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**Story script**

**The International Olympic Committee (IOC) OFFERS THE FOLLOWING VIDEO NEWS RELEASE TO ALL NEWS AGENCIES, BROADCASTERS AND ALL ONLINE PLATFORMS FREE OF CHARGE.**

**Story Headline:** Democratic Republic of the Congo refugee duo selected for Refugee Olympic Team at Olympic Games Rio 2016

**Date:** 3 June 2016

**Place:** Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

### **STORY SCRIPT**

Democratic Republic of the Congo judokas Popole Misenga and Yolande Mabika have been selected together with nine fellow refugees to be part of the Refugee Olympic Team (ROT) at the Olympic Games Rio 2016. The composition of the team was officially announced by the IOC today.

Misenga, 24, and Mabika, 28, fled their home country three years ago and now reside in Brazil.

The duo will now represent the ROT which will join the other teams of the 206 National Olympic Committees (NOCs) competing in Rio. The team was created by the IOC Executive Board in March as a symbol of hope for refugees worldwide.

Misenga, who competes in the up to 90kg category, and Mabika, who competes in the up to 78kg category made an asylum bid to remain in Brazil during the 2013 World Judo Championships in Rio.

The duo come from the eastern city of Bukavu but fled for South America after a deadly war stopped them from competing as professional judokas.

Having escaped the devastation, Mabika hopes to spread a message of hope to refugees across the world having been selected as part of the ROT.

“My message to them would be not to give up on hope and to keep believing, to have faith in their hearts. We went through a lot of suffering in



Congo, and this is still the case nowadays. This is the case of all the refugees around the world who are suffering from their family losses, from the wars, the killings.”

Misenga’s mother was killed during the conflict whilst his brother went missing. Both judokas admit the sport of judo has inspired and helped them through life.

For Misenga the reality of competing at the Olympic Games is hard to believe.

He said: “When I think that I am now an Olympic athlete, it feels really strange. It’s real; it’s not a dream, but the truth, the reality. I am an Olympic athlete. But I was very lucky to be selected by the Olympic Committee. There are lots of athletes and many refugees.”

Refugee athletes had to reach specific sporting standards and have official refugee status verified by the United Nations (UN) to be in contention to be part of the ROT – the first of its kind. They will march with the Olympic flag immediately before host nation Brazil at the Opening Ceremony and will have their own welcoming ceremony in the Olympic Village.

The Games of the XXXI Olympiad will be held from 5 to 21 August 2016. Approximately 10,500 athletes from more than 200 countries will compete in 28 sports, comprising 98 medal events.