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Response to “Addendum” to the interim report by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo

The addendum to the 2012 interim report by the United Nations (UN) Group of Experts on the DRC seen by Amnesty International today details violations of the UN arms embargo and sanction regimes committed by Rwandan officials.

These include the recruitment of Rwandan youth and demobilized ex-combatants for the M23 armed group and the provision of weapons and ammunition to the group.

Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) units are also said to have reinforced M23 activities in the DRC and supported a number of other armed groups in eastern Congo.

“The UN Sanctions Committee should immediately take measures to ensure that Rwanda ends support to armed groups in the DRC. This is a clear breach of the arms embargo,” said Paule Rigaud, Amnesty International’s Deputy Programme Director for Africa.

“Some commanders of the M23, in particular Bosco Ntaganda, who is under an International Criminal Court arrest warrant, as well as other leaders of armed groups receiving support from Rwanda, are suspected of having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

Amnesty International calls on the UN Security Council to strengthen the arms embargo, and urges a greater UN monitoring presence in eastern Congolese border areas. MONUSCO and the Group of Experts should promptly report any violation of this embargo to the UN Security Council and to the UN Sanctions Committee.

“The Group of Experts’ findings also demonstrate the limitations of this embargo and the need for states gathering in New York on 2 July 2012 to adopt an effective Arms Trade Treaty that prohibits states from transferring weapons and ammunition to a country where there is a substantial risk that they could be used to commit or facilitate serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights.”

Any government official or other person who provides arms to government forces or to armed opposition groups who knows, or is aware, of the substantial likelihood that they would be used to commit war crimes or crimes against humanity would be criminally responsible for aiding and abetting such crimes.

Background

- According to credible information gathered by Amnesty International, the M23 continues to commit serious human rights violations. Between April and May 2012, M23 combatants raped several dozen girls and women in the Jomba area (Rutshuru territory) where the M23 established its base. The victims, mainly IDPs, were allegedly raped while going to their fields to look for food.

- Rwanda denies the findings of the UN Group of Experts