

Transcript – DAS Pelletier on Eastern DRC

“Hello and thank you for listening. Today, the US Embassy in Kinshasa is hosting the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Michael Pelletier. He sat down with us to answer a few questions from our Facebook fans”.

A question from Bankengeshi Twendele: “Why does the American Government always hesitate to condemn Rwanda and give the Congolese people the impression that the U.S. is an accomplice to what is happening in the eastern part of the DRC?”

DAS Pelletier: “Thank you very much for the question. I think it is important to realize that all of us are working to try to come to a solution to what’s going on in the eastern DRC. Of course, our Under-Secretary of State Wendy Sherman was in the region recently, Assistant Secretary of State Johnnie Carson was in the region recently – he spoke to leaders in Kinshasa, he went to Kampala, and he went to Kigali as well, trying to stress the importance of U.S. diplomatic engagement with all of the players in the region to try to come up with a solution and particularly, to come up with a ceasefire and some calm so that humanitarian assistance can be given to those who so desperately need it.

A question from Timo Aja: “In regards to the current situation in eastern DRC, do you believe that power-sharing and dialogue is the only solution? Because we, the Congolese people, do not want to negotiate with the M23.”

DAS Pelletier: “I think first it is important to recognize that those who are responsible for crimes against humanity and for human rights abuse must be held accountable for that, and that’s something that the U.S. government has been very clear about throughout. I think really what is important when we look towards a longer term solution to the challenges of the eastern Congo right now is the need for confidence – the need for confidence between the states of the region and the need for confidence between all the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the government in Kinshasa. Everybody has their responsibilities to fulfill so that we can have peace and stability in the region.”

A question from Jakatu Cap Uya: “How do you explain the fact that Rwanda was elected a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations, while it is accused day and night by the DRC of supporting the M23 rebels in eastern Congo?”

DAS Pelletier: “Of course, the United States is looking forward to working with, and is working with, all the members of the UN Security Council on this and on many other issues. Rwanda was the African candidate to fill that seat and we work with all of the members of the Security Council. It’s important, particularly for those members permanent and non-permanent on the Security Council, to recognize the responsibility and the weight of that position and we’ve been very engaged in talks with Rwanda, with the government, as well as with other SC members on this issue. That was one of the key areas that A/S Carson discussed when he was in the region last week.”

A question from George Angunizu: “Europe is for the revision of MONUSCO’s mandate, but not the United States. Could you explain what you are expecting from the DRC to help us escape this situation?”

DAS Pelletier: “First let me say that I think that we’ve been fairly clear that it is important for us to look at what’s been going on with MONUSCO, to look at the mandate of MONUSCO, and to discuss with all of

the various members and all of the various parties, whether that mandate is still appropriate or whether it needs to be changed. We are open to that conversation. Again, I would repeat what I've said before and what A/S Carson has said, everybody has their roles to play and their responsibilities to take up in terms of coming up to a solution for the current crisis in eastern Congo."

Bonaventure Nzala Jr asks: "You fought in Libya under the pretext of preventing a massacre in Benghazi, but for the Congo, where there is a real massacre, you remain silent?"

DAS Pelletier: "Again, I don't think that the United States has been silent. I think the world community as a whole, with the U.S. playing a very important role, has been very outspoken about the tragedy of what's going on in eastern Congo and the importance of addressing those challenges. We are very clear, and have been from the beginning, in our condemnation of the M23 and their human rights abuses, we've called for implementation of the agreements that were reached at the end of November in Kampala so that there can be some peace and stability in the region, particularly after what's happened in Goma recently, and we remain committed to working with all of our partners, in all of the countries of the region to help implement those agreements and to help reach some sort of stability in the eastern Congo. It is incredibly important, particularly from a humanitarian point of view, and we care very deeply about that".

You were listening to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Michael Pelletier.

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