

Testimony
to the U.S. Senate Subcommittees on
African Affairs
and
Human Rights, Democracy and Global Women's Issues

By

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“Confronting Rape and Other Forms of Violence in Conflict Zones”

I’d like to commend the Subcommittees on Human Rights, Democracy and Global Women’s Issues and on African Affairs for devoting time to this urgent issue, and to the search for a more effective response to this ongoing crisis.

African Affairs Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson regrets that he cannot join us today, but, thanks to the Senate’s quick confirmation, he was able to attend South African President Zuma’s inauguration and currently is in Kenya. His deputy, Phil Carter, is here. We thank you for the opportunity to offer our testimony.

Let me preface my remarks by saying that gender-based violence (GBV) as a tool of war is in no way limited to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan, or in Africa. We’ve seen this in Bosnia, Burma, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and elsewhere. The underlying problems – gender inequality and the dehumanization of women – are often the same, and our assessment of needs and recommendations would be similar across regions.

There is, however, an important difference in scope and intensity. The crisis in DRC is reaching its 12th year. The scale and enormity of the violence directed at women can scarcely be adequately described. Some 1,100 rapes are being reported each month, with an average of 36 women and children raped every day. Armed perpetrators – elements of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC), the Congolese National Police, and illegal, non-state armed groups – are reportedly responsible for 81 percent of reported cases in conflict zones and 24 percent in non-conflict areas. Women are being attacked solely because they are women, with sexualized torture of unprecedented savagery on both the physical and psychological levels.

In addition to these rapes and gang rapes that are happening at the rate of upwards of a thousand a month – hundreds of thousands over the duration of the conflict – the perpetrators frequently mutilate the women in the course of the attack. The apparent intent is to leave a lasting and inerasable signal to others that the woman has been violated. In the DRC and in many other cultures, this translates into a lifelong public badge of shame.

The victims of these crimes are stripped of every shred of their humanity. To the perpetrators, they are nothing more than vessels for carrying out a war strategy – a war these women do not perpetrate and in which they play no voluntary military role.

Humanitarian organizations on the ground report that attacks on women destroy the nucleus of the family. Husbands blame their wives, even when they're forced to witness the rapes. Shattered women cease to perform the caregiving roles that serve as the family glue. And with the unraveling families, the communities also disintegrate.

There are non-governmental organizations in place – few, but effective – as well as heroic individuals, such as Dr. Denis Mukwege, director of the Panzi General Referral Hospital in the DRC's South Kivu province, that can try to repair the perforated bladders and shredded vaginas of the women that can reach them. There are small but essential counseling programs, such as those provided by the Center for Victims of Torture, that can try to re-integrate the women into their communities and address the psychological dimension of healing. Even in those cases where damage can be mitigated, however, infectious diseases – HIV and other sexually transmitted infections – increase the toll of death and debilitation long after the initial attack, and ripple throughout the villages and regions.

Our Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, traveling with the UN Security Council, will in a few days visit a hospital in eastern DRC similar to that

of Dr. Mukwege, which has recovery facilities for victims of these atrocities. That the Security Council is paying serious attention to this issue is critical, but we must do much more. In addition to providing medical and psychological treatment, it is imperative that we address prevention – and on this score we have a real challenge.

Currently, there are no adequate ways to hold the perpetrators of these crimes accountable for their actions. The United Nations Mission to the DRC, MONUC, as its top priority, is mandated to protect civilians in the DRC. However, MONUC is in need of additional troops and assets to fulfill its extensive mandate. The United States strongly supported the Security Council's November authorization of 3,000 additional MONUC forces, the first of which should arrive in the DRC in late May or early June. And although women are the group most adversely affected by the ongoing war, they are not represented at the negotiating table.

Prosecution is essential. First and foremost, the atmosphere of impunity must end. These crimes must be recognized not as isolated and aberrant incidents of rape, but as part of a coordinated strategy of brutalization, as war crimes, and as crimes against humanity.

Political and economic context

In both Darfur and the DRC, the United States recognizes that ending the conflicts is the most direct and certain path to ending the violence. Peace negotiations and transition from post-conflict environments should remain our highest priority.

