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United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 46 of Security Council resolution [2463 \(2019\)](#) and covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 28 September to 25 November 2019. The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) since my report of 27 September 2019 ([S/2019/776](#)); provides an overview of political developments; outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence, as well as the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians; and contains observations regarding the end of its current mandate and recommendations concerning future adjustments.

Political developments

2. Following the inauguration of the new Government, political life has centred around parliamentary processes and the discussion about the national budget. While the governing coalition has remained stable in both the executive and the legislative branches, party politics have resurfaced in public statements. At the international level, exchanges continue on a proposed regional coalition against armed groups in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as on the potential re-engagement of the international financial institutions in the country.

3. On 25 October, the Government achieved a breakthrough with the adoption of the 2020 draft finance law by the Council of Ministers. Subject to the approval of the National Assembly, the proposed budget was increased from \$7 billion to \$10 billion. The budget covers several socioeconomic measures that are crucial to President Tshisekedi's domestic programme, including free primary education across the country. In that context, the President launched an accelerated programme to lift 20 million citizens out of poverty over the coming five years that is focused on overcoming socioeconomic challenges in rural areas, and called for broad domestic and international support to that initiative.

4. In Parliament, there has been significant progress on the distribution of the remaining official positions in the upper and lower houses between the majority



coalition of Cap pour le changement (CACH) and Front commun pour le Congo (FCC), and the opposition Lamuka platform. Negotiations between the political groupings were held in a constructive atmosphere. On 30 October, the National Assembly established its eight standing committees of which FCC chairs four, CACH one and Lamuka three. In the Senate, on 28 October, the plenary took note of the composition of its standing committees, nine of which will be chaired by FCC, two by CACH and two by the opposition.

5. Provincial governments and assemblies are fully functional and have begun tackling some of the most pressing issues facing their constituents. On 9 October, President Tshisekedi chaired a meeting of the National Security Council expanded to include the governors of five eastern provinces (Conseil national de sécurité élargi aux gouverneurs de cinq provinces de l'est – Ituri, Maniema, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika), at which the decision was taken to develop a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan to be presented together with a budget. On 29 October, the Government issued two new decrees creating an interprovincial commission for North Kivu and South Kivu tasked with supporting awareness-raising in relation to disarmament, demobilization and communal reintegration (Commission interprovinciale d'appui à la sensibilisation au désarmement, à la démobilisation et à la réinsertion communautaire). MONUSCO is providing technical support to the commission and has participated in an operational planning meeting in Goma.

6. Anti-corruption initiatives remain high on the agenda. At the request of President Tshisekedi, Government ministers were called upon to declare their assets to the Constitutional Court by 6 October under article 99 of the Constitution. At the same time, controversy around the disappearance of \$15 million in public funds continued. The national authorities continue to conduct multiple investigations into the matter. On 21 October, the organization Comité laïc de coordination led peaceful demonstrations in multiple cities against corruption and impunity, which were supported by the political opposition.

7. Some members of the governing coalition have begun positioning themselves for the next general elections. During the convention of the Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie (PPRD), its permanent secretary, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, stated that the party intended to win all future polls and announced the political return of the former President, Joseph Kabila. The FCC coordinator, Néhémie Mwilanya, subsequently stated that there were no constitutional, institutional or political obstacles to Mr. Kabila seeking a new presidential term. Members of the opposition and civil society have reacted with scepticism and have given an opposing interpretation of the Constitution. Meanwhile, a senior member of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social (UDPS) indicated that his party was working towards the re-election of Mr. Tshisekedi, without referring to the current Government coalition.

8. The opposition has largely been able to participate unhindered in the country's political process. On 11 October, Jean-Pierre Bemba held a political rally in Kisangani without interference from the security services, while Moïse Katumbi made an extensive tour of the eastern part of the country that began in Goma on 26 October, after several authorizations to travel there had been denied. On 10 November, Floribert Anzuluni, coordinator of the youth citizens' movement Filimbi, returned to Kinshasa after spending more than four years in exile. Nonetheless, there have been continued reports of violations of press freedom, as well as attacks and threats against human rights defenders and other civil society actors. Meanwhile, on the topic of the political participation of women, the Government continued to demonstrate its commitment to the constitutional quota of 30 per cent in public and governance institutions.

9. At the regional level, following the call President Tshisekedi had launched at the summit meeting of the Southern African Development Community to form a regional coalition to eradicate armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the armed forces (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) and high-level military representatives of Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania held a series of meetings in Goma on the establishment of an integrated headquarters to oversee joint military operations. MONUSCO and the United States Africa Command attended as observers. The possibility of foreign military forces operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo elicited some negative reactions, in particular among high-ranking members of FCC. According to FARDC, the regional coalition was to be aimed at exchanging information and intelligence rather than deploying foreign troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO has stated publicly that its mandate to protect civilians and support FARDC did not provide for support to military operations by foreign forces inside the country.

