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New Democratic Republic of the Congo amnesty law welcomed by UN envoys

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Senior United Nations officials today welcomed parliamentary approval of an amnesty law covering acts of war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) dating back to mid-2000 as "the next step in bringing sustainable peace."

Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the Great Lakes, Mary Robinson and the team of Envoys dealing with the region - referred to as the "E-Team" - comprised of Martin Kobler, the Secretary-General's Special Representative in the DRC, as well as United States Special Envoy Russ Feingold, African Union Special Representative, Boubacar Diarra and the European Union Senior Coordinator Koen Vervaeke, welcomed the law following its approval yesterday.

The adopted law grants amnesty for acts of insurgency, acts of war and political offenses. The Envoys commend the new law for excluding amnesty for crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

"The Special Envoys said this was a positive signal," UN spokesperson Martin Nesirky told journalists in New York. "It reflects the commitment of the Government to the Nairobi Declaration, which brought an end to the M23 rebellion."

The long-awaited accord between the DRC Government and the M23 rebels - mostly composed of soldiers who mutinied from the country's national army in April 2012 - was finalized in December 2013 in the Kenyan capital, signed by Ugandan President Yoweri and President Joyce Banda of Malawi, the chairman of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The peace agreement also called on all other armed groups in the country to lay down their weapons and join the political process, a call reiterated today by the Envoys.

In their comments, the Envoys also called for the implementation of the 11-nation Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, sometimes referred to as "the framework of hope."

Signed a year ago under the UN auspices by 11 nations, the Framework is seen as a comprehensive approach to sustainable peace in the region.

Also today, Mr. Kobler condemned the killing, this morning in Beni, North Kivu province, of a national staff member at the UN Mission in the DRC known by its French acronym MONUSCO.

According to information provided, the man was shot to death while going to work.

Mr. Kobler has urged the authorities to immediately launch an inquiry, arrest the perpetrators of this act, and bring the persons involved to justice as soon as possible.

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