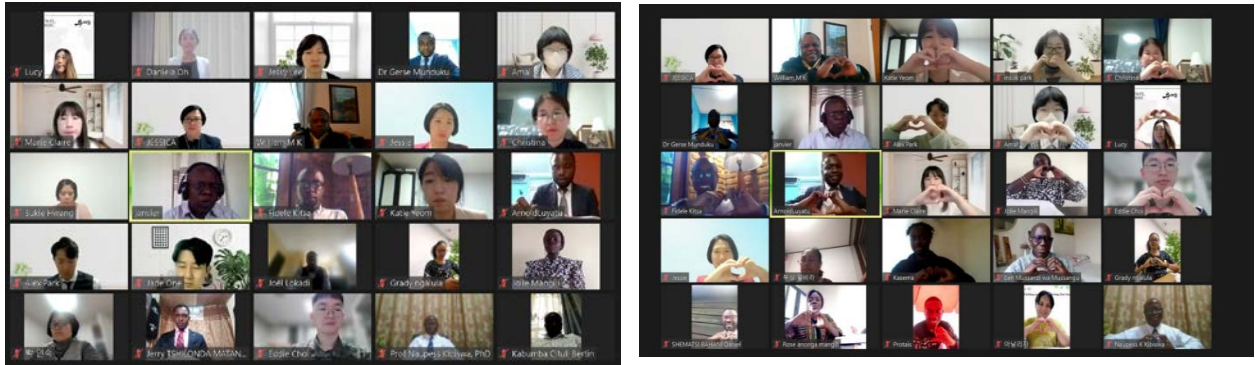




WEBINAR REPORT

The Impact of Hate Speech on Peace Building in the DR Congo



Date and Time: Thursday, March 8th, 2023, 1:00PM (Kinshasa Time)
Location: Online (Zoom)
Topics: The Impact of Hate Speech on Peace Building in the DR Congo
Host: HWPL Daejeon Branch

Speakers: Mr. Thomas d'Aquin Muiti, Vice President and Spokesperson for the Coordination of Civil Society Forces Vives de la RDC
Prof. Naupess Kwabene Kibiswa, PhD, Professor of Conflict Resolution at Catholic Universities of DR Congo (UCC) and Bukavu (UCB)
Mr. Fidele Kitsa, Independent Journalist, web and radio reporter

Webinar was held to raise awareness of the impact of hate speech on peace building and find practical solutions to prevent hate speech from spreading further and promote peace in the DR Congo.

“Hate speech leads to many consequences. This is why we say hate speech must be avoided at all costs, especially for us who are working for peace, social cohesion in our communities, in our country, in our provinces, in our respective territories.”

Mr. Thomas d'Aquin Muiti

Introduction Webinar

On Thursday 18th, 2023, HWPL (Heavenly Culture World Peace Restoration of Right) hosted the webinar "The Impact of Hate Speech on Peace Building in the DR Congo".

Webinar was held to raise awareness of the impact of hate speech on peace building and find practical solutions to prevent hate speech from spreading further and promote peace in the DR Congo.

Three key figures of the society in the DR Congo gave presentations on how dangerous hate speech is in the society and how hate speech can be prevented and how much the social media have influence on hate speech.

Background Information

"Hate Speech" refers to offensive discourse targeting a particular group or an individual based on inherent characteristics. It incites hatreds, hostilities and violence which also leads to terrorism and atrocity crime. Hate speech creates mistrust and hatred and threatens stability and peaceful coexistence in a community.

Recently, there has been a proliferation of hate speech, not only against foreigners but also among Congolese citizens of different ethnic backgrounds. This hate speech has increased since the resumption of fighting between the Congolese army and the March 23 Movement (M23) rebels in North Kivu province in 2021. UN has expressed a deep concern about recent increase in violence and hate speech in the DR Congo.

