

## Statement of Ireland

### High Level Dialogue on Sexual Violence in DRC

25 March 2014

Ireland aligns itself with the intervention made by the European Union.

Ireland welcomes this important discussion and the opportunity it presents to assess progress and identify challenges in combating sexual violence in the DRC. We remain deeply concerned by grave reports, in both scale and nature, of acts of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as other human rights violations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We condemn in the strongest terms the ongoing use of sexual violence by armed groups, as well as by Congolese defence and security forces, as a strategy to instil fear and control certain territories and populations.

While we welcome recent positive reports that the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for DRC has resulted in improvements on the ground, we stress the importance of continued constructive and participatory engagement by all parties with a view to eradicating the root causes of sexual violence, and addressing the continuing culture of impunity.

In this regard, Ireland strongly supports the work of the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary General to the Great Lakes, Mary Robinson. We commend the efforts of the Special Envoy to engage regional leaders, bilateral and multilateral partners and civil society organisations to ensure the broadest possible range of actors remains committed to the Framework. In particular, Ireland supports the Special Envoy's commitment to take a 'bottom up' approach to addressing issues surrounding sexual and gender-based violence, which includes ensuring the engagement of civil society organisations due to their central role in provision of medical, legal and psychosocial services for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and in holding the government to account for its commitments. We also welcome the recent establishment of the *Women's Platform for the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework* which aims to support the active and meaningful participation of women and girls in the implementation of the Framework and to ensure that their voices and aspirations are effectively communicated, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325.

Furthermore, Ireland is a significant humanitarian donor to the DRC, having donated over €39 million since 2009, and we believe there needs to be a continued strong emphasis on the importance of humanitarian actors in eastern DRC having access to those displaced and in need of assistance.

*We would be interested in hearing from Minister Mumba Matipa and Special Representative Bangura on how civil society can be meaningfully engaged in the fight to combat sexual violence in DRC.*