September 13th, 2010: Press Statement Issued by Members of the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's Network of Men Leaders, the MenEngage Alliance and the Athena Network Calling for Action to Stop Rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Online petition at: http://www.genderjustice.org.za/mass-rapes-in-the-drc-statement-and-call-to-action.

Contact:
Bafana Khumalo: MenEngage Africa Coordinator; bafana@genderjustice.org.za ; 27 11 339-3589 or mobile phone: 27 82 905 7587
Gary Barker: MenEngage Co-Chair and Director Gender, Violence and Rights at the International Center for Research on Women; gbarker@icrw.org; Tel 1 202 742 1215

Last year the African Union declared this decade, 2010-2020, the African Women's Decade.

Between July 30th and August 4th nearly 500 women and girls, and some boys and men, were raped in and around the village of Luvungi in the Eastern DRC in a campaign of ongoing terror waged by armed groups who use rape as a weapon of war. To date, armed groups and soldiers from the Congolese armed forces have raped over 200,000 women.

We, the undersigned members of UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's Network of Men Leaders and members of the MenEngage Alliance and the Athena Network, call on the African Union, its regional bodies and member states to take urgent action to demonstrate their commitment to indeed ensuring that this decade improves women's lives and brings an end to the endemic violence faced by women and girls across the continent, especially in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The announcement by African heads of state that 2010 to 2020 would be the decade of the African Women was met with hope and excitement. The announcement followed a decade in which African heads of state signed numerous commitments to ensure protection for women from sexual violence in situations of armed conflict and to increase women's leadership and involvement in peace-building in conflict and post-conflict settings. These binding commitments include the 2005 Maputo Protocol, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000, and UNSCR 1820, which addresses the issue of sexual violence in conflict, in June 2008.

The United Nations has acknowledged that its MONUSCO forces failed in their peacekeeping mandate and did not do enough to respond to warnings issued by villagers about impending attacks. The UN has committed itself to doing things differently. They must now act on those commitments.

To date, however, neither the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo nor the relevant regional bodies have issued statements condemning the violence. The African Union has been silent and

so have the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which just last November held a meeting to address sexual violence in the Great Lakes region.

As members of the UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders to the United Nations UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign (http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/network.shtml), and as members of the global MenEngage Alliance (www.menengage.org) active in over forty countries, and members of the Athena Network, advocating for gender equity in the global response to HIV and AIDS (http://www.athenanetwork.org/), we call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the African Union, SADC, the EAC, the ICGLR and the United Nations to take immediate and urgent action to hold accountable the perpetrators of this violence and to take measures to prevent such violence from occurring ever again.

Specifically, we call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the African Union, is regional bodies the SADC, the EAC, the ICGLR, its members states and the United Nations to do the following:

1. Provide immediate health care, and support to survivors of rape and to those affected by violence.
2. Take swift action to arrest and prosecute those responsible for the attacks, including those involved in planning, sanctioning and colluding with the attacks. As a state actor, the DRC Military, or FARDC, must be held to the commitments made by the DRC government or face war crimes charges.
3. Substantially increase the numbers of peacekeeping troops on the ground.
4. Take women's and children's experiences and priorities into account in planning and monitoring protection measures, including confidential consultation, feedback and complaints mechanisms and adequate representation on security committees and other community protection bodies[1].
5. Develop programmes and policies, including mass media and community education campaigns that challenge the stigma faced by survivors of rape
6. Develop programmes and policies that educate men about women's and girls' rights and challenge notions of manhood that contribute to rape and domestic violence.
7. Accelerate engagement with non-state armed groups in the DRC to demand that they uphold international law and cease using rape as a weapon of war and other human rights violations against civilians.

Endorsed by:

Members of UN SG's Network of Men Leaders:

1. Juan Carlos Arean, Member UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders, Family Violence Prevention Fund, USA.
2. Gary Barker, Member UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders, Co-Chair MenEngage Alliance, International Centre for Research on Women, USA.
3. Ted Bunch, Member UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders, Co-Chair MenEngage Alliance, A Call to Men, USA.
4. Andrew Levack, Member UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders, EngenderHealth, USA.

[1] As articulated by Oxfam in their briefing paper "In Harm's Way".

5. Todd Minerson, Member UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders, White Ribbon Campaign, Canada.
6. Dean Peacock, Member UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders, Co-Chair MenEngage Alliance, Sonke Gender Justice Network, South Africa.

Members of the MenEngage Alliance:

7. Sonke Gender Justice Network, South Africa
8. Instituto Promundo, Brazil
9. Olive Leaf Foundation, South Africa
10. Men's Resources International, USA
11. Rwandan Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC)
12. ABATANGAMUCO Network, Burundi
13. Men's Association for Gender Equality (MAGE), Sierra Leone.
14. Congo Men's Network, DRC.
15. Ecumenical Global Network of Men on Gender, Zimbabwe
16. LifeLine/ChildLine Namibia
17. EngenderHealth
18. Men For Change Network, HOPEM, Mozambique
19. MenEngage Kenya Network (MenKen)
20. Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme, South Africa
21. Men's Movement Against AIDS in Kenya
22. African Fathers Initiative, Zimbabwe

Endorsing organisations:

23. The Athena Network
24. Kumi Naidoo, International Executive Director, Greenpeace; Co-Chair, Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP); Chair, Global Coalition for Climate Action.
25. Pan African Space Station.
26. International Fellowship of Reconciliation – Women Peacemakers Program
27. The Sexual Violence Research Initiative, International
28. Health Research Unit of the South African Medical Research Council, South Africa
29. Institute for Social and Health Sciences at the University of South Africa