



Plenary sitting

B9-0200/2021

9.3.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the assassination of Italian ambassador Luca Attanasio and his entourage (2021/2577(RSP))

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on behalf of the S&D Group

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European Parliament resolution on the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the assassination of Italian ambassador Luca Attanasio and his entourage (2021/2577(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), notably that of 17 September 2020 on Dr Denis Mukwege,
- having regard to the Statement by the UN Secretary General of 22 February 2021 on the attack in the DRC,
- having regard to the Statement by the Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Human Rights of 22 February 2021,
- having regard to Statement by the Deputy Country Director for the United Nations World Food Programme in the DRC of 26 February 2021,
- having regard to Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/2033 of 10 December 2020 to maintain individual restrictive measures against several personalities of the DRC,
- having regard to the enhanced dialogues of 2 October 2020 by the Human Rights Council on the situation of human rights in the DRC and Central African Republic,
- having regard to the declaration of 20 May 2020 by the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative on behalf of the EU on the security situation in Ituri,
- having regard to UN Security Council resolutions, notably Resolution 2528 of 25 June 2020 on the situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Resolution 2463 of 29 March 2019 on the extension of the of the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO);
- having regard to the measures laid down in UN Security Council Resolution 2528, which renewed until July 2021 a series of sanctions such as an arms embargo on armed groups in the DRC, a travel ban on individuals and an asset freeze on individuals and entities designated by the Sanctions Committee,
- having regard to the UN Report of August 2010 of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the DRC between March 1993 and June 2003,
- having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas,
- having regard to the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, adopted on 18 February 2006,

- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the Members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part (the Cotonou Agreement);
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which was adopted on 27 June 1981 and entered into force on 21 October 1986;
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
 - having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure.
- A. whereas violence, armed attacks, killings and human rights abuses remain widespread in the DRC, notably in the east of the country;
 - B. whereas on 22 February 2021 Luca Attanasio, Italian Ambassador to the DRC, his driver Mustapha Milambo, and Vittorio Iacovacci a member of the Italian Carabinieri were killed by gunmen following an attack on their convoy; whereas the Ambassador and his staff were travelling in an UN vehicle from Goma to visit a UN World Food Programme school project in Rutshuru;
 - C. whereas President of the Democratic Republic of Congo Félix Tshisekedi strongly condemned the murders and committed to launching an investigation;
 - D. whereas the grave security situation in eastern DRC continues to deteriorate, in particular on the border between Ituri, South Kivu and North Kivu; whereas around 120 armed groups including the FDLR, the ADF and NDC-Rénové operate in the region vying for access to and control of natural resources including minerals, and have been responsible for kidnappings, killings, torture and sexual violence;
 - E. whereas over 2000 civilians were killed in the east of the DRC in 2020 and over 5,2 million people have been displaced throughout the country;
 - F. whereas park rangers from Virunga National Park attempted to save the lives of the Ambassador and his entourage; whereas rangers themselves work under the constant threat of kidnapping and killings by rebel groups; whereas six rangers were killed and a seventh injured in an attack in January 2021 in Nyamitwitwi; whereas twelve rangers and five civilians were killed in an ambush in April 2020;
 - G. whereas on 12 March 2017, armed men executed two UN investigators – Zaida Catalán, a Swede, and Michael Sharp, an American – while they were documenting human rights abuses in the central Kasai region of the DRC;
 - H. whereas the UN Mapping Report published in 2010 documented 617 corroborated serious human rights violations in eastern DRC between 1993 and 2003; whereas the report detailed a series of recommendations which have largely not been implemented; whereas impunity remains a serious problem;
 - I. whereas the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has reported increasing kidnappings and attacks on aid workers and convoys, which have forced humanitarian organisations to delay the delivery of aid and suspend

their activities; whereas members of civil society including activists, journalists and human rights defenders continue to face harassment, intimidation and attacks; whereas many of them risk their lives to defend freedom of association and expression;

