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International Criminal Court Must Speed Up Investigations into Sex Crimes in DRC

Brussels, 7 July 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC is calling on the International Criminal Court to speed up its inquiries and investigations into the crimes committed in eastern DR Congo, particularly sex crimes, and to prosecute those responsible. It has also underlined the urgent need for the international community to ensure a strengthening of the judicial system in DRC as well as capacity building for its judges in the area of international criminal law.

The ITUC has once again expressed its shock at the horror of the violence perpetrated against women in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the United Nations, another 121 women were raped last month alone. These atrocious crimes committed in Nyakiele in South Kivu illustrate the extent to which sexual violence remains a serious and recurring problem in the country.

Other mass rapes were reported in January of this year in Fizi, South Kivu. To be added to these crimes are all the unreported sexual attacks that are suffered in the villages and fields, on the roads and at work, but that are not denounced for fear of reprisals, out of shame, or simply because the victims are convinced that those responsible will never, in any case, be punished.

The ITUC is working with its affiliated organisations in DRC - the CSC, CDT and UNTC - on the issue of violence against women, organising workshops on its prevention, on care and support for the victims and the reporting of sex crimes to the authorities. By taking part in the World March of Women in Bukavu in November last year, the ITUC also marked its solidarity with all the women that have been killed and violated in the region for decades.

"The sexual violence against women in eastern DR Congo is a horror, a crime against humanity that nothing or no one seems capable of stopping. We are calling, once again, for those responsible, be they civilian or military, to be arrested, tried and punished for these atrocious crimes. Urgent measures must be taken to bring immunity to a halt and end the unbearable cruelty and suffering experienced by thousands of women," insisted ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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