

Democratic Republic of Congo: Road to Political Transition

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Demographics

With a total land area of 2 344 885 square kilometres that straddles the equator, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the third largest country in Africa after Sudan and Algeria. It is situated right at the heart of the African continent. It shares borders by nine countries, namely Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Its population is estimated at 60 millions inhabitants and is made up of as many as 250 ethno-linguistic groups. The whole country is drained by the Congo River and its many tributaries. The second longest river in Africa and fifth longest in the world, the Congo River is second in the world after the Amazon with regard to hydroelectric potential.

Brief Historical Background

Established as a Belgian colony in 1908, the DRC was initially known as the 'Congo Free State' when it was formally attributed to King Leopold II at the Berlin Conference of 1885. In fact, in 1879 King Leopold II of Belgium commissioned Henry Morton Stanley to establish his authority over the Congo basin in order to control strategic trade routes to the West and Central Africa along the Congo River. Stanley did so by getting over 400 local chiefs to sign "treaties" transferring land ownership to the *Association Internationale du Congo* (AIC), a trust company belonging to Leopold II. On 30 April 1885 the King signed a decree creating the 'Congo Free State', thus establishing firm control over the enormous territory. In 1907, Leopold II transferred the Congo Free State to the Belgian Government for failing to settle the debt that the King owed Belgium. The administration of what was regarded as a private property of Leopold II shifted to the Belgian Government, which renamed the country 'Belgian Congo'.

Following a series of mass revolts and political unrests, which began in the late 1950s, the Congo gained its independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960. It is established that the decolonisation movement in the Belgian Congo took place hurriedly and with improvisation, following uprisings launched in Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, in January 1959. The history of the independent Congo can be subdivided into three main phases: the 'First Republic' (1960-1965), the 'Second Republic' or Mobutu's regime (1965-1990), and finally the Transition to Democracy (1990 to date). It is to a sketchy discussion of the political developments in these three phases that the next section now turns.

Political Developments in the DRC: 1960 to date

The 'First Republic' (June 1960 – November 1965)

As a result of the mounting internal pressure, the colonial authorities met with Congolese political leaders in Brussels in the late 1959 and early 1960 to discuss the decolonisation process for the

Congo. The Brussels Round-Table agreed, among other things, on the independence date and the fundamental features of the provisional Constitution of a sovereign Congo.

The provisional Constitution, commonly known as the *Loi Fondamentale*, was adopted on 19 May 1960 by the Belgian Parliament. As elsewhere in Africa this Constitution mirrored the constitutional monarchy of Belgium and provided for a unitary state system for post-colonial Congo. Under the said constitution the Congo would have six provinces, each with its own legislature and Government.

The *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC) of Patrice Emery Lumumba and a coalition of radical nationalist parties, including the *Parti Solidaire Africain* (PSA) and the *Centre de Regroupement Africain* (CEREA), won the majority of parliamentary seats in the pre-independence elections of 22 May 1960. As a result, Lumumba became Prime Minister and Head of the Government, while Joseph Kasa-Vubu, the leader of the *Alliance des Bakongo* (ABAKO), became the Head of State.

But within the 12 months of the proclamation of independence, the new sovereign State was destabilised and went through a catastrophic period marred by political and social instability. What became commonly known as the 'Congo Crisis' of 1960-1965 was a period of political instability and civil war that began with the mutiny of the armed forces on 5 July 1960 and ended with the military coup of 24 November 1965, led by the then Commander-in-Chief of the national army, Lieutenant General Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. It included, among other major events, the Katanga and South Kasai secession attempts in 1960, Lumumba's assassination in January 1961, chaotic rebellions, as well as the subsequent deployment of the United Nations peacekeeping force to restore order.

A series of negotiations between politicians to restore political stability and peace culminated into the drawing of a new Constitution, commonly known as the Constitution de Luluabourg or the 1964 Constitution, which was approved by a Referendum that took place from 25 June to 10 July 1964. The new Constitution established a federalist structure and a presidential system. The number of provinces was increased from six to 21. The Luluabourg Constitution made provision for the automatic dissolution of the parliament upon its promulgation. The only remaining central authority would be the President of the Republic who would appoint a transitional government. The new government would have the main task of organising general elections within a period of six to nine months following the promulgation of the Constitution.

