



03 – 18 – 2024

YPTI'S PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE ONGOING CRISIS IN THE NORTH-KIVU DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Dear All,

In the shadow of the escalating atrocities committed by the M23 and other armed groups in North-Kivu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a crisis unfolds that has lasted for three decades. This prolonged conflict has tragically claimed over 10 million lives and displaced hundreds of thousands of families, leaving a scar on the heart of humanity that cannot be overlooked.

Despite the concerted efforts of civil rights activists and numerous UN reports drawing attention to the destructive and inhuman nature of these conflicts, resolutions have remained elusive. The international community and the Congolese government have yet to find a path to peace, allowing violence to continue ravaging the eastern regions of the DRC. Treaties intended to foster peace have instead been exploited and amended by the protagonists in a way that facilitates the proliferation of armed groups. These groups have capitalized on their granted immunities to derive benefits from the ongoing crisis. This situation points to a stark failure within the political class and suggests that the war industry may be benefiting certain regional and international entities.

It is within this context that we, the Youth Peace Talks Initiative, issue a call to action. The time has come for the global youth to step forward and make our voices heard. The people of the DRC do not need empty promises or politically motivated speeches. They seek the fundamental right to live in peace, free from the fear of losing loved ones to the machinations of material interests

and political battles. We must protect those who are still with us, for no apology can bring back those we have lost.

We must not cherish life so much that we forget the importance of freedom. Without freedom, life loses its meaning. It is crucial that we shed light on those who have fueled the violence in Congo for too long, supporting rebel movements and perpetuating suffering. These individuals, whether acting alone or in organized groups, must be identified, called out, and held accountable.

To all organizations operating within the region: it is your responsibility to publicly declare your plans for protecting employees and the local populace. Every trade must be conducted ethically, with transparency and a commitment to not contributing to the conflict.

The exploitation of mineral resources has been identified as a primary catalyst for conflict, with alarming instances of child abduction and exploitation within the mining industry. Authoritative bodies such as UNICEF, Global Witness, and Human Rights Watch have consistently condemned these practices, which remain lucrative for corporations and other entities. The time for mere denunciation has passed; we must transition to decisive and immediate action. These egregious practices must be halted forthwith. It is imperative that the Congolese Government extends its focus beyond fiscal gains to encompass the safety and well-being of communities surrounding mining operations. This includes the meticulous supervision of mining activities, as well as the thorough documentation and verification of mineral exports, to ensure that the benefits are equitably shared with the local populace.

The European Union's recent agreement with Rwanda concerning the supply of raw materials, including tantalum, tin, tungsten, gold, niobium, and lithium, has been observed with concern because of the nation's involvement in the North-Kivu crisis where these resources are sourced. While Rwanda is entitled to engage in such agreements autonomously, the timing suggests a disregard for the underlying conflict. The European Union, from whom constructive engagement in conflict resolution is anticipated, seems to be either minimizing the DRC's current predicament or implicitly condoning the armed factions responsible for perpetuating instability in the region. Such an accord should ideally encompass the DRC, especially if it purports to address issues of transparency and traceability, as indicated by Commissioner Thierry Breton.

Furthermore, a global consensus on these principles should be reached, mandating corporations reliant on these materials to commit to ethical sourcing practices. The public disclosure of these transactions is crucial in the fight against illegal extraction and the provision of materials that may fuel ongoing conflicts, not only in the DRC but worldwide.

We must not overlook the broader ecological impact, including deforestation, poaching, and the forced migration of wildlife—all collateral consequences of these conflicts.

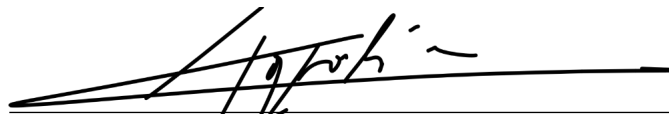
The era of mere rhetoric has concluded. The international community must now embrace pragmatic measures to foster ethical mining practices that preserve human rights and protect the environment.

We cannot afford to wait until there is no one or nothing left to protect. The pain of one affects us all. Many of you have lived through unimaginable suffering, losing everything dear to you. But do not lose hope. Now is the time to unite and bring an end to this barbarism. Thirty years of violence, rape, and murder are enough. We must not stand by idly any longer. Rise and fight for the right cause, or we risk facing even greater chaos in the years to come.

The international community must take decisive action. If the Congolese youth rise to the challenge, the impact of this crisis will be felt globally, marking a significant change in the World Order as we know it. This crisis has shaped us all, whether we grew up in its shadow or were born into its darkness. Let us be transformed not into bystanders but into peacemakers.

The protection of the world is in your hands. Stay blessed and united for peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gratien Asimbahwe', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Gratien Asimbahwe
Executive Director
Youth Peace Talks Initiative