Darfur:

The President and Secretary appointed U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration on March 17 and he is robustly addressing issues in Sudan. Restoration of humanitarian capacity in the wake of the Government of Sudan's March 4 expulsion of 13 international aid organizations and closure of three national

agencies is of extreme importance at this time. Gration's efforts are ongoing and we are watching the situation closely. Meanwhile, the United Nations humanitarian agencies have assumed all responsibility for filling gaps in key areas, such as the provision of food and water.

We continue to remain focused on our long-term priorities in Sudan, including implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and resolution of the conflict in Darfur. Sudan's national elections in February 2010 will be an important benchmark in CPA implementation and we are providing essential support to make them credible. Elections and the democratic transformation they contribute to are essential to Sudan's future. On Darfur, the United States has called on all parties to the conflict in Darfur to join the Doha peace talks immediately and to cease all provocations and violent actions in Darfur. We are striving for an interim ceasefire that will allow the armed movements and the Government of Sudan to achieve a comprehensive solution that includes security, individual compensation, wealth-sharing, respect for land rights and political participation by all the people of Darfur. We continue to support the work of United Nations-African Union Joint Chief Mediator Bassolé, and further welcome the Libya-mediated and Qatari-sponsored bilateral talks in Doha between Sudan and Chad as a positive step forward.

On March 4, 2009, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant for Sudan President Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Though we are not members of the ICC, we nonetheless abstained from UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (UNSCR 1591) referring the situation in Sudan to the ICC in order to support accountability there. We are strongly committed to the pursuit of peace in Sudan and believe those who have committed atrocities should be brought to justice.

DRC:

In 2006, President Kabila won the first democratic election in 40 years; nevertheless, the problems faced by the Congolese state and population remain rife: endemic corruption, widespread abuse of human rights, economic mismanagement and extreme poverty. Weak state institutions coupled with the presence of domestic and foreign armed militias have prevented the extension of state authority throughout the country, but recent military cooperation with Rwanda and Uganda against foreign armed groups in eastern DRC and peace agreements with domestic militias are positive developments that could usher in real change.

Eastern DRC has been the scene of unrelenting conflict and violence for many years. We have long supported and encouraged bilateral cooperation between the DRC and Rwanda on issues of mutual interest, including regional security. The two governments' decision to plan and launch (in January) a joint operation against an illegal armed group in eastern DRC, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), was illustrative of such improved coordination. In fact, it's worth noting that the countries gave the operation the name "Umoja Wetu," which is Swahili for "Our Unity."

Rwandan forces pulled out of DRC in February. Although the joint operation succeeded in weakening the capabilities of the FDLR to a certain extent, it remains active and continues to terrorize the local civilian population. The FDLR is able to do this because the Rwandans' departure resulted in a security vacuum that the Congolese military cannot fill. The FARDC is bloated, ill-trained, ill-equipped, under-resourced and frequently unpaid for months on end. The United States, MONUC, and other international partners have undertaken major security sector reform efforts in concert with the DRC government to address these issues. On May 12, in Brussels, representatives of several key donor nations and

organizations met for a day-long discussion of how to better coordinate security sector assistance – including ensuring that all such assistance includes a focus on FARDC and other security forces’ adherence to human rights norms.

The GDRC and Government of Rwanda continue to take steps to normalize relations, a process they started last year by meeting regularly in each other’s capitals. Rwanda has just named its ambassador to the DRC; the DRC is likely to follow suit with its nominee for Rwanda shortly.

Additionally, the government of the DRC has now demonstrated its willingness to address, through recent joint military operations with the governments of Uganda and southern Sudan, the threat posed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA is a Ugandan rebel group that is now based in northeastern DRC that uses rape and the sexual enslavement of women and girls as just one of its tools of terror against civilian populations in the DRC, Central African Republic and Southern Sudan. Although these operations have not yet met their stated objective to capture senior LRA leadership, operations against LRA elements have degraded LRA capabilities, destroyed LRA camps, and seized LRA equipment, supplies, food and weapons. Operations have also captured LRA combatants, freed abductees, and increased military cooperation among participating governments, especially between Uganda and the DRC. However, despite these advances, attacks by the LRA against civilian populations in DRC and southern Sudan have continued, with more than 900 killed and over 160,000 displaced. As military efforts to contain the threat advance, regional militaries must continue to make the protections of civilians a priority.

