



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 36th Session of the Human Rights Council

Enhanced interactive dialogue on the High Commissioner's report on the human rights situation in
the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Geneva, 27 September 2017

Mr. President,

The Delegation of the Holy See remains seriously concerned by the deteriorating socio-economic and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The situation is further aggravated by the economic and budgetary crisis severely affecting the population.

In particular, the conflict-affected areas continue to be marked by a high number of human rights violations and abuses. As reported by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the violence affecting the region has caused the death of at least 3000 persons and “the displacement of more than a million people. In the provinces of Kasai, Tanganyika, North Kivu and South Kivu, the number of militias and armed groups, including self-defense groups, has increased and inter-ethnic tensions have been exacerbated, resulting in a large number of attacks on the civilian population”.¹ In consequence, the Holy See is greatly concerned for the precarious living conditions of this population, because of the lack of food, of medicines and of the risk of the outbreak of epidemics. Especially vulnerable are women, children and those with disabilities.

Mr. President,

Notwithstanding, the significant increase in the number of violations and the extrajudicial and summary execution of hundreds of civilians in the Kasai provinces, a significant decrease in the number of convictions of State agents has been recorded. Certain social practices, the weakness of the judicial system and the persistence of impunity foster such violations. These are the tragic consequences of tensions that have never been adequately addressed, despite various recovery and reconciliation initiatives.

The Holy See Delegation, “recalling the commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, (...) to punish all persons who are responsible for cases of serious human rights violations perpetrated in this part of the country”,² urges the

¹ Cfr. Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General Doc. A/HRC/36/34 (para. 5)

² Letter of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 6th June 2017, A/HRC/35/L.3

Government to take all appropriate steps to conduct transparent and impartial investigations into allegations of human rights violations committed also by State agents and bring the presumed perpetrators to justice. Through the establishment, as soon as possible, of fair trials that respect international standards in the fight against impunity for the atrocities committed in the Kasai provinces, a strong signal will be given that will promote effective, objective, open and transparent efforts towards reconciliation, dialogue and peace-building.

Mr. President,

“The ongoing violence and intense political tension in the Democratic Republic of the Congo necessitate an urgent and efficient commitment from all parties to find a solution to the constitutional crisis”.³ Looking at the evolution of the crisis, it is clear that only political solutions can address and stem the rising levels of violence now being witnessed in the DRC. The Delegation of the Holy See would like to appeal to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, consistent with its responsibility to protect its population, to intensify its efforts to put an end to violence in its territory, with the support of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, consistent with its mandate.

Mr. President,

Let me conclude by renewing the heartfelt appeal of Pope Francis to the conscience and the responsibility of the national authorities and of the international community, so that appropriate and timely decisions are taken to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thank you, Mr. President.

³ H.E. Msgr. Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for the Holy See’s Relations with States, Address at the General Debate of the Seventy-Second Session of the United Nations General Assembly, New York, Monday, 25 September 2017.