

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4904

July 13, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Clinton  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary,

I write to express my concern about the troubled eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Without a clear strategy for engagement, I am worried that we may witness a descent further into crisis. In particular, I am concerned by the escalating attacks against civilians by rebels of the Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which have forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes. At the same time, the inability of the Congolese government to reform its historically undisciplined military is deeply problematic. On a related and equally worrying note, according to a UN Group of Experts report from June 2009, several former rebel leaders of the Congrès National pour la Défense du Peuple (CNDP) who were recently integrated into the Congolese military continue to operate parallel command structures and control independent arms stockpiles.

I urge you to develop a long-term policy that addresses the underlying causes of this conflict and presses regional governments to engage proactively, while also taking immediate steps to prevent the current situation from deteriorating further. To this end, I recommend you work with regional governments, MONUC and our international partners to take the following short- and long-term steps:

1. **Explore ways to rapidly enhance MONUC's ability to protect civilians.** As you know, the UN Security Council voted last December to authorize an additional 3,000 peacekeepers for MONUC. However, six months later, those peacekeepers have still not been deployed. It is crucial that those additional troops are deployed as soon as possible and that MONUC is given enhanced capabilities to fulfill its civilian protection mandate. Furthermore, MONUC commanders must receive clear direction on how to respond in the face of abuses by the Congolese military.
2. **Develop a viable plan for the protection of civilians.** Since the joint regional offensive began last February, hundreds of thousands of people in North and South Kivu have been displaced and remain vulnerable to

reprisal attacks by the FDLR and abuses by regional military forces. Regional militaries should not initiate any new offensive operations against the FDLR until there is a clear and viable plan for the protection of civilians.

3. **Support non-military efforts in parallel with military operations.** Armed groups in eastern Congo, especially the FDLR, have become deeply embedded within local communities and military force alone is not sufficient to disband them. It is critical to augment non-military initiatives to induce defections and open channels of dialogue between the warring parties. In particular, the international community should urge Kigali to open direct negotiations with non-genocidaire combatants of the FDLR to encourage their repatriation. At the same time, it is also imperative that Kinshasa break any remaining ties with the FDLR.
4. **Establish a framework to address the conflict economy.** As you know, the continued plunder and unregulated trade of eastern Congo's rich mineral base, particularly cassiterite, coltan and gold, makes war a profitable enterprise. Various armed groups in the region, including the FDLR, are financed by controlling mines and/or taxing trade routes. The international community should work with governments in the region as well as end-user companies under their jurisdiction to establish a framework to bring greater transparency and regulation to promote a conflict-free mining economy that benefits the Congolese people.
5. **Leverage assistance toward real security sector reform.** One of the underlying drivers of instability in eastern Congo is the dismal state of the security sector. The Congolese army, in particular, suffers from regular delays in salary payments, a lack of accountability, and logistical problems, which have led to a pattern of incompetence, abuses and desertions. The international community has committed to support security reform, but there needs to be a clear strategy tying increased assistance to comprehensive and measurable reforms, including mechanisms to address the ongoing reports of abuse.

On that final point, I note that the President's FY10 budget request includes \$2.45 million in foreign military financing for Congo, which while still a small amount given the challenging task at hand, is an increase over previous years. Again, I support U.S. efforts, working in collaboration with other donors, to advance security sector reform in Congo but I strongly believe that new funds need to be backed by a clear strategy to promote reform and end abuses by the military. Moreover, as we increase funds, we should demand the removal of internationally indicted war criminals from leadership positions within the military.

I appreciate your attention to eastern Congo and your consideration of my suggestions. From your work on the DRC Relief, Security and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, I know that you and the President care a great deal about the situation in eastern Congo. I look forward to working together with you to finally end the crisis there and promote lasting peace.

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold  
United States Senator