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LETTER DATED 11 FEBRUARY 2000 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

On instructions from my Government and further to my letter dated 28 January 2000 (S/2000/67), I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the memorandum of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the humanitarian catastrophe currently taking place in the Ituri district, more specifically in Blukwa, situated in the area around Lake Albert to the south-east of the town of Djugu and to the north-east of the town of Bunia, in Orientale province, following the massacres and atrocities committed by regular Ugandan armed forces, backed by their accomplices of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex distributed as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) André MWAMBA KAPANGA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Appeal to the international community by the Democratic Republic of the Congo concerning the humanitarian catastrophe in the Ituri district which has been brought about with the active participation of Ugandan troops and their Congolese accomplices of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD)

(8 January 2000)

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Human Rights, thanks you for responding to its invitation.

It wishes, through you, to draw the attention of the national and the international community to the human tragedy, which has now reached catastrophic humanitarian proportions, taking place in the Ituri district of Orientale province, more specifically in the area around Djugu in the part of the country occupied by Ugandan troops and administered with the help of their Congolese accomplices of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) (Wamba-dia-Wamba wing).

Some 5,000 men, women and children have died as a result of violent, bloody clashes and confrontations between Hema and Lendu. Almost as many people have been injured and 150,000 persons have been displaced. The British non-governmental organization Christian Blind Mission has warned repeatedly about this situation but there has been no meaningful response from the international community.

Only recently, during the special meetings of the United Nations Security Council on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Ugandan President, Mr. Yoweri Museveni, tried to suggest that Uganda's presence in Ituri was justified by the fact that one of the parties to the inter-ethnic conflict belongs, according to his megalomaniac vision, in the Ugandan fold, and also that he was acting to protect a minority tribe.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo wishes to emphasize that, apart from the usual tensions and incidents inherent in any social coexistence and which have always met with amicable solutions, the Hema and the Lendu have always lived in perfect harmony and understanding and even share the same language.

Between Hema and Lendu, there are no invaders or invaded. They are both equally Congolese.

The old cliché about land disputes between growers and herders, the boundaries of whose land are far from clear, does not hold up here.

If Hema and Lendu have always lived together without too much friction for decades and even centuries, the Congolese nation is justified today in wondering what is the reason for the extent of the killings, massacres and other

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atrocities now going on. Who lit the match? Who is fuelling the fire and keeping it going?

In the view of the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, primary responsibility for all that is happening in that province - tortures, kidnappings, ethnic pogroms - lies with Uganda and, more particularly, with Yoweri Museveni himself. Since 2 August 1998, the day the war of aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo started, Orientale province has been under the control of Ugandan troops. Uganda is responsible for administration, law and order and security in the province, and it has even gone so far as to give the province a new name - Kibali-Ituri province.

A master of manipulation, President Museveni is posing as the protector of ethnic minorities in Ituri. In other words, his presence and his intervention are justifiable to prevent or halt a genocide of one of the tribes in Ituri.

But who is a minority in Ituri district, the most heavily populated in the Republic with roughly 3.7 million inhabitants? Neither the Bahema nor the Balendu are minority groups, and the Alur even less. One could cite the Bira, the Nyali, the Lese or, better yet, the Pygmies. Paradoxically, none of these minority tribes has been the object of Ugandan concern.

The fact remains that Ituri is a veritable mosaic of peoples belonging to different ethnic groupings. It is in fact one of the few places where all the population groups of sub-Saharan Africa are represented. Nilotics, Bantu, Sudanese and Pygmies have lived there together for centuries, more or less contentedly.

It is thus clear that the massacres taking place can only be the work of an invisible foreign hand in the Ituri district, namely the hand of Museveni, who acts by using and manipulating ethnic groups, stirring up old rivalries and fanning them at will, arming one group against another. What is more, even the Ugandan troops do not hesitate to fire on groups of persons in markets or in church doorways and blame it on this or that group. Such an incendiary policy threatens to send the whole region up in flames and instil a culture of genocide which is unknown in Congolese tradition.

The Government of National Salvation and the Congolese people cannot continue to tolerate the routinization of genocide as a tool for achieving the hegemonic goals of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi.

In fact, faced with an increasingly organized resistance from the Congolese people living in the occupied territories, Museveni and his troops are trying vainly to apply the Latin proverb "divide ut imperes" (divide and conquer) to the Hema and Lendu people of the Congo. In the present context the situation is more accurately one of divide and conquer and loot the wealth of the Congo.

While mass slaughter goes on, Museveni, his family members, his entourage, his army officers and his henchmen can calmly proceed systematically to loot the various riches that are to be found in this part of the country: gold, coffee, timber and rare species of fauna, such as the okapi and the white rhinoceros. And all of this is done in violation of the 1973 Convention on International

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Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the 1981 African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights and the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage of 23 November 1972 as well as of General Assembly resolution 1803 (XVII) of 14 December 1962, on permanent sovereignty over natural resources, and the relevant provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949.

The Government of National Salvation, which is responsible for the protection and welfare of the entire Congolese population, cannot remain impassive at the magnitude of the human tragedy now taking place in Ituri. Once again, the aggressor troops and their Congolese accomplices are violating the fundamental principles and rules of both the International Bill of Human Rights and international humanitarian law.

The essential cause of this state of affairs continues to be the presence of armed occupation forces in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which prevents the Government of National Salvation from effectively exercising control over the entire country, primarily to ensure the security of property and individuals.

So long as aggressor troops are present in Congolese territory the threat remains that there will be further massacres such as those that occurred at Ituri, at Makobola and at Kasika; that men, women and children will again be burned to death, as at Kasala; that rapes such those that took place near Kabinda will recur; and that women will again be buried alive, as they were at Mwenga.

Accordingly, the Government of National Salvation calls upon the international community to:

Formally condemn and denounce the armed aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for it continues to be the main source of all violations of human rights and international humanitarian law;

Order, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1234 (1999) of 9 April 1999, all uninvited foreign forces to withdraw immediately from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

Dispatch an international commission of inquiry, headed by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to investigate Ituri district and all other crimes and massacres committed by foreign troops of aggression and their Congolese accomplices, particularly the events at Mwenga, during which 15 women were buried alive;

Hold President Yoweri Museveni and the Rwandan Vice-President, Kagame, accountable for the commission, directly or indirectly, of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Government of National Salvation, and with it the entire Congolese people, can only express its astonishment at the fact that all these crimes continue to be perpetrated notwithstanding the presence of the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

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MONUC is therefore requested, within the framework of the provisions of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, particularly article III, paragraph 10, to ensure that the Ugandan aggressor State and the Wamba-dia-Wamba wing of RCD facilitate the opening of a humanitarian corridor and the creation of favourable conditions to allow local leaders residing outside Ituri and religious authorities to travel there to work for peace and bring solace to the population.

The Government of National Salvation urges the communities concerned, Hema and Lendu, to make an exceptional effort and ensure that Congolese problems are dealt with by Congolese. May they not give the Ugandans an excuse to use this situation to make their presence a permanent one.

The Government of National Salvation continues to believe that there can be no satisfactory or lasting solution without a halt of the aggression and the withdrawal of foreign forces.

Social calm and peaceful coexistence between Hema and Lendu absolutely cannot be restored by the aggressors, who are the architects of this conflict. It is therefore imperative, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1234 (1999) and the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, to help the Congolese Government re-establish its authority throughout the entire country.

For the Government of National Salvation:

YERODIA ABDOULAYE NDOMBASI
Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation

Léonard SHE OKITUNDU
Minister for Human Rights
