheer numbers alone, they warrant strong GOC interest, and in the current circumstances they require focused GOC support.

The young ex-combatants have agreed to surrender weapons and to support the peace process, but have done so against promises made by the GOC: promises such as that made by the President during his Millennium speech where he singled out youth employment as his main priority; promises to hold a national dialogue to be followed by free and fair elections; promises to incorporate elements of ex-militiamen into the armed forces. The youth of the ROC will hold their politicians accountable for the promises they have made.

Regularly excluded from previous post-conflict political processes, sidelined on important issues, but used to fighting political battles, today they are scrutinising every move, every decision made. Many of the young militiamen followed with great interest the recent peaceful and democratic elections in Senegal. For them the success of the Senegalese elections demonstrates that peaceful political transitions are possible.

Included in the peace accords is a promise to integrate elements of the armed opposition groups into the FAC. This promise has been interpreted by the majority of the young militiamen as a carte blanche for all ex-combatants to begin low ranked military careers. It also keeps alive the “Kalashnikov culture” which has developed and has become a central element in the ethos of militiamen.

Estimates of the number of ex-militiamen range from 10,000 to 15,000 and the incorporation of even half these numbers is not feasible or desired. Many would fail age, health and other regular selection criteria, while the financial implications should not be overlooked. General Moukoki estimated that 4,000 could be selected for consideration. When informed of this the youth who had gathered to hear General Moukoki speak in Sibiti expressed their considerable displeasure, a sentiment echoed by most ex-militiamen. The most likely explanation for this is that entry into the army represents security - security from those who may wish to take revenge for crimes or atrocities committed during the war.

The first priority of any rehabilitation programme must therefore be to provide alternatives to the Kalashnikov culture. This can be done through the design of a well-structured, broad-based programme for the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants. The objective of the programme should be four-fold:

- 1) use a strong public information campaign to demonstrate to youth that there are alternatives to military activities
- 2) provide start-up capital to help kick-start informal and formal individual and community-level economic activities
- 3) provide youth with a sense of ownership and pride in community
- 4) strengthen community-based activities and support structure and provide youth with alternative to urban migration .

The message that this project will soon be active is spreading quickly and is clearly seen by many as a means to an alternative lifestyle. One gun-toting youth discreetly said to the author, "I don't want to go into the army. I am the sole provider for a large family and I want to go into agriculture. Can I do this?" Another such youth indicated that prior to the war he had been accepted through a bursary programme for study in Canada, but that the war had put a stop to that. " Now what I want to do is continue my studies."

III. Supporting Economic Recovery

If the streaming of youth into productive economic activities has been recognised as one of the country's highest priorities, facilitating the movement of goods and services will be an essential component of this programme. Labour-intensive road rehabilitation projects are being discussed, but the immediate concern is the railway, which suffered considerable damage during the war.

France's state railway company, the Société nationale des chemins de fer (SNCF), has been engaged to undertake the necessary repairs to return the railway system to active service. Repairs are expected to be completed in June. The psychological impact this will have on the country should not be underestimated. The fact that Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire are reconnected will demonstrate that the ROC is again a nation. Brazzaville will once again be provisioned by Pointe-Noire, facilitating the delivery of important tools of rehabilitation and development. Travel will increase, communications will improve and informal economic activity will spring up along the length of the tracks, reanimating the countryside, while commerce as a whole will flourish. As one diplomatic source stated, "Goods are still significantly cheaper in Brazzaville than they are across the river in Kinshasa, despite the fact that everything is flown in. Imagine what the train will do to promote commerce."

The railway represents the glue that holds the country together and inspires a new beginning. As the Director General of SDV said, "The railway and the benefits it brings will demonstrate that peace is real."

Developments to date have already facilitated an upsurge in economic activity. Signs of increased commerce are already evident in Pointe-Noire as the level of imports begin to rise and Portuguese, Mauritanian and Senegalese businessmen are making forays into the interior of the country to investigate the possibilities of re-establishing businesses. In early May Air France was expected to re-establish flights to Brazzaville, while several other European carriers are contemplating similar actions.

