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TOWARDS A NEW SECURITY AND DEFENSE
ARCHITECTURE IN EAST AFRICA**

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JOINT MILITARY EXERCISES IN RWANDA: TOWARDS A NEW SECURITY AND DEFENSE ARCHITECTURE IN EAST AFRICA

Abstract:

Immersed in a conflict region, the East African Community has started a process towards the actualization of its security and defense structures, in order to face the permanent threats to the stability of these countries. The reinforcement of EAC's capabilities as well as the cooperation with international stakeholders will be one of the key factors in the short term.

Keywords:

East Africa Community, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, security and defense, cooperation, regional integration, conflicts prevention and resolution.

“There is no alternative to our forces maintaining peace in the region”

Richard Sezibera

The East African Community (EAC) has recently developed some joint military exercises, in which have taken part 1 680 soldiers from the five armies of the countries integrated in the community. The exercises have been carried out in two Rwandan provinces, one of them Kibu, in the strained military boundary with the Democratic Republic of Congo. With the name *Ushirikiano Imara*¹, they are

designed as part of AEC’s efforts to articulate a space of common defense towards the full integration proposed.

These are the words used by Richard Sezibera², secretary-general of the AEC, in the inauguration of the *Ushiriako Imara* maneuvers in the host country that has been designed to fill the turn as a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations, along with Luxemburg, Australia and South Korea for the biennium 2013-2015⁻³.



In his intervention, he took the chance to praise the Somali and Kenyan forces, who have contribute to take the city of Kismayo (Somalia) from the Al-Shabab rebels.

Furthermore, Sezibera reminded that the community has already been equipped with a defense protocol which will replace the former Cooperation Memorandum in this context.

Since the end of April, after being approved at the AEC’s Tenth Summit of the Heads of State held in Tanzania, the Protocol is pending ratification by them. As the Secretary-General himself pointed out, an undue delay of its entry into force would slow down the AEC’s chances of becoming more important in the internal conflict resolution. Therefore, Sezibera urged the Member States to carry out the ratification in the coming month.

¹ http://www.eac.int/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1133:field-training-exercise-ushirikiano-imara-&catid=146:press-releases&Itemid=194

² http://www.eac.int/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1130:ushirikiano-imara-2012-statement&catid=147:speeches-a-statements

³ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=43320>

The Memorandum, valid since 2001, concerned the military cooperation and training, in order to increase the effectiveness of the national armed forces. However, it doesn't approach a joint strategy of the Member States to address the risks and threats shared. Even so, Sezibera considers it as one of the most successful action programs undertaken by the Community⁴. As an important novelty, the new commitment means the strengthening a common pact to establish mechanisms to face regional challenges regarding security and defense.

Moreover, the introduction of a framework to the conflict prevention, administration and resolution in the AEC's area of influence is in the planning stage, within the Early Warning Mechanisms established by the organization.

Accordingly, it is expected the designation of a group of mediators for each conflict, comprised of political leaders and influent and respected personalities in the area, who assert their decisions to all parties concerned.

The AEC's representatives have shown that the organization aims to transform the joint institutions, in order to increase its effectiveness, reducing as much as possible the dependence on other multilateral bodies and international agencies during crisis situations. "We Africans must learn to solve our own problems", stated Beatrice Kiraso, at the Summit last April⁵.

The AEC is formed by Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi, and coexists with certain conflicts happening in the African continent.

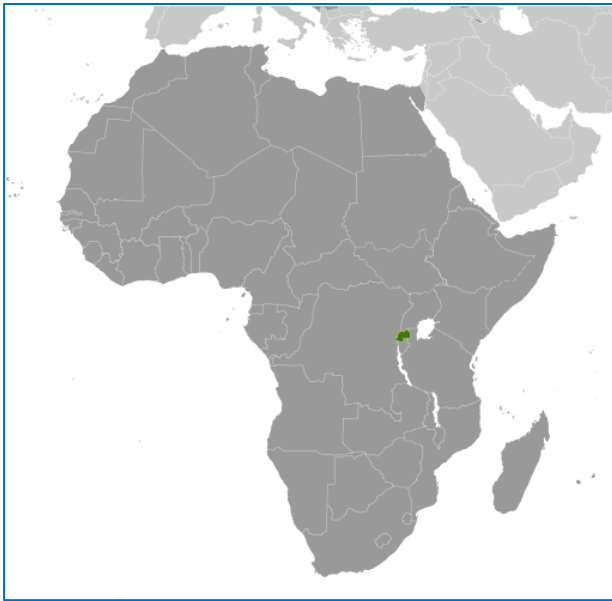
Kenyan troops have actively participated in the war against the Al-Shabab fundamentalists in Somalia, within the international mission AMISON, lead by the African Union.

While there's still fighting against piracy in the waters of the Indian Ocean, Uganda, with the cooperation of the US forces of AFRICOM, tries to eradicate the last remnants of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which has some active commands in neighbour countries.

⁴http://www.sg.eac.int/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=112:cooperation-in-defence-our-best-bet&catid=40:sgs-blog&Itemid=1

1. ⁵<http://www.apanews.net/photo/en/photo.php?id=165764>

But above all, the AEC's security is affected by the political crisis and the violence in the borders that share Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo; this affects the Eastern half of this country, particularly the Kivu province. Kinshasa's Government accuses Rwanda of supporting the M23, the Congolese movement that started the conflict. The complaint by the Congolese authorities has had an impact among the international community, which has recriminated Uganda and Rwanda's involvement in the dispute. The SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) has been fairly active in this context, urging Kigali to stop supporting the rebels, and stating that the interference of Kigali adds instability to the



region⁶. The situation in the largest Congo links the AEC with the International Conference of the Great Lakes⁷. Since 2011, collaboration channels have been established between the AEC and the International Conference, in order to find a resolution for the conflict⁸.

Due to the states' fragility and lack of means of its armies, the absence of consolidated regional institutions and the instability context, the AEC will still need a constant and firm international support. The desire of security and defense won't be able to forego without the major powers

and without the collaboration of the African Union, within the continental defense policy.

In this process, the Africa's growing importance for the White House causes United States, with more operational capacities, to continue playing its role in the area.

In short, the AEC must define in the coming months its new security and defense structure, and also what cooperation mechanisms they want to establish with other stakeholders. The main risk is that the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo may put too many obstacles in the path of bringing peace to East Africa, due to Rwanda's involvement.

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⁶ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201208210524.html>

⁷ http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2012/DIEEEA37-2012_La_region_de_los_gandes_Lagos_IJGS.pdf

⁸ <http://www.ke.undp.org/index.php/resources/download/49>