SENATE RESOLUTION 713—CALLING ON ALL PARTIES TO THE ESCALATING VIOLENCE IN EASTERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO TO IMPLEMENT AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE AND WORK WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TOWARD A COMPREHENSIVE AND LASTING SOLUTION TO THE CRISIS

Mr. FEINGOLD (for himself, Mr. BROWNBACK, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. HARKIN, Mr. BOXER, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. SMOWE, Mr. LIEBERMAN, Mr. MENENDEZ, Mr. ISAKSON, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mrs. BOXER, Mr. WYDEN, Mr. BOND, Mr. COLEMAN, Mr. LUTENBERG, and Mr. MILER of Florida) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 713

Whereas the Democratic Republic of Congo was devastated by civil wars lasting from 1991 to 1997, 1998 to 2003, and 2008, resulting in over a million deaths and involving at least 6 neighboring countries;

Whereas, despite the signing of a peace agreement and subsequent withdrawal of foreign forces in 2003, eastern Congo has continued to suffer from high levels of poverty, insecurity, and absent or inadequate institutions, allowing armed and criminal groups to operate freely;

Whereas continuing abuses committed by the national military against civilians in Congo and apparent ties between the military and armed groups in the region have tainted attempts to restore the rule of law in the eastern country;

Whereas, according to a study by the International Rescue Committee released in January 2008, the conflict and related humanitarian crises in the Democratic Republic of Congo have taken the lives of an estimated 5,400,000 people since 1998 and continue to cause as many as 40,000 deaths each month;

Whereas sexual violence and rape remain a pervasive tool of warfare used by all parties in eastern Congo to terrorize communities, affecting hundreds of thousands of women and girls and frequently resulting in traumatic fistula and other severe genital injuries;

Whereas the continued plunder and trade of eastern Congo’s rich mineral base, notably cassiterite, coltan, and gold, by armed groups and members of the national military make war profitable and undermine peace efforts;

Whereas the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda signed the Nairobi Communique in November 2007, committing to work together to address the continued activity of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and other armed groups operating in their shared border region;

Whereas, on January 23, 2008, with the active support of the international community, the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and 22 armed groups in the eastern region signed the Goma accord, committing to an immediate ceasefire and buffer zones for troop disengagement and ultimately disarmament;

Whereas these agreements together provided the necessary framework for peace and lasting stability in eastern Congo, but a continued culture of impunity and suspicion has impeded their implementation;

Whereas the United Nations reported more than 200 violations of these agreements between January and July of 2008, as well as 2,000 cases of rape and hundreds of people killed;

Whereas hate speech inciting ethnic violence by local political and religious leaders in Congo continued during this period, feeding the concerns and perceived insecurity of minority Tutsi communities;

Whereas, according to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 250,000 people have been forced to flee their homes as a result of renewed fighting in eastern Congo, often without access to shelter, water, food, and medicine, and adding to the over 1,000,000 people already displaced from North and South Kivu;

Whereas the United Nations Mission in Congo, known by its French acronym MONUC, has proven unable to protect civilians and to take immediate measures to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations to avert a wider regional war and revive a comprehensive peace process in eastern Congo;

Whereas the United Nations' Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador J. Gerard Prunet, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have called for more troops and better capabilities for MONUC to stop the rebel offensive and end impunity in Congo; and

Whereas the United Nations' Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador J. Gerard Prunet, has proven unable to protect civilians and to take immediate measures to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Congo to protect civilians, especially through increased troops and additional capabilities as requested by the Secretary-General; and

Whereas the President to sustain high-level diplomatic engagement together with the African Union, the European Union, and the United Nations to avert a wider regional war and revive a comprehensive peace process in eastern Congo;

Whereas the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Alan Doss, and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon have called for more troops and better capabilities for MONUC to stop the rebel offensive and end impunity in Congo; and

Whereas United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, on November 7, 2008, and convened a summit of regional leaders, including the heads of state of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, which led to a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire and the creation of humanitarian corridors; and

