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One Hundred Seventeenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
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March 16, 2022

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to encourage your attention and prioritization of the upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and specifically urge the Biden Administration to mobilize additional resources to support the deployment of international and domestic election observers, strengthen civil society, advance free and independent media, provide technical support to election preparations, and build on nascent efforts to root out corruption. These efforts could help strengthen the U.S. – DRC relationship, which is critical to promoting our diplomatic, economic, and security priorities in Africa and ensuring DRC citizens are empowered through the democratic process.

The United States, which has pledged extensive support for President Tshisekedi's reform agenda, also provides over \$300 million in bilateral aid to DRC and is the top donor of funds for humanitarian relief and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). While we were pleased to see the Administration's recent high-level engagements with the DRC, including President Biden's bilateral meeting with President Tshisekedi during the G20 last year and Deputy National Security Advisor Singh's travel to Kinshasa in January, we are calling for a holistic, sustained approach that views a healthy political climate in the DRC as part and parcel to U.S. national security objectives in the region. There must be room to engage the DRC as partners in building diverse supply chains for critical natural resources, creating a conducive environment for U.S. investors, and promoting an inclusive approach to governance.

The 2018 elections were neither free nor fair and were marred by the corrupt and undemocratic actions of former President Joseph Kabila who delayed the elections, installed loyalists into critical positions within the electoral commission and judicial system, and oversaw widespread brutality and harassment against pro-democracy protestors and opposition leaders. Pervasive corruption and mismanagement led the United States to impose targeted financial sanctions on top officials in the national electoral commission.

While we recognize steps taken under Kabila's successor, Felix Tshisekedi, to open political space, address corruption, and reform state institutions, additional steps must be taken now to pave the way for free and fair elections in 2023. Local civil society and religious activists have raised concerns about the extent of President Tshisekedi's commitment to a fair and competitive contest and the composition and leadership of the electoral commission, including the appointment of Denis Kadima as chair.

This could be a pivotal election for the DRC, and we must ensure that the people of the DRC are finally fully enfranchised, where their will for the country's leadership reflects the votes cast at the polls. Looking ahead, public confidence in the election process will be crucial for the DRC to make progress in addressing a legacy of authoritarianism and kleptocracy. The United States must maintain pressure on corrupt networks, including those associated with Israeli businessman Dan Gertler, that have squandered DRC's natural resource wealth. As part of this process, we also ask that you share your assessment of the mining sector, including the government's announcement of plans to review of all mining contracts and the deal reportedly struck between the DRC government and Mr. Gertler, who reportedly stands to retain royalties from many of the most lucrative mineral projects in the country.

Encouraging greater stability and prosperity in the DRC are rightly strategic, economic, security, and diplomatic priorities for the United States in Africa, which can be accomplished by expanding two-way trade and investment with the United States, encouraging good governance and respect for human rights, countering corruption, improving critical mineral supply chains, and ensuring strong U.S. engagement as a counterweight to growing strategic investments by the People's Republic of China. Advancements in key areas of partnership will be undercut if progress is not made to ensure credible, timely and transparent elections in 2023. We look forward to engaging with you on these matters.

Sincerely,



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Michael T. McCaul  
Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee



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Gregory Meeks  
Chairman  
House Foreign Affairs Committee