

**Open Letter to the United Nations Security Council on strengthening the arms embargo
on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

We non-governmental organisations representing civil society opinion from around the world are calling on the UN Security Council to take urgent steps to strengthen the design and implementation of the UN arms embargo on the DRC to help protect human rights in the eastern DRC and surrounding region.

Daily abuses against civilians, including widespread killings, rapes and other serious human rights violations continue to be committed in the DRC due to the proliferation and diversion of weapons and ammunitions to be used by the regular army, the police, and by armed groups. When they enter the DRC, from Sudan, China and other sources, there is no longer any procedure for MONUC to ensure that such equipment is properly safeguarded, distributed, stored and used by named units of the DRC armed forces.

In order to ensure respect for the arms embargo on the armed groups in the DRC, the UN Security Council must encourage urgent steps by the international community to help address the DRC government's lack of progress towards professionalizing its security forces, securing its arms stocks and ending impunity,

The UNSC should strengthen the procedures for the implementation of UN arms embargo as follows:

1. Require the DRC government to provide advance notification to MONUC of all imports to the DRC of military and related materials, and to require the government to only import such material via agreed designated receiving sites subject to MONUC supervision, and to submit to MONUC inspections of inventories.
2. In order to prevent diversion from official DRC holdings, all transfers to FARDC units deployed in eastern DRC should be made by prior arrangement under MONUC supervision where the subsequent FARDC holdings and stocks are subject to MONUC inspections.
3. Warn all governments of third countries from which arms have been sent or arranged in violation of the UN arms embargo, including transfers to the DRC without prior notification to the Security Council, that such action will result in secondary sanctions imposed by the Security Council.
4. Require MONUC to establish without delay adequately trained specialised units to monitor arms transfers, and to effectively promote stockpile security, accountability and management of arms and ammunition in the DRC.
5. Request as a matter of urgency that all UN Member States urgently review the end use of their transfers of military material to countries in and bordering the Great Lakes Region, and implement measures to ensure legitimate end uses that do not violate international law, including international human rights law and IHL.

We believe that to avoid massive human rights catastrophes such as the one that has unfolded in the DRC and Great Lakes, Member States should not only rely on arms embargoes but should also cooperate towards the early establishment of a global Arms Trade Treaty with the principles of the UN Charter and other legal obligations of states, including international human rights law and IHL, at its centre. Such a treaty would require all States to establish an effective national system of control for the international transfer of conventional arms according to agreed international standards, thus considerably reducing the incidence of irresponsible arms transfers and rendering the UN arms embargo regimes much more effective.

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