

Interview with Richard Muyej, governor of Lualaba Province, Democratic Republic of Congo, in Kolwezi on March 18.

The governor spoke French. The interview was translated and transcribed for CNN by Lesley Howard Languages.

The following are excerpts from the transcript that relate specifically to issues covered in CNN's reporting.

NIMA ELBAGIR, CNN SENIOR INTL. CORRESPONDENT: We had a very frank discussion when we came and met with you and we really appreciated that, and you asked in return that we be transparent with you. So we want to talk with you about what we saw on the ground and what we saw at the mines. First of all, you very kindly gave us access to all the areas.

RICHARD MUYEJ, GOVERNOR OF LUALABA PROVINCE: I have nothing to hide. I did tell you that there were problems. I also told you that the problems were even worse a few years ago. We are moving towards new solutions. I prefer that you see things on the ground, it makes more sense for you to see the problems so that I can explain what we have achieved so far.

I can explain what things were like before, where we are now and where we are headed. I hope that you had the time to visit all the sites. We have some sites which have seen 100% progress. And then there are other sites that still require work. In order to make a proper comparison you have to see it all. For example I know that you saw Tilwizembe. We have made progress in Kasulo. I know that in Tshipoki we still have a few problems to iron out but things are evolving.

We also negotiated with homeowners to stop their activities [sic]. You see the problem is not just child labor. It is also the methods of exploitation, often practised at home [sic], which

lead to accidents. We want training, we need training. We also need small-scale mechanization in order to help develop artisanal mining and to make the job a little easier for people. I know that the quarries are often located close to residential neighborhoods. So women and children are still tempted to go into them [the quarries] because they are so near.

The way forward is not always easy, we have to break habits, change attitudes and people are in a vulnerable position financially. I told you that it's time that Gécamines (La Générale des Carrières et des Mines) should be employing about 40,000 people. But in spite of all these joint venture, Gécamines doesn't even have 20,00 employees to its name. We have an unemployment problem. We have a problem with young people finishing university and needing jobs. Wars have intermittently affected the stability of the country, wars whose origins lie in the very fact that we have cobalt and copper.

I hope that the investors who are angry about the new mining laws will not resort to the same method. I hope that they won't resort to the same method, meaning war. All of this means that we are a country in the process of reconstruction. That is why I explained to you the other day that the picture was even more grim three or four years ago. We need encouragement and support at this time. In addition to that, we sometimes feel frustrated when we host NGOs and external media. We say certain things. Yet when they publish their articles or broadcast stories, we get the impression that they haven't even interviewed us. So we ask ourselves if they came here with their own preconceived ideas and wanted to contact us but still promote their own agenda. I have said that CNN could make a difference because of the channel's credibility so we would like this conversation to have a positive outcome.

NIMA ELBAGIR: The issue for us was that these were two very

different experiences. Your transparency and your willingness to allow us access to these sites was not reflected on the ground. We were subjected to intimidation, we were harassed, children were harassed, they were pushed, they were physically intimidated to leave the sites. So while we commend what we are hearing from you, what we saw on the ground paints a darker picture than you yourself are aware of.

RICHARD MUYEJ: I have just told you that there is a certain attitude around here even amongst those small groups that you met. They have been told that the NGOs are trying to bring down [President Joseph] Kabila. We have managed to overcome a few opponents because they were not really threats. Yet you all hold them up as saviors of the Republic. They failed through all the legitimate political channels to bring down the Republic. And there is a general view that these people are now using cobalt to bring down Kabila.

So there is a kind of resistance and if we are not careful we might find ourselves on the brink of aggression. But to prove our goodwill in this ... when I learnt that there had been these incidents ... I brought in our police commissioner, the head of our police. I did this because when I assessed the situation I concluded that there had been a misunderstanding. People all have different levels [of understanding]. We cannot all have the same level of understanding. There are people who politicize everything. Even amongst the NGOs the people come with documents, statements and accusations. They are part of the opposition. They don't understand that we want to take an economic approach, an approach that uses traceability in order to clean up the mining industry in the DRC.

In this environment of false information these NGOs, who tend to be part of the opposition, come to you in the hope that now that you have been armed with all these new facts you have

tools to bring down the regime. That is why I spoke to you about the problem of people's responses. So the young people you met in these places ... If they tend to support the government they will be against you, they will be prejudiced against you. That is because they saw what happened during previous visits [from the media] ... when we allowed the outside world in to see both the good and the bad. They saw how only bad things about us were being published. People were asking, "Why is it so important that we let them see things?". "When we show them the truth, this is what happens," they said.

NIMA ELBAGIR: These were government officials, these weren't people in the community, these were government officials, these were Ministry of Mining officials, police officers, these were people from the bureau of intelligence who were trying to stop us filming.

RICHARD MUYEJ: I will go back and check this, but I still think that what I am telling you is relevant.

NIMA ELBAGIR: Please do.

RICHARD MUYEJ: We have nothing to hide. What we really want is goodwill. When we make an effort we would like to be treated fairly. Given that important cobalt production is situated in the Congo, it will not be easy to skirt the issue. You and we must work together to make the issue of traceability transparency ... and to make the sites safe and regularized. Even our biggest consumers, Apple, Samsung and all the others. They all come here and we always find out when they enter the country. They contact their local partners. Yet I have never received any of them at my office, never. If they have the correct intention to work with us on traceability in a proper manner, they should come and see us."