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DIASPORA CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION:
ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE
TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION  (page 3)

DAY 1  ___ KEYNOTE SPEECHES  (page 5)
      ___ PANEL DISCUSSION  (page 7)
      ___ WORKING SESSIONS  (page 9)

DAY 2  ___ KEYNOTE SPEECHES  (page 14)
      ___ PANEL DISCUSSION  (page 15)
      ___ WORKING SESSIONS  (page 17)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE  (page 20)

APPENDICES  (page 23)
On the 5th and the 6th of November The Hague Peace Projects, in cooperation with the African Diaspora Policy Centre (ADPC) and the International Institute of Social Studies, organized a diaspora conference on the Great Lakes Region in Africa, titled: “Root Causes of Conflict and Opportunities for Peace”. During two days, around seventy participants listened to speakers, joined plenary debates and discussed in small working groups.

The organizers aimed to facilitate the positive and effective contribution of diaspora communities from Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and DR Congo, living in The Netherlands, to the peace process in their region of origin. By way of open discussion and dialogue, people from different diaspora backgrounds reflected on the context of the conflict in The Great Lakes Region. Through sharing their knowledge and expertise, they were able to analyze the main obstacles to sustainable peace. Together they have formulated possibilities on how these obstacles could be overcome and how they themselves could become engaged in this peace building process.
DAY 1
1. ROOT CAUSES OF CONFLICT

During the first day, the conference focused on the subject of ‘root causes of conflict’. The idea was to start with a very general introduction to conflict studies, then to zoom in on the conflict in the Great Lakes Region, and finally to have a witness tell about his personal experiences during his life in the middle of this conflict.

1.1 KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Jagoda Paukovic

Jagoda Paukovic is an independent consultant on peace building and gender. In her keynote speech she gave an overview of key themes of conflict studies. She explained some of the most common definitions of ‘conflict’ that are used within the academic world and compared those definitions with her own experiences working in many different contexts of conflict: from Myanmar to Haiti, Georgia and DR Congo.

Paukovic stressed explicitly the importance of looking at the multidimensionality of any conflict. There is at present hardly any definition that can really capture every different aspect and the multiplicity of events that are at the core of every conflict. Every scientific approach of a conflict should therefore be aware of its limitations. Probably the best thing one can do in order to really understand a conflict is to sum up a whole range of different elements which, when put together, create a situation that we call ‘conflict’. Some important questions to consider while making an analysis of a conflict are: What are the (political, economical or cultural) motivations behind a war? What role do natural resources play? How is political power organized in a society? What is the role of the state? Who finances a war? How are the gender-relations in a society? What is the local history and how is it used by actors in the conflict? Etc, etc.

Paukovic pays special attention to a relatively new concept that is gaining ground, both at the UN and in the academic world: the concept of ‘Human Security’. This concept puts the elementary human rights and needs at the centre of every approach to establish security and stability. In that sense it opposes so-called ‘hard security’, the approach used by most states that mainly considers the stability and security of the state (and not necessarily its inhabitants) in a strict military sense. The interesting thing about this concept is that it crosses the lines of what is traditionally regarded as a ‘conflict’. Not only does it cover security issues for the population during armed struggle, but also the problems of stability and security that arise from extreme poverty, exploitation, discrimination (ethnic, religious etc.), human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns.

Paukovic concludes by stressing once again that only a holistic approach could lead us to truly understand what causes conflict.
Ben Rutabana

The second speaker was Ben Rutabana who spoke about his own experiences and about his vision on the current situation. In a moving personal story, Ben told us about his childhood in Rwanda. When he was still very young, he sometimes had to hide in the bush with his family from people who wanted to kill them. As a Tutsi in Rwanda, he experienced a lot of discrimination, exclusion and finally he witnessed genocide against his people. His mother was one of the victims.

Just before that time Ben had been in jail for several months accused of participating in subversive political activities. Fed up with discrimination, Rutabana chose to take up arms and join the ranks of the Tutsi army which had been created in Uganda, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). The RPF entered Rwanda during the genocide of 1994 and took over power in the country. After the victory by the RPF, Ben was at first relieved because he thought that finally everything was going to change for the better.

But soon Rutabana discovered that the new regime had its own dark sides, and had no intention to rule the country for its people but just for themselves. A clear sign of that is the way they are currently still using the remains of the victims of the genocide as a political tool against their enemies. The regime chose not to bury them, which would not only be appropriate but in fact also a necessity according to almost every African belief to give rest to the spirits of the deceased. Instead, the bones are being exposed in a genocide memorial. This monument uses the feeling of guilt of both citizens and the international community for their role in the genocide to prevent them form criticizing the current regime.

Immediately after the war Rutabana quit the army and continued his fight for freedom of Rwanda by making music. Because of his clear and honest songs that were often critical of the regime, he was put in prison for six months and has been severely tortured. Since 2004 Rutabana lives in exile. In the end, he does not believe that the root cause of the problems of Rwanda has to be sought in ethnicity, but rather in bad governance.

Filip Reyntjens

The final speaker of day one was Filip Reyntjens, professor of political science at the University of Antwerp. In half an hour he clarified some of the elements that he sees as root causes of conflict in the Great Lakes Region. He elaborated the following topics: the weakness of the Congolese State, the territorial extension of civil war, the constantly shifting alliances, the local and cross border dynamics, the profitability of war, and impunity.

The weakness of the Congolese state has prevented it from protecting its eastern part from intrusions by foreign armies and rebel groups that are looting the resources and leaving populations devastated. Because of the porous borders, civil wars in any of the Great Lakes Region countries easily spread to become regional conflicts. The clearest example is the fact that the genocide in Rwanda, the following influx of refugees and the military incursions by the RPF led to the complete collapse of the Congolese state.

Reyntjens explained in detail some of the extreme complexities of constantly changing alliances and agitations between not only the Great Lakes countries, but also, Angola, Tanzania and Sudan over the past 30 years.
Often countries tend to reason in the following way: “an enemy of my enemy is my friend”, thus creating ad hoc partnerships with other countries and armed groups to achieve short term gains. This creates each time a very instable balance that can turn to war form one day to the other.

Also Reyntjens pointed at the profitability of war for many actors involved, mainly because of the looting of mineral resources involved in many of these wars. Under ‘normal’ circumstances, war is a costly business: all arms, salaries of soldiers and infrastructure to support troops cost immense amounts of money. However, the data about the Rwandese army operations suggest that the cost of warfare seems to be more than fully compensated by net profits from looting.

Lastly it has to be considered that all Heads of State in the Great Lakes Region have a military background rather than experience in good governance. They will more easily choose for military ‘solutions’ than for diplomatic and social arrangements. Also, none of them has any interest in prosecuting war criminals because they can easily be accused themselves of similar crimes. This creates a perpetual system of impunity and continuance of violence.

1.2 PANEL DISCUSSION

In the panel discussion Jagoda Paukovic, Ben Rutabana and Filip Reyntjens all answered on questions from the audience. Many questions were about the role of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, both as a cause and a result of conflict in the Great Lakes Region. Below follows a summary of the questions and answers:

Q: (to Ben Rutabana): Is there a movement in Rwanda of people who are making a point of the exposure of the corpses and are willing to bury their relatives?

A: Rutabana: Yes, there are some people who are advocating the burial of the genocide victims. However, it remains a very sensitive thing and people are also afraid of offending the regime in Rwanda.

Q: (to Ben Rutabana) Why did you feel the necessity to mention you are Tutsi, and why did you specify just about the Tutsi genocide? Isn’t it common policy in Rwanda not to refer to any tribal background but just to simply state that everyone is equally Rwandan?

A: Rutabana: The reason why I wanted to state that I am a Tutsi is that today anyone who does not agree with Government is accused of being a genocide-denialist. By stating that I myself am a Tutsi and a genocide survivor, no one can make this accusation against me.