10. Meanwhile, the chiefs of intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania met in Dar es Salaam from 4 to 6 November as a follow-up to their first meeting, held on 7 June. They called for a comprehensive strategy based on both military and non-military approaches to eradicate negative forces and prevent their remobilization. The importance of ensuring the participation of women's, youth, religious and community leaders was emphasized, as was the need for community-based initiatives and employment projects for former combatants and young people vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.

11. At the international level, President Tshisekedi has continued to advocate for investment in the Government's domestic programme, notably in the areas of education, healthcare and infrastructure. In response, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are assessing their possible re-engagement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 30 October, the country representative of the World Bank announced a possible \$5 billion support package over the course of five years, conditional on reforms to improve public revenue, accountability and governance. The African Development Bank has also assured President Tshisekedi of its support.

12. My Special Representative has pursued her good offices with key national and local stakeholders. She has met with President Tshisekedi, the Minister of Interior, Security and Customary Affairs, the Minister for Decentralization, the Minister for National Defence and Former Combatants and the Chief of Staff of the President to exchange views with regard to ongoing security challenges and the ways in which the Mission can support the authorities in addressing them. In response to serious human rights and protection concerns in South Kivu, my Special Representative met with key political and civil society actors from that province, including the former Vice-Chair of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Norbert Basengezi Katintima, to discuss ways of resolving local conflicts. To support the conclusion of peace negotiations between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI), my Special Representative participated in a meeting of the steering committee under the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo held in Kinshasa on 24 October and chaired by the Prime Minister, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilukamba, about the peace negotiations. Mission personnel have also provided good offices and mediation support at the field level, as outlined below.

Security situation

North Kivu Province

13. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remain a serious threat to peace and security in Beni Territory and were responsible for the killing of dozens of civilians during the reporting period. On 30 October, following the announcement of unilateral operations against all armed groups in the country, FARDC launched a military offensive against ADF in the area north of Beni after concentrating more than 20,000 troops in the town and along key roads during the preceding weeks. While several bouts of heavy fighting were observed and FARDC indicated that it had taken over a number of strategic positions, ADF followed a tactic of deliberate attacks against civilians in order to undermine the offensive, with a spike in brutal attacks occurring during the second half of November. Preliminary reports put the number of civilians killed in ADF incursions since 31 October at more than 80, more than half of whom were women and children.

14. Previously, in October, a total of 10 attacks had resulted in the killing of 22 civilians and the abduction of at least 17 more. Four assaults were recorded against Congolese security forces during the same month, reportedly resulting in the killing of 7 FARDC soldiers. ADF members also attacked MONUSCO military personnel at the Semuliki base on 25 and 29 October. On 27 October, during a patrol on the road linking Mavivi and Oicha, United Nations peacekeepers were caught in an ambush and returned fire.

15. In Masisi Territory and surrounding areas, the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) has continued to expand its area of control, resulting in a climate of impunity for human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence. Frequent clashes between NDC-R and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura armed groups have further increased insecurity and led to the killing of at least 46 civilians, the rape of 18 women and the displacement of civilians. FARDC launched military operations against armed groups in Masisi on 6 October. While APCLS, FDLR and Nyatura appeared to be the initial targets, some clashes were also reported with NDC-R later in the month. In Rutshuru Territory, FDLR remains a major concern as it continued to carry out violations and exactions against civilians. On 10 November, FARDC announced that Musabimana Juvenal, the leader of the FDLR splinter group Rassemblement pour l'unité et la démocratie-Urunana, had been killed in an operation. A rise in the number of security incidents in which humanitarian actors are being targeted has been reported in North Kivu, notably in Masisi and Rutshuru territories.

16. Following preliminary talks with FARDC, more than 800 members of the Mai-Mai group Union patriotique pour la libération du Congo gathered in Kalunguta, 20 km south of Beni, to be integrated into FARDC. The interprovincial commission for North Kivu and South Kivu tasked with supporting awareness-raising relating to disarmament, demobilization and communal reintegration subsequently began working with the FARDC leadership to develop alternatives for a community-based reintegration process. Given the lack of clarity on the way forward or funding for an agreed plan, the risk of human rights violations and abuses being committed against civilians in Kalunguta remains.

South Kivu Province

17. Ethnically motivated violence against civilians on the high and middle plateaus of Fizi and Uvira territories remains a major source of concern, in particular in the Minembwe area. Since March 2019, Ngumino, Twigwaneho and Mai-Mai groups

have killed at least 44 civilians and destroyed 89 villages. Worryingly, these attacks have targeted civilians on the basis of their perceived community affiliation, with the Banyamulenge particularly affected on one hand, and the Bafuliro, Babembe and Banyindu, on the other. The situation has deteriorated sharply since October, with a growing risk of the violence spreading to neighbouring provinces. There are many displaced civilians, especially in the Minembwe area, and humanitarian concerns are growing because the insecurity limits access to the area and adequate health facilities are far away. Fearing further attacks, hundreds of these displaced civilians have sought protection in the vicinity of MONUSCO bases. As outlined further below in the report, the Mission has undertaken a range of proactive efforts to protect civilians in the area. The authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported by MONUSCO, have responded by deploying additional FARDC soldiers and launching political mediation efforts. However, thus far, these efforts have failed to significantly de-escalate the situation, due, in part, to the politicization of the conflict and the perceived lack of impartiality of the authorities involved.

18. In Shabunda Territory, the redeployment of FARDC to other areas has increased the freedom of action of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki armed groups, which has led to a deterioration of the security situation and an increase in exactions against civilians.

Ituri Province

19. In Djugu Territory and neighbouring areas, the number of attacks against civilians has shown a downward trend, following the killing of 37 civilians – 2 of whom were women and 15 children – by armed assailants in September. The reduction in the number of incidents follows mediation efforts by the provincial authorities supported by MONUSCO. Violence has not subsided completely, however, with internally displaced persons at particular risk of attack. In Irumu Territory, where there was continued progress towards the demobilization of the FRPI armed group, the situation remained calm and there were no reports of human rights violations being committed by the group.

Maniema and Tanganyika provinces

20. In Kabambare Territory, the Mai-Mai Malaika armed group led by Sheik Assani continues to be present in and around Salamabila. On 25 October, around 150 Mai-Mai combatants entered Salamabila town and looted goods from members of the civilian population. The nearby mining site, operated by the Canadian company Banro, remains closed as a result of the Mai-Mai presence. MONUSCO has deployed troops to deter violence against the civilian population and is supporting the provincial authorities in their efforts to regain control of the situation. In Tanganyika Province, against the background of an overall improvement in the security situation, FARDC announced operations against Mai-Mai groups operating in the Bendera area. Twa-majority militia remain a concern as they are responsible for looting and abductions of civilians for ransom.

Kasai, Kasai Central, Kwilu, Mai-Ndombe and Sankuru provinces

21. The situation in the Kasai region has continued to improve, with former members of the Kamuina Nsapu militia, to a large degree, returning to their communities. Following a spike in tensions during the gubernatorial elections, the political and security situation in Sankuru Province is also improving, thanks, in part, to efforts by MONUSCO to promote reconciliation between communities and the disarmament of local youths. However, there is a continued risk of local conflict, as several thousand people, including members of displaced Lulua and Luba communities, have crossed the border from Angola to return to their places of origin, primarily in Kasai Central, where Pende and Chokwe militias have yet to be disarmed.

MONUSCO is monitoring the situation and is supporting intercommunal dialogue and reconciliation efforts of the provincial authorities.

Humanitarian situation

22. The humanitarian situation remains a source of serious concern, particularly in the eastern part of the country, where intercommunal conflict, active hostilities and ongoing epidemics have worsened humanitarian challenges. An estimated 15.9 million individuals are facing severe and acute food insecurity, especially in the eastern provinces. The situation is most critical in Ituri, Kasai, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, South Kivu and Tanganyika, where between 12 and 15 per cent of the population are classified as being in the highest emergency phase. At the same time, humanitarian actors continued to face obstacles to aid delivery, such as lack of access to conflict areas and insufficient funding.

23. Epidemics remain one of the most pressing humanitarian concerns. The total number of Ebola cases since the beginning of the outbreak stands at approximately 3,300. Around 2,200 people have died. While new cases of Ebola disease continue to be recorded, there was a clear downward trend during the reporting period, with many previous hotspots remaining free of new infections. Increasingly, new cases have occurred in the rural, more inaccessible areas of Ituri Province, where community distrust remains a challenge. The country is also facing the worst recorded measles outbreak in its history, affecting all 26 provinces. There have been 209,211 suspected cases, of which 4,189 deaths, as at early October. Since the beginning of 2019, over 22,931 suspected cases of cholera and 407 deaths from suspected cases of cholera have also been reported. The situation is particularly worrying in South Kivu, Haut-Lomami, North Kivu and Tanganyika.

