

Opened letter by Congolese Diaspora women

To Johnnie Carson
Outgoing Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
United States of America (U.S.A)

Dear Mr Carson,

We are writing to you with regards to the current U.S.A policy position on “Lasting Solution to Instability” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (D.R.C), which you presented on 11th February 2013 at the Brookings Institution, in Washington, DC, USA.

Although we welcomed your call for greater attention to and response to the ongoing crisis in the D.R.C, however, we are alarmed and extremely concerned by your statement *in italic* below that implies that the only way forward to resolving the crisis in the D.R.C is an international effort similar to that achieved in Yugoslavia and Sudan in which the two countries were broken apart.

"Clearly, a sophisticated and internationally backed solution is the only way forward. We were able to achieve such a solution to end the conflict in the former Yugoslavia through the Dayton Accords. We were able to end Africa's longest running civil war, the conflict in Sudan, through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that was negotiated by the IGAD states and supported by the United States, Norway, and Great Britain."[Johnnie Carson].

We are extremely concerned by this neocolonial vision of the U.S.A imposed upon the populations of the D.R.C, in addressing issues of peace and security in the Great Lakes region of Africa. While the U.S.A has been resolving issues of peace and security in its 50 states as well as supporting the unity of European countries under the European Union of 27 states; the U.S.A is promoting the dismemberment of countries in Africa.

We recall the 1884-1885 Berlin conference that partitioned Africa map without the presence of any African individual or representative of communities. We commemorate the 19th century genocide of Millions of Congolese, perpetuated by the members of the International African Association, under the command of Leopold II of Belgium; who used forced labor to gather wild rubber from vines and enforce quota by the cutting off of heads or hands of recalcitrant Congolese populations.

We invoke the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1956 Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that recognise the right of all peoples to exist, to live in peace and dignity, to self-determination, to freely determine their political status, to pursue their economic, social and cultural goals, as well as to manage and dispose of their own resources.

We cite the following reports that detail international crimes committed in DR Congo and Great Lakes Region of Africa since 1994:

- The 2012 UN Group of Experts (Hege) report on the ongoing role played by Rwanda and Uganda in directing proxy militia groups in the D.R.Congo.
- The 2010 "Mapping Project" report by the UN HCHR on serious violations of human rights and international laws committed between 1993 and 2003 in the D.R.Congo.
- The 2009 Mukwege & Nangini report on Rape with Extreme Violence: a weapon of war, of destruction and displacement in the D.R.Congo.
- The 2008 report by UN experts showing the involvement of several companies in the financing of the conflicts D.R.Congo and particular the armed groups.
- The 2005 UN SC resolution 1756 recognising the specific link between illicit trade of natural resources and the proliferation of arms trafficking in the D.R.Congo.
- The 2006 Lutundula report on illegal mining and contracts in the D.R.Congo.
- The 2004 UN Security Council resolution 1533, on the illicit flow of weapons in the D.R.Congo and arms embargo on all foreign and Congolese forces.
- The 2002 Kassem report on the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources in the R.D.Congo
- The 1994 Gersony report on mass killings by Rwandan Patriotic Front led by Paul Kagame after their military victory in the civil war post-genocide Rwanda.

The crimes committed in the DR Congo since 1997 breach articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Rome Statute defined as crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, sexual violence, persecution and forced displacement; and war crimes. The consecutive armed conflicts that are fought in the DRC are proxy wars sponsored by multinational corporations for the illegal access and control of coltan, cassiterite, beryllium, niobium, andesine, europium ruthenium (used in aeronautic and space industry), oil, diamonds, gold, zinc, cobalt, copper, silver, cadmium, uranium, and other rare and new metals of exceptional concentration in the DRC's soil. The mining of these natural resources are often undertaken in inhuman and unsafe conditions, by men, women as well as children who are exploited, treated without human dignity and often forced into labour under the guns.