Q: (to Ben Rutabana and Filip Reyntjens): The current Rwandan regime says we shouldn’t talk about Tutsi or Hutu and refer to the entire population as being ‘Rwandans’ instead. So why is it necessary to say that it was a Tutsi-genocide? Many Hutu’s have been killed as well. So why don’t we call it a Rwandan genocide against both Hutu’s and Tutsi’s?

A: Rutabana: I know that there have been a massacres of Hutu as well but, do not dare to call it a genocide because there has not been enough evidence presented by scientists or courts that can prove that this was truly a Hutu genocide. There simply isn’t enough evidence yet. But as soon as it can scientifically proven I am ready to accept that there was a Hutu genocide as well.

A: Reyntjens: This is a very courageous statement by Ben and I think it should be considered an example of how we should approach this matter. In terms of deciding whether you can call what happened in 1994 a genocide against both Tutsi’s an Hutu’s, I have to reply in a strict juridical sense.
The term ‘genocide’ has a very specific meaning: the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such. The definition of genocide is about targeting specifically one group by one or more other groups. So one genocide can by definition not be directed towards two or more groups at once. In that case one should speak of separate genocides taking place at the same time. In the case of Rwanda, in fact nobody doubts the evidence of the genocide against the Tutsi’s. The evidence of a possible genocide against the Hutu’s in Rwanda is not so clear yet. On the other hand, the evidence for a genocide of the Hutu’s in DR Congo in the years after 1994 are very obvious. There is no way of denying that hundreds of thousands of Hutu’s have been targeted and killed by the Rwandan army. This took place either by direct military action and massacring of the refugee camps in Eastern Congo, or by displacing thousands of people without food, who often died of malnutrition and diseases.

Q: (to Filip Reyntjens) You began talking just after 1994 without mentioning all the things that happened before that time and that lead to the genocide then. Why couldn’t you start with for instance the genocide that took place in Burundi in 1972?

A: (Reyntjens): Yes you are right, I could have started much earlier, for instance in colonial times or even far before, back into the 11th century or even earlier. In part the current struggles are always connected to previous phases in history when one group was subjugating the other. Each bloodshed lead to revenge and attempts at annihilation of the other. This goes back a very long time.

Q: (to Ben Rutabana): You say you don’t accept ethnic differences as root cause of the conflict, but aren’t you then ignoring the most obvious facts? Aren’t Hutu’s and Tutsi’s opposed to each other at every step in history?

A: (Rutabana): Maybe I should have been more clear. Of course many of the sufferings are inflicted by one group against the other. I have spoken about the dehumanization of Tutsi in Rwanda that I experienced myself. But what I wanted to say was that the ethnicities themselves are not the cause of all these troubles. Ethnicity and tribal identity are just being used as a tool to divide people, as soon as it serves some elites’ interest. That was clearly the case in colonial times and it continues to be true until today.
1.3 WORKING SESSIONS

The goal of the working session on the first day was to discuss in three groups what the participants believe to be the Root Causes of Conflict in the Great lakes Region. The groups were split up by language, having a French, an English and a Dutch speaking group. Below follows a summary of the most important root causes mentioned by the participants.

1.3.1 Colonialism

Colonial authorities had a large influence on the conflicts of today by building their policies on a strict division of different tribes and communities. In some countries the ethnic conflict derived from the way colonizers favored some ethnic groups above others. Everywhere in society, even in schools, people were classified by ethnicity. Each ethnicity had assigned certain characteristics and was supposed to behave according to these pre-determined characteristics. One group was taught to lead and another group was taught to follow orders. Participants insisted that beforehand this was not really a problem until the colonization of the region.

Other negative aspects of colonization that were mentioned were the destruction of local identities and social structures, dehumanizing practices of slavery and oppression and a lack of investment in the eventual independence of the colony by way of creating education systems, infrastructure, legislation etc.

1.3.2 Decolonization

Most countries were unprepared for decolonization and independence. This led to a lot of problems that are still not solved today. This is especially the case for DR Congo. A failed decolonization process made sure that Congo was never capable of developing into a normal modern state. Where other countries inherited a more or less well-functioning state apparatus where the local people were more or less involved in building the nation, no such thing was available in Congo. Congo was never intended by the Belgians as a true ‘colony’ including all its services and civilian infrastructure, but more as a ‘resource area’ in private property of the Belgian King, and all of its inhabitants hardly more than slaves for the purpose of exploitation. Without any higher educated Congolese, a defunct state system, and an permanent lack of resources Congo as an independent state was set up to fail.

1.3.3 The cold war and afterwards

The cold war was a period in which the world was being split up in largely two opposing blocks. Both the Soviet and the Western bloc created puppet regimes worldwide that would obey by their rules. These were mainly dictatorships. For this reason national and local causes were sacrificed for the exclusive interest of world powers. For example, the 32 year rule of Mobutu, a protégé of the US, destroyed Congo (Zaire) both materially by looting whatever resources possible and spiritually by annihilating any hopes that remained among the population after the colonial epoch. The lack of a responsible state during this period still has severe effects on the mentality of people in DR Congo.

1.3.4 The 1990’s and the Rwandan genocide

The rise of democracy after the Cold War in the early 90s usually did not take into account the national and regional fragility that most countries in the region endured in the past. Weak and dishonest attempts at creating democracy have ended in a lack of effective institutions, and have given the power in the hands of few people who actively participate in the deterioration of the
state of law, territorial integrity and the state’s poverty. This and more led in Rwanda and the entire region to one of its darkest epochs: the genocide of 1994 and the resulting Congo wars. The genocide still has a tremendous negative effect on the entire Great Lakes Region, both politically, socially and even personally between families and neighbors.

1.3.5 Governance

*Elites*

Besides the historic problems, many problems were mentioned by the participants regarding governance. Most of the countries of the Great Lakes Region are ruled by a very small elite of just a handful of individuals or families. In the case of DR Congo it is easy to see that always the same families end up on high positions. Even up to this time family members of the former dictator Mobutu are active in the opposition. These elites of families or individuals are all highly connected and fully dependent on foreign actors and the international community.

*Military dictatorship and impunity*

Most leaders in the regions have had a military career and are used to tackling problems though the use of force, intimidation and murder, both in internal and foreign affairs. Dictatorship has been the most common way of governing the region since independence. None of these leaders is actually interested in solving any conflict or persecuting war criminals because this might harm their own interests. This situation in turn leads to impunity and the protection of those responsible for war crimes.

*Weak democracy and institutions*

Democracy is seen by many leaders and a large portion of the population as simply holding elections. Elections are the beginning and the end of the democratic process. Especially local governance is very fragile because all attention is paid to national elections and national institutions. Local conflicts are often exploited for the gains of the political agendas of national leaders.
Lack of governance

In some cases, like in DR Congo one could speak of an entire lack of governance in large parts of the country, especially the east. This is partly due to the size of the country, in combination with a lack of funds for local security, the influence of local militia and incursions from neighboring states.

Ethnic manipulation

Knowing the complex and troubled nature of ethnic relations in the region, many politicians are trying to exploit existing ethnic divisions in order to mobilize certain ethnic groups or gain control over other ethnic groups. Although not fundamentally a cause of conflict, ethnicity continues to be a tool for those who profit from instability.

Legislation

Laws are very often copied from other countries’ laws without understanding exactly what they mean and without any adaptation to the local situation. The Congolese government adopted the Belgian legislation unaltered, even though the national and local circumstances are totally different. Also the African Union is merely a copy of the European Union without understanding its true philosophy and purpose.

Corruption

Another trade mark of the Great Lakes regimes is their use of corruption. Corruption is institutionalized as a way of living.

1.3.6 Land

Many problems in the Great Lakes Region are related to the use of land. Not only the legal or illegal mining of resources create land issues for inhabitants, also continuous flows and resettlements of groups of refugees create tensions over land use. Besides that, many areas are overpopulated and certain countries create policies surrounding land which are at the root of new problems.