The 1965 parliamentary elections took place from 18 March to 30 April 1965, moving from one constituency to another. The constituencies coincided with the boundaries of the six provinces plus the capital city Leopoldville, later renamed Kinshasa. Elections started in Eastern Katanga province and ended in the Oriental Province. Initially planned for six weeks, the elections lasted eight weeks because of logistical problems. The elections were won by the then Prime Minister Moïse Tshombe, whose party *Convention Nationale des Congolais* (CONACO) won 122 of the 167 seats of the National Assembly. The controversy around the appointment of a Prime Minister led to a power struggle between President Kasa-Vubu and Tshombe. This prompted Mobutu to take over the political control and self-declared president of the country on 24 November 1965.

The 'Second Republic' (November 1965 – April 1990)

The Mobutu regime was both a military dictatorship and a system of absolute power and personal rule. On 20 May 1967 Mobutu founded the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR), a party

of which all Congolese citizens were automatically members. In June 1967 a new Constitution was prepared by a commission appointed by Mobutu and approved by Referendum. The 1967 established a unitary state, a presidential system and a one-chamber legislature. Initially called National Assembly, the legislature was later renamed Legislative Council, with substantially reduced powers. In addition, the 1967 Constitution limited the number of legally authorised political parties to a maximum of two and introduced female suffrage. Political pluralism was abolished and subsequently replaced with a mono-party regime (which increasingly degenerated into a one-person regime), characterised by a patronage politics, kleptocracy and political repression.

Mobutu quickly centralised power into his own hands and was elected unopposed in presidential elections in October-November 1970 for a seven-year term. Legislative elections took place on 14 and 15 November 1970 for a five-year term. Candidates were selected by the Political Bureau of the MPR and presented to the electorate on a single list. In 1971 Mobutu renamed the country Zaire. By 1975, however the parliament had lost any influence over policy-making. Its new function became that of merely endorsing the decisions of the MPR Political Bureau. This role was confirmed by the 1974 constitutional revision, which provided for the supremacy of the party over the state. As a result, the electoral process was also modified. The November 1975 parliamentary elections took place in stadiums and other public places, where MP candidates stood in front of an unregistered electorate and became elected for a five-year term through a round of applause and standing ovation of those present.

Relative peace and political stability prevailed in Zaire until the launch in March 1977 of a series of invasions into the Katanga province by Angola-based rebels of the *Front National pour la Libération du Congo* (FNLC). The rebels were defeated and driven out after the military assistance by French and Moroccan troops with the logistical support of the United States of America. In the December 1977 presidential elections Mobutu was again elected unchallenged. It is worth mentioning that his re-election was preceded by anticipated parliamentary elections, in which the secrecy of the ballot was restored. Both the 1982 parliamentary elections and the 1984 presidential elections were a remake of previous electoral processes. The last parliamentary elections under the party-state system took place in September 1987.

The extreme kleptocracy and repression of the Zairian state as from the 1980s, combined with the acute economic crisis, inevitably led to the paralysis of the administration and the complete disorganisation of the army. In fact, Zaire as a state had practically disappeared and the whole country was a hotbed of political, economic and social problems of its own. It was obvious that a dramatic deterioration had occurred in all sectors in the then-Zaire, in defiance to tremendous human potentialities, as well as natural resources, that the country has at its disposal. During this period, Mobutu continued to enforce his one-party-one-person system of rule. Although he was successful in maintaining absolute political authority, opposition parties, most notably the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social* (UDPS) of Etienne Tshisekedi, were also increasingly active. Mobutu's attempts to quell these groups drew significant international criticism and disapproval.

