

THE FIRST BUDGET OF THE DRC 3RD REPUBLIC HAS BEEN RELUCTANTLY ADOPTED BY THE PARLIAMENT (BOTH CHAMBERS)...

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1. The National Budget is the annual financial planning of the execution of the tasks required by the nationally approved programme. The latter is the reformulation of the national consensus achieved through election campaign debates. These focus on seeking some agreement on the fair diagnosis of the ills of the country and what to do to cure them.
2. No national debates really took place, not even those legally required between the two second round presidential candidates. Security reasons were given to explain the failure to respect the law on this matter. The occasion was missed to take stock of the country's situation. In our view, the country is in a catastrophic situation requiring an emergency sort of programme to get the country out of it to some kind of normalcy. This would have required an understanding on the need to have the government be formed on the basis of that consideration, rather than that of compensating all those who made it possible for the majority (AMP¹) to win. There would have been a need to concentrate the available resources rather than spread them too thin. Government should have been smaller (18 people, for example) rather than elephantine at 60 people. The order of priorities should have been rigorously linked to the requirement of getting the country out of the catastrophic situation. Members of government should have been selected in terms of their personal and political commitment to save the country, as well as their competence in handling necessary tasks. The focus should have been on the mobilization, empowerment and motivation of the Congolese working people.
3. The Budget was, thus, not responding to the requirements of the situation. Almost everyone criticized the unrealistic character of the Budget. Even the five areas (five *chantiers*) selected as priorities by the Head of State were budgeted at 26.3% of the Budget. Once again, close to half the budget came from outside financing sources. In relation to last year, a slight improvement in internal resources financing was made.
4. Our friends of the civil society (GAT/OCAP²) have made a good breakdown analysis—a copy has been sent to the website: www.otabenga.org/. A number of conclusions can be drawn from that analysis. The separation of powers (executive, legislative and judiciary) does not entertain the idea of equality. The executive gets a much bigger part of the budget, followed by the legislative power, with the judiciary having almost half of that of the legislative. The ratio of powers, in terms of the budget, is 24 to 6 to 3. Due to the changes being introduced through the new Constitution—decentralization and the need to eradicate impunity—the budget allocated to the judiciary is just insufficient. That factor alone is impunity generative and supportive. Courts will simply not eradicate corruption. Of the part that is allocated to the executive, almost half of it goes to the Presidency alone. This factor leads to what Bemba's party (MLC³) has referred to as a tendency towards the presidentialization of the regime, while the latter is supposed to be semi-presidential. The fact that most of the resources allocated for security go to the Presidency is conducive to making security a “*domaine réservé du Président*” as in the times of Mobutu's imperial presidency.
5. The country is in a catastrophic situation with 82% of the population living under the poverty line of one dollar per day. People have almost no access to health services, nutritious

food, decent housing, potable water, etc. In some families children eat by turn, the one who eats on Monday can eat again maybe on Friday. Some people go searching for something to eat in the rich people's garbage. The number of people who are treated by herbalists—charlatans or good ones—is growing. This explains, in part, why there are about 2000 people who die daily. Malaria, very much developed by the fast reproduction of mosquitoes due to the insalubrious environment, is the leading cause of death. Each family is struggling to get a son or a daughter abroad so that he/she can send a few dollars each month. Western Union is the most visited money institution. The day that a government closes it will lead to a revolt. Despite all this, the Budget hardly responded to that situation.

6. The key to our self-development is the effort that is required to make 60 million Congolese the best force of development. The educational structures are now in great crisis, not only do they need to be revamped, they have to be increased in quantity and improved in quality. Although in relation to the past the allocation for Education has been increased to 11% of the Budget, this won't make much change at all.

The health of the citizens is given only 3.4% of the Budget. Just a visit to hospitals in Kinshasa—with patients sleeping outside on the ground—makes one realize the health situation here. Competent personnel exist, but they are poorly paid and lack motivation. Doctors are emigrating, especially to South Africa. Health policy is almost non-existent. Of 3000 pharmacies in Kinshasa, only 37 meet quality standards. This means that most of them are shops of drugs that are not checked. They are spreading death. A dispensary in Masina recently had to be closed because each case it treated died. Compared to other countries, women dying due to birth complications is high. Due to stresses of daily survival and poor nutrition, cases of people dying of hypertension are rising.

7. The housing policy, in a country of growing urban population, is not well articulated. The budget for housing was put at 0.134% of the Budget. Recently, in Kinshasa, supposedly to clean the city, the Governor has been tearing down houses and huts which people supposedly built illegally, leaving them without housing. Feelings are running very high, and with momentum, some of these things are going to lead to an uprising. This takes place in a world where it is now possible to build a house, with pre-fabricated materials, in 45 minutes. No attention is given to the modernization of traditional houses, using local materials. Very little support is given to the Habitat organization.

8. The great difference in treatment between the city and the countryside (kept out of "civilisation") is hardly addressed by government. While Pygmies who belong to some Bantu, in Ituri for example, are much worse off, rural people are not necessarily much better than that; they hardly have access to potable water. The penetration of capital in the country side led to the destruction of streams of potable water which people used. Efforts are made in some areas, but in the main, the conditions remain very bad. Agriculture is one area that could deal with the issue. There is a project for producing bio-carburant from a tree (puluka) that peasants would find easy to grow and would make money on the order of \$1000 per year for 100 trees, but it has not gotten the attention of government. Agriculture has been allocated 0.77%; and rural development (note that up to 70% of the population live in the rural area; this is changing with wars) is allocated only 0.66% of the Budget. The ratio of agriculture to National defence is close to 1 to 8.

9. Water and electricity services get only 4.6 % of the Budget. So many promises were made to people about improving their access to electricity and water. There is simply no way that

something significant will be done. All social sectors combined received only 20% of the Budget.

10. The Budget does not deal explicitly with the requirements of decentralization.

11. Many things could be said of the Budget; we cannot say them all here. The exercise of elaborating such Budget was just a bureaucratic continuation. There is nothing that would suggest a break with the past. This should have required the regime to find creative ways of increasing the resources. Insufficient attention has been given to fiscal reform and to identifying sectors that do not pay taxes. Taxes on property, such as housing, are hardly dealt with. The American company exploiting oil off-shore at Muanda does not pay taxes. (The Energy Minister said to the transitional Senate that the government did not have access to the company's accounting books and thus had no way of knowing how much the company owes the government.) The destruction of the city like Kisangani by the military confrontation Rwanda-Uganda (1999) should allow the government to ask those governments to pay for its reconstruction. Looters, identified by the UN expert panel, should also be made to return what they looted. When a person, without any real income to talk about, becomes a billionaire in 5 years, this should be scrutinized. The requirement that people elected to offices present a statement of their property before entering office was made a joke of. Sealed envelopes were received in lieu of public statements. And there is no way to verify anything. When a country is in the hands of looters, the Budget becomes a joke. In the past, those overdrawing their accounts of the Budget were hardly taken to task. The National Budget remains the arena of class struggles. The class of looters, supported from outside, is winning. People are not empowered to have control over the national resources.

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Kinshasa, le 28 juillet 2007.

¹ Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et le Démocratie—Joseph Kabila's party

² Great Apes Trust/Ontario Coalition Against Poverty

³ Mouvement de libération de Congo