Eighty percent of the population of the DRC lives below the poverty line. World market prices of (and demand for) the key mineral resources that form the basis the DRC’s formal economy have fallen sharply in recent months, cutting GDP growth projections by half and undermining previous economic gains. Prior

to the recent approval of IMF assistance totaling \$200 million, the DRC government was operating with only a few days' cash reserves and faced significant balance of payments and fiscal gaps. The World Bank has subsequently provided \$100 million and the African Development Bank, \$97 million. Without this critical emergency assistance, civil servants, teachers, police and the military risked not being paid -- and in fact soldiers' pay is still two months delinquent -- while already inadequate basic services could have been curtailed. Higher inflation and a depreciating local currency have resulted in the continued escalation of food prices, placing further hardships on the most vulnerable members of the population.

More should also be done to address the unregulated mining and trade of Congolese natural resources, which for too long have funded violence and facilitated human rights abuses in the eastern DRC. We are consulting with the DRC, other regional governments and the international community on how to regulate this trade so that it benefits and fosters development for the greatest number of people possible.

U.S. programs and initiatives

Overall:

Since 2000, the Department of State has funded a special program for "Prevention and Response to GBV" for refugee populations. The program has provided over \$27.8 million for sexual violence prevention and response projects, in cooperation with international organizations and NGOs worldwide.

In fiscal year 2008, the Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) supported several stand-alone programs that targeted the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence, totaling \$6,341,281. In order to address GBV effectively, program components that include GBV are also integrated within larger multi-sectoral assistance programs. As a rough

assessment, in FY 2008 PRM provided an estimated \$3.2 million to support such integrated programming. For example, a health program for Burmese refugees in Thailand also included a community GBV coordinator, and a radio program for refugees from Darfur included segments and features on GBV.

Darfur:

In Darfur, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) manages the overall international protection activities in West Darfur, and is expanding its activities into North and South Darfur. UNHCR specifically looks at GBV issues and intervenes through various outreach activities: psychosocial support, trauma counseling, clinical management of rape, access to justice, and women's empowerment. Many of the beneficiaries lost access to this UNHCR support following the March 4 NGO expulsion. UNHCR is looking for new partners to continue this type of programming.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has provided resources to the office of the UNHCR to support stronger human rights monitoring in Darfur, and also to the UN Development Program to integrate awareness of sexual violence into the rule of law. USAID supports the food, water, sanitation and health needs of people living in internally displaced person (IDP) camps and other underserved areas. They provide women with the skills and resources to pursue income-generating activities.

The Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) has provided over \$2 million to support 10 women's centers in Darfur internally displaced persons camps. These centers have provided GBV survivors with psychosocial counseling and referrals for medical services and have provided thousands of women with a safe space in which to receive such diverse training on such issues as literacy and advocacy skills.

DRC:

USAID has allocated more than \$10 million since 2002 that has helped more than 100,000 survivors in the region. Programs provide care and treatment services, including access to medical care, fistula repair, counseling and family mediation, and social and economic reintegration support. Community awareness activities educate and mobilize local communities, including traditional leaders and women's groups, to promote women's rights, the acceptance of rape survivors, and protection of the whole community. USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) also supports emergency health projects in North Kivu, including medical services for IDPs and GBV survivors.

On Dec 16, 2008, USAID signed a \$5 million three-year cooperative agreement with the international NGO Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI). The agreement builds on the past successes of COOPI GBV programming in the eastern provinces of Orientale (Ituri District) and Maniema. The programs address physical, psychological, and economic needs of survivors, with a particular focus on minors and women pregnant as a result of rape. They also aim to strengthen the community response to GBV to prevent future acts of violence.