Besides, it is an historical fact that Mobutu was in essence a commodity of the Cold War politics given that he was helped and maintained into power by the West simply because he was considered as an effective Western ally in sub-Saharan Africa. This was a critical geo-political calculation of the West in its ideological tug-of-war with the then socialistic USSR and its allies of the time. It worth remembering that the Cold War and its global ideological bi-polarity that marked global politics since 1945 came to dramatic end with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1990. Predictably,

since the communist menace disappeared from the international scene as a consequence of the *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*, Mobutu's autocratic and oppressive regime was increasingly challenged at home and abroad in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In fact, with the end of the Cold War, Western powers were no longer eager to continue on supporting Mobutu. This prompted the emergence of the internal opposition, which became gradually more vocal in its demand for more political rights and the democratisation of the State apparatus. These actions culminated in the announcement by Mobutu in April 1990 of dramatic reforms towards democratisation.

The Transition to Democracy (April 1990 – May 1997)

The Second Republic formally ended on 24 April 1990 with the demise of the mono-party state and the beginning of the transition to multiparty democracy. In fact, with the end of the Cold War, internal and external pressures on Mobutu increased. By late 1989, Mobutu was so besieged by international criticism of his regime's human rights records and internal pressures for democratic change that he decided to launch 'popular consultations' on the country's future. In the face of overwhelming popular pressures for political transformation, Mobutu finally conceded to end the one-party system of government and re-introduced multi-party democracy.

However the single-handed approach used by Mobutu to control and delay the democratic transition compelled the opposition and civil society to claim the holding of a Sovereign National Conference (CNS) through which all parties could have the opportunity to express themselves and decide on the transition process towards democracy. Widely supported by the general public, the CNS opened on 7 August 1991, only to be disrupted in September as a result of looting and violence initiated by poorly paid soldiers. It resumed its work on 6 April 1992. The Congo's CNS holds the record of all national conferences organised in Africa, not only with regard to its duration, but also to the number of participants. In fact, a total of 2.842 delegates participated in the forum. The CNS provided for a two-year transition under a government led by a Prime Minister and responsible to a transitional parliament. Both Prime Minister and the transitional parliament had to be elected by the CNS. Mobutu would remain as Head of State. The conference elected Archbishop Laurent Monsengwo as the President of the transitional parliament, the High Council of the Republic, along with Etienne Tshisekedi, leader of the UDPS, as Prime Minister. Furthermore, the CNS laid down the fundamental principles of governance and adopted a provisional Constitution establishing the transitional political dispensation.

However Mobutu is reported to have managed to torpedo the whole process by unilaterally amending the Constitution and creating parallel institutions in order to control indefinitely the political power pending elections. The political situation following the end of the CNS was characterised by the formal bipolarisation of the political arena between the Mobutu's camp and the opposition. A single institutional framework was finally agreed upon during political negotiations held in September 1993. The middle ground was found with the merger of the two parliaments into the 'High Council of the Republic-Parliament of Transition' (HCR-PT), a single constitution, namely the Constitutional Act of the Transition promulgated on 9 April 1994, as well as the establishment of a Government led by Leon Kengo wa Dondo as Prime Minister.

Although presidential and legislative elections were scheduled over the whole transitional period, they never took place. The protracted transition placed the country's politics in a state of permanent crisis. This coincided with the crisis in the Great Lakes region that followed the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. By 1996, the civil war in neighbouring Rwanda had spilled over into Zaire.

Rwandan Hutu militia forces, commonly known as *Interahamwe*, who fled Rwanda were using Hutu refugee camps in the eastern Zaire as bases for incursions against Rwanda. In October 1996, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) troops entered Zaire, simultaneously with the formation of an armed coalition, the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), led by late Laurent-Desire Kabila.

The Laurent Kabila Regime (1997-2001)

Supported by Rwanda and Uganda, the AFDL began a military campaign aimed at ousting Mobutu by force. Following failed peace talks under the mediation of the former South African President Nelson Mandela, Mobutu fled the country. On 17 May 1997, as the AFDL took over Kinshasa and Kabila proclaimed himself President of the renamed Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

However, the authoritarian and repressive methods did not go away with Mobutu. In fact, shortly after taking office, on 28 May 1997, Kabila signed a decree which annulled the Transitional Act and bestowed on himself monopoly of executive, military and legislative powers until the adoption by a Constituent Assembly of a new constitution. Under the said decree, all political parties were banned.