Under the pretext of self-defense, Rwanda officially invaded the D.R.C since 1994 and engaged in genocidal killings of civilians, Congolese and Rwandan refugees, and took this opportunity to plunder D.R.C natural resources. This incited the "convoitise" of other countries bordering the DRC, including Uganda. This gave rise to a regional war on Congolese soil, which included more than seven foreign countries, including the Rwandan and Ugandan armed forces that fought each other in a fierce battle in Kisangani in 1999 and 2000 with total international impunity, despite numerous reports on innocent Congolese civilian casualties and sexual violence committed by their troops.

We invoke the United Nations Security Council resolution 1674 (2006) on the protection of civilians in armed conflict and resolutions 1493 (2003), 1596 and 1616 (2005) 1698 (2006), 1768 (2007) 1771 (2007 -2008) on arms embargoes against armed groups in eastern DRC.

We cite the United Nations Security Council resolution 1794 (2007) that stresses that the protection of civilians must be given priority when deciding on the use and capabilities of available resources and stated that the UN Security Council Mission to use all necessary means to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence

We note the lack of accountability of the U.S.A as one of the five permanent members of U.N Security Council who promoted and voted for the 1994 UN Security Council Resolution 929 Operation Turquoise on humanitarian situation in Rwanda and the lack of a political will to end the armed conflicts in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, by organising effective interRwandan and interUgandan dialogues necessary for peace, security, good governance, economic development and stability in the region.

We recall the July 2009 President Obama speech in Ghana, where he publicly recognised the need for a new approach and a clean break neocolonial practices; stating that the U.S.A must support “*strong institutions*” in Africa, “*not strongmen*”. We are therefore disappointed that this vision for changes in USA foreign policy approaches for Africa has a double standard. The U.S.A is currently demonstrating by favoring a military agenda, hence promoting armed violence as the only way to access political and economic power in the Great Lakes Region of Africa.

We are concerned that the U.S.A is not taking stronger steps in holding Rwanda and Uganda regimes accountable for their support to proxy wars and crimes committed in the DRC– by not Sanctioning Rwanda at the UN for violating UN sanctions regime and arms embargo inside the Congo, by not withholding of further military aid, not placing both the Rwandan government and its high-level officials named in the UN reports on the sanctions list, and not investigating whether the Leahy Amendment has been violated in U.S. training of Rwandan troops.

We therefore denounce the U.S.A obvious support and promotion of the authoritarian nature of regimes in both Rwanda and Uganda, regardless of reports demonstrating evidence of their significant destructive role in the D.R.C over the past sixteen years. Not only both Rwanda and Uganda governments have militarised political space inside their respective countries, they have also exported this militarisation to the D.R.C to the detriment of the Congolese civilian populations.

We decry the neocolonial and paternalist visions imposed upon the populations of the D.R.C, under the 24th February 2013 signed Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation Agreement drafted under the leadership of the U.S.A without any national consultations in the D.R.C and based on policies that favors the international economic interest of multinational corporations.

Recalling the UN SC Resolutions 1325 and 1820 adopted by the UN Security Council on Women, Peace and Security; Diaspora Congolese Women call on the U.S.A to:

1. Demonstrate a political will to end the conflict in the Great Lakes Region of Africa
2. Sanction Rwanda and Uganda at the UN for violating UN sanctions regime and arms embargo by arming the rebel militia inside the Congo, and not respecting the protocols signed by heads of states of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.
2. Submit the names of the top-level Rwandan officials named in the UN Group of Experts report starting with Rwandan Defense Minister James Kaberebe; chief of defense staff Charles Kayonga; and General Jacques Nziza, military adviser to Kagame. Section 8 of UN Resolution 2076 says "Expresses its intention to consider additional targeted sanctions, in accordance with the criteria set out in resolution 1857 (2008), against the leadership of the M23 and [those providing external support to the M23] and those acting in violation of the sanctions regime and the arms embargo, and calls on all Member States to submit, as a matter of urgency, listing proposals to the 1533 Committee.
3. Take similar action in the U.S.A House of Representative to compliment the Senate's Amendment 3199 to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) calling for imposing an asset freeze and visa ban on those supporting the M23.
4. For the U.S.A president to add to the existing Department of Treasury sanctions list under Executive Order 13413, top level officials in the Rwandan and Ugandan government named in the UN Group of Experts report.
5. Withhold further aid from Rwanda until the UN Group of Experts and the U.S. government have credible evidence that the Rwandan government no longer supports rebel militia in the D.R.C.
6. Initiate an inquiry to discover whether the Leahy Amendment is being violated as a result of U.S.A military support for the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries.
7. Amend public Law 109-456 to make it a requirement for the Secretary of State to withhold aid from Congo's neighbors who destabilize the Congo. The current law authorizes the Secretary of State to withhold aid but does not require that the Secretary of State withhold aid from Congo's neighbors.
8. Per section 102 (3) of PL 109-456, support democratic institutions in the D.R.C via technical, financial and training resources in order to buttress local efforts to expand democratic space and strengthen democratic institutions in the Congo.
9. Elevate the profile of the UN Mapping exercise report at the United Nations and request that the U.S.A Ambassador to the UN make the implementation of the report recommendations a priority.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 2013