- J. whereas the United Nations World Food Programme is the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, as the world's largest humanitarian organisation, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change;
 - K. whereas the DRC is considered a fragile state; whereas poverty, food insecurity and lack of economic opportunities are endemic; whereas these severe challenges provide opportunities for militias and armed groups to recruit young people and exploit child labour;
 - L. whereas the number of troops and budget of MONUSCO continues to be reduced;
 - M. whereas in December 2020 the EU renewed the targeted sanctions in place against eleven Congolese officials responsible for human rights abuses;
1. Expresses its shock and sincere condolences to the families and colleagues of Luca Attanasio, Moustapha Milambo and Vittorio Iacovacci, and deeply pays tribute to their service and their lives;
 2. Deplores the continual threat of violence which faces the local population, humanitarian and development workers, international organisations, the diplomatic community, and human rights defenders operating in eastern DRC;
 3. Urges a thorough, independent and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the murders; welcomes the commitment from President Tshisekedi to launch an inquiry and urges the Congolese government and provincial leaders to cooperate fully with the Italian authorities and the United Nations;
 4. Is extremely concerned at the continuing levels of impunity in the country; notes that the failure to address such impunity for human rights violations contributes to the continuation of such abuses; urges the Congolese authorities to swiftly bring to justice the perpetrators of the 22 February attack and take serious steps to advance transitional justice;
 5. Encourages the establishment of a national transitional justice strategy to address serious abuses committed in the past, with a view to establishing accountability, delivering justice and enabling reconciliation; notes that this strategy must be based on genuine consultation and involvement of all stakeholders;
 6. Reiterates its call for the recommendations of the Mapping Report to be taken forward, notably that of creating specialised mixed chambers in DRC courts to allow for cooperation between the Congolese judiciary and the international community to prosecute human rights abuses; calls for the strengthening of the national justice sector as a whole to prosecute crimes which have caused serious human rights violations;

7. Calls on the Government of the DRC to adopt a zero tolerance approach to collaboration between political leaders, the armed forces and the police, and armed groups; urges continued support from the international community to security sector reform in the DRC and the consolidation of state institutions; calls for an overview from the UN group of experts of all the actors who continue to support these groups so they can be sanctioned;
8. Urges the Government of the DRC to establish a Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration programme in order to create a long-term strategy to disband armed groups and prevent former fighters rejoining;
9. Urge Congolese authorities to remove from their posts security force officers and other executive branch officials who have been implicated in serious human rights violations, according to reports by the United Nations Group of Experts on Congo, the UN joint human rights office (UNJHRO), the UN Human Rights Council, and Congolese and international human rights organizations; urges the DRC to facilitate these efforts by establishing a formal vetting mechanism as part of the broader Security Sector Reform (SSR) efforts, to undertake the factual investigation needed to build cases for removal and to support efforts to build disciplined, rights-respecting forces;
10. Stresses the need to address the root causes of recruitment to armed militias, including extreme poverty, through humanitarian and development assistance; notes that in eastern DRC the role of MONUSCO is vital in working to establish security and stability in the region; notes that its role should be reaffirmed through a clear mandate in which benchmarks related to the security situation must be reached before its possible withdraw from the region;
11. Emphasises the direct link between the funding of armed groups, violent attacks aimed at securing access to raw materials, and the unregulated trade in minerals; welcomes the entry into force of the Conflict Minerals Regulation, and notes that the biggest challenge remains with regard to artisanal gold, the management of which is a source of instability in the region; urges the Commission to come forward with ambitious proposals for mandatory due diligence requirements in order to identify and eliminate instances of child labour and human rights abuses in the supply chain of companies operating in the EU;
12. Notes the challenges that exist in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in eastern DRC; recalls the deplorable violence and fatal attacks perpetrated by armed militias on healthcare workers in Ebola treatment centres, and urges the international community to ensure patients and healthcare workers treating and vaccinating against COVID-19 are supported by security efforts;
13. Welcomes the publication of the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region in January 2021; urges parties to continue cross-border cooperation including through the UN Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes to address the violence, human rights abuses and impunity in eastern DRC;
14. Welcome the renewal in December 2020 of the EU targeted sanctions against senior Congolese officials responsible for violent repression and other serious human rights

abuses; urges that this sanction mechanism be used to fight against corruption, which often leads to serious human right violations; regrets that none of the sanctioned individuals have been investigated or prosecuted by the government for alleged rights violations, and urge the Congolese government, the EU and the international community to intensify efforts to ensure they face justice;

15. Call on the Congolese authorities to fully protect the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association for all, and in accordance with international standards; stresses that activists, members and supporters of political parties, journalists, and human rights defenders should be able to conduct their work freely, criticise government policies, and organize peaceful protests without fear of intimidation, reprisals, harassment, arrests, or the excessive use of force by the security forces;
16. Calls the newly formed Congolese government and the security forces to exclude from its ranks any individuals which are under EU sanctions;
17. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Speaker of the Congolese Parliament and the African Union and its institutions.