An example is Rwanda. A large part of the land in Rwanda belongs to the government. If a person stops using it for a while or doesn’t use it according to the plans of the government, the state may expropriate it and sell it. This happened a lot after the genocide in Rwanda when many people fled to neighboring countries and currently still happens to the property of Rwandans living abroad. It also happens to people who lack the resources to make good use of the land. According to the law the government should give a compensation when they take the land back, but this does not always happen. Such disposition of the land ownership increased the division between rich and poor within Rwanda and this triggers conflicts.

Another problem connected to the land is the selling of land to foreign companies. This reduces the possibility for poor people to use it and therefore it triggers conflicts. This is caused by the fact that the owners, the ones that could sell it to the foreign companies, are usually not the ones who actively farm it nor are they otherwise dependent on this land for their livelihoods. The owners are usually rich, and the farmers who actually make use the land are poor people who rent their plots from the owner. When they lose their livelihood by selling off their farming grounds to foreign companies, and are sent away from their farms as a consequence, this can trigger a conflict. Some Dutch companies are currently buying some 20,000 acres of land in Rwanda and they use a cadastre system to determine ownership. These Dutch companies try to buy the land from the owners, but try to maintain the workers in order to avoid conflict.
1.3.7 The role of the International Community

Western countries still play a major role in the conflict of the Great Lakes Region because many raw materials like gold, coltan and cassiterite end up in goods and products that are transported to the West. Because Western countries and companies depend so much on the minerals that are plundered and taken by force, they may be considered key actors in the conflict, even if they remain at great distance of the actual fighting and suffering.

Another role is played by those Western companies which profit from the arms trade in the region. Proliferation of weapons in the region mostly takes place in the villages. This stimulates the growth of armed groups who control a huge territory all together.

1.3.8 Knowledge and education

A lack of knowledge and education adds to the problem of conflict. This is mostly apparent at the local level, where people are largely unaware of the real causes behind the conflict, due to a lack of proper information services. This denies them of means to solve and prevent conflict. Besides that, many people lack an education about what it means to live in a democracy. Very few people understand the real idea, the institutions and the rules that could guarantee at least a minimum of popular influence in decision making.

Finally, in DR Congo proper knowledge and experience are lacking on how to create an economy more technologically advanced than just based on the export of raw materials. This situation keeps the level of development and stability very low and fragile.

1.3.9 Social aspects

Other aspects that were mentioned that contribute negatively to the situation of conflict are social matters. First of all, many social structures have been destroyed due to several conflicts. There is a lack of both traditional, family and government authority. People easily mistrust each other which prevents people from cooperating in peace building.

Another problem that was mentioned is the apparent lack of national identity. In most countries there is no common vision of what the country should look like and how to achieve that. Rather, people stick to the smaller identity of the group they belong to.

Someone else mentioned also the problem of mentality. Some people pointed towards pride as a root cause of conflict: the way people think they are better than others and have a right to oppress the other group.
DAY 2
2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE

The second day of the conference focused on opportunities for peace. The main question was how the diaspora can play a positive role towards sustainable peace.

2.1 KEYNOTE SPEECHES

Dirk-Jan Koch
Dirk-Jan Koch, Special Envoy Natural Resources of The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained the efforts that are being done internationally to make sure that mineral resources of Congo do not contribute to war. Many things have been achieved over the past years. Less and less mines are being controlled by armed groups due to strict certification measures. Artisanal gold mining remains one of the biggest problems however. Studies by Belgian research institute IPIS show that gold mining suffers most from the presence of armed groups. According to Koch, each stakeholder of the ‘value chain’ from resource to end product has a responsibility to make sure that they only use materials that are ‘clean’. Therefore an elaborate system of inspections, and quality labels is being developed at a global level. Koch ends his presentation by stating some final conclusions:
State building is essential for stability: if there is no working state present in an area of mining it is very hard to professionally organize trade regulations, controls, tax services and security. Only with a functioning state, the local populations have a chance not to be exploited only, but also to profit and to prosper from their natural riches.

Joost van Puijenbroek
Joost van Puijenbroek of Dutch peace organization PAX talked about the local context of the Ituri region in Eastern Congo. He explained the different dynamics of a conflict that continue a long time after a war has ‘officially’ ended. He explains the different stages at which civil society organizations could intervene in order to contribute to sustainable peace. Van Puijenbroek especially highlights the devastation that has taken place on a social level. Hardly any structure in society, both traditional or legal, has any legitimacy. Everybody is divided and normal functioning of social institutions is disrupted. It will take a lot of time and investment to bring people together and start normal social relations an cooperation between groups again. Other problems concern the land, good governance and the role of the international community.
As solutions Van Puijenbroek gave much attention to the role of civil society in this process. Women and their organizations can play a very essential role in opposing to conflict and its continuation.
Stéphanie Mbanzendore

Stéphanie Mbanzendore, founder of Burundian Women for Peace and Development (BWPD) explained how she, as a member of the diaspora, tries to stimulate the peace process in Burundi.

In her presentation, she identified three main challenges facing regional peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region. She especially mentioned the inadequate participation of local actors and civil society in the peace process, which prevents the process from having enough legitimacy and effect. Another problematic factor is, according to Mbanzendore, the failure to address historical injustices, issues of land and negative use of ethnicity. Finally also the lack of commitment to the implementation of peace agreements and institutional reforms plays an important role in the continuation of conflict.

Settling the above mentioned issues will greatly improve any chances for real sustainable peace. Besides strengthening of legal and political institutions in order to enhance good governance there should be a focus on healing and reconciliation to restore harmonious relationships within the communities.

Mbanzendore advocates for a comprehensive peacebuilding approach that synthesizes peacebuilding both at a political level, involving governments, and grass roots initiatives.

The above initiatives can address historical injustices, hostility and insecurity and increase fair political transitions, resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, reparation for victims of civil war, resulting in healthy relationships and a just peace. Mbanzendore ends her speech by saying: “Peace is very expensive, but war is even more expensive, so we should choose the first”.

2.2 PANEL DISCUSSION

Q: Can the diaspora play a role in peace building?
A: Stéphanie Mbanzendore: “What can I say, of course!”
A: Dirk-Jan Koch: “I think it is not a question of ‘if’ but of ‘how’, I think they have to. As we look at the statistics, for example of DR Congo, one-tenth of the population is living abroad.
A: Joost van Puijenbroek: “I recently was at a meeting of the cabinet in Kinshasa. There I met Congolese ministers who I got to know when they were still living as migrants in Brussels. They went back to Congo to be elected. They brought their expertise and experiences to their home country. The interesting thing is that they feel more free to speak because they have a double passport.
Q: (to Joost van Puijenbroek) In Ituri there are 150.000 Internally Displaced Persons who cannot go back to their hometown because their land is stolen. Don’t you think we should work with informal frameworks of society to solve these problems?
A: Van Puijenbroek: Yes that is very necessary. There are two parallel systems functioning at the same time in Congo: the official administrators of land and the communal land system organized under the authority of the local “chefs coutumiers”. The first has 100% legality but 0% legitimacy, the second has 0% legality but 100% legitimacy. However even the authority of these traditional structures have suffered greatly due to the recent wars. During the war, many people have lost their land and still don’t have it back. Some communities took land from other communities.
When the war was over, people were afraid to claim it back. There are currently no effective local structures and informal frameworks that can solve these problems. One of the most severe effects of the wars has been exactly that: the destruction of the fabric of society. The women and the elderly who usually form the bond of society have been targeted on purpose as victims in order to weaken local societies. Ituri hasn’t recovered from these losses yet. The peace committees and organizations who are dealing with these issues, have little to build upon. So there are social initiatives supported, but we have to be aware of their limits. The main persons responsible are still the chiefs.

