

Human Rights Council – 37th Session

Item 10 – Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on the High Commissioner’s Oral Update on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 20 March

Australian Statement

We thank the distinguished panellists for their presentations. Australia is gravely concerned by the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are deeply disturbed by the reported spread of violence across the country, characterised by gross human rights violations, including summary executions of civilians, mass rape, the abduction and forced recruitment of child soldiers.

Australia is also deeply concerned by the resulting mass displacement – internal and to neighbouring countries. This is having a dire impact on the basic human rights of millions of Congolese, including in relation to shelter, to food and to health.

The human rights situation in the country is directly linked to the ongoing political crisis. Australia believes that the implementation of the December 2016 political agreement as well as timely elections in 2018 are essential for consolidating peace in the DRC. We call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to ensure that the civil and political rights of the population are respected, and to facilitate the holding of peaceful, free, fair and credible elections in accordance with the 2016 political agreement.

Australia also reiterates the need for accountability for human rights violations and abuses. We express our support for the continuing work of the Team of international experts on the situation in Kasai and look forward to receiving their comprehensive report and findings.

Finally, we would welcome your insights into the gender dimensions of the impact of the violence in the Kasai region on women and girls. We would also like to ask: what are the obstacles to achieving accountability in relation to human rights violations?

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