Within the Department of State, PRM supports the efforts of UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Their programs include initiatives to boost health center capacity to provide psychosocial, as well as physical, rehabilitation support to victims, and efforts to sensitize communities to prevent and respond to GBV. One example is the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), which hires and trains national staff to serve as mental health providers as well as providing training staff at local and international NGOs, UN agencies, and other institutions. Other NGO partner programs assist victims with re-establishing their livelihoods through skills training and help with market access. In its role as head

of the IDP protection cluster, UNHCR plays an active role in monitoring and conducting needs assessments in conflict-affected areas.

PRM also provides support to UNHCR and partner NGOs in preventing and responding to gender-based violence in DRC refugee camps and settlements in neighboring countries. For example, they support the American Refugee Committee in Rwanda and the International Medical Corps in Uganda.

Also within the Department of State, DRL has programs in the DRC to promote human rights, provide legal services to survivors, and build the capacity of local NGOs, the justice sector, law enforcement personnel, and the media.

Through its Africa Bureau, the Department of State funded a program in cooperation with the Defense International Institute for Legal Studies (DIILS) and MONUC to build sex crimes investigation capacity within the DRC's military justice system. Embassy Kinshasa's "Democracy and Human Rights Fund" also provides small grants on an annual basis to local organizations that provide economic and legal support to survivors.

Multilateral efforts

UN General Assembly Resolution 62/134; Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820:

Abundant information exists about violence against women in conflict and post-conflict situations, including the widespread and systematic use of rape. Yet international efforts to address such violence are often hindered by lack of political will and by assertions that the information is insufficient to warrant action. To address this problem, the United States has sponsored resolutions in both the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the UN Security Council (SC) that call upon States to take specific actions towards ending the use of sexual violence in armed conflict. Effective implementation of these resolutions is crucial.

UNGA Resolution 62/134 (December 2007) calls special attention to the issue of rape in conflict situations and to rape and other sexual violence committed to achieve political or military objectives. The resolution affirms the need for States to ensure that perpetrators of such acts do not operate with impunity and suggests concrete ways that States and other actors can assist victims. It contains a number of provisions that are particularly relevant to cases in which rape is used or condoned by those in authority. And it calls for the Secretary-General to issue a report that is intended, among other things, to help identify situations in which rape is being used to advance political or military objectives, in order to spur the international community to act to stop this practice.

During the U.S. presidency of the Security Council, the United States introduced SC Resolution 1820 (June 2008), a resolution that built upon SC Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security and drew attention to the egregious use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war. SC Resolution 1325 recognizes that women are not only victims in conflict situations, but must play a central role in the post-conflict reconstruction process if societies are to thrive. That resolution is widely praised, but member states and civil society organizations have rightly noted that follow-up actions leading to tangible results have been conspicuously lacking.

SC Resolution 1820 recognized that preventing and responding to sexual violence deliberately targeting civilians could significantly contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security. It affirmed the Council's intention to take sexual violence in situations of armed conflict into account when establishing or renewing state-specific sanctions, and requested the UN Secretary-General to report to the Council on situations of armed conflict in which sexual violence has been systematically employed against civilians. We hope that this

reporting requirement, and the forthcoming first report in June 2009, will bring these instances to light and encourage steps to halt the sexual violence.

Children and armed conflict:

The United States is also leading efforts at the UN to address rape and sexual violence committed against children in the context of armed conflict. Specifically, we are working to expand the list of “triggers” for listing state and non-state actors in the annexes of the Secretary-General’s annual report on Children and Armed Conflict to include rape and sexual violence committed against children in the context of armed conflict. At present, the only existing “trigger” is unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers.

When a country is listed in the annexes, monitoring and reporting of unlawful recruitment and use in the conflict situation begins. Action-plans to address unlawful recruitment and use are also developed. If we are able to add the trigger of rape and sexual violence committed against children, we will be better equipped to assess the scope of the problem in a given country and to develop action-plans to combat it.

Based in part on U.S. efforts, the Security Council approved, on April 29, 2009, a Presidential Statement that expressed deep concern with the high incidence and appalling brutality of rape and sexual violence committed against children in the context of armed conflict. The Statement recognized the importance of including in the annexes to the Secretary-General’s reports on Children and Armed Conflict state and non-state actors that commit acts of rape and other sexual violence against children. The Statement further expressed an intent to take action on the expansion of the trigger within three months. The United States actively supported this important statement of intent, which we hope will lead to the adoption of this additional trigger. We are working to make this happen.

