



Vision GRAM International



Press release

The responsibility to protect, an appeal to States for children in DR Congo



(Ottawa, February 12, 2013) – On February 12, 2013 the world recognizes the International Day of child soldiers in order to speak about the situation of children in armed forces and groups.

Children in conflict zones are recruited and used in violation of their rights. This is the time for states to take responsibility to protect their children against the forced recruitment and participation in armed conflicts. This is a responsibility that will be achieved by the adoption of an Arms Trade Treaty that is binding and takes aggressive action.

Vision GRAM-International is very concerned about the plight of children who are the targets of armed groups in eastern DR Congo. This situation becomes more complex and disturbing with the confrontation between the M23 Movement and the Congolese army. With the displacement of the population, some children are abandoned and threatened while others are on the front lines.

Cases of children being killed and injured in deliberate ways by the M23 continue to worry many. The former demobilized child soldiers are in extreme fear of a possible re-enrollment. This situation has caused the desertion of children and teachers in schools for fear of a forced recruitment strategy used by M23 and M26 movements, the FDLR, the Mai-Mai-Pareco the Mutomboki Raia and others in the two provinces of north and South Kivu.



(Sultani Makenga)

Despite pressure and sanctions enforced on the M23 rebel leaders by the UN, including Sultani Makenga for recruiting and using children, they are always present and run the risk, as they are not yet demobilized from the rebel M23.

While talks are underway in Kampala / Uganda, on the ground, it is the psychosis of renewed fighting. Armed groups recruit children and don't give them any chance to quit or escape. They live in anxiety and fear for their future.

"We believe that these talks will take into account the presence of children in all armed groups involved in current conflicts and must be a priority in the agreement" says Victor AMISI, Executive Director of Vision GRAM-International.

Children are seeing their future broken with these endless wars to benefit armed groups for political or economic interests. The weakness of the treaty robust arms

trade, easy access to weapons and their proliferation and illicit circulation in the region exposed to hazards.

Concrete actions and responsibility must be taken to prevent the recruitment and use of children by armed groups. Thus, during the last diplomatic conference on the Arms Trade Treaty to be held in New York in March 2013, states must adopt to end the cycle of suffering and violence facing children.

Vision GRAM-International calls on the armed groups in conflict to immediately cease the recruitment of children into their ranks and to respect the rights of children. The Movement M23 must demobilize all children in its ranks, in order to facilitate their reintegration into civilian life.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the plight of children who are in the ranks of other groups and militias and prevent further recruitment.

Vision GRAM-International appealed to the states involved in the search for a solution in this conflict, to implement the principles of the responsibility to protect by highlighting the best interests of children.

Concerted actions are set up by organizations of civil society in the DRC, population and international organizations to denounce and condemn all armed groups who have their place children.

Pressure and sanctions against Sultani Makenga are not enough; the international community should arrest and convict him for child recruitment to the international tribunals. The organization recalled that charges against Bosco Ntaganda should continue for his transfer to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Vision GRAM-International believes that the Diplomatic Conference on the Treaty on Arms Trade to be held in New York will be an aggressive action to prevent the recruitment of children and to stop atrocities against the population.



**STAND UP FOR LOVE.
STOP THE USE OF CHILD SOLDIERS.**

Vision GRAM-International

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Vision GRAM - International (Group of Actions against the marginalization) is a Human Rights organization which promotes human rights by defending the rights of children and women.

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