CONGOLESE PEOPLE, STAND UP AND SAVE YOUR COUNTRY
Fidelity to national unity and territorial integrity of the DR Congo
(cf. 1Ma 14, 35)

Message from the Standing Committee of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO) on the security situation in our country

INTRODUCTION

1. Worried by the upsurge of violence in the East of our country which culminated in the taking of the town of Goma by the rebels of the « Mouvement du 23 Mars 2009 » (M23), we, Cardinal, Archbishops and Bishops of the Standing Committee of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), met in Kinshasa from the 3rd to the 5th December 2012 in extraordinary session to examine the overall situation and its consequences.

GIVENS

2. In our previous messages we condemned the balkanisation of the DR Congo, the illegal exploitation of its natural resources, and the proliferation of militias and armed groups. At the same time we also organised a triduum of prayers and a march in all the dioceses of the DR Congo on the 1st August 2012. Following our pastoral visit to the suffering population in North and South Kivu in September 2012, and in spite of our discussions with the M23 in the presence of the hostage-population of Rutshuru, the situation got worse.

3. The war in North Kivu caused enormous destruction especially with regards the degradation of human rights caused by the M23 and the armed groups, numerous murders, rapes, kidnappings, the enrolment of minors in the armed groups, illegal imprisonment and taxation, banditism, destruction and looting of national resources and personal belongings and forced massive displacement of populations in conditions that were less than human. The fall of the town of Goma has been a source of consternation for all Congolese.

4. Today, a part of our territory escapes our government’s control and finds itself under the administration of the M23 supported by foreign countries, namely Rwanda and Uganda. The report of the United Nations Experts confirmed this. Underlying this situation is the balkanisation strategy which is in the process of being implemented. This strategy has followed the same trajectory for tens of years: questions of (national) identity, finance, rejection of national
authority, illegal exploitation of national resources, forced displacement of populations and use of violence, all with a view to breaking up the DR Congo.

5. We are also aware of a growing frustration among the population because of governmental failure to meet their expectations. Our ethnic identities are deliberately used by some compatriots for their own political ends. Some “peace treaties” signed with armed groups, without prior consultation, compromise the RD Congo’s sovereignty and integrity.

CONDEMNATION

6. This is why we disapprove and condemn all that has happened. It has been the source of suffering for the people, caused delay in the development of the whole country and has been a step backwards in terms of the democratisation process. It is all the more inadmissible that all this has been caused by Congolese compatriots who allow themselves to be manipulated in the name of foreign interests. They ignore the legitimate institutions of the Republic and disrupt the national cohesion to which we aspire after so many years of tribulation and uncertainty.

7. At the same time, we disapprove the recourse to arms as a possible solution to the problems that occur in our national community. The atrocities and the negative consequences of past experiences of recurrent wars demonstrate how limited this solution is. The actions of the M23 do not, therefore, meet their claims. It is up to the leaders of this rebel Movement and those who support them to draw their own conclusions and accept responsibility. Their criminal acts will not remain unpunished.

INVITATION TO REINFORCE NATIONAL UNITY

8. We reaffirm the sovereignty of the DR Congo and the permanence of its borders; we hold firmly to the unity and indivisibility of the DR Congo based on the borders fixed during colonisation and recognised by the international community on the 30 June 1960. The integrity of the DR Congo territory is non-negociable.¹

9. Faithful to our duty as pastors, called by Our Lord, Jesus Christ, to work for the unity of humankind in our country, we urgently call the whole Congolese population to work for national unity. All efforts to find solutions to the

¹ Cf. CENCO, Non à la balkanisation. Communiqué sur la situation de guerre dans le pays, 06 juillet 2012.
problems of our nation have to be considered in the perspective of a unity to be saved and promoted for the good of the whole population, without privileging one group to the detriment of others. This is the price of national reconciliation.

