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27 March 2008

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Democratic Republic of the Congo: The number of members and offices of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS); the importance of the UDPS compared with other political parties
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The following information was provided by the Canadian Representative of the Union for Democracy and Social Progress (Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, UDPS) in correspondence sent to the Research Directorate on 3 March 2008:

[translation]

The UDPS did not participate in the last electoral process, which it deemed untransparent. Less than 30 percent of the Congolese population voted, which means that millions of Congolese who identify themselves as UDPS members did not participate in the electoral process, although some members bought voter's cards to use for identity purposes. Therefore, the UDPS is still the main opposition party in the Congo while the UDPS's fight for democracy has been gaining popularity throughout the country since 1990. The exact number of members is still a concern for party leaders. That is the reason for the current requirement to register members through the purchase of two new cards, called the UDPS First Congress Card (*Carte 1er Congrès de l'UDPS*): a common membership card, and a supporters card, both of which are signed only by Etienne Tshisekedi, the party's president. ...

The UDPS is represented in every region of the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo] by federations of the UDPS, which operate in the sub-regions and in communities. Thus, in the regions and the cities, each territorial administrative division has a corresponding UDPS organization. The absence of democracy in the DRC means that, whether they are in the DRC or not, members of the UDPS are subjected to harassment and various types of persecution from armed and unarmed entities that are linked to those in power in the DRC.

Once outside the DRC, and when their numbers permit, UDPS members generally organize themselves to continue to support the organization's fight for democracy. Their organizations are recognized by the leaders of the UDPS, who integrate them as external federations. In Canada, there are currently two federal UDPS organizations: the UDPS Federation of Canada West (*féderation de l'UDPS Canada-Ouest*), which in theory covers Ontario, the Prairie Provinces and Western Canada; and the UDPS Eastern Canada (UDPS Canada-Est), which in theory covers the National Capital Region, Quebec, New Brunswick and the Maritimes. The members of each federation are supervised by a federal committee and a federal assembly office, both elected by the respective federal assemblies. The mandate of the federal committees is to support its members.

Relations with the official institutions of the host country are solely the responsibility of the Representative (*Représentant*) and the Assistant Representative (*Représentant-adjoint*). Those two positions are held by individuals elected by an assembly of UDPS members and are confirmed by the President of the UDPS. They are part of an office of five people, called the Representation Office (*Bureau de la Représentation*), which covers all of Canada. The Representative's mandate is to develop relations with

Canada's official institutions in order to inform them of the situation in the DRC and the UDPS's peaceful fight for democratic change, and to gain support for the democratization process in the DRC.

Additional and corroborating information on the number of members and offices of the UDPS as well as its importance compared to other parties could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Reference

Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS). 3 March 2008. Correspondence from the Representative of the UDPS in Canada.

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS), Etienne Tshisekedi's advisers, and the representatives of the UDPS in France, Belgium and the United States were unsuccessful.

Publications, including: *L'État du monde 2007*, *Les Nouveaux mondes rebelles : conflits, terrorisme et contestations*, *Political Handbook of the World 2007*.

Internet sites, including: Agence France-Presse (AFP), AllAfrica, Amnesty International (AI), *L'Avenir* [Kinshasa], Danish Immigration Service, European Country of Origin Information Network (ecoi.net), Factiva, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group, Jeuneafrique.com, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *Le Phare* [Kinshasa], *Le Potentiel* [Kinshasa], UDPS.net, UDPS.org, United Kingdom (UK) Home Office Country of Origin Information Service, United Nations (UN) Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo, MONUC), United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), United States (US) Department of State, World News Connection (WNC).