Monsieur Alexis Tambwe Mwamba

Ministry of Justice

228 Avenue de Lemera

BP 3137 Kinshasa Gombe

Democratic Republic of Congo

Honourable Minister:

I am greatly concerned by the cases of Bienvenu Matumo, Marcel Heritier Kambale Kapitene, members of Lutte pour le Changement (LUCHA), and another activist, Victor Tesongo, who were sentenced by the Peace Tribunal of Kinshasa/Gombe to a year in prison.

These three youth activists had been charged with “spreading rumours” and “incitement to disobedience.” Bienvenu Matumo and Marcel Heritier Kambale Kapitene were arrested in the hours before a general strike called for by members of the political opposition to protest against delays in preparations for the 2016 general elections in the DRC. Victor Tesongo, who was helping the two others prepare leaflets for the general strike, was arrested a day before. The three youth activists were held incommunicado by the intelligence service for days before being presented at the prosecutor’s office in Kinshasa.

These youth activists have been prosecuted on baseless charges. They are prisoners of conscience, arrested and convicted for expressing their political views. I believe they are at risk for ill-treatment. I call on you to immediately and unconditionally release Bienvenu Matumo, Marcel Heritier Kambale Kapitene, and Victor Tesongo and to ensure that the three are not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment while in prison.

Furthermore, I urge you to ensure that the DRC government upholds the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly for all.

Sincerely,