

THE NAIROBI DECLARATION

Nairobi, Kenya, 15th to 19th February 2002

We, women of the Democratic Republic of Congo, representing the different components in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, that is, Government, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la Democratie (RCD), the political opposition and civil society, meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, from 15th to 19th February 2002,

Conscious of the fact that we represent 52 per cent of the Congolese population, which constitutes an inescapable force in the restoration and the maintenance of peace and the development of our country;

Considering the real impact of atrocities of the war on the entire population;

Considering women, children, the aged, the sick and the handicapped under their care, are the most vulnerable groups and victims of this war;

Profoundly pained by the blind violence against women and the girl child, such as rape, forced prostitution, abductions, mutilations, and the killings, looting, psychological and mental traumas, HIV/AIDS infections and sexually transmitted diseases;

Noting the tribal wars, massive dislocation of populations;

Deploring the recruitment of child soldiers in the armed conflict and the difficulties related to their social and familial reintegration;

Considering the terrible consequences of the war on displaced and refugee populations, the growing number of orphans and children resulting from rape;

Convinced of our wish and determination to become active in peace-building in our country;

Considering that, as mothers of the nation, we have a right, a duty and a responsibility towards the Congolese people;

Considering the innate capacities in mediation, as mothers and spouses, and as custodians of our traditions and our cultural values;

Reaffirming our total support for all initiatives geared to reestablishing total and sustainable peace in the DRC, and to its reconstruction and development;

Saluting the multidimensional efforts engaged by Congolese women themselves, the development partners and all those who have demonstrated their solidarity to these struggles (the African Women's Peace Committee, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), UNIFEM, the agencies of the United Nations, diplomatic missions);

Convinced that women's rights are human rights;

Considering about the under-representation of women in decision-making;

Convinced about the effective holding of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue;

We thus appeal to all parties involved in the Congo crisis to take account of the ardent wishes of Congolese women, expressed in this Declaration and the attached Action Plan;

We call for the immediate halt to the hostilities and the immediate and effective withdrawal of foreign troops from the Congolese territory;

We insist on the reunification of the country and respect for its territorial integrity;

We demand the application of good governance and the stability of the institutions;

We demand the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, ratified by the DRC, is mentioned in the preamble of the new constitution to be adopted by the DRC;

That access to land and resources for women be legislated and instituted;

That affirmative action, such as a 30 per cent quota recommended by the Beijing Platform of Action, be instituted as demonstration of good governance and democracy in order to guarantee significant representation of women in all instances of decision- making;

That gender-sensitivity be mainstreamed across the entire Inter-Congolese Dialogue and that its various components accept to take this into account.

We demand the institution of an emergency humanitarian programme, which should include women's organizations at all levels of its implementation;

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We exhort all delegates to secure the reintegration and the rehabilitation of demobilized child soldiers, street children and orphans, and the care of women and girls victims of the atrocities described above;

We commit ourselves to address the priorities of women, children and other vulnerable groups in all points in the agenda of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, to ensure that there is no impunity for all criminal acts, and that rape is legislated as a crime against the humanity of women.

We ardently appeal to the international community to appropriately take charge of the Declaration and Action Plan of the women of the DRC, with budgets for its implementation.

We demand that the facilitator, His Excellency KETUMILE MASIRE, to incorporate the Declaration of Nairobi and the Action Plans of the Congolese women in the Agenda of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.

Adopted in Nairobi: Tuesday, February 19, 2002