10. Although many policy institutes have called for a reform of Congo's Security Sector, there cannot be any successful reform of the security sector without reform of the political sector. The U.S.A government should support reformation of Congo's electoral commission and assure via aid conditionality that the constitution is not changed to extend the term of the Presidency.

Thank you

Yours Sincerely,

Diaspora Congolese Women immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers from Belgium, Canada, France, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America

Cc: D.R.C President, Mr Joseph Kabila

Cc: U.S.A President, Mr Barack Obama

Cc: UN SG, Mr Ban Kin Moon.

Cc: D.R.C Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Raymond Tshibanda

Cc: U.S.A Secretary of State, Mr John Kerry

Cc: D.R.C Ambassador to the United Nations, Mr Atoki Ileka

Cc: U.S.A Ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Susan Rice

Cc: D.R.C Ambassador to the USA in the, Mrs Faida M. Mitifu

Cc: U.S.A Ambassador to the D.R.Congo, Mr James F. Entwistle

Cc: Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Mr A.D Ntumba Luaba

Cc: International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor, Mrs Fatou Bensouda

For further information, please contact the following: commoncauseuk@gmail.com

For Diaspora Congolese Women in the U.S.A: *Jeanne Kasongo (FondShalupe -Boston) Marie-Jeanne Luyinda Georges (Victory Women-New Hampshire), Bibiane Tshetu (WILPF-New York) Leontine Daliga Lanza (Activist Congolese Woman- Los Angeles), Marie-Jeanne Kirby-Lanza (Atlanta), Jacky Kalonji (Catholic Mothers-Boston), Anne M. Kalonji (Dallas), Claude Kabuya (Boston), Nita Evele (Congo Global Action-Washington), Marie-Claire Ghonda-Mpanu Mpanu (Washington).*

For Diaspora Congolese Women in the U.K: *Marie-Louise Pambu (COMMON CAUSE UK -London), Maguy Mayanda (COMMON CAUSE UK -London)Kongosi Onia Mussanzi (COMMON CAUSE UK-Bradford) Nzita ngma (COMMON CAUSE UK-Manchester) Mina Munga (WILPF Scotland Glasgow), Liliane Mbiki Lando (COMMON CAUSE UK-London), Francoise Lutala Kabe (COMMON CAUSE UK-Cardiff), Esther Muloway(COMMON CAUSE UK-Essex), Carine Mushigo (COMMON CAUSE UK-London) Christine Lilley (UK), Marie-Claire Faray (COMMON CAUSE UK-WILPF UK-London). Me Marie-Thérèse Nlandu (London). For Diaspora Congolese Women in Belgium: *Stella Kitoga (FIREFEC Bruxelles), Juliette Kimpiabi (FIREFEC Bruxelles), Marceline Mundela (Bruxelles) and Elena Matundu (GFAIA-Bruxelles). For Diaspora Congolese Women in the UK France: *Elza Vumi (Congo Actif-Paris). For Diaspora Congolese Women in the UK South Africa: *Me Lola Miteu (Johannesburg)****