

## **Canadian Conflict Resolution Specialist Is On-the-Ground in the DR Congo**

*Dr. Glenys A. Babcock is in Kinshasa and Goma to talk with diverse groups and explore pragmatic options for peace stabilization*

*Toronto, ON, May 29, 2010* — Dr. Glenys A. Babcock, President & CEO of Pragmora, is in the DR Congo on for a 10-day research tour. In Kinshasa and in Goma (the centre of the conflict zone) she is discussing peace stabilisation options with diverse government, security, mining, civil society, and international aid organisations.

Dr. Babcock will arrive in Goma tomorrow, Friday, and is available for media interviews by phone and by Skype to provide analysis of the current security and humanitarian situation.

### **Why the DR Congo? Why Now?**

The sense of urgency that surrounds Dr. Babcock's trip to the DR Congo is high. At the insistence of DR Congo President Joseph Kabila, the UN peacekeeping mission MONUC will pull out 2000 troops in the next few weeks—before the country celebrates its 50th Anniversary of Independence on June 30, and may be fully withdrawn in 2011. MONUC is the largest UN peacekeeping mission in the world and was put in place during the civil war, which is estimated to have killed 5.4 million people between 1998 and 2003.

The international community is very concerned about the drawn down of MONUC forces. There have been increased incidents of violence by rebels groups in the east and in the north, and increased reports of atrocities being committed against civilians, including an escalation in gang rape.

Further, recent attacks by rebels have taken place in areas of the country previously considered entirely secure and safe, including in the heart of the mining region. The international community as a whole fears that if the peacekeepers pull out too quickly, the situation may worsen and possibly spiral out of control.

In Goma, the heart of the conflict zone, MONUC is highly visible and many see its presence as critical for preventing an all out resurgence of conflict here. However, very different views prevail in the capital city, Kinshasa, where it is difficult to see evidence that MONUC is, in fact, keeping the peace, while accusations of MONUC soldiers "trafficking" minerals and raping women are top of mind. There is a sense that the conflict is over and now it is

time for the international community to assist the DR Congo in moving forward through trade, foreign investment, and development (education, health care, and democratisation).

"The divergent perceptions between the international commentators and those living in the DR Congo are not irreconcilable," says Dr. Babcock, "At this time, security in the Congo depends on economic development, while economic development depends on security... and on the appearance of security."

Security in the DR Congo matters not only for the Congolese people, but also because instability in the DR Congo will inevitably affect the prospect for long-term stable peace in neighbouring countries—Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda.

#### ***About Dr. Babcock***

*Dr. Glenys A Babcock, President of Pragmora, is a specialist in conflict resolution. For more than 20 years, she provided strategic counsel and research to preeminent public, private and not-for-profit organisations. She holds a PhD and MPhil in public policy analysis, an MA and BA in international relations, and a BA in mathematics. Dr. Babcock is Pragmora's spokesperson for conflict and security issues related to DR Congo, Sri Lanka, Georgia (Abkhazia/South Ossetia), Liberia and Somalia.*

#### ***About Pragmora***

*Pragmora is an international peace organisation based in Canada. It is both a policy think tank and a grassroots activist group. We work with experts around the world to develop pragmatic, nonviolent, non-partisan measures to help resolve and prevent conflicts.*

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