24. The security environment for Ebola emergency response teams has improved significantly in most areas, owing, in part, to the additional deployment of MONUSCO force and police units. However, it has deteriorated in the Mandima and Mambasa health zones in Ituri Province. During an attack on Lwemba village that occurred in the Mandima health zone on 2 and 3 November, suspected Mai-Mai combatants killed a journalist working for an Ebola awareness-raising programme. Before the incident, leaflets threatening attacks against Ebola response personnel had been distributed and staff had received hostile messages by telephone.

Comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians

Mission-wide strategies

25. MONUSCO continued to implement its protection-of-civilians mandate taking an approach based on a combination of static deployments and “protection through projection”, involving temporary standing combat deployments of 50 to 100 troops and the conduct of over 7,500 long-range patrols in the past two months alone. This has helped to contain violence in South Kivu and Ituri provinces and in the Salamabila area in Maniema. In line with the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, which is aimed at finding sustainable political solutions to conflict situations, the projection of the MONUSCO force to inaccessible areas has enabled the whole of MONUSCO to pursue comprehensive strategies in those areas, such as providing good offices and facilitating political settlements spearheaded by the national authorities. MONUSCO civilian components have further contributed to these efforts by strengthening early warning networks and enhancing collaboration between State actors and communities, including by participating in joint assessment missions and protection teams.

26. The Mission's police component continues to implement the so-called operational strategy to counter insecurity, aimed at supporting the national police. The emphasis lies on enhancing the trust and confidence of the local population in the national police through the development of community-based policing. MONUSCO has also increased its support to the efforts of the inspectorate general of the national police to counter corruption and impunity. In particular the capacity of the national police to process allegations of sexual violence has been supported through the establishment of a case management and archive system in 12 locations. The Mission's six formed police units continue to be strategically deployed in accordance with operational needs. To that end, the Senegalese formed police unit is being moved from Kinshasa to Bunia to support the national police in addressing crime in the vicinity of Bunia town and armed group activity in rural areas of the Ituri Province.

Field-level response

27. MONUSCO is taking active steps to enhance the impact of its protection of civilians efforts at the field level based on the strategic and evidence-driven use of standing combat deployments, successfully projecting its presence to key areas of concern to amplify the capacities of the Mission where it is most needed. Key achievements, outlined below, include efforts to deter armed groups from attacking internally displaced persons and taking a close look at protection challenges by conducting in-depth assessment missions during which personnel have interacted extensively with the population in remote, conflict-affected locations. As a result, MONUSCO has been able to better anticipate and respond to threats posed by armed groups. By supporting the conflict resolution measures taken by provincial authorities, MONUSCO has also helped to create space for non-adversarial engagement with militia groups aimed at achieving negotiated settlements for their voluntary demobilization and reintegration.

28. In North Kivu, MONUSCO has developed contingency plans for the protection of civilians in the context of FARDC operations against ADF. Their aim is to minimize the risk of reprisal attacks against civilians, which ADF has employed in the past as a deliberate tactic when faced with military pressure. Following the deterioration of the situation, MONUSCO and national authorities have renewed efforts to cooperate more closely on the protection of civilians. In line with its protection mandate, the Mission has increased the number of day and night patrols dispatched to areas vulnerable to ADF attacks. MONUSCO is providing logistical and medical support to FARDC to help in sustaining the latest operations against ADF and weaken the capacity of ADF to inflict harm on civilians. Despite these efforts, the spike in ADF attacks has triggered a series of protests against the security situation that have largely been directed at MONUSCO. Since 20 November, increasingly violent demonstrations have taken place in Beni, Butembo and Oicha that have included the breaching of MONUSCO premises, prompting staff relocations.

29. In Masisi Territory, MONUSCO established a standing combat deployment in Pinga during the reporting period, thus enabling the projection of a protective force in response to the strong presence of the NDC-R armed group in the area. The measure enabled the deployment of three joint military and civilian teams to identify protection challenges and develop comprehensive long-term solutions with local actors.

30. In response to the violence in the Minembwe area in South Kivu Province, MONUSCO has maintained a standing combat deployment in Mikenge. In addition, the Mission has established standing combat deployments in Kamombo and Bijombo that have helped to protect displaced civilians targeted by hostile militias. In Mikenge alone, the standing combat deployment is protecting hundreds of civilians in its

vicinity. On 31 October and 5 November, MONUSCO troops fired warning shots at Mai-Mai members approaching the camp for internally displaced persons in Mikenge with hostile intentions, and were successful at deterring them. In Bijombo, a large number of displaced civilians had sought protection around the standing combat deployment within days of its establishment. By its presence in the area, MONUSCO has provided logistics and security infrastructure to facilitate conflict resolution efforts at the local, provincial and national levels. Furthermore, the Mission has supported multiple visits to the area by the provincial and national authorities.

