

Forum: Security Council

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TOPIC 1: The Conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Link to Libguide

I. Introduction to the Topic

With the theme of the conference “How do we ensure sustainability through multilateral cooperation?” The topic of the Conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo is one that exhibits a case where such a question goes unanswered for a certain nation. While the world is always full of different issues and challenges, sometimes society tends to neglect a specific region in our world, Africa. Concealed by other western issues such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the earthquake in Turkey, most people are not even aware of the issue taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a country situated in Central Africa, today.

Internationally, there is not much recognition of the conflict in the DRC. As aforementioned, much of Western media portrays issues that seem to be the “hottest” issue of the moment, such as the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The so-called CNN effect seems to have veiled what is happening in the DRC. Moreover, there is not much the international community and intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN, can do for the conflict in the DRC, as the sovereignty of the DRC as a nation state is recognized and respected. This means that the support from the international community is quite limited and superficial, and to truly solve the issues, domestic policies or laws would be the most effective. The continued cycle of poverty and militarization can make these African countries extremely vulnerable.

The regional geopolitical tension among the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, and some state-less armed groups are driving forces of the conflict. It has affected many lives in the eastern region of the DRC, displacing over five million people. The tensions among the neighbouring countries also escalate as displaced populations become refugees to the other surrounding countries, adding to the other concerns that each country has on their own hardships.

The national crisis of the DRC is severely affecting its national security, stability, and most importantly, its people. With the ethnic armed forces that strongly oppose the country’s central government, the nation is highly polarised and more prone to conflict. Such tension and violence have affected many innocent lives in the DRC, threatening the government’s responsible sovereignty to protect its citizens.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Mount Nyiragongo volcano eruption: On 22 May 2021, Mount Nyiragongo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo started erupting. As of 25 May, casualties were up to 32 and 1,000 homes were destroyed.

Extreme poverty has led the government to lack plans and strategies for disaster risk reduction, and has left them more vulnerable to such disasters.

UN Peacekeeping Force: Instrument developed by the United Nations as a way to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace. Their role is to protect civilians, actively prevent conflict, reduce violence, strengthen security, and empower national authorities to assume these responsibilities.

Displacement: A process in which people are forced to flee their homes in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, and find themselves in another part of the country or abroad that is considered safer.

Human Rights: Looking through the universalist view, human rights is believed to be inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent. All human beings should be given the same human rights no matter their background. In the case of the conflict in DRC, the human rights of many people are violated as they are not provided the basic necessities for decent living.

III. Key Stakeholders

DRC Government

The DRC Government, with its current president Felix Tshisekedi, is in the centre of the conflict in the DRC. The central government is where many opposition groups feel strong sentiment towards, and decide to escalate their violence. The government also plays an important role in protecting its citizens, demonstrating responsible internal sovereignty. However, this is not clearly shown in the case of DRC, as we see many innocent lives being affected by the armed conflicts, extreme poverty, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

The United Nations, specifically the UN Peacekeeping Force, is present and active in the DRC. Although the group is there to de-escalate any armed conflicts and protect the civilians, there have been several reported cases of misconduct of the organisation. The UN Peacekeeping Force, although meant to de-escalate the conflict, has in fact exacerbated the opposition groups' strong feelings towards the central government of the DRC as well as international organisations like the UN. The MONUSCO is a UN Peacekeeping Force specifically located in the DRC. They took over an earlier UN Peacekeeping Force in the DRC and deployed themselves on 1 July 2010. According to some however, MONUSCO is considered a failure as it has not made any significant impact on the DRC and its conflict.

Ethnic militia groups

Although not specified with names, there are estimated to be more than 100 armed groups operating in the DRC. These groups usually show opposition to the central government of the DRC. Yet, they are not recognized as terrorist groups by the central government as well as the international community.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Increasing armed force and forced displacement: Opposition sentiments towards the DRC's central government continues to grow due to its mismanagement of several aspects of the country. This leads to further armed conflict, in which the government also fails to protect its civilians from.

Withdrawal of UN Peacekeeping Force: The UN Peacekeeping Forces that are currently in the DRC have reportedly demonstrated misconduct. There are reports of breaking curfews, violence, and sexual abuses, which are all seriously prohibited in the UN Peacekeeping Force. The Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, has underscored the zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation.

Natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and public health: Due to natural disasters, like the volcano eruption mentioned earlier in the report, and ebola outbreaks in the midst of armed conflict, public health of the civilians is neglected by the government of DRC. In the long-term, if this issue is not addressed, it could lead to serious consequences to the general public's health and possibly lead to an epidemic that will be more difficult to control and may lead to more casualties.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1994	As a result of the genocide in the neighboring country of Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of people fled into eastern Zaire, leading to a massive influx of refugees. Consequently, the overcrowded refugee camps and lack of basic hygiene lead to a cholera outbreak that sweeps across the city of Goma.
1996	Rwanda invades Zaire, in response to the rebellion towards Rwandan refugees coming into the country. This conflict brings in more neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Angola, and Zambia. The First Congo War has started.
1997	As the First Congo War comes to a gradual end, with approximately more than 100,000 casualties. The leader of the rebellion group, Laurent Kabila, recognizes Zaire as the Democratic Republic of Congo and declares himself as the president of this nation. Zaire officially became the Democratic Republic of Congo.
1998 - 2003	A rising rebellion group led by the ethnic minority group Tutsi in the eastern region of the DRC begins the Second Congo War. The remnants of the violent conflict is still felt today with the continuing ethnic violence, political instability, and extreme poverty that affect millions of people. The estimated number of deaths from the Second Congo War is around one to five million people.
2012 - 2016	Kasai region, located at the south of the DRC, was where Jean-Pierre Pandi became the chief of territory. He led a group of opposition parties to the central government. Although officially, the chief position of Pandi should be recognized

by the central government, President Joseph Kabila never recognized Pandi, which escalated tension between the region and the central government. Tension escalated the highest at the death of Pandi, which led to a full-scale conflict. The result was internal displacement of up to 1.4 million people in the region.

2016 - 2019

Over the last few years, political instability has exacerbated in the DRC, especially after the former President Joseph Kabila ended his 11-year term in 2016. Following Joseph Kabila was Laurent Kabila, his son, who was faced with increasing protests and growing opposition. As a result, Laurent Kabila stepped down in 2019. Currently in term is Felix Tshisekedi.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Addressing the ‘Increasing armed force and forced displacement’: The main cause for the armed forces is the opposition sentiments towards the central government. The government can work towards increasing their transparency between high officials and the public through the use of media and press in order to gain back the public’s trust and confidence. Although opposition groups won’t be easily convinced right away, continued transparency will not only help to build trust, but also to hold themselves accountable. This will automatically lead to other indirect positive impacts, such as more efficient use of resources and government budgets on addressing some of the other issues mentioned in the report, such as basic sanitation facilities.

Addressing the ‘Withdrawal of UN Peacekeeping Force’: Due to reported cases of misconduct by the UN Peacekeeping Force, a small number of the group has been withdrawn. In order to address the conflict in the DRC on a bigger picture scale, there should be less intervention from external intergovernmental organisations, such as the UN. Instead, the solutions should really come from the national government and their domestic policies and laws that can protect the country and its civilians.

Addressing the ‘Natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and public health’: In order to address the issues regarding natural disasters, disease outbreaks, and the public health of the DRC, it is crucial that the DRC government works closely and transparently with nongovernmental organisations specialising in disaster risk reduction, disaster resistance building, and health and sanitation. For example, the DRC WASH Consortium is a WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) Programme run by UNICEF that delivers sustainable access to water, sanitation and hygiene for more than 640,000 people living in rural areas of the DRC. Implementing programs like this can help to alleviate the issues around lack of basic needs of the affected communities. Quick and efficient response to emergencies, such as natural disasters and disease outbreaks, is a core focus that needs to be addressed in the DRC. This can once again be supported by nongovernmental organisations in collaboration with the central government.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

The chair strongly recommends delegates to carefully deconstruct and dissect the issue of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo using various tools of analysis. Some tools of analysis the chair advises the delegates to use include levels of analysis (international, regional, national, and local levels), time analysis (immediate, short-term, intermediate, and long-term), stakeholder analysis (intergovernmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and private sector), power analysis (power asymmetry and power dynamics). By doing so, delegates will be able to ascertain the wider context of the issue as well as what is at stake.

As this issue is specific to one country (the DRC), delegates may struggle initially to find the stances of their own delegations. In order to contribute to the discussions in an accurate and meaningful way, the chair highly recommends delegates to approach their analysis in different schools of thought. For example, some basic schools of thought to look at this issue through can include neoliberalism, neorealism, neomarxism, and postcolonialism. If these terms sound unfamiliar, it would be a good idea to research them and attempt to incorporate them into the research.

It is also recommended to research different example case studies and relevant events to your delegation. Those events, although happening in different parts of the world, can be used to make comparisons and analyse the precedent-setting nature of the issue in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Finally, delegates should always keep in mind the theme of this year's November Conference: '*How do we ensure sustainability through multilateral cooperation?*' The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo conveys the need for multilateral cooperation through diplomatic and peaceful means not only at the national level, but also on regional and international scales.

If delegates consider these suggestions when conducting their research, writing their opening speeches, and drafting their resolutions, this Conference will be another meaningful and enlightening experience for all.

VIII. Bibliography

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IX: Additional Resources

Map of Democratic Republic of Congo