Q: In all of your speeches I miss the role of Uganda. Many current presidents of the region have taken refuge in Uganda and were or are still friends with the Ugandan president. The Ugandan army is deployed not only in Congo but all across central an eastern Africa: also in South Sudan, Somalia and the Central African Republic. Are you aware of the role of Uganda in all of these conflicts?

A: (Van Puijenbroek): Yes you are absolutely right. Uganda was in Congo during the war and they occupied land. At first on the pretext of defending themselves, but soon they were also profiting from the local natural resources. Congo is asking Uganda to pay back everything that they have stolen, in total something around 10 billion dollar. Uganda is a major player behind many conflicts.

Q: What is the role of religious groups or institutes in peace-building?

A: Van Puijenbroek: In Ituri, the region I am speaking about, every church was related to one or another armed group. Churches are mainly divided along ethnic lines. They are important actors because they have social legitimacy. We have to look at the loyalty of the religious leaders, is that the church or the community? For example, a few years ago the Catholic National Conference condemned the fraudulent elections, but the bishops in Katanga made great efforts in order to not do so. I am working for PAX, so we are working together with local churches. They are a influential potential player in peace building. But in reality they are unfortunately also actors of war.

Q: (to Stéphanie Mbanzendore) Do you really think it is necessary to have a quota for women in politics? Shouldn’t we just choose the best candidates, no matter whether they are man or woman?

A: Mbanzendore: My finding is that you shouldn’t follow politics, you have to make politics follow you. Burundi is a men’s country, under the table it is clear that only men are allowed in politics. But in times of war, women are the first victims. So this quota was something we asked for ourselves, we even fought for it. So yes, we are in favor of this quota. Women in Burundi are now much more included in peace negotiations.
During these sessions the goal was to find out how the diaspora can contribute to the peace building process in the Great Lakes Region.

The sessions began with every individual painting or drawing on a piece of paper how he or she views the region within 10 years.

One of the participants drew a balance. On one side of the balance there was a small group of people who represent the governing elites and on the other side there is the large population of the Great Lakes Region. Currently, the balance leans very much to the side of the few. The ideal that we should work on is to have the balance equal on both sides.

The idea behind this painting was that it reveals the imbalance in the countries of the Great Lakes region. Populations are taken hostage by a small group, the "elite class" who rules without consulting or involving the governed in the process. The picture also shows some other things:

- It reveals the virtual absence of a middle class, which reinforces the dictatorship of the ruling elites over the large population.
- The sub-region of the Great Lakes is sick of insecurity, mistrust and exclusion, this attitude negatively impacts the climate of cohabitation.
- Inequality between citizens, some are considered ‘more citizens’ than others.

Many participants draw people sitting together talking. They found it important to stress the need for unity. The below message has captured the attention of that first round of the session:

“To refuse our differences is to ignore our diversity.
No country will ever see the sun of tomorrow if we fail to embrace our diversity”
Unconsciously the above was mentioned after it was obvious that each individual participant views the region in a different manner. Each participant defines the dramatic situation that the region is going through differently than the other. But to understand the complexity of the region one has to put all the pieces together; it's only then that we can start to understand what really needs to be done in the region. Someone said: “We need to speak with one voice in order to make people listen to us. To become one voice we need to organize, by conference and meetings like this. What we have done these two days is the first step. We have to trust each other. I know this is a sensitive issue, but we have to be patient. When we can make one voice, the Dutch government and maybe also our own governments can take us seriously.”
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CONFERENCE
Conclusions

At the end of the conference, many participants were convinced of the potential of the Diaspora. Although many root causes of conflict were addressed and many possibilities for the Diaspora to work on peace were proposed, there was a clear willingness among participants to continue the discussions after the conference. Of course only two days of this conference are not enough for all aspects of this complex context.

Therefore there is a need to keep seeing each other and talking to each other regularly. In the near future it will be important to focus on becoming a strong group and to think about how the voice of the diaspora can be heard. Some of the attendees of the conference were journalists themselves, so the next time we can think of how our voice can be heard in the media. It is important to show other images than just destruction, it is also important to show and image of hope an mutual understanding. We need places and opportunities like this conference where people can freely talk and think.

This brings us to the issue of trust building. Trust was mentioned as one of the main obstacles for building up a strong diaspora group. Many diaspora groups are attached to various churches and mosques and are divided by ethnicity and their religious or political orientation, a main tool for maintaining mistrust of the other ethnicity or the “enemy”. Individuals trying to explore the possibility of dialogue with the others are afraid of being accused of treason and rejected by their own group.

The general conclusion was that this conference offered a unique opportunity to start low profile and base its objectives on trust building and opening to the stories of others. We should learn listening to each other without judging. This approach should be the foundation of all other projects issuing from this conference.

The diaspora has to work together, but peace has to grow and it needs time. We have hope for people to trust each other again. Two days of the conference have shown us that we can have a real connection. Staying in Europe is not only a tragedy, it is also on opportunity to learn, have education and use new insights to help our country as best as we can.

Recommendations

To acknowledge the significant impact that diaspora can have on economic development is an important step towards understanding how the diaspora can become a reliable actor for peace as well. To make this effective, partners like governments, private and international institutions must help create the necessary frameworks, programs, and opportunities to maximize the potential, capacities and abilities of the diaspora to be actively involved in the peacebuilding process.

Different ways of how the diaspora can contribute to the peacebuilding process have been outlined. The following initiatives were mentioned:

1. Identifying and mapping the diaspora and their needs and intentions for the region.

2. Bringing together on a regular basis a working group of dedicated members of the Great Lakes Diaspora. This Diaspora Working Group could consist of different organizations and individual members of the Great Lakes diaspora. It would be a good idea to involve younger people in these group meetings. The Diaspora Working Group could:
a. continue the trust building
b. design future projects together and
c. make the voice of the diaspora heard at meetings with decision makers and other relevant actors

Some more specific goals and objectives of such a group could be:

• Obtaining commitments from individuals and organizations to fight for the same cause.

• Making and coordinating partnerships with stakeholders and partners like international institutions, EU, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, embassies and local governments.

• Be willing to look for innovative solutions to common problems. And set specific goals and objectives (e.g. advocating for the diaspora’s right to vote).

• Being able to take appropriate actions when there are conflicts of interest (individual organization interests vs. common diaspora interests) and make sure that actions are relevant and constructive.

• Provide access to information on different levels, to the diaspora communities, the people in the Great Lakes Region, a professional public in the Netherlands and Europe and to international institutions.

3. Starting a constructive dialogue between different diaspora groups. Diaspora groups are too fragmented and lack a social cohesion in order to work together and have networks to help each other to build on a better future. The importance of working with young people was mentioned because they will be the generation that is going to build the future. In such a way a group of people can be selected and stimulated with a free mind, who do not immediately judge the other.

4. Providing independent information to diaspora groups. Information nowadays is mainly distributed through controlled media outlets. Locally there is hardly any independent radio and people do not dare to speak freely. People do use social media like Facebook but also these have their weaknesses and do not always contribute to dialogue. People are scared to be too political. Diaspora can contribute to giving information by creating online radio and discussion platforms and cooperate with independent journalists.

5. Organizing good and relevant education. Children learn about ethnic diversity as an unchangeable and regrettable affair. This leads to diversion instead of connection. Children should be educated about peace and cooperation and the beauty of diversity. Education on values is necessary to restore a society where there is more equality and respect for human rights. Governance has to be bottom-up, based on the will and consent of a well informed population.

6. Creating public awareness about the problems and solutions for the Great Lakes region conflict. The diaspora could organize public events in order to attract public attention and bring across a message of peace to relevant actors. We could involve journalists amongst the diaspora to work with the Dutch media to make the voice of the diaspora for peace heard by a larger public. In this effort we can involve universities, schools and the art world.

