November 4, 2015



Thomas Perriello U.S. Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa U.S. Department of State 2201 C Street NW Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Special Envoy Perriello:

As student leaders from campuses across the United States and abroad who advocate to help end the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we would like to formally congratulate you on your appointment. We appreciate your commitment to ensuring that the responsibilities of this incredibly important position remain a priority for the U. S. government as we maintain our commitment to supporting your efforts to contribute to peace in Congo and the Great Lakes region.

As the Special Envoy to the region, you are best positioned to build on the progress made by your predecessor and forge ahead on additional peace initiatives. We recognize the conflict in Congo is complex and are therefore working at the campus level to implement effective policies and bolster your efforts.

Through the Conflict-Free Campus Initiative – a joint initiative of the Enough Project and STAND – we work with university administrators, student governments, and our local communities to enact measures that pressure electronics companies and other relevant industries to help end the conflict minerals trade and responsibly invest in Congo's minerals sector. So far, 19 universities, colleges, and high schools have passed resolutions to this effect, and students from more than 175 schools across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom have participated in the campaign. Our goal is to bring attention to the consumer link between conflict minerals and the financing of armed groups in Congo, while also advocating for additional reforms that will benefit Congolese communities.

As engaged student leaders committed to seeing an end to the crisis, we ask that you take a strong and deliberate stance on the following issues:

- 1. Tackle key challenges on conflict minerals, in particular conflict gold and miners' livelihoods. In recent years, there have been significant improvements in the transparency of corporate supply chains as well as a major reduction in the number of tin, tungsten, and tantalum mines controlled by armed groups in eastern Congo. However, much more must be done to address the conflict gold trade and to support Congolese mining communities that have been negatively affected by the changing economic landscape. To that end, the United States must provide more robust support for conflict-free projects and livelihoods programs for mining communities in Congo.
- 2. Ensure the United States takes real steps to hold accountable the leaders and businesses most responsible for mass corruption and violence in Congo. This includes implementing targeted sanctions and prosecutions against corrupt officials and illicit financial networks that aid armed groups.



3. Make sure women's and other civil society voices are heard in high-level peace efforts and hold accountable leaders who block democracy. Congo enters a critical period as elections planned for late 2016 approach and President Kabila ramps up efforts to remain in power, despite constitutional requirements that he must step down. The months prior to the elections are potentially a very dangerous period for communities across Congo. In cooperation with regional and international stakeholders, the United States must prepare to take a strong stand to ensure Congo's elections are held on time and are free and fair. Additionally, high-level peace talks in Congo and the region will not be sustainable without the meaningful inclusion of civil society, especially women.

As student leaders, our goals are clear: help end the deadly trade in conflict minerals, encourage responsible, conflict-free investment in Congo, and support peace. Achieving these goals will only be possible if leaders like you continue to actively support key, Congolese-led reforms.

We thank you for the fresh perspective and excitement you bring to this position, and are eager to work alongside you.

Signed,

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