

## Remember Congo Week Event 'Break the Silence'

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Charlotte Simon Last night there was a 'Remember the Congo' event held by Mothers of Congo and Universal Peace Federation (UPF)-UK as a part of Black History month. Speakers included 'Mama' Charlotte Simon (photo left), founder of Mothers of Congo, Humphrey Hawksley, BBC World Affairs Correspondent, who has made two documentaries on the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tatiana Giraud, the founder of the TG Foundation that supports several clinics for the care of rape victims and Florence Billi, who made an impassioned plea for an end to the suffering the people in the North and South Kivus. The documentary 'Crisis in the Congo' shocked many of those present when shown during the evening. A number of those who spoke later said they had been moved to tears by the images of the brutal treatment of the Congolese people

during more than 120 years.



This occasion was part of a campaign to 'break the silence' of the scale of human suffering. It is a lawless region that has only recently started to receive a little media attention but nothing to the level warranted by the approximately six million people who have died in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the last 17 years. It has been called the worst place to be a woman in the world because of the brutal sexual violence experienced in the region. The 'conflict minerals' issue, one of the factors fueling the violence of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, has received attention in the US, the OECD and now the European Union.

Robin Marsh commented on the 'respoFlorence Billinsible sourcing of conflict minerals' legislation that will be proposed by the European Union Trade Commission by the end of the year. It is an issue that was highlighted in a European Parliament event organised by UPF on June 26th. UPF will hold another event on November 21st in Parliament to discuss 'conflict mineral' developments in the US legislation, proposed legislation in the EU and OECD guidelines for conflict minerals.



Some companies and mineral federations are making efforts to create protected supply lines that improve the income for miners and the level of state governance. Research by several groups have highlighted problems and the scale of the current illicit trade. Reports by the Enough Project, Striking Gold: How the M23 and its allies are infiltrating the Gold Trade, the Testimony to a U.S. House of

Representatives Sub Committee Hearing on 'The Unintended Consequences of Dodd-Frank's Conflict Minerals Provision' of Sophia Pickles of Global Witness, the South Africa Resource Watch's Conflict Gold to Criminal Gold and the report for German Industry prepared by Oeko-Institute 'Conflict minerals - An evaluation of the Dodd Frank Act and other resource related measures' have illustrated many of the issues involved. Whatever proposals Mr Karel De Mothers of Congo LogoGucht, the EU Trade Commissioner, announces they will not be made without sufficient study and research of the issue being available. The possibility of a better partnership of the European Union with the people of the DRC that enhances their security and prosperity while Europeans benefit from their resources could be brought much closer through this EU initiative.

**TG Foundation:**



The TG Foundation helps victims of rape and sexual violence in the north-eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Our aim is to financially support hospitals in the more remote or less developed areas of the Kivu region in the DRC. These hospitals may provide various treatments including healthcare, psychological treatment, temporary housing, as well as job training programmes for women and girls who have been raped and are victims of sexual violence. Some of these women and girls are so violently raped that it sometimes takes multiple fistula operations before they are able to physically recover from their ordeal.

They develop a condition known as traumatic fistula. This condition occurs when women are raped so violently, that their vaginas are left torn and they are rendered incontinent.

Typically, it costs a woman £500.00 for a complete operation. This includes 30 days of hospitalisation as well as a fistula operation. This equates to approximately £17.00 a day per

patient. If 30 people donate £17.00 each every month they will contribute to treating a fistula patient.

We work with charities that have been founded in the Congo at grassroots levels and are in desperate need of programmes, development, infrastructure and funding.