

**Statement by United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura:**

**Recent Convictions of Military and Police Officials in DRC Send Clear Message That  
Impunity for Sexual Violence in Conflict Will Not Be Tolerated**

**(New York, 16 December 2014)**

I welcome yesterday's conviction of former Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) lieutenant colonel Bedi Mobuli Engangela, aka 'Colonel 106', for crimes against humanity, including a twenty year sentence for rape and a fifteen year sentence for sexual slavery. He was one of five senior officers of the FARDC suspected of having committed serious human rights abuses, and whom the Secretary-General, the Security Council, and my Office, had continuously requested the DRC Government to take action against.

The decision by the military court in Bukavu, South Kivu Province is just the latest in a recent string of convictions of military and police officers for sexual violence crimes. In November FARDC general Jerome Kakwavu was sentenced to ten years in prison for rape, murder and torture, the first case ever in which a general faced prosecution by a military tribunal in DRC for rape. In October twenty-five FARDC soldiers and Police Nationale Congolaise (PNC) officers were convicted in the rapes of women and girls in separate cases in North Kivu Province and Kasai Occidental Province.

These trials, and ultimately convictions, send a very clear message to perpetrators of sexual violence in DRC that they cannot hide behind a badge or evade justice with a uniform, and that no matter how high ranking they may be, they are not above the law. With these prosecutions and sentencing the courts have also shown survivors that their voices and cries have been heard, and they will not have to suffer in silence or be denied justice, because their Government supports their right to redress.

These convictions demonstrate that the work being undertaken by the DRC Government to end impunity for crimes of sexual violence is bearing fruit, and the State is making progress in its efforts to combat and eradicate this scourge. While much work remains to be done, including in the area of providing services, reparations, and support for survivors, political leaders, justice officials, military commanders and other stakeholders are showing what can be accomplished when leaders are committed to creating a country free from sexual violence. They are also demonstrating the impact of strong and decisive political will, when countries understand that they bear the moral and legal responsibility to protect and defend their citizens.