

**Remarks from Mrs. Katana Gégé on her acceptance of the Defender of Democracy Award (DDA)**

His Excellency, President of Cape Verde, Mr. Jorge Carlos de Almeida Fonseca.

Honorable President of the National Assembly of Cape Verde, Mr. Jorge Pedro Mauricio Dos Santos, member of Parliament.

Excellence Minister of Tourism, Transport and Maritime Economy, Dr. José da Silva Gonçalves,

Honorable President of PGA's National Group Cape Verde, Mr. José Manuel Sanches Tavares, member of Parliament.

Honorable Margareta Cederfelt, MP from Sweden, President of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) and Vice-president of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Madam President Award Juror.

Ladies and Gentlemen attending this grand ceremony,

Distinguished guests,

It is with a lot of respect, hope and joy that I receive today the Defender of Democracy Award (DDA).

I would like to thank Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) their choice to support women for democracy, the establishment of democracy and the maintenance of respect for human rights.

This is also a choice for peace in countries where security contexts are more and more unstable and where the focus of political, economic and socio-cultural crises are increasing day by day.

Our regions know the high level of abuses to human rights: there is systematic violence against women and girls and rape is generalized among our societies.

These crimes are fueled by the great impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of rape and mass violence, all those armed actors who have been involved in all the conflicts that the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has experienced during the last 20 years.

I would also like to thank parliamentarians of the world for drawing special attention to the need for peace, respect for human rights and the protection of women in the DRC and the countries of the Great Lakes.

His Excellency, Mr. President of the Republic of Cape Verde,

Madam President of PGA,

The DDA will contribute to increase the visibility of the fight waged by the women of the DRC before, during and after armed conflicts, the cross-border conflicts that we know on the territory of Uvira and other forms of conflicts that permanently threaten the political, economic stability as well as cross-border cooperation.

The DDA will also contribute to the respect of women's dignity in the region.

Madam President, South Kivu, the province where I live, is one of the richest in minerals in the region. Unfortunately, its geographic location makes it a port of entry to all sorts of armed groups.

The several communities that reside in South Kivu do not know today, whether they live in war or post-conflict.

Faced with this situation, women refuse the culture of silence maintained by the sponsors of the conflicts, of the impunity and which hinders the implementation of a gender-sensitive policy.

Women no longer want to harbor fear in their heart.

Dear all, the road that remains to be traveled is still long, in my region, as is in the whole world. We invite the delegations present in this room to support women's actions for democracy, human rights and peace in the DRC.

Ladies and gentlemen, we dedicate this prize to women, young people and human rights defenders who campaign night and day for the establishment of democracy and women's rights.

This award reminds humanity that millions of women suffer every day around the world and that it is high time we listen to them and fight for the respect of their rights and their dignity. And for this, we all have a role to play each day.

Madam President, allow me to conclude by addressing the decision makers in my country, the community leaders, the civil society stakeholders and the community structures:

Dear compatriots, DRC needs us all (women, men, youth), the DDA that PGA has given us it's a symbol of gender equality, peace, freedom of expression, respect for human rights in the civil and political space and for the protection of all.

To continue to work to defend these values is to work for the good of all humanity.

It is up to all of us to contribute to the maintenance of democracy, peace throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the promotion of women's participation in decision-making bodies.

I thank you.

Katana Bukuru Gégé  
Executive Secretary, SOFAD

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