



Stockholm 2010-12-21

Dear Catherine Ashton,

Despite the fact that the civil war was officially ending in 2003, the gender based violence in D. R Congo has been a pervasive problem with over 500 000 woman being raped and tortured. This letter urge for the necessity to see the relationship between the ongoing conflict and the violence against women. That is, in order to end sexual violence against women, the conflict must end which requires an end to impunity inside the Congo and a refocus on the underlying causes to the conflict.

As EU is a key actor in the international community and a major aid donor to DR Congo, this letter would like to emphasize the European Union's role for the future development of the country.

However, a cursory look at the policies that have been prescribed or implemented reveals that almost every policy option tried, has avoided core grassroots women recommendations. Policies implemented by the international community are marked by a reluctance to pressure U.S. and British allies Rwanda and Uganda. Also, in spite of the myriad United Nations studies, there has been deadly silence around the role of western mining interests in the perpetuation of the conflict.

In the United Nations 54th Commission on the Status of Women, a delegation with Congolese women representing both government and non-government sectors as well as different provinces of the country shared the following prescriptions to bring an end to the conflict:

1. Call for an Inter-Rwandan dialogue between Rwanda's Tutsi leadership and Hutu rebels inside Congo. There are no military solutions to what is essentially a political crisis.
2. Opening and expansion of democratic space inside both Rwanda and Uganda so their internal conflicts will cease being fought on the bodies of Congolese women.
3. Greater participation in political life and the decision-making process on the part of Congolese women.
4. Redirection of focus on the part of the global community from targeting the symptoms or effects of the conflict to addressing the root causes - primarily a foreign resource war being waged inside Congo to the detriment of innocent civilians.

Best regards,

Gertrud Åström,
President, Swedish Women's Lobby

Mia Fahlén
President, Swedish Medical Women's Association.