

Towards the End of UN Peacekeeping in the DRC: Prospects for Peace and Reconstruction in a Troubled Country

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Since 1999 peacekeepers from the United Nations (UN) were deployed to facilitate the implementation of a number of peace agreements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The tasks of the UN peacekeepers went far beyond observing, monitoring and reporting on cease-fire agreements. Yet, despite all efforts, many and serious challenges continue to face the DRC government and other role-players, especially the UN, in their pursuit of security, recovery and development since the historical and remarkable holding of elections in 2006.

There is no doubt that the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) played an important and pivotal peacekeeping role in the DRC – most specifically since 2006 in the post-electoral context. Against this background an announcement by the DRC government in September 2009 that MONUC will withdraw from the DRC in 2011 caught many observers and role-players off guard.

The DRC government's announcement coincided with pressure on the UN and its Security Council ahead of the country's 50th anniversary of independence in June 2010 to produce a plan for ending MONUC's work in the DRC. On 28 May 2010 the UN Security Council reached an agreement with the DRC government on the future of MONUC. It was decided that MONUC, shall, as from 1 July 2010, bear the title of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). At the same time the UN Security Council authorised the immediate withdrawal of up to 2 000 UN military personnel from areas where the security situation permits as a first symbolic step towards the end of current-day UN peacekeeping in the DRC.

Several role-players assertively objected to the DRC government's insistence on UN peacekeepers to be withdrawn from the country and contended that a withdrawal of peacekeepers in 2011 would be too hasty. In view of the above, the aim of this article is to reflect on the planned withdrawal of all UN peacekeepers from the DRC, specifically in view of several important challenges that remain obstacles in the country's post-conflict peace building process with specific reference to the following: firstly, the reconstruction and building of state institutions; and secondly, the issue of security governance in the DRC.