



**GENERAL DECLARATION
OF THE NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE CULTURE OF PEACE IN THE CONGO**

Brazzaville Congo, 24 December 1994

1. The National Forum for the Culture of Peace was held in Brazzaville from 19 to 24 December 1994. Organized jointly by the Congo and UNESCO, its purpose was to facilitate political dialogue between the communities interrupted by serious social and political unrest that was threatening national unity and endangering the institutions of the Republic. The Forum considered the following themes:

- Peace and Education;
- Peace and Democracy;
- Peace and Sustainable Development.

2. The National Forum brought together the political parties, civil society, leading citizens, youth and women's organizations, traditional chiefs, religious denominations and the police forces. Personalities from outside the Congo enlightened the discussions with their wide-ranging experience.

3. **The Heads of State and Government of Central Africa, by their presence and contribution to the Forum**, gave it a subregional dimension. They adopted a document of historical importance and laid the foundations for close co-operation in the field of security and conflict resolution.

4. In the presence of these eminent personalities, the Congolese people, through the representatives of all its segments and with a great sense of responsibility, analysed the misfortunes that were undermining the country's political, economic and social well-being and advocated solutions which it solemnly promised to apply in order to recover its dignity and reconstruct a country that had suffered so deeply.

5. The participants in the Forum noted first of all that the precepts adopted at the National Conference - 'Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit robbery, and thou shalt not lie' - had not been observed. They also noted that the solemn undertaking made on that occasion - 'never again!' - had been purely and simply trampled under foot.

6. The Forum also noted, as another source of conflict, the **highly controversial interpretations of the Constitution** and the major delays, some justified others not, in the establishment of the institutions on which the authority of the state must be founded.

7. Among the factors that had destabilized social and political life and disturbed peace, the Forum stressed the lack of a democratic culture, the

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most obvious manifestations of which were the refusal of democratic changeovers, intolerance and the use of violence as a political argument through the constitution of private militias. The socio-economic causes were revealed in the erosion of people's purchasing power, the use of drugs among young people, and the dysfunctioning of civil and military administration and of state structures such as schools and health training programmes. In that context, corruption was seen as representing an advanced stage in the destruction of Congolese society, especially when it affected and deeply undermined the system of justice, guardian of the **rule of law**.

8. Another factor detrimental to peace identified by the Forum was the misuse or non-use of executive staff whose training had been very costly for Congolese taxpayers. It should also be noted that the concentration of more than 60 per cent of such staff (excluding the university and university hospital staff and the members of forces) in Brazzaville contributes seriously to socio-economic imbalances and disorder.

The Forum noted the high level of anti-social behaviour and an evident non-respect for the national heritage owing to the incapacity of the state for several decades to fulfil its mission to ensure the moral and civic education of the people and the defence of public property.

The Forum drew attention to what it called the 'incapacity of the state', particularly in regard to security matters. The impunity accorded to sordid and thoughtless acts had further eroded the authority of the state and caused the breakdown of a dilapidated social fabric.

9. The Forum considered that:

Young people symbolize the future of the country. They must therefore be partners in the building of that future. It is vital to protect their mental and physical health to prevent their energy from being directed towards the destruction of life and the national heritage;

Women are the trustees of our values. It is their job to pass on those values to the young. The Forum salutes the efforts in favour of peace they have made from the start within their associations and urges them to pursue such action out of respect for the life they give;

All the religious denominations address the people with messages of neighbourly love which contribute to conflict prevention and peace-building. They should continue their efforts in this direction;

The army must place the nation and the mother country above everything. Its duty is to defend republican values in a context of electoral democracy. Moreover, it should be involved in the development effort;

The leading citizens embody wisdom and level-headedness. Use should be made of their experience and skills for the settlement of conflicts;

The large number of non-governmental organizations should constitute a force conducive to an increased sense of responsibility among their members. They should not overlook in their programmes the fact that they are part of the nation;

The Parliament has committed itself to the restoration of peace;

The political parties in our country should not be established for the sole purpose of winning power but should, through a multitude of actions, contribute to the political and economic development and moral rehabilitation of the nation.

10. Having analysed the causes of the Congolese crisis and re-emphasized the role of the political classes and civil society in the search for solutions,

The Forum:

Considering the social and political unrest that has seriously affected the beginning of the democratic process in the Congo and slowed down the establishment of democratic institutions,

Considering the tribal and regional basis of numerous political parties,

Considering the threat to the unity of the Congolese people arising from political and ethnic tension,

Considering the presence and the pernicious activities of private militias,

Considering the disastrous plight of the victims and the need for their social integration and rehousing,

Considering the serious economic crisis affecting the Congo and its social impact, in particular on employment, the education system, public health and the cost of living,

Considering the incapacity of the state to deal with problems of security,

Considering the gravity of the problems being faced by young people and in particular **the abuse of narcotics**,

Considering the deterioration of the human rights situation, the frequent infringements of fundamental freedoms and the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators,

Considering the interdependence of peace, democracy and development.

11. **Launches an urgent appeal to all the active members of society:**

Political parties, government, civil society (young people, women, religious denominations, the army, leading citizens, trade unions), and non-governmental organizations, to ensure that the results of the Forum are translated into action and followed up with perseverance and determination.

12. **Calls on:**

The political parties to contribute effectively to the expression of democracy by providing an education for their members founded on national unity and by steadfastly preferring dialogue to violence in the settlement of conflicts;

The Government to take vigorous action to guarantee the security and freedoms of citizens, to resolve social problems, and to disarm the private militias.

The participants in the Forum welcomed the agreement of 20 December 1994 among the eminent personalities gathered together with the Head of State concerning the establishment of a Committee with the urgent task of making proposals on:

the **reorganization of the public forces** (armed forces, gendarmerie, police) with a view to their immediate adaptation to their role of republican public force;

the rehabilitation of the justice system.

13. The National Forum for the Culture of Peace draws attention to the fact that the Congolese nation is shaped by the interdependence of all its ethnic communities without exception. Such interdependence makes it essential for the Congolese to live together in harmony. The present generation of adults, who have been responsible for so many evils besetting the country, will be accountable for the future of our children. But that future will not be guaranteed and the challenges of tomorrow will not be taken up unless there reigns a durable peace, the construction of which is an urgent obligation.

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