

**Statement by Ms. Sigrid Kaag, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development
Cooperation, the Netherlands**

Geneva, 13 April 2018

Exactly one month ago today, Mark Lowcock and I visited the DRC. We met with Congolese men, women, boys and girls, all with harrowing stories to tell. Stories of how they had fled violence, conflict and chaos and the permanent fear that is with them.

I was touched by their fragility – especially the women and girls, prey to sexual violence, even in places where they seek refuge. I also was touched by their resilience, and their commitment to restart their lives – and their communities. Let's take resilience as a starting point. Their message is one of pride, dignity and a rightful ask for protection and assistance.

No actor can do this alone. My visit to the sites clearly showed the crucial role local authorities play in providing shelter and human dignity, through access to basic social services and to income generating activities.

I was encouraged to see all actors working together - the government of the DRC, the UN, of MONUSCO, the international NGOs and local civil society. All with a collaborative spirit to provide humanitarian assistance in the most dire of circumstances. To provide hope to the people who so crave prospects and peace.

It is clear: the DRC is facing a complex crisis. Many people told me about the sad cycle of poverty, violence and conflict they are trapped in. There's a myriad of actors; many parties are fighting, for different causes and with different motives. But this much the warring parties have in common: an absolute lack of interest in the human suffering as a consequence of their violent actions. This has to stop.

I therefore reiterate here today the call of the Security Council to all armed groups in the country: to end the fighting and the violence by conflict prevention and humanitarian assistance.

At the same time, and echoing the Secretary General of the UN, I would like to say here: prevention is the best way to address crises. The cheapest, also. DRC is a case in point.

To address their means, a lot of money is required.

The primary responsibility for this goal, of course, lies with the local authorities.

For decades, my country [the Kingdom of the Netherlands] has been a reliable partner of the Democratic Republic of Congo. A consistent provider of humanitarian aid and a known advocate of International Humanitarian Law who puts its money where its mouth is.

In 2018, the Netherlands makes a direct contribution of 10,4 million euro to provide humanitarian assistance to the people in the DRC. This amount is made available to the Humanitarian Response Plan through the UN Country-Based pooled fund and through NGOs. We urge all donors to contribute to the Humanitarian Response Plan so that we raise the 1,7 billion that is urgently needed.

In addition, the Netherlands continues to provide more than half of its humanitarian budget as unearmarked core funding to the UN Central Emergency Response Fund, UN agencies, the

ICRC and the Federation and Netherlands Red Cross.

Of course, we strongly welcome the active engagement of the government of the DRC, without whom progress cannot be made.

We will continue to engage and work with the government of the DRC and the United Nations in order to provide the much needed humanitarian assistance and protection.

In the final analysis, we all share the same goal: the end of suffering for the citizens of the DRC, and the beginning of a new chapter in this country so rich in potential. Let's all commit and work together to make this a reality.

Thank you.