



Statement by His Excellency Archbishop Ivan Jurkovič , Permanent Observer
of the Holy See to the United Nations and Other International Organizations
in Geneva at the 35th Session of the Human Rights Council

Item 10: Technical Assistance and Capacity Building
Geneva, 21 June 2017

Mr. President,

Given the dramatic and continuous deterioration of the humanitarian and human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Holy See expresses its deeply concern for the grave, widespread and apparently planned attacks against the civilian population, religious institutions and faith based organizations, particularly in the Kasai region. These are the tragic consequences of tensions which have never been adequately addressed, despite subsequent recovery and reconciliation initiatives.

Mr. President,

The Holy See Delegation sincerely hopes that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, in close consultation and collaboration with this Council and other inter-governmental bodies, will take immediate action to:

1. put in place a ceasefire that guarantees an end to wanton violence and prevent arms trafficking;
2. uphold its duty to protect and respect civilians and humanitarian relief personnel;
3. promote effective, objective, open and transparent efforts at reconciliation, dialogue and peace-building;
4. assure unbiased mediation of the conflict and establish monitored democratic processes that include all sectors of the population;

5. Build conditions that will allow the safe and voluntary return of refugees to Kasai.

Above all, let us keep our deliberations aimed at preserving and defending the human rights of the people of the DRC and its “many children torn from their families and schools to be used as soldiers.”¹ A tragedy that, in the words of Pope Francis, is a call to “the conscience and to the responsibility of the national authorities and the international community, to take appropriate and timely decisions to rescue these brothers and sisters.”²

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 19 February 2017

² *Ibid.*