31. In Djugu Territory in Ituri Province, MONUSCO maintains four standing combat deployments. The sites for internally displaced persons that have emerged around two of these contain thousands of displaced persons. The Mission continues to support the political settlement of the conflict under the leadership of the provincial Governor by facilitating dialogue sessions between FARDC and community leaders. MONUSCO has also supported the meaningful participation of female mediators and women's organizations in sensitization and intercommunity dialogue processes aimed at reducing the number of violent incidents. In Irumu Territory, MONUSCO has established a standing combat deployment in anticipation of potential ADF incursions linked to the launch of FARDC operations against the group in neighbouring Beni Territory. Another temporary base was established in Mambasa to support the Ebola Emergency Response Team, which faced violence from alleged Mai-Mai groups. MONUSCO has further facilitated a joint visit by the governors of Ituri and North Kivu provinces to Mambasa, where they met with local representatives to reduce resistance to response efforts.

32. In Tanganyika Province, MONUSCO has worked closely with provincial authorities to engage with Mai-Mai groups. On 20 October, the Mission facilitated a meeting between the Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale and the local authorities to discuss the group's possible surrender. While no final agreement was reached, the meeting opened opportunities for further discussion. On 29 October, 11 Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale combatants surrendered.

33. In the Kasai region, the improved security situation has allowed MONUSCO to shift the focus of its protection strategy to strengthening the rule of law in the longer term. In the meantime, the Mission continues to focus on community dialogue to support the reintegration of former members of the Kamuina Nsapu into their communities and to address long-standing local conflicts.

Extension of State authority

34. The demobilization and reintegration of armed group combatants remains a top priority for MONUSCO. My Special Representative has continued to engage the Government at the highest levels on this critical issue so as to work towards effective and evidence-based solutions. In response to the Government's call on the provincial authorities to develop community-based reintegration options for armed groups willing to lay down their arms, MONUSCO has stepped up its support to provincial structures. The Mission is providing strategic and technical advice to various parties to facilitate sustainable solutions based on national and international best practices, including the newly established interprovincial structures in South Kivu and North Kivu provinces and the expanded National Security Council.

35. From 28 September to 11 November, MONUSCO assisted the authorities in the demobilization of 61 Congolese ex-combatants and 18 children associated with armed forces or armed groups, and processed 14 foreign ex-combatants and their dependents. From that group, five individuals were repatriated to Rwanda. These developments bring the total number of individuals demobilized since the beginning

of 2019 to 1,304. Moreover, to support local demobilization initiatives, MONUSCO has reinforced its community violence reduction activities. Women's participation in community violence reduction projects has increased to 52.6 per cent of the total number of direct beneficiaries thanks to the Mission's efforts to address barriers to their inclusion in the security sector.

36. While engagement with most militia groups remained in a preparatory phase, the peace process with FRPI continued to advance, supported by the good offices and technical assistance provided by MONUSCO. A total of 960 combatants and 600 dependants have been registered in the pre-cantonment site while a demobilization agreement is being negotiated. The Government, through the steering committee under the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, has confirmed its ongoing commitment to political discussions with the FRPI leadership. The steering committee has adopted a timeline that includes the release of children prior to the signing of the peace agreement and the transmission of a draft amnesty law to Parliament. MONUSCO continues to advocate for the immediate release of children and for adherence to international human rights principles, including withholding amnesty for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other gross violations.

37. Threats posed to civilians by explosive hazards and the proliferation of small arms were mitigated by destroying 15 items of unexploded ordnance, 8,498 items of small arms ammunition and 588 items of bulk ammunition by the Mine Action Service. The Mission also continued to install weapons safes and train national security forces on weapons and ammunition management.

Human rights situation, justice and corrections

38. MONUSCO continues to take a strategic approach in support of national efforts to reduce the number of human rights violations in the country through systematic human rights monitoring and support for the sustainable strengthening of rule of law institutions. Supporting prosecutions by the national authorities has been particularly important in the fight against impunity. The Mission's efforts have contributed to the sentencing of offenders both at the national and international levels. The signature of an action plan against sexual violence by the national police is a major milestone in the support for nationally-led security sector reform processes.

39. Between July and September, MONUSCO documented 1,441 human rights violations and abuses across the country, a number that is similar to that documented in the previous three months. Around half of the recorded cases were committed by State agents, the other half by members of armed groups and militias. FARDC soldiers were responsible for 26 per cent of all violations recorded. The human rights situation remains particularly worrying in provinces affected by conflict, where the activities of armed groups, as well as the military operations against them, continued to have a significant negative impact on civilians. At least 301 civilians, including 69 women, were victims of extrajudicial or summary killings. A total of 156 women and 46 girls became victims of sexual violence between July and September in these provinces. A worrying spike in violations, including in the form of sexual violence committed by armed groups, was observed in the Minembwe area in South Kivu.

