

Russia Pledges Support to Conflict-Stricken African Countries



By Kester Kenn Klomegah

MOSCOW, January 10, 2016 (Business Africa) -- In its end-of-year official report, the Russian Foreign Ministry indicated that Russia, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, has made a substantial contribution to resolving conflicts and crises in Mali, Somalia, Sudan and the Central African Republic and many other African countries.

Russia also provided targeted humanitarian relief aid to Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Cameroon. The report, however, did not state the total amount that was spent on humanitarian aid to Africa in 2015.

With regards to health, Russia's contribution to the international effort to fight the deadly Ebola virus in West Africa (mainly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) was estimated at around \$60 million, according to an international department head of Russia's health watchdog Rospotrebnadzor.

Russia continues participating in the joint effort to create a vaccine against the Ebola virus, which is expected to be ready for mass use in early 2016, the director of the Health Ministry's department Marina Shevyreva said. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the deadly Ebola virus has killed some 11,300 people in West Africa.

Last February, to ease the situation of refugees who have been streaming from neighboring states into Cameroon, the Russian government delivered provided food aid for refugees amounting to US\$ 2.5 million (1.3 billion CFA francs).

According to statistics issued by the Cameroon government and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, around 300,000 refugees from Nigeria and the Central African Republic have sought refuge in Cameroon.

The Republic of Burundi on May 13 last year saw a coup attempt and as a result threw the country into chaos. Burundi descended into violence after President Pierre Nkurunziza announced he was running for a third term. The decision to run for a third term in office was seen by opponents as a contradiction to the constitution. Coup leader General Niyombare is currently on the run. The failure of their coup bid and re-election of Nkurunziza have not stopped the unrest in the country.

Over the past years, Russia has played pivotal roles in helping resolve many multi-faceted conflicts on the continent. For instance last September, there was a three-way consultation, the first time within this format, with the participation of Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour and South Sudanese Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Benjamin Barnaba, to utilize the "Moscow platform" to continue the dialogue on the issues that remain in the relations between the two states.

The joint meeting made some important decisions by the Sudanese and South Sudanese foreign ministers, above all, regarding the need to implement – to the maximum degree and as soon as possible – all the provisions of the document on the inter-Sudanese settlement that were signed over the past two or three years.

Russia welcomed the efforts to stabilize the situation in the Republic of South Sudan, where a conflict has been ongoing since 2013, as well as the signing of a peace agreement between the South Sudanese government and the opposition last August.

Russia supported them to continue advocating for a political, diplomatic settlement of all outstanding issues, among other things, by following a corresponding approach at the UN Security Council.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, meeting separately with the Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Ministers from Rwanda, Congo and Madagascar last year, stressed Russia's preparedness to boost humanitarian aid to natural and man-made disasters regions as well as continue helping to find lasting solutions to conflicts in Africa.

"We agree that various conflicts in Africa require heightened attention of the world community and the UN, primarily in order to support the approaches of Africans who know better than others how to approach complicated issues on their continent," Lavrov told Rwandan Louise Mushikiwabo during a joint media conference held last October in Moscow.

They further shared opinions on the events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the African Great Lakes Region as a whole, the Horn of Africa, the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

As always, Russia has agreed on the need to contribute to the subregional organizations on

the continent and to continue consolidating the peacemaking potential of the African Union (AU). In addition, Russia regularly provides funds for the annual training of about 80 peacemakers from African countries.

"We will help strengthen the peacekeeping potential of African countries in the form of training peacekeepers from African countries and helping them equip their peacekeeping contingents," Lavrov said in January last year after talks with Burundi Foreign Minister Laurent Kavakure.

In all discussions and consultations held throughout 2015, both African and Russian sides have had in-depth exchange of opinions on key issues on the African agenda with a particular focus on easing crisis situations in Africa.

Russian President Vladimir Putin stressed at a previous ceremony when receiving credentials from ambassadors of several foreign countries, including diplomats of several African states, that Russia has planned to give all necessary humanitarian assistance to conflict-stricken African countries. **(Source: Business Africa)**