

## World Council of Churches (WCC) condemns sexual violence against women in the DR Congo



KINSHASA, Dem. Rep. of Congo (DRC) September 3, 2009/ABC Television-Africa (ABC)/ — The Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) urged its member churches “to publicly condemn violence against women” in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and declare that “violence against women is a sin”.

In the DRC “the brutal crimes of sexual violence against women have massively increased and become pervasive in the country, especially since the beginning of the military operations in January 2009”, said the WCC Central Committee in a public statement on “Sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo”.

The statement, adopted by the committee on the last day of its 26 August – 2 September meeting in Geneva, urges all parties to the armed conflict to commit themselves immediately to putting an end to all acts of sexual violence against women and girls in the DRC.

The DRC government is called “to end impunity for rape and to evolve effective strategies to combat sexual violence”, bringing “to justice those responsible for committing” it.

“Thousands of women and young girls have suffered due to rape and forced sexual slavery, often being forced also to serve as soldiers”, says the statement.

The increasing sexual violence affects especially the region of South Kivu. Non-governmental armed groups and particularly militia from neighbouring countries “commit sexual atrocities that are of an unimaginable brutality, which go beyond rape and aim at the complete physical and psychological destruction of women as sexual slaves, with implications for the entire society”, the statement says.

In the statement, the WCC urges churches “to publicly condemn violence against women and to make constructive efforts to overcome such violence by declaring that violence against women is a sin and by the development of clear sexual harassment policies that also spell out clearly the consequences of such harassment”.

# AfricaNews

The WCC Central Committee also encourages member churches “to continue offering solidarity to the women of the DRC so that they know that they are not alone in their struggles”. This accompaniment includes public campaigns in the framework of the WCC Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010).

Full text of the “Statement on sexual violence against women in the Democratic Republic of Congo” can be read on the Internet at <http://www.oikoumene.org/?id=7155>.