40. At least 26 people died in detention between July and September, mainly due to a lack of access to appropriate medical care, malnutrition and, in some cases, ill-treatment. At least 64 people escaped from detention centres across the country. Both figures represent a decrease compared with the previous quarter but show that it remains necessary to reform the corrections system. MONUSCO, together with partner organizations, continues to promote better living conditions for women and

girls in high-risk prisons by identifying the challenges they face, their needs and their concerns, and advocate for improvements such as offering legal training sessions, distributing health kits and giving training to prison staff on gender perspectives.

41. MONUSCO has continued to support the efforts of civilian and military justice authorities in investigations into and the prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations. On 7 November, Bosco Ntaganda was sentenced to 30 years in prison by the International Criminal Court. At the national level, at least 57 FARDC soldiers, 4 members of the national police and 26 members of armed groups were convicted for human rights violations and abuses throughout the country between July and September. Following a trial in Ituri supported by MONUSCO, 55 defendants, including 1 FARDC soldier and 1 member of the national police, were convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity committed in the context of intercommunity violence in Djugu Territory between December 2017 and May 2018. MONUSCO also supports national investigations into attacks on Ebola treatment centres in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. Overall, while progress in convictions of members of the security forces is encouraging, the number of violations perpetrated by members of the security forces – including by officers who have been promoted or been retained in high command positions – is worrisome and needs to be addressed.

42. With MONUSCO support, the national police, key government ministries and the special adviser to the President on young people, gender and violence against women have developed a three-year action plan against sexual violence for the national police. The document was signed by the Minister of Interior on 5 November. The goal is to eliminate sexual violence committed by police officers and enable the national police to better contribute to the prevention of and response to sexual violence, including by countering impunity and improving the protection of victims and witnesses.

Child protection

43. The Mission's efforts to engage with armed groups on the release of children has continued to produce positive results. Over the past year, MONUSCO engaged with 16 commanders of armed groups, which resulted in the release of 973 children, 136 of whom were girls. Later, eight of the groups formally surrendered, which demonstrates that communication with such groups about children's rights can be a valuable entry point for their eventual demobilization. Over the past two years, a marked decrease in child rights violations has been observed, from 3,383 in 2017 to 2,150 during the first 10 months of 2019. New recruitment by armed groups has decreased by 60 per cent over the past two years.

44. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 524 grave violations against children from September to early November. At least 445 children (71 girls, 374 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups. During the same period, 21 children (11 girls, 10 boys) were killed and 21 children (13 girls, 8 boys) were maimed. MONUSCO verified the abduction of 81 children (18 girls, 63 boys). Six attacks on schools and health centres were documented, as were eight cases of rape against girls.

Gender considerations in mandate implementation

45. MONUSCO is making progress in its efforts to implement its protection of civilians mandate in a more gender-responsive way. The application of a gender

perspective in the analysis of early-warning data has helped to inform decisions on the timely deployment of robust patrols to prevent violations that disproportionately affect women, such as abductions and sexual violence, particularly in Oicha and Eringeti in the Beni area. These efforts have been reinforced by the Mission's support for the professionalization of the national police and FARDC, particularly in relation to the participation of female personnel and other gender aspects.

46. MONUSCO has also supported greater participation by women in public life with the help of capacity-building for Congolese journalists and by significantly increasing the airtime of female panellists on programmes aired by Radio Okapi, the radio station operated by the Mission. The Mission has strengthened its engagement with women's organizations on the prevention and resolution of local conflicts. In North Kivu, for instance, the Mission has helped to build the capacity of women leaders, of more in non-violent communication for the peaceful resolution of community conflicts.

Deployment and assessment of the Mission's performance

Progress in adjusting the Mission's priorities, posture and presence

47. MONUSCO has proactively taken steps to adjust its footprint in response to the evolving situation on the ground. Two infantry battalions, comprised of 750 troops each, will be repatriated from South Kivu and North Kivu provinces by 31 December 2019. To ensure the continued protection of civilians and provide support to government forces in the areas vacated by the two battalions, other troops are being strategically redeployed to ensure the continuity of the MONUSCO force presence where required. The rapidly deployable battalion from Morocco will be sent from Kananga to North Kivu to replace the Indian infantry battalion currently stationed there, and will itself be replaced by a part of the Ghanaian battalion currently stationed in Kinshasa. A part of the rapidly deployable battalion from Indonesia will be redeployed from Tanganyika to southern parts of South Kivu to replace the departing Pakistani battalion.

