

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 6, 2023

The Honorable Felix Tshisekedi  
President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo  
The Palais de la Nation  
M7XJ+23P, Av. De Lemera,  
Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Dear President Tshisekedi,

As the Democratic Republic of the Congo's general elections approach in December 2023, we write to express our support for electoral transparency and note our concern with the opacity surrounding the electoral process, including the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI)'s voter registration process and budget. We are also concerned by reports of physical attacks on political figures, harassment of political party activists, and arbitrary detentions of civil society members such as journalists that risk undermining public confidence in the elections and limiting the free and fair participation of all candidates. We urge your government and the CENI to take all necessary measures to ensure free, fair, and transparent democratic elections this December.

As the Democratic Republic of the Congo's central electoral body, it is critical that the CENI operates impartially and transparently to ensure the integrity of the electoral process. We believe the CENI should make every effort to ensure that all eligible citizens are registered and permitted to vote throughout the country, and that all candidates are allowed to compete freely and without government manipulation of their eligibility or ability to campaign through travel, meetings, and peaceful protest. We are concerned that the CENI has not provided adequate transparency regarding the voter register, and we join the U.S. Department of State in calling on the CENI to publish voter registration lists as soon as possible.

We call on the CENI to commit to publishing both preliminary and final electoral results by polling station and electoral district, on both its website and polling station premises, well before the deadlines for parties and candidates to file legal challenges, so that results may be cross-checked against data gathered by election observers. We are also concerned by the opacity surrounding the CENI's budget and expenditures. We urge your government and the CENI to publish expenditure data as a first step toward improving public oversight and confidence in the election process and reassuring the international community that the CENI has the financial resources it needs to administer elections.

Following the 2018 elections, the results announced by the CENI did not match projections made by local election observers. Moreover, the 2018 elections prompted allegations by local civil society groups of widespread irregularities, voter disenfranchisement, and fraud, and involved

stark limitations on international election observers. While we welcome your government's commitment to inviting international organizations to observe the 2023 elections, we are seriously concerned that the integrity of the 2023 elections may be compromised without a significant intervention by your government to improve the CENI's election administration capabilities and transparent rendition of results.

As you know, holding credible, inclusive, and transparent elections within the Democratic Republic of the Congo's constitutionally determined deadlines is fundamental to the development of democracy, peace, and prosperity in your country. A poorly administered election would undermine not only these goals, but would jeopardize efforts to strengthen our bilateral relationship, including cooperation on regional security, environmental protection, and U.S.-DRC trade and investment.

We look forward to engaging with you on this issue and receiving information on the steps your government has taken to address the issues above and support free, open, and fair elections this year.

Sincerely,



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Michael T. McCaul  
Chairman  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs