

**Call for international solidarity to communities
in diamond mining areas in the CONGO**

We are writing this letter as a call for international solidarity to communities living in diamond mining areas in DRC. As director of a national NGO promoting development at a grass roots level in the Congo, I feel a moral and even a civic duty to mobilize all efforts available to help change living conditions of our people in these places. There is an urgent need to improve the health systems and school conditions for young boys and girls, as well as provide access to clean water, housing, and food quality. Above all, we need improved security conditions for all and self-supporting social structures.

The living conditions are unbelievable in places where diamonds are produced. There is misery, starvation, and underdevelopment in popular quarters in Mbuji Mayi, in Tshikapa, in villages around Kisangani ... These precious stones that make dreams possible for all the beautiful women of the world's modern cities do not bring its magic to those living in places where they are exploited.

We are very excited by our partnership with the Diamonds for Africa Fund which is working to raise money to directly improve the lives of our people in the Congo. With your help, we together will raise \$100,000 for the first projects to bring the minimum basic health and education resources to mining communities.

A few years ago, from 1998 to 2005, war broke out in DRC. Rebel groups fought the government for its anti-democratic nature. In this context, diamonds became the heart of the war economy. Warlords came in with all kinds of diamond dealers and smugglers. They fought for cheap gems to sell to the world market. But also they brought guns and ammunitions to the country to supply rebels and militias - killers that kept the war going on for many years. Millions of Congolese people died.

Now peace is back in DRC with the support of the UN mission in the Congo, the American government, the European community and Africa Union. Since July 30, 2006 we have entered into the election period. We have finished the first free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections since 40 years. The experience was peaceful and well organized all around the country. Our people have thus demonstrated their determination to control their future. Now with the democratic era starting, we are optimistic. We have the chance to change our political leadership, to attract the world business community, and to produce more food to solve the recurrent starvation problem. But these efforts could be destroyed if the international community and all the people of good will in the world do not support our struggle against tyranny, wars and misery.

We send our appeal for solidarity with the Congo to the American people. Congo, our country, is one of the largest countries in Africa. It has more than 60 million people - among them 90% live below the poverty line. Paradoxically, our country has a lot of agricultural potential and mineral wealth that could improve the lives of our people. Because of wars, poor governance, poor access to science and technology, and minimal financial resources, we have not been able to make progress since our independence.

The Kimberley Process has helped to reduce the illicit diamond business, but more help is needed. We need your support. Let us start with communities where small diamond diggers work everyday. Let us join in an effort to change their paradigm as an example. We have seen some of the world famous American stars sing solidarity songs for Africa. We are asking them and all artists throughout America to mobilize solidarity for Congo's recovery. Congo is the heart of Africa. Congo is the future of Africa.

Thank you very much.

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