Assessment of the performance of the Mission's uniformed personnel in protecting civilians

48. In line with the commitments made under the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, measurable progress continues to be made towards ensuring the highest level of peacekeeping performance. To that end, 15 MONUSCO force units were evaluated during the reporting period. The evaluation criteria included the capacity for mandate implementation; aspects related to command and control; training; discipline; and the sustainability of logistical capacities and medical support. Ten units were assessed as excellent and four as satisfactory; one review is still being finalized. To improve operational standards, MONUSCO has instituted training and has taken operational and logistical measures to enhance the ability of the contingents concerned. The Mission has also carried out stress tests of the Mission's casualty evacuation capabilities, which confirmed that medical and casualty evacuation procedures were fit for purpose.

49. The police component of the Mission has continued to implement its performance evaluation system both for individual police officers and formed police units. Evaluation criteria included professionalism; commitment to address protection challenges; capacity to identify security threats; productivity; and information-gathering, information analysis and information-sharing. The results show that the Mission's formed police units have excellent knowledge of the strategic priorities of the Mission, are fully committed to the implementation of their mandated tasks and

have a high level of expertise and operational readiness. At the same time, in compliance with the new standards for formed police units, there is a need to improve language skills, gender aspects and equipment. Action has been taken to address these, in part by giving French-language courses to commanding staff of the formed police units. Progress is also being made with raising the number of female police officers, with the incoming Egyptian formed police unit, which is scheduled to arrive in March 2020 and is to be comprised of 10 per cent female officers.

Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

50. Between 1 September and 31 October, four allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse were recorded, all involving MONUSCO military personnel. These allegations are currently being investigated or have been referred to the troop-contributing countries concerned. Thirty-six other allegations of misconduct were reported, which are also under investigation. Thirty-one of those were concerned fraudulent administrative claims.

Safety and security of United Nations personnel

51. The safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities remains a priority concern, in line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments. A total of 68 incidents were recorded during the reporting period. Those included 5 incidents related to armed conflicts, 21 related to crime, 36 relating to hazards and 6 relating to civil unrest. MONUSCO has helped the national authorities to investigate and prosecute crimes against peacekeepers, including in the case of the abduction in 2018 near Kalemie of 13 peacekeepers from Benin and the case against the former leader of FRPI, Germain Katanga, and other defendants, some of whom stand accused of murdering nine peacekeepers from Bangladesh in Ituri in 2006.

Observations

52. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has made undeniable progress towards stability and democratic governance, considering the formidable challenges it has had to overcome in the past 20 years. The first peaceful transfer of power ever in the country's history and the formation of a new Government in September have fuelled hopes that it can, at last, embark decisively on the path to lasting peace, stability and sustainable development. The security situation in the majority of its 26 provinces is stable, which allows MONUSCO to embark on the progressive, sustainable and responsible transfer of its tasks to the Government, with support from the United Nations country team and other partners, as appropriate.

53. I wish to express my gratitude to Youssef Mahmoud for his efforts in leading the independent strategic review of MONUSCO requested by the Security Council. In its report, the review team recognized the positive impact of two decades of peacekeeping and the opportunities created that, if leveraged, could pave the way to sustainable peace and development. The strategic review team usefully re-examined the key assumptions underlying the military and protection-of-civilian mandates of the Mission. Ultimately, the only way to achieve durable peace is through a sustained effort to build strong democratic and governance institutions. As the United Nations reconfigures its presence in response to the evolving needs on the ground, support for reforms and the strengthening of key institutions must be carefully assessed and, where necessary, strategies must be implemented to ensure that necessary capabilities are in place. Given the fragility of the situation and the continued security challenges faced in the eastern provinces, the transition towards the exit of MONUSCO should

be based on a careful assessment of conditions on the ground and the progress made in achieving key benchmarks, to be identified in close consultation with the Government.

54. I believe it is essential that MONUSCO concentrate its activities and resources in areas where acute security challenges persist and where opportunities exist to make tangible progress in consolidating stabilization gains and addressing the drivers of conflict and violence. The Mission should therefore prioritize the provision of good offices in support of the ongoing political transition, the strengthening of the core functions of the State, including with regard to human rights, and the protection of civilians, including through the resolution of local conflicts and the sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of armed groups. The Mission stands ready to support the Government in further professionalizing the national security and defence forces, in close coordination with the United Nations country team and key bilateral and multilateral partners. The Mission will continue to place its expertise at the disposal of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to reinforce the military and civilian justice systems with a view to combating impunity, enhancing trust and confidence in the security forces and the judiciary, and strengthening the rule of law.

