



**Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on
Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström**

VERDICTS BY DRC COURT SENDS STRONG SIGNAL TO ALL PERPETRATORS

(New York, 21 February 2011)

I welcome today's verdicts by the FARDC military mobile court in Baraka in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Not only did the Congolese authorities react swiftly to the Fizi rapes in January and apprehended a number of the alleged perpetrators, but by all accounts the legal process has been fair and efficient. To my knowledge, this was the first time that a high-ranking commander of the national army as well as three majors, one captain and six soldiers were arrested, tried and sentenced for conflict-related sexual violence in the DRC.

The sentences send a strong signal to all perpetrators in the DRC and beyond that conflict-related sexual violence is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. It also shows that accountability for sexual violence is possible. I see this trial as a principally important step in the continued fight against impunity for this type of crimes. It is now imperative that the remaining perpetrators are found and brought to justice, for the Fizi incident as well as last year's Walikale atrocities. It is equally important that the victims of and witnesses to instances of sexual violence are protected, as well as their families.

I would like to commend the Government of the DRC, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), the American Bar Association (ABA), the Open Society Initiative, and local Non-Governmental Organizations for their assistance in this crucial case.

We continue to monitor this and other incidents of alleged sexual violence in conflict, wherever they occur.

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