7. Collectively advocating for peace in the Great Lakes Region. Eventually, when a strong, inclusive diaspora working group has been established, this group could work on its own, doing research and advocacy, both in Europa and locally. A united diaspora group is a powerful tool to put pressure on governments to implement relevant policies towards peace. Strengthening the skills of the active diaspora member is in peace building, lobby and advocacy would be needed in order to be heard by the Dutch Government, the EU and local governments.
**APPENDIX 1:**

**Full opening speech by Jakob de Jonge**

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of The Hague Peace Projects, The African Diaspora Policy Centre and the Institute of Social Studies I would like to welcome you all to this conference: The Great Lakes Region: Root Causes of Conflict and Opportunities for Peace.

A special welcome first to all of our speakers today, all of whom have come form Belgium: Jagoda Paukovic, Ben Rutabana and Filip Reyntjens. I am truly grateful to that you will share with us your points of view and your experiences so that we can have a basis for discussion in the afternoon.

Another special welcome to all of the members of the diaspora present here today. The Diaspora of Uganda, the Diaspora of Rwanda, the diaspora of Burundi and the diaspora of DR of Congo. I am very pleased to see that we are together with so many people from so many different backgrounds to discuss a very important matter, namely peace in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

We very strongly believe that you as a diaspora have a lot to offer in terms of information, insider knowledge and creative solutions to the complex problems that we are facing today. This significant contribution of the diaspora is not always recognized. I think it is high time that the diaspora gets the role as partners and agents of positive change.

We are here in a city that is known worldwide for its promotion of peace and justice. With so many courts of justice, international organizations and ngo’s that work on peace, security, development and human rights, the city of The Hague is an example to the rest of the world. In many places the mere mentioning of the name of The Hague evokes hope in the hearts of those who desire a world without war, without fear and without want. Not to mention that the name of The Hague also strikes fear into everyone who acts against the interest of humanity. It is this vision of peace and justice that we as an organization fully subscribe to and it is the reason why we called our organization The Hague Peace Projects.

The work for peace and end of these wars and violent conflicts is the focus of our organization because we are convinced that true social and economic development, the existence of democracy and human rights are impossible in a situation of war. In other words: you cannot seriously talk about things like human rights and development when bombs are falling, when people are killing each other or when one group within a society is violently repressing other groups.

As an organization The Hague Peace Projects aims in the first place to play a role in the relation between information and conflict. As the saying goes: the first victim in any war is the truth. Each party in a conflict tries to present the facts in a way that is favourable to its own interests. And it is hard to find any media or any person for that matter who is fully immune to such manipulations. But as wars go on truth gets more and more clouded and this is one of the main reasons, we think, why also solutions often become more remote. If you don’t know what is really going on, who is involved and what interests are at stake you will have a hard time ever solving this conflict.

The Hague Peace Projects would like to contribute to clarifying and identifying in the first place what causes wars. Which factors and which actors play a role? Only then are we able to get to the source of the problem and are we able to talk about real solutions.

Information, knowledge and analysis are the first and essential step towards peaceful solutions. In that respect we are very aware of the value of the diaspora from conflict and post-conflict areas. We Europeans remain largely outsiders, even if we know a lot. But you, most of you who are here are able to understand the many political, cultural and historical views and subtleties that often
escape the outsiders view. And exactly this information could be crucial in truly understanding a conflict and coming closer to a solution.

At the same time, while preparing this conference I got more and more aware of the divisions that exist among the different Diaspora groups. One country can have two or more different Diaspora groups that never really talk to each other.

I hope and believe that we all can make a difference if we are listening, if we are expressing our points of view, if we are questioning ourselves and others about established truths and about the role we want to play in order to bring a future of peace for ourselves and our children closer.

We think in order for the Diaspora to fully being able to participate in the process of shaping the future of its regions of origin, a good begin would be to start discussing among yourselves. Even asking the hard questions sometimes. Even sharing difficult experiences sometimes.

Therefore I would like to encourage you all to work hard, to do your best and to devote your energy and attention to come up with clear analyses of the conflict during the discussions today and come up with the most clever and creative solutions tomorrow. There is a lot of work to be done. I wish you all fruitful discussions and hope you’ll enjoy the conference.
APPENDIX 2:  
Full keynote speech by Jagoda Paukovic

a. Introduction

War is a profitable business. There are presently about 300 multinational companies producing arms electronics, arms vehicles, missiles, ships and general military equipment. And we have those producing, backpacks or other gear.

Boeing Company, for instance, is manufacturer of Aircraft-, Electronics-, Missiles and Space equipment. In 2011 it was the second largest US government contractor. This, with about 21 billion dollars’ worth of goods contracted. The Chicago based company makes a wide range of arms including strategic missile systems, laser and electro-optical systems, GPS systems, etc. 46 percent of the company’s total sales of 68 billion dollars in 2011 came from arms. Even though Boeing is mainly known as the largest airplane manufacturer in the world and for its space technology, almost half of its income came from arms. There are other similar companies, such as Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics1, etc.

When governments ---who are the main clients of those companies ---have to cut down their spending budgets, these companies have to look further for new clients, which one could characterize as clients profiting from conflicts and wars. Those range from local private markets, to international insurgent groups in various conflicts.

I picked this illustration about the magnitude of the weapon industry as an anecdotal entry into the issue of the numerous conflicts taking place in the world at present. Today and tomorrow we will look at the various aspects of conflict, examine the root causes, discuss the various approaches to conflict resolution, and, eventually, at the end of the second day, come up with suggestions for strategies for solutions for peace-building. May be we will come up with some very original ideas.

b. Definition

There are many definitions tackling violent conflict, but for the beginning, I took the one from a paper from 1998 by Frances Stewart2. She analyzes the ‘root’ causes of complex humanitarian emergencies (CHEs) on the basis of studies conducted in a UN University/WIDER project on social and economic causes of CHEs. Different UN Agencies have adopted various definitions, but maybe the following one, from 1994, very pertinently defines a conflict or a complex humanitarian emergency:

A humanitarian crisis in a country, region, or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority, resulting from internal or external conflict, which requires an international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency and/or ongoing UN country program (47th Session of the General Assembly, 1994. Italics Stewart’s)

c. Analysis

Most of the ‘analyses of conflict’ stress the multi-dimensionality of it, where many aspects have to be considered3, such like the following:

• Motivation and mobilization behind the conflict---economic motivation but also political and cultural processes taking place at that moment; (we should not forget the stress on processes).

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1 Samuel Weigley, 24/7 Wall St com ‘10 Companies profiting the most from the war’ 10 March 2013.
3 Ibidem
• Gender mainstreaming included in government policies as well as into the policy changes; (an example familiar to me is the analysis of the DDR – Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program in DR of Congo where gender mainstreaming shamefully failed. Women soldiers or so called bush wives were not considered at all in the program, as consequence they remained banned by their communities without any means for survival and sexual violence in the region increased. The program omitted a prior anthropological and sociological analysis of gender).

• Group differentiation. Group construction is a dynamic and fluid process, changing with circumstances. Ethnic or religious identification can play an important role in various stages of the conflict.

• Organization of the groups in conflict, the internal hierarchy of the groups as well as the hierarchy between groups; and again gender relations within each group.

• Identity construction by political and religious leaders;

• Government policies and the situation of the state: e.g investment in education, access to health, equality

• The role of resources in the conflict

• Political power and political dynamics among the groups

• The power of the state institutions and the dynamics of civil society or lack thereof

• Political participation or its lacking; (who is excluding whom)

• The way the state is dealing with past history of violence (genocides in Rwanda or Turkey for example).