55. The absence of large-scale armed conflict in the Kasai region and Tanganyika offers an opportunity to consider a withdrawal of the MONUSCO force in favour of a civilian response in those provinces. Importantly, that would enable the Mission to concentrate its military footprint in a redefined operational area of responsibility limited to those parts of the country that continue to be marked by armed group violence and the national security forces still require the Mission's support to address threats to civilians and State authority. The drawdown of the military component of the Mission in the less conflict-affected provinces must, however, be anchored in the continuation of a strong civilian presence, focused on building and strengthening sustainable and inclusive rule of law capacities and security institutions. Increasing the United Nations police presence during this period of transition will be a critical aspect of the Mission's efforts to help with building the capacity of the national police and restoring State authority in these areas, alongside the Mission's continued support to justice and corrections institutions. These efforts must be accompanied by a sustained focus on the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups and their sustainable reintegration into civilian life based on flexible, community-based approaches that are in line with international standards, while at the same time addressing the need for justice and accountability. This would help to avoid the negative consequences associated with integrating armed groups into national security forces as practiced in the past. The strategic, technical and financial support of key partners will be essential to provide a timely and effective response to the requests for demobilization, disarmament and reintegration emanating from numerous armed groups around the country.

56. Notwithstanding these advances, I remain deeply concerned by the volatile security situation in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces. Armed groups, both foreign and national, continue to pose a serious risk to civilians in these areas and continue to undermine regional stability. While there have been some encouraging signs in Djugu Territory in Ituri Province, inter-community violence, often amplified by incitement by external spoilers, continues in North Kivu and, especially, in South Kivu, where a worrying spike in violence and human rights violations and abuses has been observed since October. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the primary responsibility for addressing these security threats. Helping it to do so in a comprehensive manner, by both military and civilian means, remains a top priority for MONUSCO and I am convinced that the Mission can play a vital role in this regard. The latest developments in Beni Territory serve to underscore the

continued centrality of the Mission's protection-of-civilians mandate, which must be implemented in a robust and proactive manner in close cooperation with national authorities. I count on the continued support of the Security Council and of the countries contributing troops and police to MONUSCO for the Secretariat's constant efforts to improve the effectiveness and impact of the Mission's military and police components in discharging their core responsibilities as part of a whole-of-mission approach to the protection of civilians.

57. I am heartened by the Government's continued efforts to promote regional cooperation in addressing the challenges facing the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I strongly believe that a regional approach, including the promotion of the National Oversight Mechanism within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, remains essential to reinforcing cooperation between countries in the Great Lakes region and finding durable solutions to the continued threat posed by armed groups while fostering economic integration.

58. Humanitarian needs are expected to remain immense in 2020. Forced displacement will continue to detrimentally affect the population in the absence of major improvements in the current situation in the eastern provinces. Structural underdevelopment and crises such as local armed conflict, epidemics and food insecurity will also continue to affect people's well-being. The humanitarian country team will endeavour to assist 8.1 million of the most vulnerable people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2020, despite significant obstacles relating to access, security and funding. These interventions will focus on population movements, food insecurity, malnutrition, epidemics and broader protection needs.

59. The Ebola virus remains a concern to both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries. I welcome the reported downward trend in the number of new cases, which has been achieved thanks to the tireless efforts of the Government and the support of the World Health Organization, the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator and other partners. At the same time, I condemn the violence continuing in some areas against those involved in the response effort. Given the challenging security environment, it is essential that MONUSCO keep at its disposal the means necessary to create a safe environment for local responders. We must remain vigilant until the disease is completely eradicated, while ensuring the necessary support to survivors, some of whom may face stigma and health complications for years to come.

60. Against the background of the developments outlined in the present report, I firmly believe that MONUSCO still has an important role to play in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I look forward to working closely with the Government to develop a clear understanding of how the Mission and the United Nations country team can best support its vision for the future of the country. I therefore recommend that the Security Council renew the Mission's mandate for an additional year, considering my observations and recommendations on the Mission's posture and priorities in this new phase of its life cycle. Improved security in parts of the country previously affected by conflict has created opportunities to adjust the footprint of MONUSCO to better meet the challenges posed by the current situation on the ground. I would therefore recommend that the Security Council consider reducing the Mission's authorized troop strength by 1,650 personnel to more closely reflect the evolving security landscape. To enable the Mission to effectively support the professionalization of the national police, I would also propose a temporary increase in the Mission's authorized police strength of 360 formed police unit personnel (equivalent to two formed police units) and 200 individual police officers. Such a police presence would also serve as an interim measure for the protection of civilians

and of Mission personnel and assets in locations where the MONUSCO force is being withdrawn.

61. Lastly, I wish to thank my Special Representative for her steadfast leadership and dedication, and all MONUSCO personnel, the United Nations country team and the countries contributing troops and police for their commitment to the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also commend regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

