

H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma
Chairperson
The African Union Commission

28 September, 2016

Your Excellency,

RE: APPEAL FOR URGENT ACTION TO STOP VIOLENCE AND STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

We, the undersigned African civil society organizations, urgently appeal to you to take immediate steps to address the growing crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

As Your Excellency is aware, the violent clashes between protesters and security forces in Kinshasa on 19th and 20th September 2016 claimed at least 50 lives and dozens were injured, according to the UN. There are also reports of ongoing arrests of civil society activists and members of opposition parties as well as the burning of the offices of political parties in Kinshasa. We are extremely concerned that, unless immediate steps are taken to address it, this political crisis could spiral into a cycle of prolonged violence and unrest across the country in the weeks and months ahead.

Your Excellency, while we welcome your leadership in appointing H.E. Mr. Edem Kodjo to facilitate an all-inclusive National Dialogue, we are gravely concerned by a number of issues raised by Congolese civil society, which include, but are not limited to, the following;

- The lack of confidence in the neutrality and impartiality of the facilitator H.E. Mr. Edem Kodjo as he discharges his mandate;
- The lack of efforts to ensure the participation of key political opposition figures and civil society groups in the National Dialogue, without which the process is not credible.
- Delays in the voter registration exercise and uncertainty on the election calendar due to a lack of direction from the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) on the election timetable;
- Ambiguity over whether President Joseph Kabila will be seeking a third term as President;

Your Excellency, in order to avoid further escalation of the crisis, **these challenges must urgently be resolved to ensure the confidence of the public, civil society, political parties and other stakeholders in the National Dialogue.** A credible, all-inclusive National Dialogue is critical to help the Congolese people pave the way towards a peaceful democratic transition.

Your Excellency, as citizens of Africa, we take to heart the promises contained in the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance in Africa**, which clearly stipulates that member states must ensure constitutional rule, particularly the constitutional transfer of power. We also join the call of the African Union in **reaffirming the commitment to the crucial importance of holding a successful National Dialogue with all Congolese stakeholders and agreeing to undertake consultations aimed at encouraging all stakeholders to participate in the dialogue** as expressed in its press release on 4 July 2016.

In this regard, we urge the African Union Commission to;

1. Reinforce the importance of the right to peaceful demonstration, to publicly call on the Congolese security forces to refrain from excessive use of force against protesters, and warn that such violations are unacceptable.
2. Call on the Government of the DRC to guarantee the people's right to freedom of expression and to open the media space.
3. Actively foster a new, all-inclusive and credible National Dialogue, which includes key opposition parties and civil society.
4. Closely work with the Support Group for the Facilitation of the National Dialogue in the DRC to appoint a new mediator for fresh political talks.

Your Excellency, at this critical juncture for Democratic Republic of Congo, we believe that there is an urgent need for the people to be reassured of the supremacy of the constitution and constitutional order, and that the African Union will defend their rights in fulfilment of its vision of a people centred Union.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurances of our highest consideration.

Cc: Amb. Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union Commission.

Cc: H.E Mr. Edem Kodjo, African Union-appointed Facilitator to the National Dialogue in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Signed

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| 1. AFRICA ATROCITIES WATCH | 14. HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTE OF SOUTH AFRICA (HURISA) |
| 2. ACTION POUR LE DEVELOPMENT ET LA PROMOTION DE LA PAIX | 15. INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR POLICY AND CONFLICT (ICPC) |
| 3. ACOTIC ASBL | 16. INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS (ICJ-KENYA) |
| 4. AETA | 17. JOURNALISTES AGISSANT POUR ELECTIONS DEMOCRATIQUES |
| 5. ASBL TOUS ENSEMBLE POUR LA PAIS ET LA DEMOCRATIE | 18. JUSTICE PLUS |
| 6. BUILD PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT NGO | 19. LIGUE DES ELECTEURS |
| 7. CENTRE FOR CITICEN'S PARTICIPATION ON THE AFRICAN UNION | 20. PAN AFRICAN LAWYERS UNION (PALU) |
| 8. CENTER FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CECORE) | 21. RENAISSANCE AFRICAINE |
| 9. CODESCI | 22. RESEAU GOUVERNANCE ECONOMIQUE ET DEMOCRATIE COMITE EXECUTIF |
| 10. CONGO DIASPORA IN SOUTH AFRICA | 23. RJMP |
| 11. CRC-PEL | 24. WEST AFRICA NETWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING (WANNEP) |
| 12. DROIT ET DEMOCRATIE POUR LA FEMME RURALE | |
| 13. FADPE | |