



The Holy See

VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PEOPLES OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO AND SOUTH SUDAN

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the Republic of South Sudan: good day!

Today, as you know, I had planned to come on a pilgrimage of peace and reconciliation in your lands. The Lord knows how greatly disappointed I am to have had to postpone this long-awaited and much-desired visit. But we remain confident and hopeful that we shall be able to meet as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I would like to tell you that, particularly in these weeks, you have been that much closer to my heart. I carry within me, in prayer, the pain that you have endured for all too long. I think of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the exploitation, violence and insecurity from which it suffers, particularly in the east of the country, where armed conflicts continue to cause much intense suffering, aggravated by the indifference and the convenience of many. I think of South Sudan and the plea for peace arising from its people who, weary of violence and poverty, await concrete results from the process of national reconciliation. I would like to contribute to that process, not alone, but by making an ecumenical pilgrimage together with two dear brothers, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Dear Congolese and South Sudanese friends, at this time words are insufficient to convey to you my closeness and the affection that I feel for you. I want to tell you this: do not let yourselves be robbed of hope! Think, you who are so dear to me, of how much more you are precious and beloved in the eyes of God, who never disappoints those who put their hope in him! You have a great mission, all of you, beginning with your political leaders: it is that of *turning a page* in order to blaze new trails, new paths of reconciliation and forgiveness, of serene coexistence and of development. It is a mission that you must take up together. A mission that entails looking to the

future, looking to the many young people in your lands, so rich in promise and yet so troubled, in order to offer them a brighter future. The young dream and they deserve to see those dreams come true, to see days of peace. For their sake, above all, it is necessary to lay down arms, to overcome all resentment, and to write new pages of fraternity.

There is one other thing that I would say to you: the tears that you shed on earth and the prayers that you raise to heaven are not in vain. The consolation of God will come, because he has “plans of peace and not of woe” (*Jeremiah 29:11*). Even now, as I look forward to meeting you, I ask that God’s peace fill your hearts. As I await the opportunity to see your faces, to feel at home in your lively Christian communities, to embrace all of you with my presence and to bless your lands, my prayers and my affection for you and your peoples, become all the more intense. I send you my heartfelt blessing and I ask all of you, please, to continue to pray for me. Thank you and... see you soon!