Peacekeeping:

Security Council resolutions now include in peacekeeping mandates, where necessary, specific instructions for UN peacekeepers to prevent gender and sexually based violence and to take steps to protect against it. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is developing and improving training modules (both pre-deployment and on arrival) and field manuals on this subject, and the Secretary-General's regular reports on each mission include information on sexual violence, where that is an issue.

The U.S. continues to actively work with the UN Secretariat and fellow Members of the UN to prevent sexual misconduct by UN peacekeeping personnel – military, police and civilians.

Darfur:

The African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) report issued by the Secretary-General in April, 2009, reported that the vulnerability of women in IDP camps to sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is a continuing problem. In an attempt to address the ongoing violence, UNAMID's mandate asks the Secretary-General to ensure that UNAMID personnel implement Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 and to report on their implementation in the periodic SYG reports. UNAMID conducts community policing initiatives, employs women police officers to educate women about rape and sexual violence, encourages the reporting of rape, urges women to join camp security committees, and conducts escorts and patrols when women are outside the camps collecting firewood.

The Secretary-General has also urged Sudan's Government of National Unity to adopt a comprehensive strategy to address sexual violence, including strengthening the capacity and coverage of family and child police units, and

continuing to train and build the capacity of police and judicial officials and social workers on issues related to sexual violence.

DRC:

Upon renewing the mandate for MONUC in December 2008, the Security Council identified the protection of civilians as MONUC's top priority. In addition, due to the scale and severity of sexual violence committed especially by armed elements in the DRC, the Security Council requested MONUC to strengthen its efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including through training for the Congolese army, and to regularly report on actions taken in this regard.

MONUC has focused on developing innovative strategies to improve civilian protection and recently developed the concept of joint protection teams (JPTs) to enhance and improve the implementation of the Mission's mandate. During the past three months, ten multi-disciplinary joint protection teams were deployed to the main conflict-affected areas in North Kivu. MONUC has also created what it calls "MONUC-protected corridors," where civilians can be evacuated preemptively in anticipation of an attack. MONUC continues to search for more effective, innovative approaches to complement and enhance the military effort to protect civilians.

Under the auspices of the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and on the basis of extensive consultations with MONUC and partner agencies, a comprehensive strategy on combating sexual violence in the DRC has been developed to provide a platform and framework for action and to strengthen prevention and protection and the response to sexual violence. The strategy is aimed at supporting the efforts of the UN system and the Government of the DRC to combat sexual violence and ensure complementarities with ongoing processes and initiatives, including the reform of the security sector and the security and stabilization support strategy.

While both the current mandate and rules of engagement do provide for use of force to protect civilians, most observers and analysts agree that MONUC's numbers on the ground are simply too few to effectively implement a comprehensive prevention and protection strategy.

Recommendations for more effective actions against gender-based violence

Needs:

The most basic, urgent, and fundamental need is to move from words to action. DRC President Joseph Kabila has said he has “zero tolerance for sexual abuse,” but such statements need to be backed up by concrete action on rape prevention, protection of women, victim services, and the prosecution of perpetrators.

We have a potential tool in SC Resolution 1820, but without adequate funding and political will, its good intentions remain unrealized. MONUC has the potential to be more effective, but a realization of the 3,000-troop plus-up foreseen in last November's SC Resolution 1843 and December's mandate renewal SC Resolution 1856 is essential.

Specific and focused responses require specific and focused information about the true extent and geography of the crisis. To that end, it is imperative to have a broad network of trained data collectors in place.

The culture of impunity must end. As even the most horrific rapes become trivialized and accepted as routine, rates of rape committed by civilians are also increasing. A recent UN Human Rights Integrated Office in the DRC (UNHRO) report concluded that “law enforcement personnel and magistrates continue to treat rape and sexual violence in general with a marked lack of seriousness.

Consequently, men accused of rape are often granted bail or given relatively light sentences and out-of-court settlements of sexual violence cases are widespread.”

