

To: The President of the United Nations Security Council

Cc: The members of the UNSC; the Secretary-General of the United Nations

RE: Peace and conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Conflict in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo is at a crisis point. Vulnerable communities are bearing the brunt through deaths, sexual violence, humanitarian crisis and displacement. As civil society<sup>1</sup> organisations working in DRC, we call on the Security Council to take urgent, stronger and more sustained action towards peace.

Conflict is estimated to have cost [6 million lives](#) since 1996. Since the beginning of 2023, nearly [1 million](#) people have been newly displaced<sup>2</sup> – with over [900,000 displaced](#) in the North Kivu province alone since March 2022. The overall number of people displaced in DRC hit a record high of [6.9 million](#) in October. Women and girls are severely impacted, as [sexual and gender-based violence](#) is high and rising. Children are being kidnapped or recruited by armed groups and many have not had a stable home or education for two years. Armed violence present in the region is increasing, amid an already hyper-militarised context. Moreover, greater flows of arms and ammunition, and the continuing “state of siege” in Ituri and North Kivu provinces are only exacerbating the situation.

Elections in DRC have historically been challenging, and those scheduled for December 2023 heighten risks to an already dire situation. Frustrations are growing among people prevented or intimidated from registering to vote or campaigning due to insecurity. There are increasing concerns that credible elections cannot be held in many areas of the east, which is likely to further increase violence.

We acknowledge the efforts made by the Security Council member states and others to support and improve political processes in the region, and the role of MONUSCO in eastern DRC. However, more must be done, and urgently, to avoid a disaster.

This conflict has slipped too far down the international agenda and the people of eastern DRC are paying the highest price. **We urge you to bring key actors together, at the highest levels and including civil society, for a political solution in the region.** Reform of DRC’s security sector is crucial, as is a strong political strategy for the eastern part of the country. Many actors inside and outside the country continue to pursue interests that are contrary to peace, such as benefiting from the exploitation of resources sustained by violence, at a tragically high cost to local populations. **We ask the Security Council to press the facilitators and participants of the Nairobi and Luanda processes to move beyond short-term interests and stalemates to build solutions that put peace and security for eastern DRC’s population first.**

These political efforts need to be much more inclusive and led by the expertise of local peacebuilders and civil society. The Security Council has made repeated commitments to inclusive peace efforts, but we have not seen this result in inclusive peace in reality. **We ask the Security Council to call this out and press harder for genuine inclusion of civil society, especially women and young people from eastern DRC itself, in the peace processes.** Civil society participation produces both better solutions and greater pressure on often self-interested elite political actors to find those solutions. It is vital and urgent to enact this option.

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<sup>1</sup> We define civil society as local, national and international organisations and local communities.

<sup>2</sup> According to the International Organization for Migration’s (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

Civil society in DRC requires urgent additional support for its crucial work on the ground. Amid the conflict, thousands of brave individuals and organisations continue to work hard to improve community security, collect evidence on and respond to emerging crises, reduce recruitment to armed groups, and build trust between populations, maintaining vital strands of the Great Lakes region of Africa's fragile social fabric. MONUSCO's accelerated transition and withdrawal amid escalating levels of conflict, make this work even more important. **We ask the Security Council to guarantee sustained, flexible and committed international support for peacebuilding alongside, and integrated with, responses to the region's urgent development and humanitarian needs.**

The international community's supervision and monitoring of the MONUSCO withdrawal is crucial. This process must proceed according to the priorities of communities who will be most directly affected and include direct support to those communities to build their capacities and minimise the potential security vacuum. **We ask the Security Council to provide assurance and proof that the voices and priorities of civil society in DRC will be considered in the process of the MONUSCO withdrawal, including in the upcoming United Nations Security Council debate.**

The people of eastern DRC need peace above all else. After decades of conflict, their needs must come first. We urge you to put these issues at the top of the Security Council's agenda and to take the urgent actions necessary for peace to be built and sustained.

Yours sincerely,

Action Aid International

Action pour le Développement des Milieux Ruraux (ADMR)

Action Solidaire pour la Paix (ASP)

Acudi Peace and Gender

AFIA MAMA Asbl

Aide et Action pour la Paix (AAP)

AIDPROFEN

Bureau de Soutien pour la Consolidation de la Paix en RDC

Caucus des Femmes

Centre Résolution Conflits

Children of Congo Foundation (CCF)

Congolese Family for Joy (CFJ)

Cordaid

Deutsche Welthungerhilfe e. V. (WHH)

Dynamique des Organisations pour le Bien (DOBS) - network with 300 members

Fondation Chirezi

Forum de Paix de Beni

Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS) UK

Give Directly

Habari RDC

HIVE

Idée Géniale

Initiative pour un Leadership Cohésif (ILC)

International Alert

Justice Plus

L'Association pour un Développement Communautaire Intégré (ADCI)

La Dynamic des Femmes Juristes (DFJ)

Laissez L'Afrique Vivre (LAV)

Le BVES (Bureau pour le Volontariat au service de l'Enfance et de la Santé)

Le Cadre Provincial de Plaidoyer pour la Paix du Nord-Kivu – network with 45 members

Le Guichet d'Economie Locale du Sud-Kivu (GEL Sud-Kivu)

Le Réseau Congolais des Artisans de Paix (RECAP)

Le Réseau des Cadres de Concertation Intercommunautaire (RCCI)

Life and Peace Institute

National Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding (NPCYP)

Nobel Women's Initiative

Observatoire Gouvernance et Paix (OGP)

Oxfam

Peace Direct

People in Need

Pole Institute

Réseau des Associations Congolaises des Jeunes (RACOJ) Sud-Kivu

Réseau d'Associations pour la promotion des Droits de la Femme (RAPDFEM) - network with 20 members

Réseau des Femmes Ambassadrices et Médiatrices des Territoires pour la Paix (REFAM-TP) - network with 55 members

Réseau D'Innovation Organisationelle (RIO)

Sauti ya Mama Mukongomani (SMM)

Save Communities in Conflicts

Search For Common Ground

Service, Par, Pour et Avec les Femmes (SEPPAF)

Solidarite des Femmes de Fizi pour le Bien-Etre Familial (SOFIBEF)

Solidarité des Volontaires pour l'Humanité (SVH)

Solidarité Féminine pour la paix et le développement intégral (SOFEPADI)

Tearfund

Trócaire

Umoja in Action

Union des Juristes Engagés pour les Opprimés, la Paix et le Développement (UJEOPAD)

War Child

Women for Women International

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) UK