

**Statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General
On the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

The Secretary-General is outraged by the rape and assault of at least 154 Congolese civilians, during an attack by armed elements of the *Mai-Mai* and the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda* (FDLR), in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). This is another grave example of both the level of sexual violence and the insecurity that continue to plague the DRC.

The Secretary-General reiterates his call on all armed groups in the DRC to lay down their weapons and join the peace process. The Secretary-General further calls on the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to investigate this incident and bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes and renew efforts to bring an end to insecurity in the eastern part of the country.

The United Nations supports the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fight impunity and ensure the protection of civilians from violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

Given the seriousness of the incident, the Secretary-General has decided to dispatch immediately Assistant Secretary-General Atul Khare, Officer-in-Charge of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations to the DRC. He has also instructed his Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Margot Wallström, to take charge of the UN's response and follow-up to this incident.

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