

EurAc Communiqué

The European Union must take a stronger position to end the post-electoral paralysis in the DRC

Brussels 2 February 2012

On the strength of its observation of the presidential and legislative elections on 28 November 2011 in cooperation with Congolese civil society organisations, members of AETA (whose communiqué we support and which is attached), and subsequent communiqués (28 November, 1 and 19 December) the European network for Central Africa (EurAc) expresses its grave concern regarding the course of the electoral process. The resulting political crisis undermines the institutional stability of the country, could lead to violence and give ammunition to those seeking to create disorder. The fact that in some provinces and some polling stations the election ran smoothly and respected the will of the Congolese people, who voted enthusiastically, is not enough to weaken the general perception that the process was far from confidence inspiring.

The Congolese elections have created a weak president who suffers from a serious crisis of legitimacy and who in the current situation is incapable of responding to the important challenges facing the DRC - maintaining order and security; or development.

EurAc welcomed with great satisfaction the nomination of Ambassador Koen Vervaeke as coordinator for the Great Lakes region as part of the EU External Action Service. We are confident that his considerable experience in the region and his qualities and qualifications will enable him to direct European action in the region in the best possible way. EurAc hopes that, working on a region which has not succeeded in definitively ending conflict, Ambassador Vervaeke will be able to harmonise the various European approaches. This seems to us the only way to create policy with the coherence needed to make positive advances in field such as: the struggle against impunity, the reform of the security sector, the struggle against sexual violence, democratisation and the illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Considering the present situation the European Union and its member states should adopt a strong and coherent position, expressed in the framework of multilateral solidarity. The EU should contribute to the search for a solution to the paralysis in the DRC so as to avoid an epilogue in which the country descends into a crisis of violence and instability which could have extremely damaging consequences for the people.

The European Union should therefore take a strong line to:

- Prevent a return to divisions between communities in the country and violence against the population;
- Contribute to the strengthening of dialogue between Congolese political actors - including at the same time the involvement of civil society - and encourage them to find an agreed and realistic solution to this post-electoral crisis;
- Ensure that the voice of the silent majority is taken into account in the course of whatever arrangements are made, in order to rebuild the confidence which has broken down between the Congolese people and the institutions which are meant to represent them;
- Press for the as yet unfinished electoral process to be conducted in such a way that it can be evaluated and lessons learned from the process as it has been conducted up to now. A basic need is to recreate a credible and legitimate Independent National Electoral Commission and to adopt an electoral law capable of ensuring the respect of democratic principles and the active participation of all political and social actors in the holding of provincial and local elections;
- Press for the electoral process to end with the holding of provincial and local elections and the setting up of an effective process of decentralisation which is the only guarantee of real participation by the grass roots in the political life of the country and in its democratisation.
- Commit to supporting civic education which is the only way to enable the democratisation process to be owned by the people; and commit to protect the people from vote rigging which led to violence during the last elections. The stakes are high as there is the serious risk of a politico-military elite taking the process over and destroying respect for the principles of democracy and justice for which Congolese civil society has long struggled.
- Take a position on the electoral process and the results of the presidential vote which is strong, coherent and shared by all member states. Take advantage of the programming by the European Development Fund (EDF) planned for 2012 to identify a common political strategy which takes into account the importance of the DRC in the region.

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is the European Network of Active NGOs in Central Africa. EurAC is made up of 49 member-organisations from 13 European countries.