

Declaration of Murhesa II for A Community Demobilisation, Disarmament, Reintegration and Reconciliation process in South Kivu province

Murhesa, 16 September 2020

A meeting was held between 14 and 16 September 2020 at the Grand Seminary of Murhesa near Bukavu (South Kivu province), held by His Excellence the Minister for National Defense, with the heads or representatives of around 70 armed groups who came from the Territories of South Kivu province. Along with the Minister sent to Murhesa by His Excellence the President of the Republic, the following persons took part in the discussions: the provincial authority represented by the Minister of the Interior, the Commander of the 33rd Region military, the Commander of the Sukola II North and South Kivu operational sector, the provincial officer of the PNC, heads of various services, representatives of local communities, and actors from civil society.

The meeting, organised by the Interprovincial Commission for Support of the Community Awareness, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Process (CIAP-DDRC for short), in close partnership with SFCG – Consortium Maji ya Amani, the Initiative for Cohesive Leadership (ILC) and the Association for Integrated Community Development (ADCI) was officially opened by the Minister for Defense on Monday 14 September:

The Murhesa II talks filled in the gaps left by first Murhesa meeting in December 2019, as well as addressing certain setbacks observed after those talks due to a profusion of less ambitious and less coordinated initiatives (the COVID-19 pandemic being an additional though marginal factor);

Because the aim of this approach mirrors the **expectations** of populations in the east of the DRC above and beyond just South Kivu: a national territory with regular, duly sworn forces, responsible for the safety of the territory but also public order, respect for fundamental rights of the person and citizens. By acting with unfailing impartiality, these same forces would also guarantee living space in which all tribes could feel at ease in the inter-dependence which has characterised them for centuries.

Everybody in the room realised the **historic nature of the moment**, and every party, non-state armed forces as well as institutional actors, could sense the part that he played in ensuring that, this time, hopes of a return to normalcy in South Kivu province would not be disappointed.

The goal of the Murhesa process, relaunched by the September 2020 retreat, is to initiate a **community and state-level peace process in South Kivu, in spite of all its vicissitudes, and, in the same stride, in North Kivu.**

In the immediate short-term, this process must be approved by signature of this Joint Declaration. This must highlight the **significant short-, medium- and long-term efforts** which must be made by all parties concerned:

- (i) a sustained and joint effort to **rebuild trust between communities, on one hand, and between communities and the Congolese state, on the other;**
- (ii) an **effort** by all militia groups which have not committed serious crimes to find a way to rebuild their lives in the bosom of society via viable and lasting reintegration pathways, with the help of public and private partners, in the Congo and abroad;
- (iii) a major, decisive effort by **security infrastructure of the Congolese state to offer humble and determined public service,** in order to ensure constant and impartial protection of property, persons, and borders;

The first day marked a symbolic break: the presence of the Minister for Defence was expressly mandated by the head of state along with heads of armed groups, at the Murhesa retreat, for the duration of the session. This availability and opportunity to listen symbolised the State waking up to the realities of insecurity of those populations living in the east of the DRC, after decades of absence and disdain for overtures made to public powers on the topic of the **lack of security and, therefore, of trust** around national security forces. Murhesa II was a moment of shared humility in the face of enormous issues with restoring public order and coexistence in South Kivu;

This attentive presence was accompanied by an extremely clear guideline, based on the refusal to grant amnesty to perpetrators of imprescriptible crimes, and an individual invitation to take part in standard selection for any candidate joining national security forces. A starting point for participants taken from Murhesa I was no demagoguery or false promises in “cohesive leadership” retreats.

Murhesa II became a new historic opportunity: more than eight heads of armed groups and coalitions were able to explain how their choice to fight with arms should be seen less as a gesture of defiance to the State and more an act of re-equilibration in the face of a security deficit and socio-economic uncertainty. For his part, the Minister for Defense came to pass on the head of state’s wish to embrace the challenges involved in restoring peace and an environment of trust and tolerance in the east of the DRC.

The days were devoted to very specific topics, related to the implementation of all phases of a DDR process: Community Demobilisation, Disarmament, Reinsertion, Reintegration and Reconciliation. Yes, reconciliation, because above and beyond simple technical considerations, this was about restoring bonds of trust destroyed by years of extreme violence and worsened by manipulation and movement of money by big players and diaspora, who fueled hatred out of self-interest, ignorance and failure to listen to local sages - these men and women, compasses of peace and social harmony, who are to be found in every tribe on the African continent.

At the end of the three days of discussions, characterised by great honesty, all attendees solemnly adopted and co-signed the following six focal points:

First focal point

All armed groups in South Kivu Province agree to cease hostilities and to inform their respective members of the same. They demand that the Armed Forces for the Democratic Republic of the Congo resume their state functions, and take all necessary measures to foster an environment for rebuilding trust, by ceasing operations and ensuring the voluntary return of displaced persons.

Second focal point

The undersigned parties agree to **communicate** on respecting the present Declaration of Murhesa II. This will be possible thanks to the creation of an informal Oversight Committee, on a sector-by-sector basis, which will communicate on a weekly or even daily basis, if necessary, and by analysing methods of respecting cessation of incidents and hostilities.

Third focal point

To guide those acting on the Oversight Committees mentioned in the second focal point above, the undersigned parties agree to produce maps of insecure zones, for confidential use. These maps are intended to hold all those involved in respecting the ceasefire responsible, and to permit accurate identification of possible breaches. Because this Murhesa II process does not allow for any form of breach, particularly in terms of respecting fundamental human rights.

Fourth focal point

The undersigned parties encourage the head of state to engage all state institutions in incorporating structures responsible for Community Demobilisation, Disarmament, Reinsertion, Reintegration and Reconciliation (CIAP-DDRC) into institutional and budget plans, in order to facilitate the process.

Fifth focal point

Members of armed groups and several tribes agree to make joint restitutions, as far as they are able to do so, in order to save the upcoming growing season.

Sixth and final focal point

Heads of coalitions of armed groups have expressed the desire to be able to express directly to the Head of State, in a location of his choosing, their original motivations and their desire to see the central state take issues in hand in a lasting manner.

Done in Murhesa on 16 September 2020.

List of participant signatories

(signatories)