Few cases are reported to the police and fewer still result in prosecution. Of the

more than 14,000 rape cases registered in provincial health centers in the DRC between 2005 and 2007, only 287 were taken to trial.

The trend toward increasing lawlessness and impunity will not end until respect for the rule of law and for humane conduct is established. Until then, more must be done to identify and punish perpetrators. Police must receive better training; there must be more focus on initiatives to strengthen the rule of law and provide victims with access to justice while offering them protection throughout the judicial process.

Protection of women needs to be integrated from the start into our efforts to rebuild civil society in Darfur and the DRC. In Darfur, efforts to involve civil society in the peace process have always made the participation of women a priority. We cannot allow the participation of women to become an afterthought or a separate category, but rather we must make programs for women's empowerment, girls' education, shelters, and care for victims of violence mainstreamed into general humanitarian and capacity -building work in this region. These issues should play an important role in our response to any conflict in any country, not just in the DRC and Sudan. These problems are not just women's issues or African issues, but a humanitarian and burgeoning security crisis, and need to be addressed as such.

Recommendations:

Building on the needs identified above, our specific recommendations are to:

- Establish a UN fund for gender advisors to help implement SC Resolution 1820. Develop a U.S. national action plan for SC Resolution 1325 that includes input from, and roles for, the Department of State, Department of Defense, Health and Human Services, USAID, and civil society. Build public awareness of SC Resolution 1325 and 1820 and bring international pressure and suasion to bear on countries that violate their provisions.

- Empower MONUC's formed police units, working in close coordination with EUSEC (the EU Security Cooperation entity, which has the lead on police reform in the DRC) to provide training in gender and human rights issues to the Congolese National Police. Clarify the peacekeepers' rules of engagement, and, particularly, the circumstances under which they are able to take perpetrators into custody.
- Enhance prison facilities. Currently, in the DRC, even if rapists can be arrested and convicted, there is often nowhere to incarcerate them without adding to the chronic, dangerous and physically detrimental overcrowding throughout the DRC prison system.
- Establish guidelines for social responsibility in consultation with organizations active in DRC and for humanitarian operations in Sudan. Require that all private military contracting firms hired to conduct activities have adequate numbers of women in supervisory roles, have been trained in proper and confidential reporting methods, and promptly and appropriately respond to reports of violence.
- Foster public awareness campaigns and efforts to shift national opinion about the seriousness of rape. DRC First Lady Olive Kabila and NGOs led by Congolese women have begun to have some success in this area.
- Enhance community reintegration services for victims, including schooling, vocational training, employment services and childcare.
- In cooperation with the Department of Defense, launch an effort to link participation in sexual violence to career consequences for officers in the FARDC. Establishing a human rights office within DoD could be helpful for coordinating programs, policies, and data collection to achieve this goal.
- Provide additional protection patrols within IDP camps in Darfur and the DRC. Within the context of enhanced data collection, identify specific

locations and patterns of daily activity – for example, water and firewood collection – that create the most vulnerability to attack, and fortify patrols and protection in those geographic areas and at those times.

- Provide personnel to gather documentation and testimony for the prosecution of rapes. Supply legal experts to help establish clear and consistent guidelines for identifying and punishing perpetrators. The United States has already undertaken efforts along these lines by supporting civilian justice sector reform that parallels our military justice reform work. Through a USAID-funded program, the American Bar Association is helping Congolese rape survivors navigate the justice system so that they are not discouraged by the bureaucracy of a system that should be working for them.
- Encourage the African Union to carry out the recommendations presented in their International Commission of Inquiry report of 2006 into sexual violence and abuse in Darfur, including those that focus on holding African Union (AU) troops accountable for actions of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as more general prevention of impunity and protection efforts.
- Include women in negotiations to end the conflicts in Sudan and the DRC. Women must be represented at the negotiating table so that their specific needs in post-conflict civil reconstruction are incorporated, from the start, directly into the fundamental documents and blueprints of reconciliation.

We at the State Department are eager to work with you in developing more serious and sustainable actions, coordinated across the U.S. Government, to combat the violence. The Obama Administration assesses that this humanitarian crisis urgently requires attention, and we pledge to accelerate our efforts and our engagement.