

The MDRP and the OSAA organize a videoconference to discuss the upcoming UN Conference on DDR and Stability in Africa

N&N no. 18 – August 30, 2006



United Nations colleagues in New York

On August 24, 2006, the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) and the United Nations (UN) hosted a preparatory videoconference for the upcoming UN International Conference on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Stability in Africa, scheduled to take place in February 2007 in Kinshasa. Participants included key MDRP counterparts from Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic

Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda as well as members of the United Nations, the Belgium Government and the MDRP Secretariat.

Pan-African in nature and scope, the upcoming UN International Conference on DDR and Stability in Africa will focus on DDR in the Great Lakes Region. It is intended as a follow up event to the UN Conference on DDR and Stability held in June 2005 in Sierra Leone. Organized by the Office of the UN Special Advisor on Africa (OSAA) in collaboration with the Government of Belgium, the conference will aim at improving the effectiveness of DDR programs in Africa by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and experiences, particularly amongst Africans, in order to identify best practices and lessons learned.



Joseph Mbossa and High Commissioner Michel Ngakala of the Republic of Congo



Bruno Donat and Maria Correia of the MDRP Secretariat

During this plenary videoconference, participants were invited to discuss the themes they believed were most relevant to their own DDR programs and should be addressed during the UN conference. OSAA Director Patrick Hayford started the discussion by identifying four key issues the UN believes could serve as guiding themes for the conference, namely: Combatants on Foreign Soil; the link between DDR and Transitional Justice; Child Soldiers and Children in Conflict; and the linkages between Security Sector Reform (SSR) and DDR.

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The importance and relevance of these themes were emphasized by several participants. As Justice Onega, Chairman of the Uganda Amnesty Commission, noted, “These are themes which present many African countries with difficulties in their carrying out of effective DDR programs. I believe that if well discussed and given adequate time, they will give us good guidelines for DDR practices in our countries.”

Participants also raised other issues they believe should be discussed at the conference, such as the crucial role played by good governance and democratic leadership in the transition from war to peace.

As the Central African delegation stated, it is crucial to “..establish links between stability and democratic transition because if we do not have good governance, if we have not set up democratic transitions, we will not have stability.”



Participants from Burundi

The Burundian delegation similarly emphasized the need to look at DDR in the broader context of regional stability by considering the horizontal link between DDR and small arms trade, as well as the link between combatants on foreign soil and refugees, noting that weak boundaries and a free flow of weapons have hampered the effective implementation of DDR programs throughout the region.

The videoconference also offered a good occasion to remind the participants of the provisional nature of the MDRP projects and the need to build linkages between DDR programs and long-term development.

In order to facilitate the dissemination of lessons learned and good practices in DDR, Daniel Kawata, General Coordinator of the DRC’s National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, CONADER, suggested that the conference include a series of mini-evaluations of the different programs already implemented so as to allow participants to draw lessons from the past.

“We don’t always have time to talk about DDR,” he explained, “We need to take stock of what has already happened, get an overview of what is being done somewhere else and see how we could aim at what is really efficient in terms of DDR.”



Justice Onega of the Uganda Amnesty Commission

Taking note of these valuable comments, Patrick Hayford announced that the OSAA would revise and update the aide-memoire outlining the objectives and themes of the conference and circulate it for final comments. The UN will now focus their planning efforts on the technical and logistical aspects of the conference.

For more information on MDRP, please visit www.mdrp.org or contact Bruno Donat, Communications Officer, MDRP Secretariat, World Bank at info@mdrp.org.