

## **DRC: Interview with Eugene Serufuli, governor of North Kivu Province**

GOMA, 22 Jul 2004 (IRIN) - The eastern provinces of North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have, for the past eight years, been destabilised by civil war, which has continued despite the installation of a transitional government in June 2003.

Violence and other forms of brutality have continued in the region, perpetrated by various armed groups. The governor of North Kivu Province, Eugene Serufuli, spoke to IRIN on 14 July in Goma, the provincial capital, on the prospects for peace and economic recovery of the DRC. We bring you excerpts from that interview:

**QUESTION:** What is your greatest challenge as governor of North Kivu?

**ANSWER:** First, we must complete the peace process in the country, because, as you know, I represent the head of state in this province. I represent the transitional government, and you know the government's objective is to complete the process, to organise free and fair and transparent democratic elections. These are the major challenges.

**Q:** When do you hope to attain this objective?

**A:** We should make efforts to ensure that all the government programmes evolve normally. We should achieve national reconciliation. We should achieve stability in our country. We should put in place an integrated army to protect the population and people's property, and finally defend the sovereignty of the country; and therefore, all these challenges are awaiting our attention.

**Q:** What is your first priority?

**A:** The first priority is to attain security. No business is possible in a situation of insecurity and, in this respect, we have a major problem, which is the activity of armed groups, the foreigners [armed groups] who are very, very active in our country, especially in our province of North Kivu. The Interahamwe [Rwandan Hutu extremist militiamen] and ex-FAR [former Rwandan armed forces] are an alarming reality. They are ransacking villages; they are killing Congolese every day. This is a real problem we must solve.

**Q:** How do you intend to solve the problem of the Interahamwe and ex-FAR?

**A:** This problem cannot be solved at the local level only. At the local level, efforts are being made, and the public is doing its bit. The local authorities, the DRC armed forces in our province are doing all that is necessary to overcome all that is destabilising the population, but you know that the UN mission, MONUC, is here.

It is here, the Congolese government is here, Rwanda, our neighbour, is here - even Uganda, because you know that the Interahamwe is not only here in North Kivu; they are in the forest in central Africa. I think it is a problem that has to be solved at a much higher level.

**Q:** What is being done and at what level?

**A:** Action is being taken. We have decided to open sites for the DDRRR [Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Reinsertion] programme to encourage Interahamwe and ex-FAR to return home peacefully. We have undertaken sensitisation programmes to do this, because we need peace. If they [the Interahamwe] think they are going to continue to use Congolese soil to gain power in [the Rwandan capital] Kigali by force, that approach will not work. They must agree to submit to peace and return [home].

The second thing is that we have deployed security services and the army to protect the population.

Thirdly, we are not just folding our arms waiting to be attacked when we know that the Interahamwe is burning this village and kills one, two or three people each day.

**Q:** What measures have been taken to ensure that the Interahamwe do not attack Rwanda from Congo?

**A:** You should ask MONUC. You know that there were accords signed, firstly in Lusaka [the Zambian capital] and then in Pretoria [South Africa], between states: the one [provides that the Interahamwe and ex-FAR] should leave Congolese soil, the other should canton, demobilise, disarm and repatriate the fighters.

**Q:** How is the government going to solve the problem of Gen Laurent Nkunda [who recently led dissident troops in the capture of Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu]?

**A:** This is a problem to be solved by the Congolese government. Gen Laurent Nkunda was an officer in the Congolese armed forces and he is there. Everyone followed the recent events in Bukavu. Today, he is in a locality in South Kivu; the latest information is that he wants to return home. I think the government is trying to find a lasting solution.

**Q:** Where's Nkunda's home?

**A:** His home is with his family. His family is in Goma.

**Q:** There has been speculation that Nkunda intends to attack Goma. Is there any chance of this?

**A:** Why would he attack? Because when he went to Bukavu he did so because of a problem that was there. There was fighting between officers of the Congolese army, fighting that degenerated into massacres of residents. Everyone has spoken about it, and he has already said why he went to South Kivu. He had said he went to stop the killing. There has been no massacre in Goma.

**Q:** The quest for the control of resources is often given as the reason for instability in the Congo. What is the real cause of this instability?

**A:** It is a problem that arose out of very poor management. The country had been very badly run for several decades. We should not today begin to trivialise the Congolese problem down to a political one. How many years have civil servants not been paid? How many years have passed without inter-ethnic fighting and killings where entire villages have been burnt down? You want to tell me that all these villages have been burnt because of natural resources? No, we have to be serious and sit down at the table, think and seek a lasting solution to the crisis in the DRC.

I have already said that no business can thrive if there is no peace, if there is no security. So the first thing to implement is a pacification programme, one that reinforces security. And it is such conditions that would put people back to work. We think we have a dynamic people, one of entrepreneurs.

**Q:** What are the priorities to rebuild the province?

**A:** Let us say the priority is the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure. Presupposing there is enough security to start economic activity, it is the roads. The second thing is education, then health.

[ENDS]