



**The Democratic Republic of the Congo: UN Special Representative Pramila Patten expresses her deep concern over alleged acts of sexual violence against women and girls in IDP camps around Goma**

*Press Statement: For Immediate Release*

**New York, 25 May 2023:** Allegations of grave cases of sexual violence against civilians, including children, in particular affecting internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), is a matter of profound concern which requires immediate action.

I am deeply troubled by serious allegations of conflict-related sexual violence in IDP camps around Goma perpetrated by armed men, who have targeted women and girls attempting to return to their homes or as they carry out their daily livelihood activities, including collecting firewood, food or water. More than 38,000 cases of Gender Based Violence (GBV) were reported by UNICEF for all of 2022 in North Kivu alone. Humanitarian actors report they have provided assistance to over 600 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in six IDP camps over the course of two weeks in a volatile security environment. In most cases, survivors reported being attacked by armed men and displaced men in and around the camps.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence in the cases reported by humanitarian partners, and a large number of victims were not able to access life-saving services, including Post-Exposure Prophylaxis kits, during the crucial 72-hour window after an attack. Immediate medical and psychosocial assistance must be accompanied by protection measures, to ensure that those who have been forced from their homes due to violence and insecurity, including women and girls fleeing conflict in Masisi and Rutshuru territories in North Kivu province, are able to access services and are not placed at further risk of sexual violence. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the DRC is liaising with humanitarian partners and other United Nations actors in the country to document the allegations and provide the necessary support to victims.

As the Chair of UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, the 24-member UN inter-agency coordination network, I reiterate my urgent call to all parties to the conflict, to immediately cease every form of sexual violence and end hostilities in eastern DRC. I call on all parties to respect their commitments to peace and security, and to formally condemn all forms of sexual violence, in line with the 2013 Joint Communiqué to address conflict-related sexual violence and its 2019 Addendum.

I urge the Government to ensure its national police secures all IDP camps in accordance with their primary obligation to protect civilians under international humanitarian law and their responsibilities to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights obligations. I call on the authorities to work closely with the United Nations to ensure the safety of civilians fleeing conflict and to ensure that perpetrators of sexual violence crimes are identified and prosecuted.

I call on donors to allocate resources for an emergency response to ensure protection and immediate holistic assistance and multisectoral services to survivors, as per Security Council Resolution 2467 (2019). My Office and the United Nations system stand ready to support national authorities and civil society actors to put in place rigorous measures to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

*For **media inquiries** related to the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, please contact Ms. Géraldine Boezio (+1 917 367 3306 / [geraldine.boezio@un.org](mailto:geraldine.boezio@un.org)) - Follow us on social media: [@endrapeinwar](#)*