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Thank you, Mr. President. It is an honor to address you regarding the role of justice in establishing peace and the rule of law in the DRC.

As Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues at the U.S. Department of State, I am responsible for formulating U.S. policy responses to atrocities committed in areas of conflict. One of my top priorities is to assist the government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to end the impunity that has fostered intolerable crimes in the DRC, particularly crimes of gender and sexual violence.

My own work on these issues builds upon more than eight years of experience as an international prosecutor pursuing justice in cases of mass atrocities. Prior to my service as Ambassador-at-Large, I served from 2001 to the end of 2006 as a prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), and from 2006 to 2009 as Chief Prosecutor at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. I saw first-hand the broader impact that justice can have on countries torn apart by conflict. It re-affirms core values of what is "right" and what is "wrong" in a context where these values have broken down. It recognizes the suffering of the victims and publicly holds the perpetrators accountable as criminals. While we all know that trials alone cannot end widespread violence, they can play an important part in not only re-establishing the rule of law in an environment of insecurity and impunity, but also in preventing and deterring would-be perpetrators from committing further atrocities.

Following Secretary Clinton's visit to Goma in August, I travelled to Kinshasa and the Eastern region of the DRC last month. In Kiwanja, I met with victims of the November 2008 massacre there, including a woman whose husband and children were killed before her eyes. Survivors still suffer from the effects of the Kiwanja massacre today. They lost their families, their homes, their property, and their ability to work. Securing justice for those who survive soul-shattering violence such as the events in Kiwanja is essential, I believe, not only for its own sake but also to securing a sustainable peace. It is crucial that the people who commit such atrocities are held to account and not put into positions of power. Unfortunately, Kiwanja is by no means an isolated event. Recently, there have been reports of almost 1,500 targeted killings of civilians this year by elements of the belligerent parties during current operations in the Eastern DRC. These attacks and killings must be investigated and the violators brought to justice.

In the DRC, a crucial step to ending the cycle of impunity is for Parliament to enact domestic legislation that will allow those who violate international humanitarian law, including those who commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide to be tried by civilian courts. Additionally, the DRC, in conjunction with the international community, must be committed to strengthening the civilian courts, by pursuing justice sector reform and training and hiring additional judges, investigators, and prosecutors.

Until this legislation is implemented so that civilian courts can try violations of international humanitarian law, military courts are the only venue for trying such violations. The military courts, despite immense challenges, have had some success in prosecuting those who have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. In order to build on these successes, it is important to strengthen the military courts so that they will be able to try accused violators, no matter what their rank. As I'm sure you know, accused soldiers in the DRC must be tried by a judge of the same or higher rank. Very few high ranking judges have been deployed to the East, which means high ranking soldiers who commit atrocities are not brought to justice. It is crucial that the DRC's domestic courts bring perpetrators to justice without regard to their rank or political connections. The

U.S. is committed to providing assistance to ensure that domestic courts are effective in holding perpetrators to account.

Finally, accountability must be pursued, not just through judicial mechanisms, but also through revising the processes by which soldiers are integrated into the FARDC. Re-integration methods must include thorough investigations and vetting of soldiers prior to integration, as well as suspensions and punishment when soldiers abuse their power. This is a challenge, for sure, but a challenge that must be met one soldier at a time.

These are not simple issues. But the DRC and international community must rise to the challenge. Silence is acceptance, and as Secretary Clinton has stated, the United States “will not tolerate this continuation of wanton, senseless, brutal violence perpetrated” against civilians. I am deeply committed, as is Secretary Clinton and President Obama, to pursuing peace by fighting for accountability and justice.