



Statement by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on

Sexual Violence in Conflict Margot Wallström

***JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS BY DRC AUTHORITIES IMPORTANT SIGNAL IN THE
FIGHT AGAINST CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE***

(New York, 29 March 2011)

I welcome that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has initiated judicial proceedings against three of five high-ranking military officers of the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratiques du Congo* (FARDC) charged with having perpetrated rape. They include General Jérôme Kakwavu, former leader of the armed group *Forces Armées Populaires du Congo* (UDC/FAPC) before his integration into the national army, Lieutenant Colonel Engagela aka ‘Colonel 106’, and Colonel Safari.

General Kakwavu is under arrest and is currently being held in Kinshasa on charges of having raped two young women seven years ago, one of whom was only 13 years old at the time. The two other officers, Major Pitchen and Colonel Mosala, are still at large and trials in absentia are currently being considered.

This is the first time that an FARDC General is to be prosecuted by a military tribunal for rape in the DRC. These actions send a powerful signal that no military or political leader is above the law, and no woman is below it. In addition to prosecution, there is a need for reparation for victims. It is vital that survivors receive assistance, in particular medical interventions. The aim is not only to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice, but also to ensure that victims obtain justice and care.

It is now crucial that the DRC authorities apprehend as soon as possible the two individuals still at large. We continue to monitor this and other incidents of alleged sexual violence in conflict, wherever they occur.

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