10. Taking into account the situation caused by this latest violence, some of the consequences of which we have described above, we have formulated the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATIONS

A call to patriotism

11. Congolese brothers and sisters we call on all of you to embrace patriotism. Faithfulness to national unity and the protection of territorial integrity of the DR Congo are a sacred task for all Congolese. Our ethnic diversity is our wealth. Brothers and sisters, we invite you to remain vigilant so that no one, not even elected persons of your ethnicity, make use of your identity in order to cause opposition among you for ends which are not clear. It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels.

Responsibility of those who govern and of politicians

12. The actual state of the Congolese nation is a call to you, who govern us. It is imperative, first of all, to guarantee the security of the population and the national territorial integrity. It will be by addressing the legitimate aspirations of the population to peace inside the country and with its neighbours, dignity and development that you will consolidate national unity. In light of this take to heart the visionary leadership role you are called to in formulating and presenting solutions to the crisis to national and international partners. It is urgent to promote good governance to train a republican Army, dissuasive and capable of defending the security of the Congolese and the integrity of their territory against all threats and consequences of armed groups.

13. We remind all Congolese politicians that the country is in danger. You have no right to waste time quarrelling about egoistic interests. It is deplorable that some of you in privileging your proper interests, make yourselves complicit with those who are trying to destroy our national unity. The protection of national unity and of territorial integrity impose upon you to mobilise and group all your

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2 Cf. Notre rêve d’un Congo plus beau qu’avant. Message of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo to the Congolese people on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of the DR Congo (24/06/2010), n.17.
efforts in order to counter any effort to balkanise our country. *The ideals so dear to the pioneers¹ of the independence of the RD Congo, namely independance, unity, prosperity, peace and Nationhood have to be respected and promoted by you.* It is these ideals which constitute our pride and form the basis of our national unity. They have to remain as the horizon towards which converge all efforts to create the Congolese nation by a process of serene political and democratic debate. *Now is the time to stand together to face the danger of the break up and enslavement of our country that endangers the existence of both it and of the nation.*

**Regarding upcoming negotiations**

14. Claims by any group of Congolese who feel badly done by must be dealt with in accordance to the law and respecting the Constitution of the DR Congo. It might be worth examining the juridical value of the agreements of 23 March 2009 and why the meeting was held in Kampala.

15. We also call to the attention of all those who will travel to Kampala the traps *implicit in these negotiations.* They must not sell out the unity of the Congolese nation, nor must they sign agreements which enact the balkanisation of the RD Congo. They have to be vigilant and clairvoyant. It is important that the fundamental and patriotic principles – from which no person can distance themselves - be scrupulously respected and that a schema of acceptable and tolerable concessions also be adhered to. **An agreement that sold out national sovereignty would be unacceptable.**

**To the international community**

16. We are grateful for all the efforts deployed by the international community for peace in the DR Congo. Nevertheless the people continue to ask: how, despite the firm promises of Monusco, the territory of Rutshuru and the town of Goma were not defended and the civil population not properly protected? **Should the mandate of Monusco not be adapted to respond to the actual situation in the DR Congo?** The Congolese people yearn for a time when the principles of international law and solidarity, which are the basis for world peace, will triumph.

**CONCLUSION**

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¹ Cf. *Notre rêve d’un Congo plus beau qu’avant, n.7.*
17. We call on the government of our country, on all persons of good will, on humanitarian agencies and on the solidarity of the international community to respond with aid that matches the needs of hundreds of thousands of Congolese women and men in North Kivu upon whom such suffering was unjustly imposed.

18. Dear brothers and sisters, even the most extreme difficulties must not lead us to despair or give up. Confident in God, source of all true peace, and with a spirit of patriotism, “let us lift up our heads and look to the future”. In view of our prophetic mission, we have undertaken different contacts with our government, politicians, some diplomatic missions to the DR Congo, Monusco and other international organisations all with a view to establishing true peace in our country.

19. We commend the victims of this war to God’s mercy. We express our spiritual unity with His Excellency, Bishop Théophile Kaboy, bishop of Goma, and our compassion to the whole population of North Kivu. We continue to pray that the Lord may open the hearts of those who are fighting to the peace of Christ. May the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Congo and Queen of Peace, obtain for our country and all its inhabitants the grace of peace.

Given in Kinshasa, the 5th December 2012