



**Vision GRAM international**

Groupe d'actions contre la marginalization --Group of actions against marginalisation

(Bureau International - International Office)

**Press Release: *Finally, the first verdict of the International Criminal Court: The first head falls.***



**Vision GRAM- International** welcomes the first verdict that the International Criminal Court has just made on March 14th 2012.

Thomas Lubanga, warlord and president of the Union of Congolese Patriots (UPC) has been convicted of war crimes for enlisting and conscripting children under the age of

(Thomas Lubanga) 15 years by making them participate actively in hostilities from September 2002 until August 2003 in Ituri in province Orientale in the DRC. This is a relief for some of his victims and gives them hope. It is also a victory for human rights since the beginning of the investigations in the DRC. Vision GRAM- International joins the victims who were waiting for this final moment.

The first verdict after 10 years of its existence, gives weight to the International Criminal Court.

Such a victory will make warlords realize that they cannot and will not get away with such inhuman crimes. It will hopefully help stop the violations of human rights.





*"This is a strong signal for other military and political leaders of the DRC who, for political reasons are involved to recruit children. They must know that the recruitment and involvement of children in armed conflicts is a path doesn't necessarily leads to power, but also before the International Criminal Court "said Victor AMISI, Executive Director of Vision GRAM-International.*

Not to betray the Congolese people, the authorities of the DRC must be very cooperative with the ICC on taking a strong decision to arrest and transfer General Bosco Ntaganda, (which is under

(General Bosco Ntaganda) international arrest warrant for 2008). This man, close to Thomas Lubanga was promoted to the rank of general in the Congolese national armed forces.

*"The reasons (" peace before justice ") alleged by the Congolese government are not convincing because justice is part of the peace process. The presence of Bosco Ntaganda as head of the Congolese national army is an insult, a slap in the faces of victims, a breach of security of civilians, to victims of his atrocities, as well as national security. The Government should not reward a criminal by giving him a senior position. His place is before international criminal court to answer for his acts "continues Victor AMISI.*

It is important to the authorities of the D R Congo to protect civilians against the presence of Bosco Ntaganda who represents a real danger and fear.

To fight against impunity, **Vision GRAM- International** believes that the actions of the International Criminal Court should be very effective, because many acts of violations of human rights are committed in the eastern of the country under the nose of the Congolese authorities. Still today some authors of these crimes are still free.

March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2012

**Vision GRAM - International** ((Groupe of Actions against Marginalization - International) is a human right organization affiliated to **Projet GRAM- Kivu** to work for human rights by defending and promoting children's and women rights.

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