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Press release | 17.06.2010

Democratic Republic of Congo

EU Parliament strongly condemns the killing of human rights defender Chebeya

On the eve of celebrations of the Democratic Republic of Congo's fiftieth anniversary of independence, the European Parliament has adopted unanimously an emergency resolution condemning in the strongest terms the murder of Floribert Chebeya Bahizire, a well respected Congolese human rights defender and president of the NGO "Voice of the Voiceless" (VSV), found murdered in his car in the suburbs of Kinshasa, on the 2 June, and the fate of his driver Faithful Edad Bazan, who has still not been located. Speaking on behalf of the Greens / EFA Group, Green MEP **Isabelle Durant**, member of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, first expressed support to the families of the two victims.

"Why was he killed? And by whom? I think, as outlined in the resolution that an independent, credible, serious and transparent committee must be established to investigate the truth about the death of Mr. Chebeya Bahizire and to shed light on the disappearance of Mr. Bazan Edad. It is also essential that measures be taken to ensure that the families of both men be protected.

The general deterioration of conditions for human rights defenders in the DRC is particularly disturbing. The murder of human rights defender Pascal Kabungulu Kibembi in 2005, and several journalists including Ngycke Franck Kangundu and his wife Helene Mpaka in November 2005, Maheshe in June 2007, and Didace Namujimbo in November 2008, are still not solved. Investigations by the Congolese military authorities have been characterised by serious irregularities.

I therefore consider it essential, in order to put an end to impunity, to identify those responsible for these murders and bring them to justice in accordance with Congolese law and international provisions for the protection of human rights. Punishing those responsible for the assassination of human rights defenders and journalists is an essential element for the democratisation of the country. As a signatory to the Cotonou Agreement, which explicitly refers to human rights, democracy and rule of law, the resolution calls on the EU and the DRC to give special attention to these issues in the evaluation of the agreement.

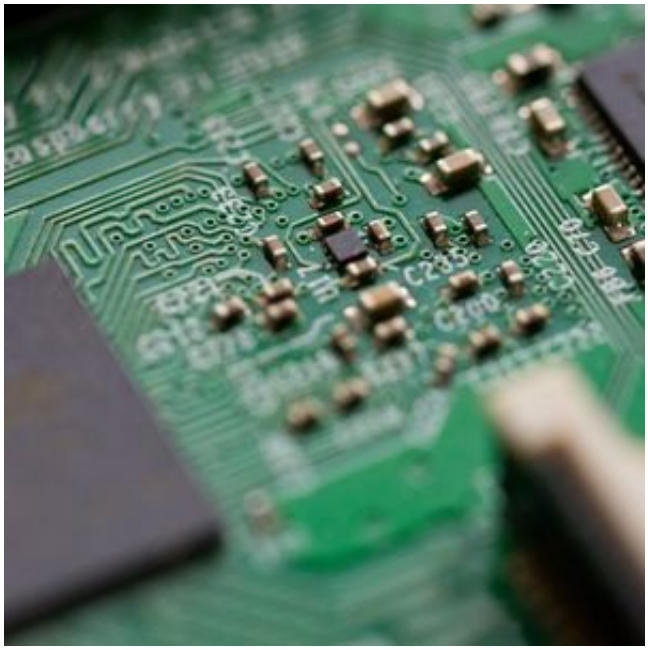
Concluding, **Ms. Durant** said:

"The European Parliament should therefore encourage the Congolese authorities to comply fully with the statement on the defenders of human rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998, and implement the recommendations of UPR UN 2009 which are measures to protect the rights of defenders of human rights ".

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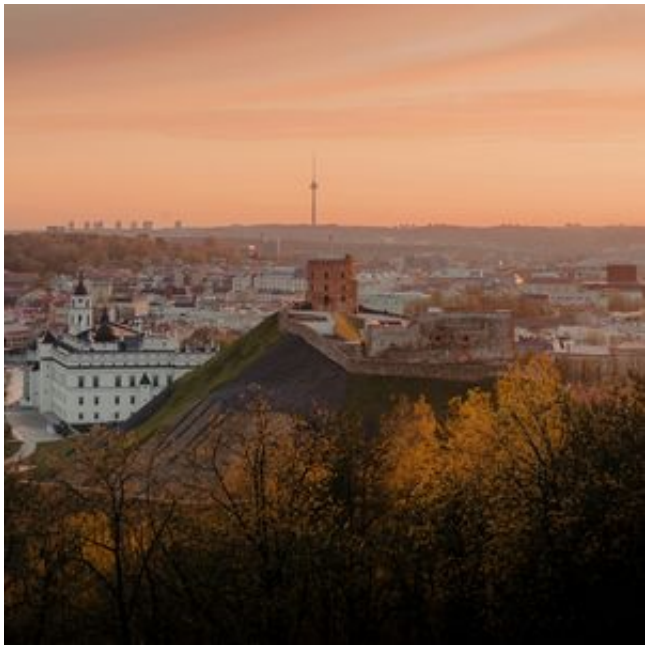
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