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Once again, the technical committees of the inter Congolese dialogue in Pretoria is the headline of the newspapers in Kinshasa this Monday 3 March 2003.

Moustapha Niasse tries to iron out the outstanding differences, announces LA REFERENCE PLUS, highlighting that the Pretoria discussions have reached a critical stage with the indirect negotiations conducted by the mediation's experts. Quoting a source close to the mediation, the paper reports that "*parties positions in both committees are still divergent*". MLC representative, Alexis Thambwe Mwamba, who indicated that five points of divergence persist in the constitutional text, gave the confirmation. The issues are, the paper notes, "*about the nationality, the source of legitimacy during the transition, amnesty, decentralizing and the emblems*". The military issue remains unresolved, highlights the paper explaining that "*In response to government experts' position advocating the convening of a meeting between the three forces' army staff... MLC maintains that the meeting between military experts do not have the power to address issues such as power sharing in the new joint army staff*". In clearer terms, the paper says "*following the example of the political power sharing last December, MLC wants the power sharing for the military command of the new army be discussed in the South African capital*".

LE PHARE proposing a similar analysis put forward that "*the atmosphere among the parties, especially between the belligerents*" in Pretoria is full of distrust. "*Owing to the signs of deadlock noted from Kinshasa officers, especially the refusal by the latter to accept the merging of the armies, the transition constitution as a new source for legitimating power and the security of the transition institutions by a neutral force, other parties dread a dirty trick*", writes the paper.

L'AVENIR, in turn, expects the debates within the constitutional committee to hit a snag over the issue about nationality, noting that we still need to distinguish "*who is Congolese from who is not*". According to the paper, those who are for the logic of recognizing the Congolese nationality to the Rwandans settled as well as those who found refuge in refugees the DRC also agree with the wording: "*A Congolese is any individual having one of his ancestors in the Congolese territory since 1960*".

Following the committee's equivocation, FORUM DES AS reveals, in turn, that, the mediation has taken away the files from the Congolese. "*From now on, the Congolese would only have to provide their amendments to the mediation that is in*

charge of smoothing the rough edges awaiting the plenary to exercise an option without necessarily opening the debate”, the paper explains.

LA TEMPETE DES TROPIQUES announces a danger hanging over the next Wednesday Plenary in Pretoria, and highlights that *“the belligerents are dragging their feet ... while the mediator is more concerned about his political future in Senegal”*. For the paper, the failure of the session is *“ all the more predictable that the belligerent parties do not show any political will to put an end to the crisis... and due to the fact that the political opposition and the civil society do not actually play their role, consisting in pushing the belligerents forward”*. The paper further indicates that *“the assumption is so threatening that the mediator Moustapha Niasse, after setting out a working methodology, flew to his native Senegal, leaving the Congolese to flounder”*. The paper infers that *“ the former Senegalese Prime minister seems more concerned about the political situation in his country”*.

The European Union rushes to the problem committees’ aids, reports L’AVENIR, noting that *“this is to help the committees to proceed faster than the EU by jumping into water”*. It therefore held separate meetings last weekend, with the members of the different parties sitting in Pretoria, with a view to *“ reconciling one another’s views in order to accelerate the working rhythm”*.

Barring accidents, the conclusion of the inter Congolese dialogue is due on 15 March at Sun City, announces LE POTENTIEL, adding that the Facilitator of the Inter Congolese Dialogue, Ketumile Masire *“ is said to have already earmarked his budget and would then be ready to convene the plenary for the ratification of the global and inclusive Agreement”*. The paper further says that, the mediation and the third party are, in turn, determined to close the Pretoria session on Wednesday, 5 March, *“ even until midnight”*. Some belligerents seem to be convinced, following the example of the MLC affirming through Alexis Thambwe Mwamba that *“ the plenary will certainly take place on Wednesday. The constitution will be ratified, even at one minute to midnight and we would have set up a minimum framework for the formation of the army”*. This is also Vital Kamerhe’s position, the Congolese General Commissioner, who declared *“there is every reason to believe in a happy outcome of the Pretoria 4”*. The paper further reminds that the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his 13th report on Monuc, *“urges the signatory to the Pretoria Agreement to swiftly adopt the transition constitution”*.

LE POTENTIEL suggests a special report on Radio Okapi, the United Nations Radio in the Congo and notes that this radio *“is to date, the radio that has the largest audience in the Congolese territory. “The audience gained by the UN radio is not only due to the administration, nor the highly performing equipment used to this end but more particularly to the Journalists running the program”*, the paper reports.

Some papers raise the situation in Ituri and indicate new fights in the region. LE PHARE reports 300 people killed in Ituri in 5 days as a result of the armed attacks allegedly carried out by Ugandan soldiers, the Fac and RCD-ML on Thomas Lubanga’s troops. The paper further indicates quoting independent sources that *“ heavily armed soldiers, difficult to identify at the present stage, have been attacking Lubanga’s positions since 18 February 2003”*.