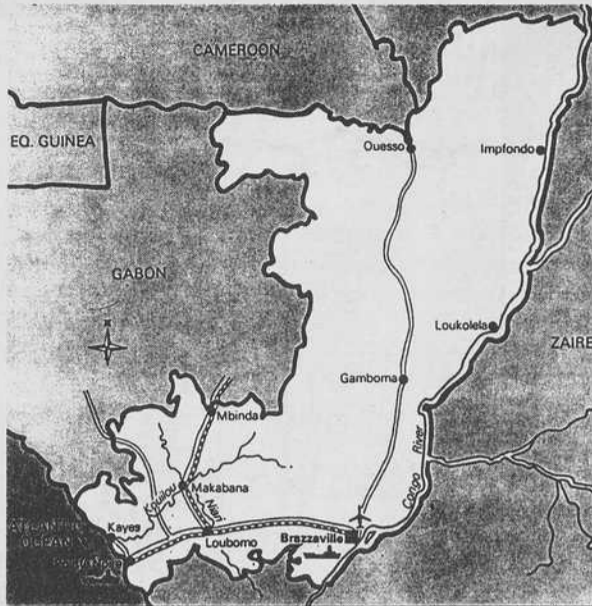


WORLD NEWS



GROUP CALLS FOR WAR CRIMES COMMISSION IN CONGO

UNITED NATIONS — A New York-based rights group has called for the establishment of a war crimes commission to investigate alleged atrocities committed during the seven-month war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Human Rights Watch, in a letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, urged him to urgently seek a security council authorization for the creation of such a commission, which will also determine whether an international tribunal should be set up to try perpetrators of the atrocities. The group's request is based on the report of a joint investigative mission of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which found that some of the alleged massacres during the war could constitute acts of genocide. The report, submitted to the UN General Assembly, said "there are reliable indications that persons belonging to one or other of the parties to the conflict ... probably committed serious violations of international humanitarian law."

SCIENTISTS ENCOURAGE INVENTOR OF MALARIA VACCINE

DAKAR, Senegal — Senegalese scientists are encouraging Professor Manuel Patarroyo, the Bolivian inventor of the "SPf66" anti-malaria vaccine, to ignore unfavorable comments from some U.S. medical officials concerning its performance. The synthetic peptide vaccine has shown encouraging results in several South American countries as well as in Gambia and Tanzania. However, its performance in Thailand has come under severe criticism from researchers in the United States. "What Patarroyo discovered is very encouraging and has a potential for greater development. You see, the anti-rabies vaccine we have today was initially not so efficient and caused a lot of problems," said Dr. George Diouf of the infectious disease department at Dakar's Fann Hospital.

COURT RULING ANGERS AFRICAN ANTI-MUTILATION GROUP

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — The recent decision by an Egyptian court to lift an existing ban on female genital mutilations (FGM) has been slammed by The Inter-African Committee (IAC), an Addis Ababa-based African women's activist group campaigning against harmful traditional practices. IAC said that the court's ruling in late June, violated the decisions of various international conferences, including one on population and development held in the Egyptian capital in 1994. These meetings, they said, recognized FGM practices "as a serious danger to reproductive health." Girls who undergo FGM or female circumcision are exposed to various hazards, including bleeding to death, frigidity and reproductive tract infection and fistula, among others.

CONSTITUENCY FOR AFRICA HOLDS PRE-SUMMIT CONFERENCE

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Representatives of at least nine non-governmental organizations (NGO) from the United States met with their African counterparts July 19-21, preceding the historic Fourth African-American Summit here, to plan cooperative strategies at a conference organized by the Washington-based Constituency for Africa (CFA). "The goal, the aim of CFA is to enlighten Americans, particularly African-Americans to the value of Africa," CFA Chairman David Dinkins, the former Mayor of New York City, told the NNPA. "The whole idea is to try to explain to people that it's not Africa begging for their help, it's Africa saying: 'It's in your interest.'"

Reconciliation, justice: a difficult balancing act

By Olu Sarr

Special to Sentinel-Voice

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — Providing justice to victims of human rights violations and reconciling the aggrieved parties, poses a dilemma for participants in one of the discussions at an ongoing international forum on democracy.

The central question addressed deals with how best to punish perpetrators of crimes against humanity, satisfy the victims and reconcile a traumatized nation.

Chilean and South African experiences set the tone for the discussions.

After years of military dictatorship, under which thousands of people disappeared, Chileans ended marshal rule and entered the democratic process.

However, Monica Jimenez

Barros, a board member of the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, said after six years of reconciliation over the disappearances, "there is an impression that pain, resentment and wounds still exist and that the establishment of the truth and recognition of the dignity of the victims did not have the effect that was hoped."

Politically, Chile is no longer divided between right and left, pro and anti-military. Reparations have been accepted by 99 percent of the families of victims, human rights have been incorporated into the national education curriculum, and the Inter-American Convention and the constitution of the Inter-American Human Rights Court have been ratified.

Yet, Barros said,

"individual truth" was missing. Relatives have been unable to find, let alone retrieve, the bones of those who disappeared.

South Africa, which borrowed the idea of a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' from Chile, has been more fortunate.

The perpetrators of apartheid's violence have appeared before the commission to confess their crimes.

Dumisa Ntsebeza, head of the investigative unit of the commission, said even the ruling African National Congress (ANC) has presented graphic documentation of torture and killings conducted in its camps in Angola.

Only people who failed to appear before the commission are prosecuted for war crimes.

Trials for human rights

violation often fail because those with evidence remain tight-lipped, allowing the perpetrators to go free. However, Ntsebeza said that with the perpetrators coming forward, the truth and reconciliation process seems to have been vindicated.

"It (the process allows) a healing nation to begin to lay the foundations for a true democracy based on a dynamic human rights culture," he said.

However, the secretary-general of the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurists, Adama Dieng, said there could be no reconciliation without justice.

"When it relates to crimes against humanity and violations of human rights, it is imperative to have prosecution, to bring to an end the culture of impunity," he said.

Nyerere dropped as Burundi conflict mediator

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania — Retired Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere has been replaced as international mediator in the Burundi conflict.

The Tanzania News Agency (Shihata) reported on May 12, that the change is contained in a joint agreement signed between a delegation representing Burundi military ruler, Major Pierre Buyoya, and that of the Council for National Defense and Democracy (CNDD), led by Leonard Nyangoma.

Nyangoma was Burundi's interior minister. He retreated to the bush after the assassination of that country's first democratically-elected President, Melchior Ndadaye, on Oct. 21, 1993.

Shihata cited articles in the so-called general accord, signed in Rome on March 10, 1997 which says Nyerere had been replaced by Andrea Riccardi of Italy.

According to the agreement, Riccardi will conduct the new mediation under the auspices of a Rome-based religious community known as Saint Egidion.

The two delegations have already met twice in Rome, to conduct "secret talks" under Riccardi, the accord explains.

The first meeting was held from Feb. 29 to March 10 and the second on April 10.

Meanwhile, the former majority party thrown out of power by Buyoya last July 25,

the Front for Democracy in Burundi (FRODEBU) has

condemned the Buyoya-CNDD accord. FRODEBU said the accord was aimed at sabotaging efforts by countries in the Great Lakes region and the international community to

bring permanent peace to Burundi.

The party's national chairman, Jean Minani, maintained that his party still recognizes Nyerere as the sole mediator in the incessant Burundian conflicts.

"We in FRODEBU will respect and adhere to all decisions made so far by the heads of state of the countries in the Great Lakes region on finding a permanent solution to the ongoing Burundian political crisis," he stated.

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