

To prevent the Pretoria agreement from collapsing altogether, the Kinshasa government, at the end of January, sent a delegation to the United States led by chief negotiator Kam-erhe and Information Minister Kikaya bin Karubi (see *Interview*), to ask the U.S. government to step in and save the deal. While it is a realistic assessment that Washington holds the key to Congo's future, it is a miscalculation on the part of Kabila's government to hope that Washington would rein in the two war-Presidents of the Great Lakes region, Museveni and Kagame.

After all, the game for Congo still is, who controls the access to the raw materials. And attention has shifted from the Shaba and Kasai provinces, which were looted by the Belgian colonialists and during Mobutu's time, to the eastern part of the country, especially the Kivu provinces, which up until the mid 1990s were left relatively untouched. They contain enormous wealth of gold, timber, diamonds, and, most importantly, coltan. Coltan has emerged as a key strategic mineral because it is used in all electronic capacitors in mobile phones, for civilian and military usage.

Since 1998, Uganda and Rwanda have both developed a system by which they loot eastern Congo, either directly through forced labor and their respective military, or indirectly through so-called rebel movements and local warlords. Uganda's capital Kampala and Rwanda's capital Kigali have become the centers for transfer of the loot from eastern Congo to the world market. This arrangement has been blessed by the Anglo-American powers, and there is no sign that Washington and London would change it, unless a future Kinshasa government would guarantee the same outcome. Forcing Kabila into accepting the deal with Uganda's and Rwanda's proxies is supposed to accomplish just that. But this will not achieve peace and stability for the Congo. Because as the Congolese in the eastern part of their country know very well, peace will only come if Kampala and Kigali are forced to accept it.

Interview: Kikaya bin Karubi

Can New Treaties Lead To Peace in Congo?

Kikaya bin Karubi is the Minister of Information of the Democratic Republic of Congo. He was interviewed by Lawrence K. Freeman on Jan. 19 in Washington, D.C.

EIR: At the end of 2002, a lot of meetings were held in South Africa, and agreements were signed to try to bring an end

to the war in the Congo, bring some stability, and set up procedures for a transitional government made up of *all* the opposing political forces in the country. Could you give us a report on what kind of agreements were signed, and what are the prospects for peace and tranquillity in the Congo?

Kikaya: What happened was that we signed, in Pretoria, [South Africa], with Rwanda, what we call the Pretoria Agreement. And in Luanda, Angola, we signed another agreement with Uganda. With these two agreements, the external reasons for the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R.C.), as described in the Lusaka [Zambia] cease-fire agreement, disappears; because these two documents cater to the preoccupations of these two countries—Rwanda and Uganda—because the security concerns that they said were the reasons for the war, will no longer exist. And secondly, for the D.R.C., its national sovereignty and territorial integrity will be accomplished, because there will be no more war. So with these two agreements, the external reasons for the war disappear.

And then, in December, we signed an agreement with all the warring parties in the Democratic Republic of Congo; and we called that agreement "the all-inclusive and global agreement." And that agreement says that we will have an inclusive transitional government that will be in charge of the organization of free and fair elections within two years. So that the people can decide on who their leaders must be.

EIR: You say that all the parties have signed this agreement. That would mean the RDC-Goma [backed by Rwanda], the MLC [backed by Uganda], and other parties in the Congo. Are they all now following the agreements? Or are there still pockets of fighting and resistance to these agreements in the Congo?

Kikaya: Well, they all signed the agreement. But the paradox is that we observe an increase in hostilities in eastern parts of the D.R.C. As a matter of fact, after we signed the Luanda Agreement with Uganda, Uganda created a new rebellion: the UPC, Union des Patriotes Congolaise—the Union of Congolese Patriots, as it is called. This is another rebellion that was created by Uganda. And given the fact that that new rebellion is signatory to none of the agreements that I mentioned earlier, they continue fighting in the Ituri Province.

The truth of the matter is that in the Ituri Province, several generals in the Ugandan Army profit from the chaos there—to exploit gold, coltan, and also timber and coffee. So they are not interested in seeing peace prevail in the Ituri Province. That's why they have created a new rebellion. That way they can continue their activities of looting the national resources of the Congo.

