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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by The Next Century Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[8 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.

Cartography of 20 Foreign Armed Groups in the East of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The following statement is submitted by the Next Century Foundation in cooperation with the Justice Congo Group:

Much commentary on the violent situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) refers to "the 120 armed groups operating in the east". This frequently leads to an implication that, because there are 120 armed groups operating in this area, there is no need to look further at what is happening. This implication is based on a historic racist trope that "the Congolese are always killing each other", that Congolese life is cheap, and therefore there is nothing more to be said.

The Justice Congo Group has commissioned research from a trusted team in Bukavu, eastern DRC, to analyse the nature of each of these armed groups. This research gives a snapshot of the situation on January 23, 2024. It covers the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika, which border the Republic of Uganda, the Republic of Rwanda, the Republic of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania respectively.

In addition to an analysis of the entirety of the 120 armed groups, which cannot be accommodated in this Statement, the research reveals that there are twenty foreign armed groups operating in this area. We have listed below the names, provenance and locality of these foreign armed groups.

The Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of Uganda invaded this eastern area of DRC in October 1996, driving Rwandan refugees from the huge camps on the border, most to their deaths, at Kisangani, and elsewhere further west (as vividly documented in Thierry Michel's film, *The Empire of Silence*). This illegal invasion was the catalyst for local populations to form armed groups to protect themselves from violence and from the occupation of their land. It was also the cue for many external armed groups to become involved in the warfare that ensued, including the Rwanda-backed M23.

27 years later, there remains little intervention by the Congolese army (*Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* i.e. the FARDC), infiltrated as it is by Rwandan military personnel. This weakness in the Congolese army means no adequate action is taken to protect the suffering population of eastern DRC.

The other crucial element in this appalling situation is that from 1996, mobile phones were being developed in the Global North, needing cassiterite, gold and the so-called 3T minerals - tungsten, tin and tantalum (the latter extracted from coltan). Now widely known as conflict minerals. The First and Second Congo Wars (October 1996 to May 1997, and August 1998 to July 2003) were funded by the value of these conflict minerals to the Global North, adding terrible fuel to the fire of armed violence in the east of DRC. The armed groups that have emerged throughout the past 27 years are significantly in response to this modern unregulated pillage of DRC's rich resources - the latest iteration of a pattern of pillage repeated so often since King Leopold's colonial rule. And the largest external armed group, the M23, runs a regular mineral smuggling route to Rwanda worth \$1 billion per year.

It is essential that this context is given any time a mention is made of "120 armed groups in the east of DRC". It is time for the truth about this situation to be widely and honestly understood, so that action can be taken to heal the agony of the Congolese population, rather than a dismissal of this agony because of the presence of "120 armed groups".

TWENTY FOREIGN ARMED GROUPS:

1. NGUMINO TWIGWANEHO OF BANYAMULENGE - the so-called Tutsi self-defence, divided into different forces. These forces are supported by the Republic of Rwanda.

LOCALITIES OCCUPIED: Bijabwe, Namara, Kamombom Mikalati, Mikenge.
TERRITORY: Uvira.

2. FNL ALLIED WITH MM (MAI MAI) KASUMBA & NDONDI.

LOCALITIES OCCUPIED: Forests of Itombwe and Lwindi, village of Lubumba, Mount Katabona and Mukutu, Majaga. TERRITORY: Mwenga, South Kivu.

3. RED TABARA – Burundian rebel group supported by the Republic of Rwanda.

LOCALITIES OCCUPIED: Forest of Nabuhu, high plateau of Uvira, villages of Masango and Kizita. TERRITORY: Mwenga, South Kivu.

4. FOREBU in coalition with Red Tabara of Kasiga.

LOCALITIES OCCUPIED: Forest of Namaramara, village of Bilemba. TERRITORY: Mwenga, South Kivu.

5. CNRD (HUTU ARMED GROUP) – coalition of convenience with the MM (Mai Mai) Buhirwa and MM (Mai Mai) Kijangala dans Uvira. Rwanda, Burundi groups.

LOCALITIES OCCUPIED: Kilembwe, Forest of Hewa Bora, medium plateaux of Uvira, Forest of Kifune TERRITORY: Fizi, South Kivu.

6. MAI MAI MAKANIKA - supported by Republic of Rwanda.

LOCALITIES OCCUPIED: Plain of Ruzizi. TERRITORY: Uvira, South Kivu.

7. NYATURA KALUME – Hutu group.

LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Buhavu, Kalehe. TERRITORY: Kalehe, South Kivu.

8. NYATURA BAZUNGU – Hutu group from Rwanda.

LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Kalehe, South Kivu.

9. NYATURA (HUTU) - Coalition of Rwanda Hutus.

LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Kalehe. TERRITORY: South Kivu.

10. MCDPIN (Popular movement for the defence of Congo – Nyatura). Coalition of Hutus from Rwanda.

LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Kalehe. TERRITORY: South Kivu.

11. FDLR – liberation front of Rwanda (Rwanda Hutus).

LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Kalehe and Fizi. TERRITORY: South Kivu.

12. FAB – Burundian armed force. LOCATIONS OCCUPIED – Fizi.

TERRITORY: South Kivu.

13. CMC/FDP - Coalition of movements for change. Hutu group from Rwanda.

TERRITORY: North Kivu.

14. FDLR-FOCA – group of Rwanda Hutus opposed to negotiations with Rwanda.

TERRITORY: North Kivu.

15. NYATURA BAGARUZA – Hutus from Rwanda.

TERRITORY: North Kivu.

16. ADF – ALLIED DEMOCRATIC FORCES GROUP from Uganda.

TERRITORY: North Kivu.

17. NYATURA TURARAMBIWE – Hutu group from Rwanda.
LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Rutshuru. TERRITORY: North Kivu.

18. RUD-URUNANA – Hutu group from Rwanda.
LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Rutshuru. TERRITORY: North Kivu.

19. ADF – ALLIED DEMOCRATIC FORCES from Uganda.
LOCATIONS OCCUPIED: Ituri. TERRITORY: North Kivu.

20. M23 – Group from Rwanda, in coalition with ALLIANCE FLEUVE CONGO.
Supported by Rwanda.
LOCATIONS AND TERRITORY: widespread & changing locations.

Justice Congo Group, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.