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The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity

# How to Bring About Lasting Peace in Congo

June 2013

There has never been a better chance than now for sustainable peace to take hold in eastern Congo since the current phase of conflict began in the mid-1990s. The United Nations and governments of the region signed a diplomatic framework for a new peace process, and the United Nations and the U.S. government have important roles to play in ensuring that the peace process takes full advantage of this opportunity and brings lasting peace to the Congolese people. Congo's peace process should revolve around three key issues: democratic transformation in Congo; regional negotiations, mainly over economic and security issues; and increased accountability for war criminals.

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## Why is this an opportune time for peace in Congo?

A number of determinants are prying this window of opportunity open:

- Several donor governments suspended budget aid to Rwanda in 2012 for its alleged support to the M23 rebel group.
- The growing consumer movement for conflict-free products and U.S. legislation has made it much more difficult for armed groups to generate revenue from three of the four conflict minerals (tin, tungsten, and tantalum).
- The International Monetary Fund suspended work in Congo until the government enacts transparency reforms.

Together, this pressure has helped reduce external support to M23 and weaken it, contributed to the surrender of M23 warlord Bosco Ntaganda, and placed heavy financial pressure on armed groups. It is also helping motivate Congo and Rwanda to participate more constructively in peace and reform processes.

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## What is the U.N. Framework for Peace?

In late February U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and 11 African heads of state signed the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Congo and the Region. The United Nations then appointed former Irish President Mary Robinson as its envoy to the region. By signing, Congo and its neighbors committed to address political, security, and economic drivers of the conflict, and Congo agreed to undertake reform on issues such as governance and the security sector. This framework is very broad, however, and needs to be operationalized by a transparent peace and reform process.

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## What should regional negotiations focus on?

Cross-border conflicts among states in the Great Lakes region have been a driver of violence in eastern Congo. Regional negotiations between Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda should focus on agreements on cross-border security, returning of refugees, and conflict-free economic integration.

Most armed groups in eastern Congo have been sponsored by Rwanda, Uganda, and Kinshasa for their own economic and security ends. The development of security measures to protect borders and eliminate armed groups that threaten neighboring countries, such as the FDLR rebel group that operates in Congo, is essential to peace. Additionally, one of the greatest sources of regional tension is the fight over Congo's natural resources. Armed groups engage in the violent extraction and trading of Congo's minerals—gold and the 3Ts. Agreements over minerals certification and the creation of joint partnerships to share natural resources in the region will help stabilize the security situation and remove the economic incentive for armed groups to wage war.

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## How can Special Envoy Mary Robinson and the United Nations help Congo enact reform?

Despite the name “Democratic Republic of Congo,” Congo is hardly a democracy. Congo has a number of issues that need to be addressed to change the course of the country. A reform program will only succeed with the active participation of Congolese civil society, women leaders, political parties, and representatives from major armed groups. Special Envoy Mary Robinson will need to work closely with these groups to enact real reforms that allow for democratic transformation. The key issues that need to be addressed include the decentralization of power, fair local elections, army and police reform, accountability for war criminals, and the resolution of land conflicts.

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## How can the U.S. government play a positive role in implementing a peace process for Congo?

Because of its close relationships with all regional players and substantial international leverage, the U.S. government should play an active role in Congo's peace process. Most urgently, President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry should appoint a high-level U.S. envoy—who has been identified as former Sen. Russ Feingold—to support the U.N.-led peace process. The United States can contribute to addressing key political, economic, and security issues by:

- Working with the U.N. Security Council to place targeted sanctions on actors in the region that are violating the U.N. arms embargo on Congo and enabling armed groups to retain strength.
- Providing military advisors to advise and enhance the capacity of the new U.N. Intervention Brigade, a force meant to supplement the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Congo, or MONUSCO's, efforts to disarm and demobilize armed groups—namely M23.
- Working with the European Union to convene key electronics, gold, smelting, and mining companies, social responsible investors, and NGOs in a responsible-investment initiative aimed at addressing risks and identifying opportunities for conflict-free, transparent investment in the Great Lakes region.
- Supporting the International Criminal Court to investigate and indict rebel commanders in eastern Congo most responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

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## What's next?

After nearly 20 years of war, peace will not come easily to eastern Congo. The U.S. government and the international community, however, must take advantage of the momentum driven by recent developments in the United Nations and the growing activist movement that demands reform in Congo to implement a sustainable peace process. The issues that are being dealt with are complex, but the reward of reaching agreements on economic, political, and security issues both in Congo and in the region could be an end to the world's deadliest conflict.

For more information, read the full report on Congo's peace process [here](#).