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Baroness ASHTON

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

1049 Brussels

Belgium

Brussels April, 10<sup>th</sup> 2010

**Subject: Request the sending of an EU observation mission for the 2010 Rwanda S**

Dear Baroness Ashton,

On 9 August 2010, Rwanda will hold presidential elections. In recent years the European Union has sent a number of observation missions to the region such as the 2005 legislative elections in Burundi, the 2006 presidential, legislative and provincial elections in D.R. Congo, the 2006 presidential and legislative elections in Uganda and the 2008 legislative elections in Rwanda. While the European Union is preparing to send an observation mission to Burundi between May and September 2010, for the different elections, there is no announcement of an observation mission to Rwanda.

AEFJN is surprised and concerned that the EU is not planning an observation mission for the forthcoming presidential elections in Rwanda, in spite of the worrying developments that have been taking place there these last months in relation to the potential candidates. Reports and direct information show that opposition parties have been denied registration and their party members in Rwanda are facing increasing threats and harassment with elections looming. Democratic space is very limited. Every day opposition activists, candidates and journalists are subjected to, and denounce, various forms of aggression.

The EU and the international community should take the opportunity to thrust for greater democratic space in Rwanda, which is critical for the country's lasting stability. The run-up to the elections is a key time for the EU to raise the issue of Human Rights and the sending of an EU observation mission is the best means to make sure that faire elections will be hold.

Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network (AEFJN), formed by missionaries working in Europe and in the African continent, many of them present in the Great Lakes Region, trust greatly the European

Union's observation missions. The presence of these observation missions is a guarantee for the population of the region and of the country concerned that the elections will be fair. The participants at the EU observation mission are directed by democratic values of impartiality, transparency and professionalism. The presence of these observation missions throughout the country contribute greatly to freedom and electoral transparency. They reinforce the legitimacy of the electoral process and public confidence in it. The EU will fail the Rwandan people if it does not stand with them in the fight against renewed abuse of civil and political rights.

AEFJN is aware that many factors influence the decision whether or not to send a mission to Rwanda and that hard choices need to be made. The EU funds available for such missions do not allow every request to be satisfied. Nevertheless AEFJN strongly believes that it is essential to send an observation mission to Rwanda, as the conclusions and recommendations of the final 2008 mission report, even though its scope and concern had been weakened, justify a thorough monitoring of the forthcoming elections.

Establishing true democracy in Rwanda is not just a tool for building peace and social cohesion within the country but it is also a determining factor for stability in the whole region. On behalf of the AEFJN network, I strongly urge you to use your influence to support an EU electoral observation mission to Rwanda and an effective coordinated monitoring by the Commission and Member States of the entire electoral process.

Yours sincerely,



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**AEFJN is an organization formed by 49 missionary congregations working in 53 African countries and in 25 European countries. 50.000 of their members are in Europe and 13.000 in Africa.** Bethlehem Mission Immensee ; Brothers of St Gabriel; Brothers of the Christian Schools; Brothers of the Immaculate Conception; Carmelite Sisters of Charity; Comboni Missionary Sisters; Congregation of Christian Brothers; Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Divine Word Missionaries; Franciscan Missionaries of Mary; Holy Spirit Missionaries; Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary; Little Sisters of the Assumption; Missionaries Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Missionaries of Mariannahill; Marist Brothers; Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary; Consolata Missionaries; Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers); Consolata Missionaries Sisters; Comboni Missionaries of the Heart of Jesus; Missionaries of St Joseph of Mill Hill; Mercedarian Missionaries of Berriz; Medical Mission Sisters; Missionaries of the Sacred Heart; Missionary Servants of the Holy Spirit; Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa ; Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles; Oblates of Mary Immaculate; Ursuline Sisters of the Roman Union; Pontifical Institute of Foreign Missions ; Marist Fathers; Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd; Sisters of Mercy; Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux; Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Sisters of St Paul of Chartres; St. Patrick's Missionary Society; Sisters of St. Louis; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Society of the Holy Child Jesus; Society of African Missions; Society of the Sacred Heart; Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary; Xaverian Fathers;