And also in Uvira, and in the area of Fizi/Baraka, we also observe some fighting going on there. But there again, it's also a matter of Rwanda this time, profiting from the chaos, and exploiting coltan, and all the natural resources that you find in those areas.

That's why we came to Washington, D.C. and to New York, to ask international players to put pressure on Uganda and Rwanda, and make them understand that the time has come for peace. Congolese from all walks of life have signed an agreement; it is time that they stop their activities of looting the natural resources of the Congo, and give peace a chance in the area.

EIR: Have the governments of Uganda—in particular, President [Yoweri] Museveni—and Rwanda's President [Paul] Kagame responded to these charges by the D.R.C.? What have people in the UN and in Washington—I assume the United States government—had to say about helping you put down these rebellions?

Kikaya: Well, the people in Washington, and at the United Nations, are very supportive of the agreements. They want to see these agreements implemented as soon as possible. The problem is, as we said, they must convince President Museveni of Uganda and Paul Kagame of Rwanda that there is a time for peace and a time for war; the time for war is long past; now it is time for peace. They must abide by and respect the agreements that they signed.

EIR: Has Washington agreed to put pressure on Kagame and Museveni to bring them into line with the peace agreements?

Kikaya: That's what they tell us. People in Washington and in New York told us that they will talk to these two Presidents, to persuade and convince them to stop their war activities in the Great Lakes region.

EIR: Could you tell us what the procedure, timetable is for the transitional government? My understanding is that under it, President [Joseph] Kabila will remain President; there will be numerous vice presidents; there will be sharing of cabinet positions; and there will be election in the future. What does the future process hold? And tell us if, in fact, the continued fighting will prevent this from going forward.

Kikaya: Well, there are two activities that must happen before the new government is put in place. First, we must meet to draft a new transitional constitution, to give that legal backing to the new government. A draft constitution exists already. Every party has given its draft constitution to the UN mediator, Mr. Mustafa Niasse; and he has come with one, harmonized draft constitution. We are studying it. Once that's accepted by everybody, the second activity will be for the army officers from all factions to meet, and work on the integration of one national republican army. So these two activities must be held before the government is put into place.

We think—from the government's point of view—that that can be done between now and early March. We have called on Sir Ketumile Masire, who is the facilitator for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, to call that plenary session of the Dialogue that will ratify, not only the all-inclusive and global

agreement, but will also adopt the draft constitution. And at the same time, we are calling for that meeting of army officers, to harmonize and work on the integration of all combatant forces, into one republican army. That can be done between now and early March.

EIR: The plans are, as I understand them, that the composition of the government will be made up of the main opposition groups and the Kabila government—this will become the new government. Can you tell us about that? And also: In the current phase, it is President Kabila's that is the current and legitimate government of the Congo until any further decisions are made—is that not correct?

Kikaya: That is correct. President Kabila remains President of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The new transitional government will have four vice presidents. One from the MLC of Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba; one from the RCD-Goma; one from the political opposition; and one from the government itself. So we are going to have a President assisted by four vice presidents; and all rebellions will be allocated 11 ministerial posts.

So we are going to have a government of almost 50 ministers, so that every single party is represented in that government. That's why we call it an all-inclusive agreement. Eleven posts per belligerent; and one vice president for each major belligerent party.

