

NPRC, and the subsequent Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government of Kabbah, to be receptive to negotiations with the RUF. Similarly, external pressure and support from international actors facilitated this process.

Following a change in leadership within the NPRC, when Strasser was removed and replaced by Brigadier Bio, the NPRC became willing to meet with RUF representatives for peace talks. A week long cease-fire was declared by the RUF and representatives from the two parties met in Abidjan in February/March 1996. After this initial success the party leaders, Bio and Sankoh met in Yamoussoukro in late March. They established three working groups to discuss various elements of the peace process and agreed to begin a two month cease-fire. These talks were continued on April 22, 1996 but with Kabbah representing the newly elected government of Sierra Leone. The cease-fire was extended and the discussions centred around devising a general peace accord which, once formulated, became known as the Abidjan Agreement.

This Agreement established the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (CCP) which was to act as a verification mechanism responsible for supervising the implementation and compliance with all the provisions of the accord, with a variety of sub-committees responsible for implementing particular provisions such as demobilization. The Accord also provided a framework to further the process of democratization and begin social and economic development in Sierra Leone.

One of the key issues of the peace talks centred around the withdrawal of foreign troops, in particular the firm Executive Outcomes, which had been hired by the government to assist in the fight against the RUF. The company had provided military advisors - mainly former South African special forces troops - and had had a significant impact on the balance of the war. It was this issue that caused an impasse in the final round of talks in May 1996, but the issue was eventually resolved and it was agreed that EO would withdraw.

Throughout this peace process of variety of international actors acted as facilitators and impartial observers. From 1994 the UN, OAU, International Alert (IA), and the Commonwealth encouraged dialogue between the RUF and NPRC with the assistance of certain West African governments, in particular Cote d'Ivoire. It was Cote d'Ivoire's Foreign Minister Amara Essy who was first approached by IA for advice on pursuing reconciliation strategies in Sierra Leone. Essy often worked as the direct channel of communication through which the main international organizations communicated with the parties. Similarly he was instrumental in facilitating the peace talks themselves, often acting as chairman.

The Abidjan discussions in February/March and those later in Yamoussoukro not only had high level intervention from representatives of the Cote d'Ivoire, but also involved the UN, OAU, IA and the Commonwealth. In addition to the observer role many of these same international actors engaged in intense "shuttle-diplomacy" efforts to effectively grease the wheels of the negotiations when agreement became difficult.

Post-Coup:

Following the May 25 coup a number of conflict resolution efforts have occurred, most of which have originated from two sources. One source has been the ARFC. On June 7 a ARFC/RUF delegation went to Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana to search for regional support and avert any potential military intervention by ECOWAS. On June 20 the AFRC called an