

110TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

S. RES.

Calling on all parties to the escalating violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to implement an immediate ceasefire and work with the support of the international community toward a comprehensive and lasting solution to this crisis.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself and Mr. BROWNBACK) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on _____

RESOLUTION

Calling on all parties to the escalating violence in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to implement an immediate ceasefire and work with the support of the international community toward a comprehensive and lasting solution to this crisis.

Whereas the Democratic Republic of Congo was devastated by civil wars lasting from 1996 to 1997 and 1998 to 2003, spawning some of the world's worst human rights violations and involving at least 6 neighboring countries;

Whereas, despite the signing of a peace agreement and subsequent withdrawal of foreign forces in 2003, eastern Congo has continued to suffer from high levels of poverty, insecurity, and absent or inadequate institutions, allowing armed and criminal groups to operate freely;

Whereas continuing abuses committed by the national military against civilians in Congo and apparent ties between the military and armed groups in the region have tainted attempts to restore the rule of law in the eastern region of the country;

Whereas, according to a study by the International Rescue Committee released in January 2008, the conflict and related humanitarian crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo have taken the lives of an estimated 5,400,000 people since 1998 and continue to cause as many as 45,000 deaths each month;

Whereas sexual violence and rape remain a pervasive tool of warfare used by all parties in eastern Congo to terrorize communities, affecting hundreds of thousands of women and girls and frequently resulting in traumatic fistula and other severe genital injuries;

Whereas the continued plunder and trade of eastern Congo's rich mineral base, notably cassiterite, coltan, and gold, by armed groups and members of the national military make war profitable and undermine peace efforts;

Whereas the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda signed the Nairobi Communiqué in November 2007, committing to work together to address the continued activity of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and other armed groups operating in their shared border region;

Whereas, on January 23, 2008, with the active support of the international community, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 22 armed groups in the eastern region signed the Goma accord, committing to an

immediate ceasefire and buffer zones for troop disengagement and ultimately disarmament;

Whereas these agreements together provided the first working framework in years for peace and lasting stability in eastern Congo, but a continued culture of impunity and suspicion has impeded their implementation;

Whereas the United Nations reported more than 200 violations of these agreements between January and July of 2008, as well as 2,000 cases of rape and hundreds of people killed;

Whereas hate speech inciting ethnic violence by local and national leaders in Congo continued during this period, feeding the concerns and perceived insecurity of minority Tutsi communities;

Whereas, since August 28, 2008, fighting has resumed in North Kivu Province between the national military and the forces of General Laurent Nkunda, known as the National Congress for the Defense of the People, the latter of which has taken control of several government military bases and major towns around the city of Goma;

Whereas, according to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 250,000 people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of this renewed fighting in eastern Congo, often without access to shelter, water, food, and medicine, and adding to the over 1,000,000 people already displaced from North and South Kivu;

Whereas the United Nations Mission in Congo, known by its French acronym MONUC, has proven unable to protect civilians in light of this new offensive by General Nkunda's forces, causing resentment and protests by local communities;

Whereas allegations of troops from Angola, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe crossing into eastern Congo have strained existing regional tensions and increased fears of a wider war that could draw other countries from the region into the fighting, as happened in 1998;

Whereas the United Nations' Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of Congo, Alan Doss, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have called for more troops and better capabilities for MONUC to stop the rebel offensive and protect civilians;

Whereas United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, on November 7, 2008, and convened a summit of regional leaders, including the heads of state of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, which led to a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire and the creation of humanitarian corridors; and

Whereas, in 2006, Congress passed the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush on December 22, 2006 (Public Law 109–456), stating that it is the policy of the United States to work for peace and security throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo by supporting efforts to protect civilians, to disarm illegal armed groups, and to hold accountable individuals, entities, and countries working to destabilize the country: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) condemns the continuing violence, forcible
3 recruitment of children as soldiers, and abuses

1 against civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of
2 Congo;

3 (2) calls on the national military in Congo, the
4 National Congress for the Defense of the People,
5 and all armed groups operating in eastern Congo to
6 cease hostilities, end all human rights abuses, and
7 respect an immediate ceasefire based on the prin-
8 ciples of the Goma agreement;

9 (3) calls on the Government of the Democratic
10 Republic of Congo to meet its obligations under the
11 Lusaka Agreement of 1999, the Pretoria Agreement
12 of 2002, and the Nairobi Communiqué of 2007 to
13 take action to end the threat posed by the Demo-
14 cratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda;

15 (4) calls on the Governments of the Democratic
16 Republic of Congo and Rwanda—

17 (A) to fully restore bilateral relations;

18 (B) to work together to mitigate escalating
19 tensions in the region; and

20 (C) to break any ties that still exist be-
21 tween them and illegal armed groups in eastern
22 Congo;

23 (5) calls on all governments in the Great Lakes
24 region of Africa and those of the Southern African
25 Development Community to support a peaceful reso-

1 lution to the crisis while ensuring that the volatile
2 situation does not spark a wider regional war;

3 (6) supports the efforts of the United Nations
4 Secretary-General, his newly appointed United Na-
5 tions Special Envoy, former President of Nigeria
6 Olusegun Obasanjo, and the international facilita-
7 tion team to bring all parties to the negotiating table
8 and establish a clear roadmap to implement the
9 signed peace agreements;

10 (7) encourages the international community to
11 take immediate measures to enhance the effective-
12 ness of the United Nations Mission in Congo to pro-
13 tect civilians, specifically through increased troops
14 and additional capabilities as requested by the Sec-
15 retary-General;

16 (8) urges the President to sustain high-level
17 diplomatic engagement together with the African
18 Union, the European Union, and the United Nations
19 to avert a wider regional war and revive a com-
20 prehensive peace process in eastern Congo;

21 (9) urges the United States and the inter-
22 national community to develop and support moni-
23 toring and verification mechanisms that can hold the
24 parties in Congo accountable to the signed peace
25 agreements, investigate alleged ceasefire violations,

1 and ultimately challenge the continued culture of im-
2 punity in Congo; and

3 (10) urges the President and the international
4 community to adopt measures to help the regional
5 governments to identify and ultimately address the
6 factors underlying the conflict in eastern Congo, es-
7 pecially weak governance and the exploitation of the
8 region's lucrative minerals.