



Release: Immediate  
Brussels, 10 October 2008

## **Europe is ignoring mass rape of women and children in Congo**

A combination of racism, sexism and vested interests are preventing the European Union and US government acting effectively against the Congolese militia's tactics of mass rape of women and children. This was the conclusion of an ALDE conference held in Brussels yesterday.

The plight of women and children is even worse than it was in Rwanda during the genocide according to speakers at the conference. The struggle and suffering of these women is invisible and must be addressed to prevent the long term results being devastating for the country. Participants urged the EU to take notice that *"this is not a battle by women for women, it is a battle for humanity by humanity"*.

**Renate Weber (PNL, Romania)**, MEP co-chair of the seminar and member of the Development Committee in the European Parliament said: *"This is an emergency! As we speak, women are systematically destroyed in DRC through dreadful sexual and psychological torture. The impunity of the perpetrators must be stopped. We have to act now because the future of a nation is at stake, the future of our own humanity is at stake!"*

The seminar heard disturbing first hand examples of the atrocities being perpetrated from the director of the ground breaking Panzi Hospital in the DRC, Dr Denis Mukwege. Eve Ensler, author and playwright and founder of V-day, a global movement that supports anti-violence organizations throughout the world also made a powerful contribution with her account of the crimes currently being carried out. Eve Enser has just returned from the DRC, where she spent a month in North and South Kivu. The French presidency was represented by Jean-Bernard Bolvin, adviser to Rama Yade, French Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, who assured those gathered that the French presidency will take concrete action to help.

**Sophie in't Veld, (D66, Netherlands)**, co-chair of the seminar, said: *"Until you hear the stories you have no idea how bad things are, it goes beyond anything you can imagine but we have to leave emotions aside and focus on action. The European Parliament can be instrumental in raising awareness; we cannot close our eyes to this anymore. Violence against women seems to be perceived by large sectors of society to be normal but this should no longer be considered as a women's issue but a human rights issue."*

For more information visit the V-Day website at:

<http://v10.vday.org/anniversary-events/video/mukwege> <<http://v10.vday.org/anniversary-events/video/mukwege>> .

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also consult: <http://www.alde.eu>