Investing in Humanitarian Action

A form of prevention

The Humanitarian Co-ordinator for the ROC has argued that in 1999, the ROC witnessed the worst humanitarian crisis in the world and yet received the lowest level of emergency relief on a per capita basis. The levels were worryingly low and certainly inadequate to meet even the basic needs created by the crisis.

The current improved circumstances dictate that an adequate humanitarian response to the ongoing emergency must be maintained, but more importantly that it must be carried out in tandem with a programme of addressing prioritised rehabilitation needs and a strong demobilisation and reintegration project. These humanitarian and rehabilitation programmes should be seen as mutually reinforcing and directed towards the same end.

The manner with which events have unfolded since the signing of the 29 December Accord have surprised not only the people of the Congo, but also the UN and its humanitarian partners. Four months ago, when 35 per cent of the population were displaced or missing no one could have imagined the speed with which they would have returned to their homes. The UN now estimates that 600,000 of the 810,000 displaced people have returned to their homes. It is therefore safe to say that the level of urgent humanitarian requirements has decreased, but that the need for humanitarian inputs has not.

During the war, the international community was reluctant to provide humanitarian let alone other forms of assistance in the ROC. They cited continuing instability and very limited humanitarian access to the affected populations. For the last four to five months this situation has been changing dramatically and the previous zones of conflict have reopened with incredible speed, with staff now able to access all of the north and much of the southern part of the country. However, despite the access, and continuing demands and a unique opportunity to add momentum to the home-grown peace process, little assistance has been forthcoming.

Prior to the war the social services and logistical sectors had been the recipients of benign neglect and what neglect couldn't achieve, the war did. The social services sector has to all intents and purposes ceased to function and in many cases even to exist. What was assumed is now confirmed. All health programmes throughout the country have stopped and according to both the UN and the NGOs the health sector is now the major humanitarian priority. There is an urgent need to locate previous medical staff and provide them with refresher training. Large quantities of drugs, not available today, are needed to restore minimum levels of health to the population as a whole and to combat the growing incidence of all major diseases. There is a need to re-establish special programmes against HIV/AIDS, sleeping sickness, and tuberculosis, expanded vaccination programmes and epidemiological surveys. Finally, programmes to help traumatised children and adults are also badly needed. A minimum level of

infrastructure will be required to assure the implementation of these important programmes.

The rebuilding of the medical, educational and water and sanitation infrastructure is a medium to long-term project. However, immediate minimum investment is needed in the health care infrastructure in order to effectively address the continuing humanitarian needs.

Conclusions

Emerging from any civil war into a period of peace is never easy. Dialogue between warring parties is difficult, making the transition fragile and each obstacle a potential flashpoint. It would therefore be easy at this juncture to assume that because of past civil wars and political failures this peace process will also fail. Without the financial and moral support and political oversight of the international community it may fail. The financial resources required are not large, while an active interest would give the Congolese people sufficient confidence to pursue the peace process through to a successful conclusion. Finally, an oversight role of interested nations, similar to a Contact Group, could provide guidance when necessary and give the process a gentle nudge from time to time to keep it moving and on course.

The international community continues to invest enormous sums of money in chronic emergencies with well-documented histories of political and economic failure (Angola, Sudan, Somalia etc.). In hindsight it is easy to say, but appropriately timed political, economic and moral support might have helped avoid the subsequent decades of suffering. The ROC has been able through its own suffering and human resources to pull itself out a war of its own making and is now on the brink of making peace a reality. While many might like a massive international peacekeeping operation, most understand that this is simply not an option. What the Congolese really want and need is tangible international encouragement and support, and they will do the rest.

What the experience of the ROC has taught us is that despite being ignored during its most difficult period, the people have been able to achieve a level of peace unimaginable only a few months ago, but now require international financial and political support. An initiative is now underway to hold an international meeting for the ROC (see Annex B) which would involve all the major financial and political actors, both Congolese and international. Such a meeting would be a good forum to recognize the priorities of this paper and then build upon them. Finally it would provide also provide the forum to chart and launch a well planned and coordinated post-conflict programme for the ROC.