At the same time, relations between Kabila and his foreign backers deteriorated. In July 1998, Kabila ordered all foreign troops to leave the DRC and the second insurgency broke out against this backdrop in early August 1998, with the formation of a rebel group called the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie* (RCD). The speedy progression of this Rwandan-backed rebellion towards Kinshasa was ultimately thwarted when troops from Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia intervened to rescue the Kabila Government.

In February 1999, Uganda backed the formation of a rebel group called the *Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo* (MLC), which drew the core of its support in Equator province, among soldiers loyal to the toppled President Mobutu. The MLC established control over the northern part of the DRC. At this stage, the DRC was partitioned *de facto* into three administrations, each resulting from military occupation and controlled namely by the main Government in Kinshasa, the RCD and the MLC.

Towards a Peaceful Settlement of the DRC Conflict

In an attempt to stop the civil war in the DRC and bring about sustainable peace in the Great Lakes region, both regional organisations and the international community undertook numerous mediation efforts. The United Nations (UN), the then Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) organised a series of meetings and consultations aimed at finding solutions to the DRC turmoil. However, the pivotal occasions in the attempt to resolve the DRC conflict emerged to be the Lusaka Summit and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue held at Sun City, in South Africa.

The Lusaka Cease-fire Agreement

After several weeks of laborious negotiations the leaders of all Congolese rebel groups and countries involved in the DRC conflict signed what came to be known the Lusaka Cease-fire

Agreement. The backbone of the agreement was essentially the call for the cessation of military confrontation, the withdrawal of foreign armed forces and the convening of a national meeting to assemble all the political Congolese stakeholders. The agreement also contained resolutions reaffirming the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC and all of the neighbouring countries and encouraging a partnership of its signatories in addressing the fundamental security concerns that underlie the Great Lakes crisis.

The Lusaka Agreement was signed by the Heads of State of the DRC, Republic of Congo, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe and the Defence Minister of Angola on 10 July 1999. It was subsequently signed by the Ugandan-backed MLC on 1st August 1999 and by 50 people representing factions of the Rwandan-sponsored RCD on 31st August 1999.

The diplomatic efforts made in Lusaka to bring to an end the DRC conflict were repeatedly overshadowed by diverse events including the split within the RCD and the deterioration of Rwanda-Uganda coalition. The turning point of this breakdown was the bloody clashes that broke between Ugandan and Rwandan troops in Kisangani in July 1999. However, with the pressure of the international community, all the belligerents definitely signed the agreement.

The Lusaka Agreement did not have a clear enforcement mechanism instead for its implementation it relied upon the good will and co-operation of the signatory parties. This fact has led to a lot of hurdles in the implementation of the accord. Progress was only to be recorded following the mysterious assassination of President Laurent Kabila in January 2001. His son, Joseph Kabila took over. Commentators believe that the death of President Kabila brought fresh hopes to the peace process and indeed paved the way for the deployment of the long anticipated UN peacekeeping force.

The Inter-Congolese Dialogue

Following his installation, Joseph Kabila endorsed the designation of Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana, as the neutral facilitator of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue and accepted the deployment of the UN military observer mission required to monitor the withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC.

The Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), as provided in the Chapter V of the Lusaka Cease-fire Agreement, was generally meant to work out a new political dispensation for a transitional government based on a power-sharing arrangement between belligerents and all other political forces. This arrangement would also lead to the holding of free, democratic and transparent elections in the DRC. Moreover, these negotiations were intended to secure an accord on substantive mechanisms for the formation of a new Congolese army that would integrate all the Congolese forces and fighting factions.

Hosted by South Africa, the ICD took place at Sun City, from the 25 February to the 19 April 2002, and brought together five components: the Kinshasa government, the two main rebel movements (the main faction of RCD based in Goma and the MLC), the non-armed opposition, and the civil society. Like the implementation of the Lusaka agreement, the Sun City process was repeatedly paralysed as a result of political disagreement on various issues. In fact the ICD was on the verge of collapse until parallel accords including that between DRC and Uganda and DRC and Rwanda eased the process.

