

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE
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BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLIS

BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

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INTERVENTO DELLA SANTA SEDE ALL'OTTAVA SESSIONE SPECIALE DEL CONSIGLIO SUI DIRITTI UMANI

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Pubblichiamo di seguito il testo dell'intervento che l'Arcivescovo Silvano M. Tomasi, Osservatore Permanente della Santa Sede presso l'Ufficio delle Nazioni Unite ed Istituzioni Specializzate a Ginevra, ha pronunciato il 28 novembre scorso, in occasione dell'ottava sessione speciale del Consiglio sui Diritti Umani dedicata alla situazione dei diritti umani nell'est della Repubblica Democratica del Congo:

• INTERVENTO DI S.E. MONS. SILVANO M. TOMASI

Mr. President,

The daily reports on human suffering in the North Kivu district of the Democratic Republic of Congo are deeply troubling to the Delegation of the Holy See. Death, rape, lootings, forced recruitment and displacement of civilian population have become a daily reality in that country. The international community cannot stand by idle and needs to speak out clearly. In fact, with a view on the growing consensus behind the responsibility to protect, it is of utmost importance for the international community to restore the rule of law and to search for the common good.

The Holy See condemns the large-scale occurrence of serious violations of human rights and of humanitarian law. It deplores the recruitment of children and adolescents as soldiers. It is alarmed by the many cases of torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, including the frequent occurrence of sexual violence against women and girls by all parties to the conflict. The international community needs to act swiftly in the face of these grave infringements of human rights.

Moreover the Holy See denounces the illicit trade of weapons, and in particular of small arms and light weapons in the DRC. They increase the intensity of violence and threaten the life and the integrity of a unacceptable number of innocent people.

The Congolese Bishops issued a Statement saying that the Congolese people "are living through a genuine

human tragedy that, as a silent genocide, is being carried out under everyone's eyes"¹. While the Holy Father, Benedict XVI, called upon "all to work together to restore peace, respect for law and the dignity of every person to that land, for too long martyred"².

Latest figures show that about 2,000,000 people are forcibly displaced in the DRC. Their right to food, water, decent work, adequate housing, education, and health is seriously jeopardized. Many of these displaced end up in camps, where they can be assisted by the international aid organisations. Others, however, are less fortunate and cannot be reached by humanitarian agencies because of on-going fighting between the different factions. It was recently reported that about 200,000 people are living in the bush and little is known about their situation.

A positive step has been allowing the ICRC to carry out its humanitarian mandate. In the same spirit, international humanitarian and human rights organizations and agencies should be welcomed to carry out their respective roles to eliminate suffering of people. Moreover, international organizations and in particular the African Union should strengthen their efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the crisis in the DRC.

My Delegation calls upon the warring parties in the Democratic Republic of Congo to respect the cease-fire that has been reached, and to comply with the Peace agreements that have been signed in the past. The people of Congo, like all the people of our planet, have a "sacred right to peace"³. In order to achieve a stable peace it has to be based upon dialogue and reconciliation as peace can only be achieved through justice.

Thank you Mr. President.

2 Benedict XVI, *After the Angelus* of 9 November

2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2008/documents/hf_benxvi_ang_20081109_en.html
 .3 un General Assembly, *Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace*, un Doc. A/39/51 (1984), p. 1.[01889-02.01] [Original text: English]

¹ Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo, *Déclaration du Comité permanent des évêques sur la guerre dans l'Est et dans le Nord-Est de la RD Congo, La RD Congo pleure ses enfants, elle est inconsolable*, 13 Novembre 2008, <http://www.cenco.cd/presidencenco/messagenov2008.htm>.
