



AFRICA/CONGO DR - Jesuits' initiative against weapons that fuel the crisis in the Great Lakes Region

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides) – To raise the awareness of the international public opinion on the crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and to monitor the flow of weapons that fuel the war in the region. These are the actions that will be held within the Jesuit Great Lakes Advocacy Initiative, promoted by some organizations linked to the Society of Jesus.

According to a statement sent to Fides Agency, representatives of Global Ignatian Advocacy Network (GIAN), the Jesuit African Social Centres Network (JASCNET), the Jesuit Refugee Service Great Lakes, the Jesuit Refugee Service Eastern Africa, the African Jesuit Aids Network (AJAN), and the Hekima Institute of Peace and International Relations (HIPSIR) met in Nairobi (Kenya) from March 24 to 28 to explore joint advocacy actions to address the conflict in the Great Lakes Region.

"Since almost twenty years, conflicts and wars affected millions of women, children and men in the Great Lakes. Only in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) two million people are continuing to suffer from massive displacement and daily human rights violations in the Great Lakes, such as sexual and gender-based violence and recruitment of child soldiers." "Among the different root causes of the conflict, the proliferation and the trafficking of illegal arms in DRC has fueled the escalation of the conflict and the instability of the region."

Despite some relevant international initiatives to address the conflict, the organizations promised by the Jesuits believe that "no significant step forward has been taken in eradicating the root causes of the conflict." This is why the Jesuit Great Lakes Advocacy Initiative was established which will have the task of raising awareness of all stakeholders in the region of the link between conflict and the proliferation of weapons, and to trace the origin of the flow of arms towards the area, conducting in-depth researches in the field. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 03/04/2013)