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Statement by the Lumumba family from 20 January 2026

At a hearing held by the Pre-Trial Chamber (Chambre du conseil) of the Brussels Court of First Instance

On behalf of the entire Lumumba family, we first wish to thank the Court for the time granted to speak today.

On January 17, 1961, the fate of Patrice Emery Lumumba was brutally cut short. With him, the trajectory of a country, a people, and an entire family was forever disrupted. The consequences of this assassination continue to affect Congolese society, trapped in an endless cycle of impunity.

The absence of justice surrounding his assassination constitutes a deep wound for our family. For nearly fifteen years, we have approached this procedure with dignity and restraint. Since 2011, we have refrained from questioning the sincerity of judicial institutions and have avoided any form of outrage directed at the procedure.

Why? Because, despite the injustices and violence inflicted upon his people, Patrice Lumumba firmly believed in law as the compass guiding relations between individuals and nations. Yet, since his execution, the law has not lived up to Patrice Lumumba. We therefore await the moment when it finally does.

We, the grandchildren of Patrice Lumumba, represent far more than Patrice Lumumba's immediate biological family. We are the voices of a generation that still wants to believe that the law can be spoken and applied, and that firmly rejects the silence of yesterday.

Beyond our family, let us remember: the entire Belgian society is implicated in this matter. Belgian youth question and scrutinize with rigor the historical legacy it shares with the Congo. They wish to believe in the ideals their country claims. But how could they, if the great book of History remains closed?

In 2001, Belgium acknowledged its moral responsibility in the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. Today, while recognizing the importance of this first step, we remind that truth cannot be satisfied with a conclusion devoid of any judicial consequence.

The assassination of Patrice Lumumba represents the macabre culmination of a convergence of interests whose ultimate goal was to deprive Congo of its future. But



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a sum of interests cannot erase individual responsibilities. That is why we demand the referral to the criminal court of the last accused still alive in this case.

We consider that Mr. Étienne Davignon is one of the links in the chain that led to the killing of Patrice Lumumba, following a series of stages during which law and human dignity were systematically denied.

We speak here of illegal detention, torture, and the outright physical elimination.

Despite the tragedy of his disappearance, Patrice Lumumba's legacy survives in the consciousness of all those who fought for this fundamental, yet simple, right: the right to self-determination. His thought remains timeless, as it refers to universal values that we have collectively chosen to uphold.

Our approach is guided by a demand for truth, law, and respect for memory. Patrice Emery Lumumba believed in justice. It is in the name of this belief that we stand before you today, we, his grandchildren, who recognize ourselves in his struggle.

We also wish to express our deep gratitude to our lawyers, present here, for their invaluable contributions to this pursuit of justice, truth, and accountability. We thank all the civil society organizations whose unwavering commitment reminds us of the universality of Patrice Lumumba's struggle.

In 2022, converging efforts made it possible for our grandfather's remains to return to the land of his ancestors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This act forms part of an international movement of recognition and openness to reparation for a past that has never been confronted with the frankness and responsibility it required.

While welcoming this outstretched hand, we remind that History still has pages to be written, and that healing is a prospect worth fighting for.

On behalf of the Lumumba family,
On behalf of the Congolese people,
On behalf of those who fight for freedom,
We thank you for hearing us.