

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO:
UN HUMANITARIAN CHIEF CALLS FOR BETTER SECURITY IN LRA-
AFFECTED AREAS

(Kinshasa /New York /Geneva, 10 March 2011): Valerie Amos, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, visited Orientale Province on the last day of her visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele districts are the scene of brutalities committed by the Ugandan armed group Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA has killed nearly 2,000 civilians and abducted nearly 3,000, including an estimated 1,500 children in these districts since December 2007.

In the village of Bangadi, located approximately 50 kilometres from the border with Southern Sudan, Ms. Amos heard harrowing testimonies from survivors, who had been abducted by the LRA. "The LRA continues to commit atrocities against civilians, and those who have been displaced have no prospect of going back home any time soon," said Ms. Amos after her visit. "The LRA are brutal. They have mutilated and killed many local people, and hundreds of kidnapped children have never returned."

Only a few hundred LRA fighters are estimated to be in the DRC. But despite their relatively small number, the insecurity and humanitarian impact of their presence is enormous. The limited road access in the Uele districts renders humanitarian operations difficult and costly. The LRA has caused the displacement of almost 300,000 people in the DRC alone. In addition to the DRC, the LRA has attacked civilians in Southern Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR), as well as in Uganda. "The affected countries and international partners need to come together to address this serious threat to regional peace and security", said Ms. Amos.

During meetings with authorities and humanitarian workers in the province, Ms. Amos emphasised the primary responsibility of the Government of the DRC for protecting civilians, but also expressed concern that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) did not have sufficient resources to protect civilians adequately and ensure access for humanitarian operations in LRA-affected areas. "MONUSCO is a deterrent for the LRA, and its presence is also essential to facilitate humanitarian access and operations in this province," she stated.

Seven United Nations agencies and 23 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) carry out humanitarian work in the Haut-Uele and Bas-Uele districts. Humanitarian workers have been able to assist an estimated 65 per cent of the displaced population, but they face obstacles on a daily basis due to persistent insecurity and the inaccessibility of many of those displaced, in areas with little or no road coverage.

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