

**Mrs. Leila Zerrougui's interview on Radio Okapi, Tuesday 26 June 2012  
on the programme "L'Invité du jour" on Radio Okapi.**

**Radio Okapi: Mrs. Leila Zerrougui, good morning. You just returned from the eastern part of the country, what is your overall appreciation of the situation there?**

**Leila Zerrougui:** the situation is a source of concern because there are negative forces who are trying to destabilize not only North Kivu and the places they are occupying, but whose activities could potentially destabilize the whole region. That is why I went there. Some measures have been taken to suppress the threat and prevent these negative forces from destabilizing the entire region. So the purpose of my visit was to inspect the plan put up by MONUSCO, the one set up by FARDC as well, and also to encourage the troops, and reassure the population, listen to them and feel whether our actions are well received. Personally, I believe containing such conflicts requires military action but also working with the population to make sure that the people understand that they are the real target of the enemy.

**Radio Okapi: MONUSCO is accused of supporting the FDLR, of contributing to the massacre of civilians in some Kivu territories and even said to be downright pointless and irresponsible. What is your reaction to these accusations?**

**Leila Zerrougui:** first of all, it all depends on who is making these accusations, because I have been on the field and I have been going there regularly to see for myself what progress is being made, to meet and talk with the population under the threat. So only their opinion counts.

When you meet people who are living under the threat, you perceive that not only are they satisfied but they are demanding an increased presence. To say that MONUSCO is supporting the FDLR is in my opinion an extremely severe charge. Let me talk about our activities : first of all, we are carrying out joint operations with the FARDC against the FDLR ; secondly, prior to launching joint operations, members of the DDRRR, our demobilization, repatriation service, are deployed to sensitize the FDLR, requesting them to lay down their weapons, to surrender and to be repatriated to their country. This is what we are doing and the results are there. Let me share a few numbers: in 2010, 3,180 Rwandan FDLR were repatriated home. They included 986 combatants and 48 child soldiers and dependents; in 2011, there were 3,062, for 878 adult combatants and 44 child soldiers ; and we are less than six months into 2012, excluding the month of June, 1,747 have already been repatriated, including 644 combatants and 18 child soldiers.

So, how can we do all this and still support the FDLR. I find that accusation not only ridiculous, because sincerely, with all the work we are doing, to accuse us of supporting the FDLR...

What interest does MONUSCO have in participating in the massacre of the very population its mandate requires it to protect as a priority? It doesn't make any sense.

Like I said earlier, it all depends on who is making those accusations. Some people are of bad faith; I won't try convincing them because I will never be able to do so. Some others do not know what is happening, and they are those I am speaking to because I want them to be

informed about what is happening. They are far and receive false information and may therefore be brainwashed. There are those people who live under the threat. Sometimes when people have undergone something terrible, anger is normal. I can understand that you are angry because you were attacked and no one was there to protect you, not because they weren't willing to, but because they weren't there, or didn't have the resources or simply because they didn't know that you were under attack. So, an angry population can say many things. That I understand. From then on, it's our responsibility to review our stance, respond...we did that in Bunyakiri, we did that in Kitoyi also.

I accept criticism when it is justified, but for those who are doing it out of bad faith, like I said earlier, I won't be bothered by such.

**Radio Okapi: DRC recently submitted a case to the Security Council of the United Nations Organization accusing Rwanda of being directly involved in the prevalent armed conflicts in eastern DRC. What do you think of this approach?**

**Leila Zerrougui:** the Congolese government says it has evidence that Rwanda is involved, reason why it took this step. I believe and we have encouraged both countries, from the beginning, to dialogue, to meet and talk and seek a bilateral solution if possible and if not, to refer the matter to a multilateral, regional and African organization or the Security Council. It's a legitimate approach.

Now, we hope, sincerely, I have said this before and I repeat, destabilization is not in the interest of anyone, Rwanda more than the Congo, because destabilization in the region will slow down the momentum of development, peace and undermine the security of the population both at short and at long term. He who wins at short term loses at long term; he who loses at short term may win at long term. So, it is not in the interest of anyone.

Each time I have met either the Congolese or Rwandan authorities, I have told them you are neighbours and you cannot relocate.

**Radio Okapi: The Group of experts on the DRC will be issuing a report which has already been termed condemnatory for Rwanda on its involvement in DRC. What is MONUSCO's opinion [about this subject matter]?**

**Leila Zerrougui:** Let me first of all emphasize that the Group of experts is not a MONUSCO mechanism. We have heard about that report. I tried personally to get it, and haven't succeeded yet. I do not yet know what its exact contents are. We are waiting to see what it is all about. At MONUSCO, we share every bit of information we have with the government. For instance, when people from M23 turned themselves in to us, we informed the government. They were subsequently interviewed by Rwanda and Congolese authorities. So there are no secrets we are keeping with us [regarding] the Experts' report. The Security Council will decide, and I believe this week the contents of that report will be revealed to us since I think it will be published.

**Radio Okapi:** Mrs. Leila Zerrougui, thank you for answering our questions.