Points of discussion

Mr. Thomas d'Aquin Muiti gave the details of hate speech emphasizing its definition. "Hate speech" refers to an offensive speech, gesture, attitude and behavior aimed at an individual or a group of individuals on the basis of intrinsic characteristics such as race, religion, tribe, ethnicity or gender. He also spoke about the current impact of hate speech in the province of North Kivu where the armed conflicts have continued to occur for a long time. There are more than two million populations who are currently displaced because of hate speech. He said that hate speech can lead members living in a territory to kill each other. Therefore, he emphasized that hate speech must be resolved for peace and social cohesion in the community and in the country.

Prof. Naupess Kwabene Kibiswa, PhD proposed an Integrative Scheme for Effectively Combating Hate Speeches (ISECHaS). The following integrative scheme is based on the research that the UN recommends in principle no. 4 of Strategy and Action Plan for Combating Hate Speeches and includes the following steps that address different aspects of the plan.



1. Gathering the elements of hate speeches (the case) in the affected area/setting or country
2. Analyze the case with respect to the specific situation and context of the setting/country affected by the case for the need to align/adapt strategies and mechanisms to address the case/setting/country and the root causes of the hate speeches
3. Identify the type(s) of hate present in the case/area/country that underlie the speeches as well as their protagonists (visible/invisible authors/perpetrators and victims of those hate speeches)
4. Approach separately the protagonists in the case/place/country to better know them
5. Convince the protagonists (key authors/perpetrators of hate speeches and representatives of victims) to resist/control the temptation to resort to evil/crime and/or revenge
6. Present/show to the protagonists [genuine] alternatives to crime/evil and/or revenge
7. Develop with the protagonists the new dispositions to support/sustain [means of] resistance/alternatives, among others,
 - 7.1. Processual dispositions
 - 7.2. Cognitive, affective, attitudinal, behavioral dispositions
 - 7.3. Educational dispositions
 - 7.4. Communicative dispositions
 - 7.5. Relational arrangements
 - 7.6. Material arrangements
8. Maintain/reproduce the supporting dispositions/arrangements for the resistance/ alternatives
9. Establish the responsibilities of each actor in the harm suffered by victims of hate speech
10. Correct/repair harm and restore damaged relationships to prevent recurrence
11. Instill new shared values of peace, tolerance, civic conviviality, empathy, [human] rights and [societal] duties to give a new start, by progressively training together groups of people among potential protagonists (authors and victims) of hate speeches
12. Develop new narratives and messages of love and cohesion based on the new atmosphere of restored conviviality and cohesion
13. Establish framework(s) and mechanisms for sustaining or enculturating the newly instilled values and love/cohesion discourses

Mr. Fidele Kitsa spoke about the influence of media on spread of hate speech. He addressed that

in the DR Congo, there has been an upsurge in insecurity due to the various reasons. Hate speech is one of the causes that have encouraged armed groups to continue to exist in North Kivu. He said that media has a great influence in dissemination of hate speech and people can easily spread false information and fake news in social media. He addressed that the Internet allows us to reach many people to raise awareness of peace, but it can also be a very dangerous tool to spread hate speech. Therefore, it is necessary to verify the facts rather than trust all information. He emphasized the role of journalists is very important to eradicate hate speech and he also stressed that in order to stop hate speech, we need to spread a message of peace on social media and raise awareness of a good use of social media among internet users.

Highlights

Mr. Thomas d'Aquin Muiti: Hate speech leads to many consequences. This is why we say hate speech must be avoided at all costs, especially for us who are working for peace, social cohesion in our communities, in our country, in our provinces, in our respective territories.

Prof. Naupess Kwabene Kibiswa, PhD: In order to effectively prevent hate speech, we need to instill and cultivate in all protagonists (authors and victims of hate speech) the values of peace, the value of peaceful coexistence, the values of love, the values of tolerance, the values of civic conviviality, the values of empathy, the values of rights and the values of duties along with ways and means for making those values a reality among protagonists.

Mr. Fidele Kitsa: The Internet is a real tool that will allow us to reach many people for raising awareness of peace, but it is also a very dangerous tool to use with care, because the Internet can also favour the spread of hate speech. But to avoid this, it is necessary to verify the contents much more, not to trust everything that we find on the Internet.

Next Steps

We will conduct online and offline campaigns and peace events to raise awareness of hate speech and spread a culture of peace in the DR Congo.

Contact Information

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