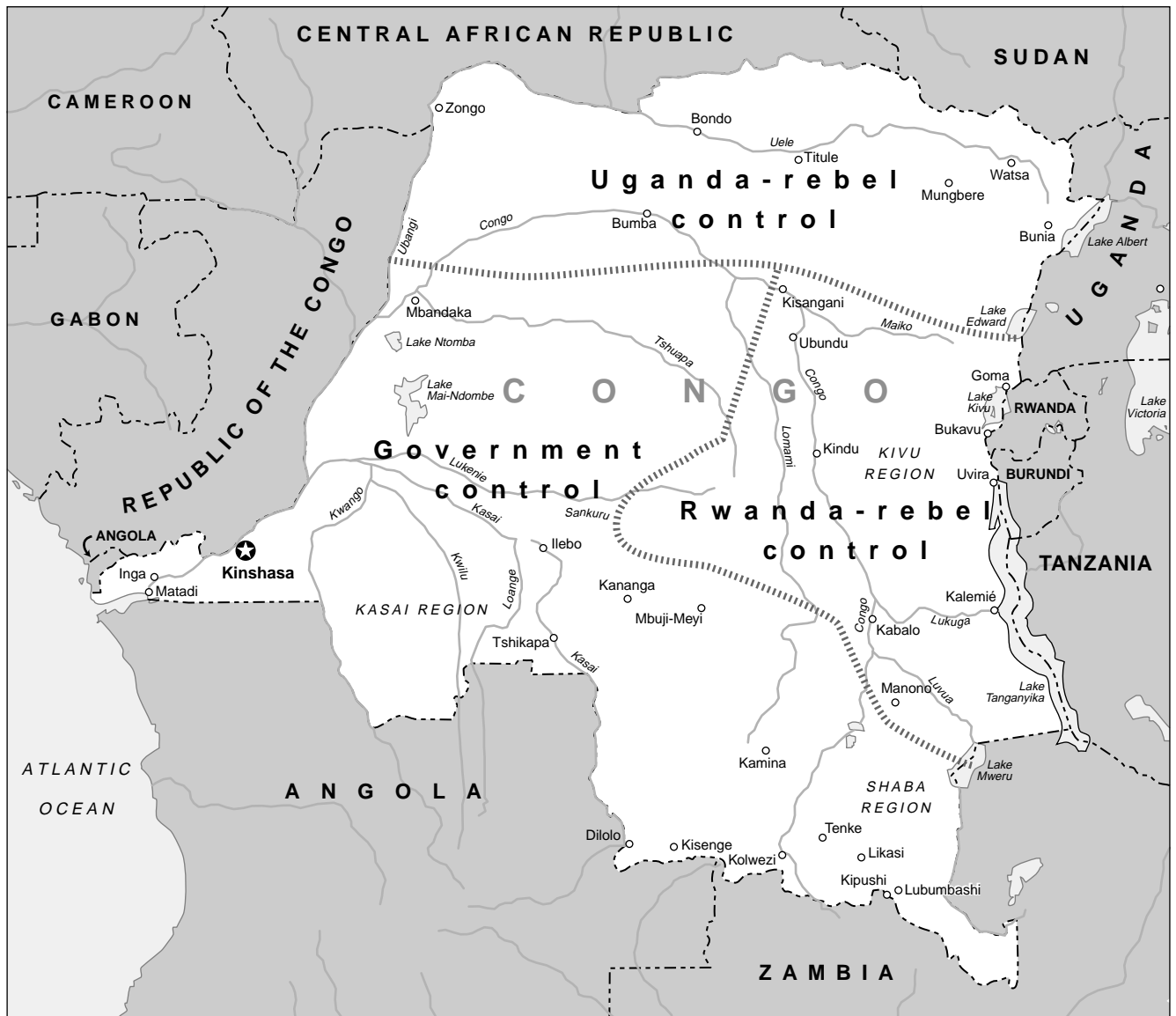
EIR: Conditions in the Democratic Republic of Congo, during the wars and now following the so-called peace, have been very, very poor. Parts of the population are suffering greatly. We got one report that upwards of 80% of the 50 million people in Congo are endangered. Could you tell us what the conditions are? What kind of improvements is the Kabila government acting on now to try to rectify the situation? What kind of assistance have you requested?

Kikaya: For one thing, the government that has been in place for the past two years has been working very hard to improve the situation of the general population of the Democratic Republic of Congo. On the economic side, we have stabilized the whole macroeconomic set-up. Inflation has been brought down to 15%, compared to 135% last year; and compared to 511% the previous year. Now we have an inflation rate of 15%. That has allowed people to have a stable currency.

Secondly, we have embarked on calling our traditional partners throughout the world: whether it's on a bilateral level, [as] with the United States, Belgium, France, Great Britain, Germany, and all the countries in the South, whether it's South Africa, or our neighbors, to improve our economic and trade relations.

We have also been talking to the Bretton Woods institutions—the IMF and the World Bank—hoping that we'll have, this time, a positive response. Because whether we like it or not, the country is heavily indebted. And that's one of the

FIGURE 1
Political Division of the Democratic Republic of the Congo



heritages from the Mobutu era. And having assumed government, we cannot run away from that heavy national debt, which is valued at more than \$14 billion. So we have to talk to the Bretton Woods institutions. We are talking to them. They have agreed to reduce the debt burden of the new government, in order for us to be able to take care of the needs of the general population.

