**SPEECH BY HER EXCELLENCY DIANE CORNER, BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO THE DRC, ON THE OCCASION OF THE QUEEN’S BIRTHDAY PARTY**

**18 JUNE 2014**

Excellency Minister of Gender, Children and Family, representing the Government

Honourable Members of Parliament and Senators;

Excellencies Ministers and members of the Government;

Excellencies Colleagues Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen

All protocols observed

*Je suis heureuse de tous vous accueillir ce soir à la Résidence Britannique pour célébrer l’anniversaire de Sa Majesté la Reine Elizabeth II.*

*Na sepeli mingi koyamba bino banso awa na pokwa ya lelo pona ko sepela mbotama ya Mokonzi Elizabeth ya mibale.*

I am delighted to welcome you all to the British Residence this evening to celebrate the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

I’ve now spent a year in the DRC, and I have learnt a great deal in that time. One of the things I have found is that British policy towards this country is not as well known as it ought to be. So tonight I’m going to let you into the secret.

The UK’s policy towards DRC is to work for the transformation of this country into a stable and prosperous nation. Nothing more and nothing less.

That’s why we’re using our position in the UN Security Council, working closely with France and the United States and others, to give MONUSCO the strong mandate it needs. That’s why we give our political support to the truly outstanding work of SRSG Martin Kobler. And that’s why we support Special Envoy Mary Robinson in her efforts to implement the Addis Accords.

That’s why we also use our diplomatic network, in DRC, in Africa, in New York and elsewhere. We use our good relations with the countries of the region to encourage everyone to abide by the Addis Accords. We talk to key leaders here in support of stable political development.

We want a stable and prosperous country. That’s why we’re encouraging British investment in DRC. I’d like to thank some of those investors, Diageo, G4S, Malabar Group and Vodacom for helping to fund this event tonight. And there are other major investors - in mining and hydrocarbons, in agriculture, financial services, telecommunications and other sectors. Last week in London, I was talking to a British company about organising a conference in the coming year on doing business in DRC.

Of course there are challenges to overcome, and DFID’s development programme is helping. We’ve helped set up the public-private Anti-corruption Pact. And we’re funding a USD 150 million Private Sector Development programme.

We want to see a stable and prosperous DRC. That’s why we strongly support, with EU member states and others, the deepening of democracy in DRC. We want to see a full timetable leading up to presidential elections in 2016, and we want to be able to support fair, transparent and credible elections.

We support civil society and the development of an independent and professional media. In the east, we support the re-establishment of state authority after decades of conflict. And DFID also supports the reform of the police, to create a police force which serves the needs of the Congolese people.

We have a major humanitarian programme, providing life-saving support to millions of internally displaced people and people affected by conflict across the country. Through our human development programmes, DFID supports safe childbirth for 75,000 births per year, and are providing 600,000 people with access to clean water. We have a major programme to control malaria, including technical support to the Ministry of Health. Our Vas-y-Fille programme provides 56,000 scholarships to girls to help them access education because educating girls invests in whole communities.

And of course, we want to tackle the sexual violence that affects too many women in this country. Their Excellencies the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and the Minister for Gender last week attended the London Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict. They stressed that tackling sexual violence is a priority for the Government, which is taking its responsibilities seriously in tackling impunity, and supporting victims. We salute this resolve, and will work with Government, civil society and the international community to eradicate this terrible scourge. It’s time to act.

In order to support development and to make the DRC stable and prosperous for the benefit of its inhabitants - men and women, girls and boys - our bilateral aid programme through UKAid this year alone will be worth around USD250million.

I hope this explanation sheds some light on the UK’s policy towards this country.

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Over the course of the last year we have paid tribute to two great political leaders, John F Kennedy and of course Nelson Mandela. 22 November marked the 50th anniversary of Kennedy’s assassination. I think he gave the most important piece of advice to any politician anywhere, when he said “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country”.

And that of course is what Nelson Mandela did. Against enormous odds, he created the politically stable and prosperous South Africa that we see today. He is an example to us all, indeed to the whole world.

At this historic moment in DRC’s history, we too need to reflect on how we, working together, can create a stable and prosperous DRC. We need together to redouble our efforts to create the future that the Congo deserves.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to invite you to join me in a toast to the health and well-being of His Excellency President Joseph Kabila and of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, and to the continuing good relations between our two countries, and to the health and prosperity of the men and women, boys and girls, of the UK and of the DRC.