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WORLD BANK PRESIDENT PAUL WOLFOWITZ TO VISIT PROGRAMS FOR EX-COMBATANTS IN BURUNDI AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Washington, DC (March 6, 2007) – During his visit to Central Africa (March 7-9), World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz will visit programs for ex-combatants in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Their demobilization and reintegration are being supported by funding from the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP).

On March 7th, in Bujumbura, President Wolfowitz will meet with Silas Ntigurirwa, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Demobilization, Reinsertion and Reintegration (CNDRR), some ex-combatants and colleagues working with MDRP.

Under the Burundi program, some 21,700 adults have been demobilized to date, and 3,000 children released from armed groups. Subsequently their reintegration into civilian life is being supported through a variety of activities. The MDRP and the World Bank have committed some US\$ 75 million in support of the Burundian program, including a special project for children.

President Wolfowitz will then travel to the Democratic Republic of Congo, where on March 8th, he will meet with Daniel Kawata, General Coordinator for the National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (CONADER, from the French) in Kisangani to see demobilization and reintegration activities and speak with ex-combatants.

The DRC program is MDRP's largest, accounting for almost half of its budget. To date, the program has demobilized some 101,000 adults, and reported the release of almost 30,000 children, of whom 80% have been reunified with family. Some 42 socio-economic reintegration projects have been approved for 68,000 beneficiaries, and 46,000 ex-combatants are currently active in reintegration projects.

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ABOUT MDRP

MDRP supports a regional planning and financing framework for the demobilization and reintegration (D&R) of a currently estimated 400,000 combatants in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of Congo (RoC), Rwanda and Uganda. Through its activities, the program aims to contribute to the overall security environment and regional peacebuilding and stabilization process in the greater Great Lakes region, laying the groundwork for sustainable development. The program's underlying principles are partnership and national ownership.

MDRP is financed by the World Bank and 13 donors – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission. It also collaborates with national governments and commissions, and with over 30 partner organizations, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

For more information on MDRP, please visit the website: www.mdrp.org.