It was, however, the Pretoria agreement that unlocked the talks in Sun City. Following protracted negotiations and intense international pressure, all major belligerent parties involved in the DRC conflict reconvened in Pretoria, South Africa, where they finally signed the 'Global and All-Inclusive Agreement on the Transition', on 17 December 2002. The Agreement was the roadmap for the DRC's transition to a stable, peaceful, and democratic state. The core provision of the agreement provides that political, military, and economic power shall be shared by the former belligerents, civil society, and the political opposition during a two-year transition period, with two possible 6-month extensions.

According to the agreement, the incumbent President Joseph Kabila would remain Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the DRC army, and would be assisted by 4 Vice-Presidents, each responsible for one of the four main Government commissions: the RCD-Goma would chair the Defence and Political Commission; the Economic and Finance Commission would be supervised by the MLC; a member of Kabila's Government would preside over the Reconstruction and Development Commission and the Social and Cultural Commission would be administered by a representative of the non-armed opposition. The signatories also agreed on the establishment of a transitional parliament, which would consist of a National Assembly and a Senate. Civil society would head the five independent institutions 'in support of democracy', including the independent electoral commission. The other four are The Human Rights National Observatory, The High Authority of Medias, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Commission for Ethics and Fight Against Corruption.

The signing of the Global and All-Inclusive Agreement and the settlement other outstanding issues, including the disarmament and integration of the armed factions into a united national army and security provisions for transitional government leaders paved the way for the final session of the ICD, held at Sun City on 1-2 April 2003, during which the Final Act of the ICD was signed, endorsing all agreements approved until then. This formally ended a nearly five-year civil war in the DRC that had directly or indirectly claimed the lives of more than three million people.

The Transitional Processes and Mechanisms

The two-year DRC transition process formally started on 30 June 2003 with the installation of the Transitional Government, which is a political compromise between the five main armed groups: the former government's army, *Forces Armées Congolaises* (FAC), the MLC, the RCD-Goma, the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-Mouvement de Libération* (RCD-ML), the *Rassemblement Congolais pour la Démocratie-National* (RCD-N), as well as Mai-Mai militias. Under the global agreement these groups are supposed to have formally converted themselves into political parties and they currently share power in Kinshasa with representatives from civil society and the non-armed opposition.

The main mandate of the transitional Government is to take the country to a democratic dispensation through competitive and genuine multiparty elections. According to the 2002 Pretoria Agreement and the Constitution of Transition, the former belligerents should hand over control of their armed factions to an integrated new national army, the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC).

With regard to the executive powers, the transitional arrangement establishes a political system largely known as 1+4. In terms of this system, the President Kabila is seconded by four Vice-

Presidents, each responsible for a particular commission. The four Vice-Presidents, as shown in Table 1, took the oath of office on 17 July 2003.

Table 1: Vice-Presidents and their portfolios

Vice Presidents	Commission
Jean-Pierre Bemba Ngombo (MLC)	Economic and Finance
Azarias Ruberwa Maniwa (RDC-Goma)	Politics, Defence and Security
Abdoulaye Yerodia Ndombasi (ex-Government)	Development and Reconstruction
Arthur Zahidi Ngoma (Non-armed opposition)	Social and Cultural

Source: Claude Kabemba, *Perspectives on the Role of Key Stakeholders in the DRC's Political Transition*, EISA Occasional Paper N° 26, November 2004

The Government comprises a total of 36 cabinet ministers, supported by 25 deputy ministers, with departmental portfolios allocated according to the relevant provisions of the ICD Final Act. The ex-Government heads the ministries of the interior, decentralisation and security, finance, energy and industry, while the RCD-Goma has the defence, demobilisation and war veterans, economy, parastatal companies and telecommunications ministries. The MLC leads foreign affairs and international cooperation, planning and budget.

Ministers and Vice-Ministers from the eight components and entities of the ICD and were chosen under the auspices of the Follow-up Commission, which was established on 14 April 2003 to address outstanding issues necessary for the installation of the Transitional Government. It is worth outlining that two major political parties, namely the UDPS and the Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU), are not represented in the Transitional Government as they did not agree with the other members of the non-armed opposition on the process of nominating opposition's representatives to the Transitional Government.

