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from the British people

Kinshasa, September 9 – Speech given by David Kennedy at the signature of the technical assistance agreement for the implementation of reforms to improve the business climate.

Distinguished guests, I am truly delighted to be supervising the launch of this project on behalf of the British government. Today marks the end of a long wait and the crowning achievement of work carried out by Congolese and British officials to bring to life the vision of His Excellency, President Joseph Kabila Kabange and the British Department for International Development. This vision means forging a solid partnership between the DRC and the United Kingdom in order to promote the improvement of the business climate.

The British government feels that the private sector is the driver for growth, development and the fight against poverty. When businesses in the private sector are not in full growth, the economy cannot create jobs, nor can it innovate nor supply the goods or services needed by the population. And private sector businesses will struggle to grow if they do not have a suitable environment to do so.

Unfortunately, this is the situation the DRC finds itself in. It is ranked 184th out of 189 countries in the World Bank *Ease of Doing Business* index. The procedures for paying taxes are too complicated, access to finance is too costly and the execution of contracts too unpredictable.

We know how to resolve these problems. The government needs strong leadership, along with appropriate technical assistance that supports the government's own plans.

Under the leadership of His Excellency, Prime Minister Matata Ponyo, the Congolese government has shown that it possesses the drive necessary for tackling these problems. It has adhered to the OHADA Treaty; signed the New York Arbitration Convention; and, thanks to the work of the CPCAI, reduced taxes and accelerated the low-cost procedure for setting up businesses. In fact, last year the World Bank recognized the DRC as one of the top ten countries in the world in terms of its reform of the business climate. But the process will take time and much still remains to be done. I am delighted that His Excellency, the Minister for Planning, has acknowledged this and is committed to continuing the efforts already made by the government to improve the business climate.

That is why the British government has committed to provide up to 50 million dollars

of technical assistance through our “Eссор programme” to support the Congolese government in this task. Eссор will begin with a programme of technical assistance for the implementation of the OHADA. This will help the OHADA National Commission enforce the commercial legal system throughout the country. This in turn will make it easier for businesses to execute contracts, keep accounts and resolve disputes.

The rest of our Eссор programme, however, remains flexible so that it can be used to support other needs expressed by the government. The Eссор team can quickly deploy experts to provide technical assistance in a wide range of fields, including commercial reforms, the simplification of taxes and access to finance.

We know that improving the business climate will not be easy. But, as the principal contributor, we endeavour to define the direction of the Eссор programme in partnership with the government through the Group theme of reforming the business climate, chaired by the Minister for Planning.

Once this agreement has been signed, the Eссор team will be able to move on to the next step: action. Distinguished guests, it is with immense pleasure that I now call upon the DRC DFIED Head of the Mission, Dr Christian Rogg, to sign this agreement on behalf of the DFID.