Ensure justice for massacred Bambote Indigenous Peoples in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

We, the Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI), Alliance Nationale d’Appui et de Promotion des Aires et territoires du Patrimoine autochtone et Communautaire. (ANAPAC-RDC), and the Programme Intégré pour le Développement du Peuple Pygmée (PIDP), strongly denounce the ruthless massacre of 46 indigenous Bambote from Irumu territory, including 36 women and girls, 15 of whom are children between 3 months to 16 years old, in Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on January 14, 2021.

ANAPAC-RDC reported that armed groups have targeted the Bambote people for their rich and ecologically reliable ancestral lands and forests. These armed groups have been occupying forests and turning them into battlefields. On January 14, armed groups forcibly occupied Abembi and Masini villages and killed 46 individuals belonging to the Bambote indigenous group. This resulted to the forced evacuation of 209 households.

The 209 households that were displaced need urgent assistance and security. These families are forced to sleep under harsh weather conditions, making them vulnerable to illnesses and increasing their risks to further violence. Their situation is even made more vulnerable considering the COVID-19 pandemic. We thereby call on the government of DRC to immediately provide shelter, food, and other necessities to these families while clearing their communities from the control of armed groups.

We demand for justice for all the victims and for the protection of the victims’ families. This horrible violence committed against the Bambote people deserves global condemnation and urgent attention and assistance to the families of the victims, including their protection from further attacks.

We urge the government of DRC to immediately clear the area from the control of armed groups and implement measures that will ensure the safe return of the displaced Bambote people to their homes. The displacement of Indigenous Peoples has an immeasurable impact on their distinct ways of lives, community cohesion, livelihoods, culture, and to the environment. To deny the Bambote people of their right to live in their ancestral lands, is to deny them of their lands, livelihood, culture, and identity.

Indigenous peoples in DRC have the right to their lands, territories, and resources, including having peace and security in their territory. The Irumu territory is a zone of biodiversity that the Bambote people have protected and lived in for thousands of years. Keeping the Bambote people safe in their territories is imperative in the protection of biodiversity in DRC.

We appeal to the government of DRC to legally recognize the rights of Indigenous Peoples, including the Bambote people, in DRC, and to undertake measures for the long-term resolution of conflicts in their territories as paramount to the collective survival, well-being, and dignity of Indigenous Peoples. The government of DRC must uphold its obligation to protect the Bambote people from any form of violence and intimidation.