

A CRITIQUE OF SARKOZI'S GOSPEL: DRC AND RWANDA MUST SHARE MINERAL RESOURCES

OPINIONS, PROBLEMS, AND PERSPECTIVES

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During his address to the French diplomatic corps on 16th of January, President Sarkozy gave a broad overview of important international matters.

With regard to the Great Lakes region, Nicolas Sarkozy made the following declaration: "violence has been unleashed. The military option will not offer any solution to basic problems, which have arisen in a recurrent manner over the last ten years. This includes the question of the future of Rwanda, with which France has resumed dialogue, a country with a dynamic demography and a small surface area. This leads to the question of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country with an immense surface area and the odd location of mineral wealth on its borders. It is necessary at some time to have dialogue which is not simply an economic dialogue but a structural dialogue: how, in this region of the world, space and natural resource wealth are shared and we start to understand that geography has its laws, that countries rarely change their address and that it is necessary for us to learn to live next door to one another".

In this response, we are not going to tackle questions of the future of Rwanda or its small surface area, to which President Sarkozy refers. However the attention of the Southern Africa Resource Watch has been drawn to two important elements:

» Immense surface area of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the odd location of the mineral resource wealth on its borders.

» Sharing of space and natural resource wealth.

1. Odd location of mineral resource wealth on the DRC borders

The vastness of the surface area of the DRC

and the mineral wealth that the latter contains in its sub-soil are a gift of God. France's natural resource wealth is not that of Belgium or Germany, although it forms part of the European Union.

The DRC and Rwanda do not have common natural resource wealth, but can cooperate within the framework of regional structures, as is the case of CPGL.

Moreover, Rwanda has been known for its tea production, whilst the DRC is renowned for its mining resources.

If France were to assist Rwanda in organising its production in order to ensure its future and the DRC in setting up clear policies on natural resource management – this would be a reason for bilateral relations. The odd location of the DRC resources may in no way influence the establishment by France of a dialogue, which could lead Rwanda and the DRC to share natural resource wealth, which is located in the subsoil of the latter. The French President's idea is not inductive to creating a healthy climate between the two African countries but risks endangering the little chance of resumption of bilateral cooperation between them.

2. Sharing of space and natural resource wealth

The Congolese space and mineral wealth contained therein are exclusively owned by the DRC and are not co-owned with Rwanda.

The DRC and Rwandan colonisers were Belgians, who in no way can pass judgement on such aberrations.

It must be remembered that the DRC signed a joint oil exploration agreement with Angola.

This Agreement was negotiated by the two governments and approved by the Parliaments of both countries. Similarly, the DRC signed another joint oil exploration agreement with Uganda in Lake Albert.

If you look at the object of these two agreements, you will note that oil is on the border of these two countries therefore exploration would have to affect both their territories. Hence the necessity to share mineral wealth located in this common border area.

What mineral wealth is there to be found on the DRC and Rwanda borders, which requires sharing between the two countries, failing which, there will be no solution for the future of Rwanda and violence will continue in DRC?

Since the promulgation of the Mining code, several Multinational companies have been set up in the DRC by signing official partnerships with the Congolese public companies or directly with the Congolese State for the joint mining of Congolese ore. If President Sarkozy wants to help to secure Rwanda's future and he feels that the DRC mines could be the solution, he simply has to advise Rwanda or Rwandan companies, that if they have new capital, they should come and officially invest in the DRC.

We conclude by saying that the question of the future of Rwanda has nothing to do with the DRC space and mineral wealth, but that President SARKOZY should rather help Rwanda in solving the conflict between the Rwandan Hutus and Tutsis in living together, by creating constant dialogue, which is not just an economic dialogue but a structural dialogue, between brothers.