

The following letter on the Congo was to the key Senate and House Int'l Committees, as well as to the State Dept, NSC, and USAID.

April 14, 2005

The Honorable Mike DeWine

United States Senate

Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Dear Sen. DeWine:

The undersigned agencies write to you to express our continuing concern over the on-going crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The outpouring of generosity from the American people in response to the tsunami disaster in south Asia demonstrates a strong interest among citizens to see their government play a leadership role in addressing global emergencies and long-term needs for developing countries. In the DRC, a silent tsunami of great magnitude persists; 1,000 people are dying every day in the ongoing political and humanitarian tragedy.

Often called Africa's "World War," at the height of the war, the conflict in the DRC involved seven nations and a host of other internal insurgents. According to a recent mortality study done in December 2004 by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) 31,000 people are dying monthly and 3.8 million have died in the past 6 years because of the conflict and the resulting disintegration of the social service infrastructure in the DRC.

After multiple attempts by members within the international community,

a peace process was secured and the DRC began a transition to democracy. This fragile political transition approaches the end of its second year, but it risks collapsing over the unreconciled interests of the former belligerents. Recent fighting in North Kivu which displaced over 150,000 people, as well as fighting in Ituri and others areas, is potent evidence that states in the Great Lakes region, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, and members of the transitional government still harbor different and conflicting interests and concerns which place the entire transition program in jeopardy.

The DRC is a complex humanitarian emergency that requires action at different levels. In order to address both the causes and the consequences of this crisis, we call upon the Government of the United States to take comprehensive action to address this important crisis.

#### Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis

\* Increase humanitarian aid. Current levels of international humanitarian assistance for the DRC are insufficient. Basic needs are not being met. The US government reduced its support in 2004 and 2005, and donors have fallen far short of UN's funding appeal for the DRC. Assistance in 2004 for DRC was \$3.23/person. According to Dr. Richard Brennan, of the International Rescue Committee, and author of the comprehensive mortality study done for the DRC in Dec. 2004: "Our findings show that improving and maintaining security and increasing simple, proven and cost-effective interventions such as basic medical care, immunizations and clean water would save hundreds of thousands of lives in the (DR) Congo. There's no shortage of evidence. It's sustained compassion and political will that's lacking."

\* Provide funding for infrastructure development, logistics and communications. The DRC is enormous?the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. The deterioration of transport infrastructure since independence was further aggravated by the years of civil war to the point where vast tracks of national highway have become impassable gulleys

and tracks in the forest. To get humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable, donors must not only provide funds for humanitarian and post-conflict recovery assistance, but for logistical and communications support, and for rural transport infrastructure to facilitate humanitarian access.

\* Address the needs of women and children. Because of the high prevalence of sexual abuse and the use of sexual violence as a tool of war against women and children, careful donor attention should be given to mitigate these effects. Interventions responding to this should include psycho-social counseling, HIV/AIDS voluntary counseling and testing, and other services to address the needs of this affected population.

\* Request a visit by the Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). This representative should review the IDP situation and make concrete recommendations. These recommendations should include new mechanisms that protect IDPs and refugees from gender-based violence, other human rights abuses, and the general protection concerns.

\* Encourage, support and expedite Disarmament. Donor planning and implementation of programs to encourage, expedite, and support all aspects of the DRC's DDRRR (Disarmament, Demobilization, Repatriation, Reintegration and Rehabilitation) process.

\* Coordinate US foreign aid and political reform in the Great Lakes region to avoid rewarding spoilers of peace and stability.

#### Addressing the Security and Political Crisis

\* Pressure to end the violence. Peace in eastern DRC must be a

political priority by the international community. More significant pressure is needed from the USG and the larger international community on the foreign governments, forces, local and foreign militia to cease violent and destabilizing actions in DRC.

\* Strengthen the UN Peacekeeping mission in the DRC (MONUC). Steps need to be taken to strengthen the UN peace keeping mission in the DRC (MONUC), which include:

- Clarifying the rules of engagement for the implementation of

MONUC's present mandate which although including protection of threatened civilian populations, provides little guidance on the definition of threatened civilian populations or the criteria for when, where, and how MONUC might engage to protect them;

- Promoting accountability in both civilian and military components of MONUC, especially regarding sexual abuse;

- Providing the necessary logistical and financial support to MONUC to enhance its intelligence information gathering; and

- Supporting the continued decentralization of MONUC's military and support structures so that it can be more effective in its role.

\* Help advance the security sector reform by assisting in the training and equipping of a national army, and in the creation of an integrated and professional army and police force, all of which are key to MONUC's exit strategy.

\* Press all parties in the Transitional National Government (TNG) to move forward with elections. Promise a 'financial aid dividend' if

they move forward with registration and setting in place the necessary mechanisms for free and transparent elections, within the timeframe provided by the Sun City Peace Accords. The US government should make it clear to all parties in the TNG that there will be consequences for individual spoilers who attempt to derail the democratic process.

\* Support the Elections. Increase donor contributions to the World Bank-approved \$285 million electoral budget for the five polls that are meant to take place this year. So far a mere \$165 million have been pledged, of which \$10 million have been disbursed.

\* Ensure that the practice of recruiting and arming children ceases, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1460 and 1539.

#### Addressing Conflict Resources

\* Include the monitoring of natural resource exploitation in MONUC's mandate. The US should push for extending MONUC's mandate to focus on monitoring natural resource exploitation and its links to arms trafficking in the east. Rampant arms trafficking and resource smuggling is a significant factor in regional instability, however this is easily preventable with adequate monitoring of the air fields in the area. MONUC should more actively police the more than 300 air fields in the east for arms trafficking and resource smuggling. Adequate resources and support are essential to ensure MONUC capacity for these tasks.

\* Press for DRC and neighboring governments to increase transparency and improve natural resource governance. The DRC's potential resources will lead to significant exploration during the next few years. The US government should reaffirm the importance of effective natural resource governance, encouraging the Government of the DRC, and neighboring countries to participate in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The US government should encourage the enactment of a revenue management law requiring such governments to regularly publish all

material oil, gas, mining and timber payments by companies to the government, and for the government to disclose the payments it receives from these companies. This law should require that these accounts are independently audited and that this is made available to the public in an accessible manner.

- \* Provide technical and financial assistance to support initiatives

in the DRC to combat corruption, and to improve transparency and natural resource governance. More US assistance should focus on providing institutional and regulatory capacity within the DRC government's civil service to ensure that new laws and codes are adhered to and that natural resources are managed in a transparent, responsible and sustainable manner.

- \* Press for the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) to

promote natural resource governance and transparency as part of their aid efforts in DRC. The IFIs should require natural resource revenue transparency as a condition of lending to the DRC and work with the DRC government to develop appropriate legal safeguards for effective and transparent resource revenue management.

- \* Monitor the enforcement of the UN Arms Embargo.

Like the crisis in south Asia, the gravity of the crisis in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo merits the compassion and focused leadership of the United States. We hope that you and your colleagues will use all range of options to ensure an end to this on-going tragedy.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International USA

American Refugee Committee

Catholic Relief Services

The Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism

Concern Worldwide US

CHABHA - Children Affected by HIV/AIDS

Global Witness

International Rescue Committee

Oxfam America

Presbyterian Church, (USA), Washington Office

Refugees International

United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

United Methodist Committee on Relief

World Vision

CC: Dr. Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State

Andrew Natsios, Administrator, USAID

Dr. Cindy Courville, Senior Director African Affairs, National  
Security Council

Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Members of House International Relations Committee

Members of Senate and House Appropriations, Foreign Operations