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## Of War and Peace

Stakeholders across Africa's Great Lakes Region Prepare for UN Conference on Demobilization and Stability

Six months might seem like more than enough time to define key themes for the February 2007 United Nations International Conference on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Still the seven African countries that are part of the World Bank's Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) and their international partners who are taking part in preparatory GDLN videoconferences have their work cut out for them. In the most recent session on August 24, 2006 participants discussed the conference themes proposed by the UN Special Advisor for Africa: combatants on foreign soil; links between DDR, transitional justice, and security sector reform; and child soldiers and children in conflict. These issues stand at the center of successful transitions from war to peace, participants agreed, but are surrounded by a range of other challenges that must be addressed if DDR strategies are to be effective.

Justice Onega, Chairman of the Uganda Amnesty Commission, underlined that "for many African countries, these issues make it difficult to carry out effective DDR programs". A delegate from Burundi highlighted arms trafficking as an additional concern, pointing out that: "You cannot have stability when there is as free a flow of weapons within countries". One of his counterparts from the Central African Republic added that a democratic process is crucial to achieving stability. To build on existing experiences, Daniel Kawata, general coordinator of the Democratic Republic of Congo's National Commission for DDR, suggested that the conference include an evaluation of different DDR programs that are being implemented. "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," he explained.

Taking part in these videoconferences are national DDR commission representatives from Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. They are joined by counterparts in the United Nations, the government of Belgium, and the MDRP secretariat at the World Bank. Together this group is making progress towards refining the objectives and themes for the 2007 conference, with Patrick Hayford, director of the UN's Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, agreeing to revise the

conference agenda based on the ongoing videoconference discussions. The UN team will now focus its planning efforts on the technical and logistical aspects of the conference.

For further information on DDR visit the website of the MDRP, <http://mdrp.org> or contact Bruno Donat ([bdonat@worldbank.org](mailto:bdonat@worldbank.org)). As a multi-agency program that supports governments in Africa's Great Lakes region in formulating and implementing a national demobilization and reintegration program, the MDRP is the largest program of its kind in the world. It is financed by the World Bank and 11 donors – Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Commission.