Annex A

Terms of Reference

Mission by Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue to Congo

In recent years the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) has been torn by violence and political instability, including a civil war in 1993-94, a second in 1997, and a third in 1998 which only now appears to be coming to a close.

In the 1997 run-up to elections, war broke out between different political parties' militia groups. Elections were never held and by mid-October, 1997, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso managed to win the war, aided by allied countries. A new Government was formed.

When fighting again broke out in late 1998, between opposition militia and the new government's forces, over 800,000 persons were displaced in the south. Food was scarce and all services were destroyed, leading to widespread malnutrition, related diseases, and thus very high death rates over extended periods.

While this was arguably the worst humanitarian crisis in the world in 1999, international assistance per capita was—in contrast—the lowest world wide. The Consolidated Appeal netted just \$1.2m during 1999, apart from food.

Secret talks among Government and opposition representatives began in July 1999, followed by the signature of cease-fire accords in November and December. Battles stopped immediately. Many opposition militia members are now disarming and volunteering for integration into the national army or return to civilian life.

Thankfully, the humanitarian situation is already much improved. More than half of the displaced are already returned today, and many more are on their way. Humanitarian access is opening to most of the affected interior, for both increased delivery of relief and for new projects to assist reintegration, including of ex-combatants.

The process for dialogue on a peaceful transition remains somewhat opaque. The process is unclear for deciding key issues such as the terms of a transition period, and the holding of multi-party elections.

The challenge is to "*keep the peace*"—using this cease-fire and opportunity for dialogue to further assistance to the victims of war and support the return to democracy and development.

At the request of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee – Working Group, the Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue will:

- visit the Republic of the Congo to examine opportunities to assist: conflict prevention attainment of broad humanitarian goals, and creation of lasting peace;
- produce a written report on the basis of the mission's findings, disseminating the document to key decision-makers with a view to producing an independent analysis of the evolving humanitarian situation and the importance of and the need to support the current conflict resolution process;
- facilitate discussion on the current situation in the Republic of the Congo and how the international community can best assist at this juncture.
- the UN Humanitarian Coordinator will, on behalf of the IASC, support the mission by assisting with arranging meeting with actors, agencies and the government and will provide logistical and administrative support as required;
- the Henry Dunant Centre will provide OCHA Geneva with the final report, with copy to the Humanitarian Coordinator, for onward transmission to the IASC.

Annex B

(Brouillon)

(Draft)

Objectif pour une réunion internationale sur la République du Congo

Objectives for an international Meeting on Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville)

Afin de répondre à un besoin de dialogue entre les représentants des pays donateurs, le Gouvernement de la République du Congo et les organisations multilatérales, une réunion d'un jour aura lieu dans le but de :

In response to a need for dialogue among representatives of donor countries, the Government of the Congo and multilateral organizations, a one-day meeting will be held to:

- 1) Offrir une opportunité de présenter et de discuter les plans en vue du rétablissement d'une paix durable et de la démocratie, éclaircir la vision du Gouvernement des processus de dialogue et de transition, et faire part des préoccupations à la communauté internationale ;
 - 2) Etre informé des problèmes macro-économiques de la République du Congo ainsi que des plans pour le développement d'un programme de reconstruction complet afin de satisfaire les besoins à plus long terme ;
 - 3) Atteindre un consensus pour appuyer immédiatement la transition, incluant l'aide d'urgence, l'assistance à la réintégration des populations retournées et des ex-combattants, la réhabilitation des communautés de base, et l'appui à des activités de renforcement de la paix.
- 1) Provide an opportunity for presentation and discussion of plans for re-establishing sustainable peace and democracy, shedding light on the Government's vision of the dialogue and transition processes necessary and addressing questions of concern to the international community;
 - 2) Be informed on macro-economic issues regarding the Republic of the Congo and on plans for development for a full reconstruction programme to assist in meeting longer term needs;
 - 3) Reach consensus on more immediate support for the transition, including emergency relief, assistance with reintegration of the returning population and ex-combatants, community-level rehabilitation, and support to peace building activities.

14 avril 2000

14 April 2000