Below is the number of posts assigned to each of the signatories of the 2002 Pretoria Agreement:

- Ex-Government : 7 Ministers and 4 Vice-Ministers
- Non-armed Opposition : 7 Ministers and 4 Vice-Ministers
- Civil Society : 2 Ministers and 3 Vice-Ministers
- RCD-Goma : 7 Ministers and 4 Vice-Ministers
- MLC : 7 Ministers and 4 Vice-Ministers
- RCD-National : 2 Ministers and 2 Vice-Ministers
- RDC-ML : 2 Ministers and 2 Vice-Ministers
- Mai-Mai : 2 Ministers and 2 Vice-Ministers

Legislative powers are vested in the Transitional Parliament, which was inaugurated in Kinshasa on 22 August 2002 and consists of the 500-seat National Assembly and the 120-seat Senate. The National Assembly and the Senate are respectively led by Olivier Kamitatu (MLC) and Archbishop Pierre Marini Bodho (Civil Society). Seats in these Chambers were allocated according to a quota agreed upon by all signatories of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, as encompassed in Table 2.

Table 2: Allocation of Seats in the Transitional Parliament

Components and Entities	National Assembly	Senate
Ex-Government	94	22
Non-armed Opposition	94	22
Civil Society	94	22
RCD-Goma	94	22
MLC	94	22
RCD-National	5	2
RDC-ML	15	4
Mai-Mai	10	4
Total seats	500	120

Source: Claude Kabemba, *Perspectives on the Role of Key Stakeholders in the DRC's Political Transition*, EISA Occasional Paper N° 26, November 2004

According to the Peace Accord, the transition in the DRC was initially due to be completed by 30 June 2005. Article 196 of the transitional Constitution allows for an extension on recommendations of the Independent Electoral Commission and a joint decision of the transitional Parliament.

On 28 April 2005, the chairperson of the CEI submitted to both chambers of Parliament the technical report on the progress of the electoral process in the DRC and officially requested the extension of the transition. On 17 June 2005, both the National Assembly and the Senate approved the CEI's request and extended the transition period. It is now due to end by 30 June 2006. The resulting electoral schedule allowed the CEI to call for the constitutional referendum on 18 December 2005. The referendum will be followed by legislative and presidential elections before the end of June 2006.

A referendum was successfully conducted in December 2005 in the DRC and was an opportunity for the Congolese to vote for the approval or rejection of a post-transition Constitution. The constitutional referendum constituted the very first genuine democratic poll held in the last four decades. In fact, the country did not have the opportunity to hold multi-party elections since 1965.

According to figures released by the CEI, a total of 15 698 451 out of the 25 021 703 registered voters participated in the DRC Referendum, representing a turnout of 62.74%. The final results of the December 2005 Referendum indicate that people of the DRC have endorsed the new Constitution, laying thus the foundation for genuine and democratic elections since independence in June 1960. According to the results released on by the CEI, a total of 12 461 001 Congolese out of 15 505 810 who effectively took part in the poll voted in favour of the post-transition Constitution, representing 84.31 percent, while the 'NO' vote was estimated at 2 319 074 ballots (15.69%). The results also show that there were some 725 735 spoiled ballot papers. It is evident that an overwhelming number of voters approved the post-transition constitution, was subsequently promulgated on 18 February 2006.

The DRC Referendum was a momentous step towards the effective organisation of elections in the country. Its successful conduct has marked a significant turning point in the history of the country and represented a golden opportunity for the Congolese people to choose democratically their system of governance in over 40 years. It has also given the CEI and all other electoral stakeholders the possibility to test their capacity and improve their ability to ensure greater success in the forthcoming general elections. It is hoped that the current electoral process could lead to an era of sustained peace and the restoration of democracy in the DRC.

The DRC has embarked on an irreversible transitional process. Much progress has been made but there are many challenges and obstacles. In fact, concerns are constantly expressed about:

- The pace of integration of the armed forces in the DRC;
- The failure to address some root causes of the turmoil and political instability;
- The lack of adequate communication between the government and the Congolese people regarding the transitional process and the preparations for general elections;
- The extension of the transition beyond the deadline agreed upon at the ICD;
- The exclusion of some political parties, such as UDPS, which could pose major threats to the outcome of the long-awaited elections.

***The author prepared this paper for an Internal Discussion Forum of the Department of Research, Publications and Information at the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA).**