• The response and the ability of the state to meet the basic human needs. Degree of Access Equality to resources and market of different groups, especially in times of government policy changes (property rights, water regulations, concessions given to foreign companies for land or resources exploitation, etc.); (example of Ethiopia where the state gave concessions to foreign companies to exploit agricultural land and the pastoralist groups had to be pushed to the less fertile lands, which intensified the traditional cattle raiding and armed conflicts between the groups, with heavy weaponry in free circulation. Or IMF measures and their implementation for example in Guinea Conakry where the government by implementing the structural measures first cut down on health and education. As a consequence the youth was massively recruited for child soldiers)

• Process of the privatization of the state property: how does it affect the poor, what is the gender impact? (Example from Kazakhstan: privatization of the large Soviet state farms (sovkhozes) in the region of Semipalatinsk went into the hands of the existing management- all men. The rest of the people who were working in the support sector like education and health care related to the sovkhozes ended unemployed, which all resulted in mass poverty, emigration and total disruption of the social fabric).

It is also important to look at (i) the conflicts that are state-triggered, for example Haiti, Myanmar (before last elections), Rwanda or (ii) other ones where the conflict is triggered by group conflict within the State and/or outside of the State (former Yugoslavia).

Together with this, we also have to look at the financing of the conflict. E.g. Myanmar, where the conflict is state financed, in contrast to RD Congo where the conflict is financed by private sources.

4 Justitia et Pax Nederland 2010, Researcher: Sara Pavan, Beyond Men and Guns,
Mary Kaldor⁵ argues that the various models—developed for various conflict analyses—fail to provide a comprehensive explanation of the genuine causes of conflict. Even when some analysts look at resources as the main cause, like e.g. in DRC, one has a tendency to consider the symptoms rather than the causes for conflict. Kaldor argues in favor of ‘an interdisciplinary and multi-causal approach’ to understanding and managing conflict. I can identify with that, as I just enumerated above in an (un-exhaustive) list of elements to be considered in an analysis.

I will also quote Herbert Kelders⁶ definition of conflict being ‘a process driven by collective needs and fears’ rather than motivated by rational calculation and national interests. This aspect should definitely not be left out of consideration, especially because fear being manipulated by media, political and religious leaders is playing a great role in the dynamics of specific conflicts. Bosnia is an example, but presently we can also look at the events in Europe.

d. Human Security

Last but not least, one has to consider the approach to conflict from the perspective of the concept of Human security. Here is the definition taken from the United Nations Human Security Unit. They stress the need for a new paradigm of security which is associated with two sets of dynamics:

First, human security is needed in response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats – from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns. Such threats tend to acquire transnational dimensions and move beyond traditional notions of security that focus on external military aggressions alone.

Second, human security is required as a comprehensive approach that utilizes the wide range of new opportunities to tackle such threats in an integrated manner. Human security threats cannot be tackled through conventional mechanisms alone. Instead, they require a new consensus that acknowledges the linkages and the interdependencies between development, human rights and national security. Human rights are often overlooked in the policies.

In its final report UN ‘Human Security Now’, defines\(^7\) human security as:

“...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations. It means using processes that build on people’s strengths and aspirations. It means creating political, social, environmental, economic, military and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.” (CHS: 2003: 4)

Overall, the definition proposed by the CHS re-conceptualizes security in a fundamental way by

1. moving away from traditional, state-centric conceptions of security that focused primarily on the safety of states from military aggression, to one that concentrates on the security of the individuals, their protection and empowerment;
2. drawing attention to a multitude of threats that cut across different aspects of human life and thus highlighting the interface between security, development and human rights; and
3. promoting a new integrated, coordinated and people-centered approach to advancing peace, security and development within and across nations.

What then are the main features of Human Security? Human security brings together the ‘human elements’ of security, rights and development. As such, it is an inter-disciplinary concept that displays the following characteristics:

• people-centered
• multi-sectored
• comprehensive
• context-specific
• prevention-oriented

**e. Conclusion**

This is only mentioning a few approaches to conflict. Conflict theories are many and there are always new ones coming up, but the only conclusion to my speech today is that one should be as much as possible aware that the holistic approach is very important when looking at conflict processes. It is also important to bear in mind that the root causes change throughout the duration of the conflict.

Soldier, musician and author Ben Rutabana talked about his personal experience and how he came to understand that life, freedom and equality are inalienable rights. Ben is a Tutsi from Rwanda who escaped the genocide. He used to be a soldier for the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and is an outspoken critic of the current president of Rwanda, Paul Kagame.

Since his very early youth, Ben experienced a lot of discrimination as a member of the Tutsi community living in Rwanda. He remembers that when he was a child he sometimes had to hide with his family in the bush, because they were chased by people who wanted to kill them. Rutabana is sometimes amazed by the games his children play, which are usually about playing super-heroes. The games he used to play himself with his friends when he was young were totally different. A common game was to play hide and seek from potential killers. Discrimination was so much part of the fabric of society that children considered it almost normal, which is why they were able to play it like a game. By the age of 7 he heard for the first time the term cockroach applied to him.

Rutabana was born during the Kayibanda regime. When this regime finally ended, he remembers he was happy and really believed in his successor Habyarimana could actually change the country. Eventually the situation did not change however. During the Habyarimana period the concept of ‘Hutu power’ did not diminish, and things just got worse instead. In his twenties Rutabana was imprisoned and charged because of his political thoughts and activities. When he left prison he ‘walked into the bush’ to join the the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a predominantly Tutsi army that was organized and trained in Uganda. He served 3 three years in the RPF. Throughout this period he was witness of many horrific crimes from all different sides. He could recall that the RPF, at multiple occasions, killed their own child soldiers who tried to escape in order to discourage anyone from following their example.

When finally the RPF rebels took over the power in Rwanda Rutabana again believed in a fresh start for his country, without the past discriminations and oppression. However, also this dream soon faded as soon as he realized the true intentions of the new regime. According to Rutabana the regime only serves its self-interest, not the interest of the people of Rwanda. Although the government is effectively developing the country economically, this development does not really improve the lives of the ordinary people. Also many human rights abuses are common practice, like the detention of homeless children within state prisons.

One of the most visible signs of the self-serving character of the current regime is the fact that it uses the horrors of the genocide in order to take the whole society hostage and even to blackmail the international community. Instead of burying the many victims of the genocide, their corpses are being exposed to the public in the national genocide memorial. Skulls are stacked on high piles and bring fear to every visitor. This is a very strange practice in relation to Rwandan culture or to any African culture for that matter. There is a widespread belief that the souls of people who are not buried after death can never find rest and will stay as spirits among the living to cause trouble. So instead of a genuine place of respect for the genocide victims this memorial is in the first place a most impertinent disgrace to these victims and their relatives. In the second place the same memorial functions as a sword of Damocles to all of the Hutu’s in the country, because it implicitly but clearly puts the blame on the entire Hutu population in general. In the third place the genocide memorial is used by the regime to put pressure on the international community, indirectly blaming them for not protecting the Tutsi’s during the genocide. The Rwandan regime is using the resulting feeling of guilt in the international community by playing the defenseless victim who needs protection, no matter what crimes it is committing itself.
After the war Rutabana immediately quit the army. Seeing the corruption and abuse of power of the new leaders, he decided to continue his struggle for true peace and democracy by making music. In his songs Ben often criticizes the current Government. This was the reason that he was convicted and put in prison in 2000.

Rutabana doesn’t believe that the real causes of war are to be found in the people themselves, not in their ethnicity or tribal culture. Tutsi’s and Hutu’s aren’t each others arch-enemies. The fact that tensions between them escalated are to be found mainly in external influences, starting from the Belgian colonial times. Myths are being told about each others cultures and identities, in order to make each group afraid of the other.