EIR: In addition to the debt reduction, it would seem that you are going to need massive assistance and capital exports to build up the infrastructure of the country, which is severely

limited and weakened in terms transportation, health care, food, etc. What kind of assistance are you getting from the U.S. and other governments around the world, to improve the living conditions for the Congolese people?

Kikaya: For the time being, the effort of the United States government is centered on helping us reach an agreement whereby we'll stop fighting one another. We hope that in a second phase, they will come in with investment to improve the infrastructure—whether it's roads, railways, waterways; the whole infrastructure that will help us build a strong economy.

But for the time being, they are not doing that. All efforts are geared towards helping us solve the crisis that we are in now.

Of course, we count on fresh capital from outside. But this time, we want to do things differently. We want to invite private investors to come in there, and work with us on a “BOT” kind of program. That they come and “build, operate, and transfer” to Congolese people; rather than going into massive indebtedness, coming and borrowing money from the World Bank or the IMF, or the Paris Club or the Rome Club [of creditors], and all these places where you borrow money with high interest, and in the long run, you find yourself in a situation whereby you are not able to pay.

So we are encouraging private capital to come in there on a BOT program; or even BOOT, as it is called now—“build, own, operate, and transfer.” That’s what we believe in today. And we hope that we are going to find sympathetic ears out there, with people who believe in the Congo; believe in the wealth of the Congo; who are going to come and together with us, start finally building a strong economy in the Great Lakes region.

EIR: I understand that the foreign troops from Zimbabwe and Angola have left Congo; so therefore, what kind of assistance are you getting from your neighboring African countries?

Kikaya: Well, all foreign troops have withdrawn from the Democratic Republic of Congo; and that’s including our own Zimbabwean and Angolan allies. We keep in touch with them. We still have our very strong bilateral ties with them. But for the time being, we just co-exist peacefully in the area. We’re not getting any military assistance from anybody.

EIR: Do you feel satisfied that the people you met with in Washington are going to take the actions necessary to bring about the peace process, and put some kind of effort into stopping the activities of Kagame and Museveni?

Kikaya: We hope so. We found a very sympathetic ear. They listened to us; they agreed with what we said, because the information they have is the same as ours. And they also believe that these activities by President Kagame and President Museveni, and their generals in the area, are not conducive to long-lasting peace in the Great Lakes African region. And we hope that they will exercise that pressure, to convince those two leaders to stop those activities.

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Belgian Court Rules on Sharon War Crimes Trial

by Dean Andromidas

The Supreme Court of Belgium has handed down a ruling that Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon can be brought to trial for war crimes, once he leaves office and no longer enjoys diplomatic immunity. The Feb. 12 court ruling opens the way for the case brought before the Belgian court by 23 survivors of the infamous massacre of thousands of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps during the 1982 Lebanon War. This case, first brought before a Belgian judge in June 2001, charged Sharon and other Israelis with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. Although the proceedings against Sharon will have to wait until he leaves office, the ruling allows prosecution to be proceed immediately against the second defendant, Amos Yaron, who was commander of the Israeli military forces in Beirut at the time. Yaron is currently the director general of the Israeli Defense Ministry, holding its number-two position

The groundbreaking ruling upholds Belgium’s right of universal jurisdiction in regard to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide as codified in the Geneva Conventions and the International Convention Against Torture. Belgian courts were given these rights in laws passed by Belgium’s parliament between 1993 and 1999. The Supreme Court overruled an appeals court ruling, that since Sharon and the other defendants were not on Belgian soil, they could not be prosecuted.

The Palestinian delegation present in the court cheered and embraced one another when they heard the decision. However, Chibli Mallat, a member of the plaintiffs’ legal team, expressed his disappointment with the ruling, and argued that the gravity of Sharon’s crimes overrides any claim he could make to enjoying diplomatic immunity normally accorded a head of state or government. Nonetheless, Mallat was satisfied that the case against Yaron could now proceed. “It is a landmark step for international law,” Chibli said.

This decision has ramifications for Israel, whose military stands accused of war crimes in the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians. Various organizations have already been collecting evidence against Israeli soldiers and officers. Israeli military officers, both active duty and reservists, fear they could be placed under arrest if they travel to a European country.