

## **Dr Mukwege Resigns From The Multi-Sectoral Commission And The Health Commission Set Up As Part Of The Response To The Covid-19 Pandemic In The Province Of South Kivu**

On March 30, 2020, I was appointed, by the Governor of the province of South Kivu, Vice-President of the Multi-sectoral Commission and president of the Health Commission established for the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in the province of South Kivu.

After two months of work, with the support of local national and international experts, we set up a response strategy which we explained during a press conference on April 11, 2020. Prevention and response actions in charge of patients, carried out according to this strategy, made it possible to contain the spread of the Coronavirus in the Province for several weeks.

Two major difficulties prevented us from effectively applying our strategy:

On the one hand, the impossibility of having in our province of RT - PCR allowing to quickly confirm the diagnosis of Covid +. The time required, of more than two weeks, to receive the results of the samples sent to the INRB in Kinshasa, constituted a major handicap for our strategy based on "testing, identifying, isolating and treating".

On the other hand, a loosening of prevention measures by our population, a denial of realities, the impossibility of enforcing barrier measures, the porosity of our borders with the massive return of thousands of compatriots from neighboring countries without having been quarantined, decreased the effectiveness of our strategy.

To these two factors are added organizational weaknesses and consistency between the different teams responsible for the response to the pandemic in South Kivu.

To date, in view of the influx of patients affected by Coronavirus in hospitals in Bukavu, it seems undoubted that the disease is present in the city. We are therefore at the start of an exponential epidemiological curve and we can no longer apply a strategy that would only be preventive.

I therefore decided to resign from my duties as Vice-President of the Multi-sectoral Coronavirus Response Committee in our province and President of the Health Commission, in order to devote myself entirely to my medical responsibilities and to treat this influx of patients at Panzi Hospital.

Concerning the continuity of our action, I am convinced that HE the Minister of Health and the Provincial Health Division will be able to ensure the implementation of the strategies initiated together.

I will continue to make my intellectual contribution to the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic in our province.

In this ordeal for our population and for all of us, I will always be alongside the population and the Governor of the Province.

Dr Denis Mukwege