However these stories are untrue. It is clear by now that the current government is predominantly Tutsi, and Tutsi are also among its first victims. The government killed many of them along with Hutu diaspora intellectuals throughout the years who were seen as threat to the government. This has brought Ben to a conclusion: ‘Power has no race, the problems are political, people themselves are not the problem’. This, together with the fact that there is no space for correct historical analysis of the genocide, and the fact that young Hutus in schools are being forced to apologize for what some of their relatives did before they were even born, contributes to the instability of the country and its inability to completely heal from past wounds.
APPENDIX 4:
Full keynote speech by Filip Reyntjens

Filip Reyntjens is Professor of Law and Politics at the Institute of Development Policy and Management, of the University of Antwerp. Reyntjens focused on the following ‘root causes’ of the conflict in the Great Lakes Region:

a. Weakness of the Congolese State

The weaknesses of the Congolese State is largely visible in it weak performances in matters of sovereignty: the lack of a full army or police control over the areas within its own borders. This allows the creation of non-State militia and private interests, and the intrusion of foreign State arms, or rebel groups under foreign state control. This ends up further eroding the already reduced physical functions of the State.

b. Territorial extension of civil war

Territorial expansion of a civil war in one of the countries of the Great Lakes Region can easily undermine the stability of any of the surrounding States. Because of poorly controlled, porous border areas, civil wars can easily be exported. If the hosting State is already weak, as in the case of the overflowing of the Rwandan conflict into Congo, this could lead to its complete collapse, which is exactly what happened to DR Congo.

c. Shifting alliances

Reyntjens more deeply explores one aspect of the Great Lakes conflict which is often overlooked: the constantly shifting and very temporary alliances between a great range of nations and armed rebel groups all across central and eastern Africa. A friend of today can be your enemy tomorrow. Often reasoning according to the principle “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”, many ad hoc coalitions, battle plans and conspiracies are made. This state of affairs and dealings by elite groups within armies and politics by constantly introducing new dissent among people, further undermine Statehood and make any truly democratic reforms increasingly remote.

d. Profitability of war

More than in any other conflict, war in the Great Lakes region means business for many stakeholders involved. This military commercialization is also known as entrepreneurship of instability. One very enlightening example is recent research calculated that in 1999, the total value added of diamond, gold and coltan plundered by Rwanda in the DRC, amounted to 6.1% of Rwanda’s GDP and to 146% of its official military expenditure. Many other businesses would be jealous at such a high rate return on investment. This all clearly shows the profitability of war in the Great Lakes region. As long as war creates so much wealth for those responsible, atrocities, massacres and plunder will most likely continue in the region and it will be really hard to stop it.

e. Local and cross-borders dynamics

Another point Filip exposes are the dynamics that constantly new fluxes of rebels and refugees create. Whenever large groups of refugees arrive somewhere, this often undermines local traditional leadership and authority patterns, creates problems of land-use and ignites new, local conflicts.
f. Impunity

The last point Reyntjens treated was about impunity. This problem is widespread in the Great Lakes Region as hardly anyone responsible for either State crimes, mass killings or non-state violence is ever brought to justice. No one on power in either of the four countries, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi or Congo has a genuine interest in persecuting war criminals, as any research might lead to the discovery of events or interests in which they themselves were involved. Many people accused of grave human rights violations and even massacres hold high positions in government.
Dirk-Jan Koch started his presentation with asking the audience who thinks that natural resources are the main source of conflict in DR Congo. Half of the audience raised their hand. Then he showed a short video of his time working in Kinshasa, both at the Dutch embassy and as a teacher at a university.

Koch showed data about natural resources, based on graphics from The International Peace Information Service (IPIS) (http://ipisresearch.be/). IPIS is a Belgian independent research institute providing tailored information, analysis and capacity enhancement to support those actors who want to realize a vision of durable peace, sustainable development and the fulfilment of human rights.

An overwhelming part of the gold mines are regulated by armed groups, both the Congolese army and foreign armed groups. In 2010, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, signed the Lusaka Declaration, declaring to fight illegal exploitation together. Also the United States of America have made efforts to reduce trade of conflict minerals, for instance the US Dodd Frank Act, Section 1502. Internationally, the conflict free Tin initiative was raised from 2012 to 2014. This program took care that the bags of minerals were sealed and included a digital fingerprint, in order to trace them so companies could be sure that there minerals were made in conflict-free mines.

The European Union is considering whether they should also take steps for minimizing illegal trade but until now the EU has no legislation.

For coltan and tin the digital fingerprints work well, partly because it is easy to indicate from the material itself where it is coming from. For gold this is much more difficult. This is even more problematic, since from all mines, gold mines produce the largest income in DR Congo. The latest report from IPIS, from October 2013, shows that “Out of an estimated 221,500 artisanal miners active in the mining sites visited in the framework of this research (1088 in total), 1350 were digging for tungsten ( wolframite), more than 7000 for tantalum (coltan), about 32,000 for tin (cassiterite) and no less than 176,000 for gold.” 98% of the gold is smuggled out of the country, this is between 8000 and 12000 kg.

Someone from the audience remarks that not only the resources itself are problematic, but also the illegal use of water and wood. Dirk-Jan Koch acknowledged this, but explains his focus on minerals because of the international trade and the associated international responsibility.

Koch ends his presentation by stating some final conclusions:

- State building is essential for stability
- Work towards a fair and effective tax system
- We need more policy relevant research

APPENDIX 5:
Full keynote speech by Dirk-Jan Koch

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- State building is essential for stability
- Work towards a fair and effective tax system
- We need more policy relevant research
Congo is an enormous country, so I will focus on the local conflict in Ituri. This conflict from 1998 to 2001 was intercommunity related between Hema and Lendu. There are still 150,000 internally displaced persons who can’t go back to their home village. These land problems and the mistrust are two of the biggest problems, people did not yet deal with the history. This has many times jeopardize the peace building process.

This conflict took place in a context where the government did not enjoy a high rate of legitimacy. The chiefs of the different communities had a triple loyalty; towards their family, to the people in his region and to the state. This loyalty issue is a problem up till now, for example for the courts who are dealing with the land properties. Results from a questionnaire showed that local women graded the work of the official courts with a 1,5 and the local court with a 6,5. State officials judged the official court as a 5,5 and the local courts with a 7.5 (both 1 out of 10). These results show us that people do not have much faith in the authorities to help them.

Ituri is an rural area and because of the conflict populations and social structures have much changed. The toll that this problem is taking on the livelihood is tremendous. The problem with land rights has many times jeopardize the peace building process to bring people closer together. Because the law did not change since the time of Mobutu and there is no juridical framework. The whole situation makes new elections also problematic, because you have to define the area and you have to know the people living in it. Both criteria are still uncertain.

The conflict and the complexes of superiority and inferiority of communities have resulted in a fragmented society, which makes it hard to mobilize for change. From a civil perspective I have a few suggestions for a better future:

- Intervention on local life. Bring people together to build on a stronger civil society, so civil society can gain legitimacy. In my opinion, civil society is the greatest hope for DR Congo.

- Security issues. Safety and stability is crucial for peace. The army and police should cooperate as a strong coalition against (foreign) rebel groups. Chiefs and other local actors should give priority to safety issues too.

- Solving land problems. As I said before there is currently no actor who has both legality as legitimacy and there is no legal framework. This has to change in order to bring justice and to gain a fundament for sustainable peace.

- Stronger state. The government needs to reform itself. Also, the international community has to keep advocating for good governance, to make DR Congo a stronger and better state.

APPENDIX 6:
Full keynote speech by Joost van Puijenbroek
Opportunities for sustainable peace in the Great Lakes Region. Overview of initiatives for peace and outline of new methods to be implemented in the region.

a. Introduction

The attention of my intervention today is to look for some of possible areas of socio-economic areas that can be reinforced under cooperation between Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for sustainable peace. It has been revealed that although different conflicts that have characterized these countries, there are yet rich opportunities that can jointly be utilized towards sustainable peace and development of the region.

