



Statement by UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Zainab Hawa Bangura, on the opening of the trial against Bosco Ntaganda

(New York, 02 September 2015) I note the start today at the International Criminal Court at The Hague of the historic trial against Bosco Ntaganda, leader of the UPC (*Union des Patriotes congolais*) and of its armed branch, the FPLC, a militia group from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This trial should serve as a powerful reminder to all other military leaders accused of similar acts that justice may be delayed, but it will not be denied.

The opening of this trial is a victory for survivors of the savage attacks allegedly perpetrated under Mr. Ntaganda's military leadership, and for the families of those survivors and human rights advocates fighting on their behalf.

I wish to commend Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda and the ICC for pursuing this important case, and to congratulate all those who worked to bring Bosco Ntaganda to justice. He is accused of a total of eighteen charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery, in connection with atrocities in Ituri, Democratic Republic of the Congo, between September 2002 and 2003.

As the trial continues, I call for support and protection of all the victims, witnesses and experts who will take part in the trial. Their courage and resolve to see justice done is inspirational for us in the international community, as we continue to fight together to eradicate sexual violence in conflict.

My Office, the United Nations Team of Experts and UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict continue to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implement the commitments made under the Joint Communiqué signed by the Government and the United Nations, a critical aspect of which is ensuring accountability for such crimes.

In this respect, I was pleased today to hear that a military court charged 18 soldiers and police officers with murders and rape in connection with crimes committed in Kasindi, Mbau, Nobili and Kamango localities in the eastern province of North Kivu.

I urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure full implementation of the armed forces Action Plan against sexual violence, to systematically bring perpetrators to justice and to deliver reparations to victims.

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