Whereas, in 2006, Congress passed the Democratic Republic of the Congo Relief, Security, and Democracy Promotion Act of 2006, signed by President George W. Bush on December 22, 2006 (Public Law 109-456), stating that it is the policy of the United States to work for peace and security throughout the Democratic Republic of Congo by supporting efforts to protect civilians, to disarm illegal armed groups, and to hold accountable individuals, entities, and countries working to destabilize the country. Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

1. condemns the continuing violence, forcible recruitment of children as soldiers, and abuses against civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo;

2. calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo, the National Congress for the Defense of the People, and all armed groups operating in eastern Congo to cease hostilities, end all human rights abuses, and respect an immediate ceasefire based on the principles of the Goma agreement;

3. calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to meet its obligations under the Luasa Agreement of 1999, the Pretoria Agreement of 2002, and the Nairobi Communique of 2007 to take action against the armed groups and end impunity in Congo;

4. calls on the Governments of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda—

(a) to fully support the Pretoria Agreement of 2002, the Goma agreement, and the basket of agreements reached in Pretoria and Goma;

(b) to work together to mitigate escalating tensions in the region; and

(c) to break any ties that still exist between them and illegal armed groups in eastern Congo;

5. calls on all governments in the Great Lakes region of Africa and those of the Southern African Development Community to support a peaceful resolution to the crisis while ensuring that the volatile situation does not spark a wider regional war and revive a comprehensive peace process in eastern Congo;

6. supports the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General, his newly appointed United Nations Special Envoy, former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo, and the international facilitation team to bring all parties to the negotiating table and establish a clear roadmap to implement the signed peace agreements;

7. encourages the international community to take immediate measures to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in Congo to protect civilians, specifically through increased troops and additional capabilities as requested by the Secretary-General;

8. urges the United States and the international community to develop and support alternative mechanisms that can hold the parties in Congo accountable to the signed peace agreements, investigate alleged ceasefire violations, and ultimately challenge the continued culture of impunity in Congo; and

9. urges the President and the international community to adopt measures to hold regional governments to identity and ultimately address the factors underlying the conflict in eastern Congo, especially weak governance and the exploitation of the region’s lucrative minerals.

SENIOR CITIZENS AND THE CREATORS OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD — SENATE S. 10753

Congressional Record — Senate S. 10753

November 20, 2008

Whereas 25,000 firefighters and emergency response personnel from California, 41 other states, and 14 firefighters tragically lost their lives fighting wildfires in California in 2008; and

Whereas, in 2008, there have been more than 10,000 wildfires in California started by natural causes and human activity;

Whereas more than 1,440,000 acres of Federal, State, and local land in California burned in 2008; and

Whereas, in June 2008, fires started by lightning strikes burned approximately 1,200,000 acres of Federal, State, and local land in California, making the June fires the largest single wildfire event in California’s recorded history;

Whereas 41 counties across California were impacted by wildfires in 2008;

Whereas more than 1,400 homes were destroyed by fires in California in 2008;

Whereas State and local firefighters have been called to duty for increasingly long fire seasons, working on the front lines of these fires for weeks;

Whereas firefighters have risked their lives and faced great hardship to protect lives, property, and the environment in California;

Whereas many firefighters were injured and 14 firefighters tragically lost their lives in California in 2008;

Whereas more than 1,000 wildfires were impacting the state in 2008;

Whereas the United States Congress has for many years honored the men and women of the United States Armed Forces for their service and protect our country;

Whereas the United States Congress has for many years honored the men and women of the United States Armed Forces for their service and protect our country;

Resolved, That the Senate—

1. Commends the men and women of the United States armed forces for their service and protect our country;

2. Congratulates the fire service personnel for their service and protect our country;

3. Encourages all Americans to support our men and women of the United States Armed Forces and the fire service personnel;

4. Pledges continued support of our men and women of the United States Armed Forces and the fire service personnel;

5. Urge the President and the leadership of the United States Congress to support these brave men and women;

6. Urge the President to sustain high-level diplomatic engagement together with the African Union, the European Union, and the United Nations to avert a wider regional war and revive a comprehensive peace process in eastern Congo; and

7. Urge the President and the international community to adopt measures to hold regional governments to identity and ultimately address the factors underlying the conflict in eastern Congo, especially weak governance and the exploitation of the region’s lucrative minerals;