I will try to show that, for any sustainable peace initiative, there is a well-recognized need for peace makers or “peace holders” to play rightly their roles to allowing potential peace makers to commit their intelligence and their capitals to investment in the region. Among these include the role of local leaders and local population (followers), the International Community, the civil society and the media.

Finally, I will conclude my reflection with hope that once initiatives are taken in preventing conflicts and its related consequences, peace agents are likely to significantly play their roles towards sustainable harmony in the region.

b. The Great Lakes Region

As you know, the Great Lakes Region consists of countries in east and central Africa, forming a complex network of political and economic interactions with implications for peace issues, security and governance. Today, the term refers to a region with multiple conflicts and common fundamental problems that emanate from post-colonial challenges to state- and nation-building.

The focus on regional approaches has often ignored the power of building relationships and involving local actors to address the root causes of conflict. Similarly, a regional approach inclines to overlook issues that are unique to individual countries yet have an predominant influence in the region.

Although international organizations and governments are active in peace initiatives in the Great Lakes region, issues of governance, land ownership, ethnicity, and reconciliation after genocide, extreme poverty, and underrepresentation need to combine bottom-up methods and top-down approaches to peacebuilding.

c. The Great Lakes Region Conflict: Actors and Factors

A regional conflict is not limited to particular geographic or political entities. It involves social networks of armed rebel groups that may be connected by common economic interests or ideologies that are region-wide and gather support from outsiders. In the Great Lakes region, Rwanda was in conflict in the early 1990s, but in the 2000s, the conflict has moved to the DRC, where fighting is ongoing; Uganda’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) is also believed to be operating in remote areas on the borders of Uganda and Congo.

While countries involved in the Great Lakes region partly differ in terms of their history, extent of war and levels of development, there are also some similarities that characterize the Great Lakes region. First, countries within the region have failed to establish inclusive political institutions:
This has resulted in unequal representation in decision making and access to resources. The specific situation in Burundi, where bad governance and instability have failed all rules, from a corrupted Magistrate to a lazy population.

Secondly, ethnicity is regionalized and manifested in political violence: The Rwandan genocide has increased cross-border ethnic affiliations between Rwanda, Burundi and Congo and regional ethnic based rebel groups.

Thirdly, the availability of mineral resources in the DRC causes enormous economic interests for neighboring countries who benefit from the illegal trade of minerals during civil wars. Similarly, massive displacements and massive human mobility-refugee flows across all borders also make the effects of the conflict spread within the neighboring countries.

In Burundi, while wars and other acts erupted in DRC and Rwanda, tensions between communities were so high that the country was also on the border of confrontation. In that country, behalf a short period in the years 70, the country was all time living in bad governance, corruption, fear of massacres because of hegemony of one ethnic group on the whole.

The Great Lakes conflict reflects the international nature of contemporary conflict, in which the consequences of conflict in one country affect neighboring countries through refugee flows and the regionalized rebel groups that operate within the conflicting zones. Research on peacekeeping and armed conflict indicate that when conflicts spread across borders, the effect of contagion can be so severe that it becomes difficult to consider each conflict in isolation. Many internal conflicts are not simply internal conflicts because some of their causes and effects normally transgress national borders.

In this regard, understanding and engaging the multiple actors, factors, and agencies is part of the wide range of approaches to creative long-term solutions. These actors are domestic, regional, and international, thus the conflict can be considered both internal and regionally internalized.

d. Regional Peacebuilding Efforts in the Great Lakes Region

Peacebuilding is a full variety of initiatives, strategies and activities that prevent, reduce and transform conflicts and develop institutions, attitudes and relationships that lead to a just and sustainable harmonious human environment. Peacebuilding activities do not only aim to end violence, but also create structures that contribute to a just and sustainable peace, resulting from healthy relationships.

Much attention has focused on a regional approach to peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region since the 1960s. This has been through three major approaches. First, regional conferences to enhance regional cooperation and peace with support of the UN-Special Representatives. Secondly, diplomatic missions by the UN, European Union (EU), established international development organizations, and donor agencies. Third, through UN peace keeping missions.

Regional and international organizations, mainly the African Union and the United Nations, have been on the front lines in responding to the cycle of conflict in the Great Lakes region. Regional peacekeeping strategies have included policy formulation by participating nations and heads of state meeting to support stability, control of small arms, refugee flows and economic development. Such strategies have been partly useful, especially after the 2004 Dar es Salaam meeting, in which heads of states committed to promote peace in the region.

e. Challenges of Regional Peacebuilding in the Great Lakes Region

Most failures of peace negotiations in the Great Lakes region have been attributed to a lack of political will and the existence of spoilers within the region. Spooers benefit economically and politically from continuous cycle of conflict and would do whatever it takes to keep the
conflict heated.

The peacebuilding approach has often taken a universal framework beginning with a ceasefire agreement, transitional governments, demilitarization, national security reform, repatriation of refugees and constitutional reform and electorally democratic process. This framework focuses on power sharing and political agreements with rebel groups, while ignoring the fundamental role of local actors, victims of war and civilians such as the women groups, youths, religious actors, local non-governmental organizations, and advocacy groups. Yet, such actors are instrumental in the peacebuilding process.

Similarly, political settlements and power sharing has proven inadequate to address historical injustices such as ethnic marginalization and land ownership for the returned refugees. In other words, representation in peace negotiations and peacebuilding after a conflict has often been left to politicians, the state and the rebel groups.

Peacebuilders have to address the root causes of the conflicts to guarantee sustainable peace. In the case of the Great Lakes region, peacebuilding approaches should also focus on the reparation for the victims and resettlements of the refugees and formulating and effecting land policies. Peacebuilding initiatives are likely to have a higher chance of success and/or long-term impact if a greater section of the civil society is included in the decision making process.

These approaches should be complementary to regional and international diplomatic initiatives that take care of the challenge of mineral resources management, poor governance, and land ownership — which form core objection in the Great Lakes region conflict. Strengthening the legal and political process to better address issues of refugees and democratic electoral participation are essential in strengthening long-term peace.

f. Summary, Recommendations, and Conclusion

In this presentation, I identified three main challenges facing regional peacebuilding in the Great Lakes region. These are:

- Inadequate participation of local actors and civil society in the peace process
- Failure to address historical injustices, issues of land and negative ethnicity
- Lack of commitment to the implementation of peace agreements and institutional reforms

The Rwandan Arusha Peace Accord of August 1993 is one example of a failed peace agreement. The aim of the accord was to end the war between the Tutsi led Rwandan Patriotic Front and the Hutu led regime. This Accord had proposed reparation of Tutsi refugees, and an increase their participation in government. However, a majority of the Hutu elites in the government were reluctant to implement the Arusha Peace Accord that later contributed to the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Similarly, the Lusaka Peace Accord of 1999 was only a ceasefire agreement without a peace agreement, thus it did not stop the violence nor result in lasting peace.

I think and suggest that creating conditions for lasting peace in the Great Lakes region will emanate from the following four key recommendations:

- Involving the civil society and local interest groups in the conflict transformation processes
- Addressing the origin causes of the conflict, mainly issues of land, historical injustices, and resettlement of refugees
- Strengthening legal and political institutions to enhance good governance
- Focus on healing and reconciliation to restore harmonious relationships within the communities.

Peacebuilding approaches in the Great Lakes region has focused more on regional cooperation and integration⁹.

Given the existing fissure between the top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding approaches in the Great Lakes regions, we advocate for a comprehensive peacebuilding approach that synthesizes both peacebuilding, at the policy level involving governments, and grass roots initiatives to address historical injustices and other consequences of the civil war in the Great Lakes region.

The above initiatives can address hostility, insecurity and increase fair political transitions, resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees, reparation for victims of civil war, and focus on trauma, healing and reconciliation resulting in healthy relationships and a just peace.

⁹ http://www.beyondintractability.org/casestudy/sikeni-great-lakes - fn32