

H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General of the United Nations
Room S-3800
United Nations
New York

24th November 2008

Dear Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon,

I am writing to you on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security with regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In particular, we seek your leadership at this crucial time and encourage you to ensure that the specific concerns of women and girls in DRC are addressed.

As you know, more than 250,000 civilians have been forced from their homes in North Kivu during the past two months of fighting, bringing the total number of displaced people in the province to at least 1.2 million. All sides to the conflict have committed international crimes, and since combat resumed in August, at least 100 civilians have been killed. In the last week alone, over 66 women were treated for rape in Kanyabayonga, a town north of Rutshuru in North Kivu. These represent only a fraction of the crimes of sexual violence being committed throughout the region.

The UN has taken a strong position on the need to protect civilians in this conflict, most recently through Security Council resolution 1843 of 20 November. Through resolution 1820 (2008) on Women Peace and Security, the Security Council has stressed the need for crimes of sexual violence to be excluded from amnesty provisions, and has called on member states, including the DRC, to ensure that the perpetrators of these actions are held accountable. The Security Council also has requested you to develop effective strategies to enhance the ability of UN peacekeeping operations to protect civilians from all forms of sexual violence.

In this context, we therefore applaud the Security Council's decision last week to provide much-needed troops to the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC). We urge you to help ensure that these troops are deployed rapidly, that they are briefed on widespread use of sexual violence as a tool of war in the DRC, and that they fulfill their mandate to protect civilians from this violence.

The UN system and member states have repeatedly committed to ensuring women's full participation in peace processes, as a matter of peace and security. Following the open debate on Women Peace and Security in October, the Security Council re-affirmed the core message of resolution 1325 (2000), and urged "Member States, international, regional and sub-regional organizations to take measures to increase the participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding and to strengthen the role of women as decision-makers in these areas." We have yet to see concrete action.

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security therefore suggests that you consult with, *inter alia*, your Special Representative Alan Doss, your Special Envoy Olusegun Obasanjo, and member states to ensure the following:

While the conflict is still occurring

- All MONUC peacekeeping and humanitarian personnel receive the necessary training and resources, and are configured, to effectively fulfill their mandate to actively protect civilians from sexual and other forms of violence, in line with Security Council resolutions 1794 and 1843 on the DRC and 1820 on Women Peace and Security.

- MONUC peacekeeping personnel provide safe corridors for humanitarian aid, in order to ensure that the UN and non-governmental humanitarian workers can continue to assist the vast number of internally displaced persons in the country.
- MONUC, and the Group of Experts established pursuant to resolution 1771, are provided with the necessary resources to effectively gather, examine and analyze all relevant information on the flows of arms and materiel in violation of the measures provided in Security Council resolution 1807 on the DRC. This includes information about “serious violations of international law involving the targeting of children or women in situations of armed conflict, including killing and maiming, sexual violence, abduction and forced displacement.”

Throughout the negotiations

- Your Special Representative, your Special Envoy and their staff are actively working to ensure the substantive participation of women’s representatives in all current and future peace negotiations, including any informal discussions prior to formal negotiations. In practice this will require the provision of transportation, security, and if necessary care for the families of the local women representatives.
- Peace agreements for DRC do not include amnesty provisions for crimes under international law, including crimes of sexual violence.

To overcome impunity, the final peace accords

- Establish an independent and effective vetting process for members of the police and military forces and civilian personnel that will exclude or suspend those reasonably suspected of crimes under international law, including sexual violence, or other human rights abuses from these forces.
- Express support for the prosecution of crimes under international law including sexual violence.
- Promote women’s active participation in the rebuilding of their communities through electoral processes, economic empowerment, and representation in the judiciary.

The NGO Working Group appreciates UN efforts within the last two years in response to women peace and security concerns, such as the formation of the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the appointment of MONUC’s Senior Adviser/Coordinator on Sexual Violence. We now urge you to take into account the views of women in DRC as expressed in the attached Declaration, delivered in Cape Town on 15 November 2008, and we look forward to your engagement on our recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

SARAH TAYLOR, COORDINATOR, NGO WORKING GROUP ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
 BOSTON CONSORTIUM ON GENDER, SECURITY
 AND HUMAN RIGHTS
 FEMMES AFRICA SOLIDARITE
 GLOBAL ACTION TO PREVENT WAR
 GLOBAL JUSTICE CENTER
 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

INTERNATIONAL ALERT
 INTERNATIONAL ACTION NETWORK ON SMALL ARMS
 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S TRIBUNE CENTER
 PEACE BOAT U.S.
 WOMEN’S ACTION FOR NEW DIRECTIONS
 WOMEN’S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND
 FREEDOM

CONGOLESE WOMEN'S DECLARATION AT AWID FORUM

Cape Town, 15 November 2008

1. As representatives of women's organizations from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), gathered at the 11th International AWID Forum on "women's rights and development" held in Cape Town, from 14th to 17th November 2008;
2. Revolted by the repeated wars, in particular the recent one led by Laurent Nkunda and its National Congress for People's Defense (CNDP) against public institutions established after long political negotiations (1999-2003), legitimized by the new Constitution and the 2006 elections;
3. We denounce the support to CNDP from external forces through neighboring countries which signed peace agreements in the Great Lakes region;
4. We denounce CNDP attacks targeting civilians who are not actively involved in war, particularly women and children. We also denounce human rights abuses perpetrated by all armed groups including DRC army (FARDC), in violation of the Goma peace agreement signed in January 2008.
5. We request a declaration of solidarity from the more than two thousand women meeting in this 11th AWID Forum; in order to end the war in the DRC. We are convinced that if women across the world show their solidarity to Congolese women against the war; ourselves and our families will be spared;
6. We ask all nations across the globe to take note of the holocaust of the millennium which is happening right now in the DRC, with total indifference and lack of concern from the international community. Six million of deaths, two millions internally displaced, thousands of raped women and girls;
7. We are calling upon the United Nations and African Union to immediately act to protect civilians, due to the DRC government's limit to do so.

Aimee Mwadi Kady, (SWAA-RDC) Anne Marie Ramazani, SOS FEC ; Annie Bukaraba, Caucus des femmes du Sud Kivu Annie Matundu, Women International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF-RDC) Audry Shematsi, Action Aid, Nord Kivu Aurelie Bitondo, Réseau des femmes africaines ministres et parlementaires/ Caucus du Sud Kivu Françoise Mukuku, Si Jeunesse Savait ; Gege Katana, Solidarité des Femmes pour (SOFAD) Gertrude Biaya Ndaya, Centre Féminin de Formation et d'Information pour le Développement (CEFIDE) ; Isidore Kashiba, Fontaine d'Espoir pour Filles et Femmes (FEFF) ; Jacqueline Mapatano, Réseau des Femmes pour un Développement Associatif (RFDA) ; Jacqueline Musugani Nyangoma, Initiatives des Femmes en situation difficiles pour le développement intégré, (IFESIDI) ; Josephine Ngalula, Réseau Action Femme, (RAF) ; Julienne Lusenge, (SOFEPADI) Kapanga Ntumba, Ligues des Femmes pour la Justice ; Lutha Bisumbula, Réseau d'Organisations des Droits humains et d'Education Civique d'Inspiration Chrétienne (RODHECIC) ; Marie Kusa, Fondation Orphelinat au Congo ; Mathurine Luzolo Luyoka, Mutualité des volontaires africaines pour le développement ; Monique Kaseya, Initiatives pour le développement de l'entrepreneuriat féminin (IDEF) Nicole Odia Kayembe, Action Contre l'Impunité pour les Droits Humains (ACIDH) ; Pierre Panda, GRAIFA