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Seventy-seventh year

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Ms. Dautllari	(Albania)
<i>Members:</i>	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mrs. Onanga
	Ghana	Mr. Agyeman
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kiboino
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mr. Mills

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization
Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/503)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/503)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ms. Julienne Lusenge, President of Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/503, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for another opportunity to provide members with an update on developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as highlighted in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/503). Since my previous briefing to the Security Council, in March (see S/PV.9007), the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has unfortunately greatly deteriorated, owing in particular to a surge in attacks by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) on the civilian population, national security forces and the Blue Helmets of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as well as continued attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Coopérative

pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and other armed groups in Ituri and North Kivu.

The escalation of M-23 attacks and the resulting regional tensions have unfortunately undermined the positive momentum created over the past few years between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Since April, the M-23 has launched several offensives in the Rutshuru territory of North Kivu province, and in May and June there were coordinated M-23 attacks along several lines in Rutshuru. They have had a major impact on the civilian population, resulting in the deaths of at least 23 civilians, including six children, while more than 170,000 people have been displaced. While some have found refuge thanks to the hospitality of host families, the community shelters built by humanitarian partners have become overcrowded, as have schools, stadiums and the other community spaces in which displaced people have found shelter.

I am particularly concerned about the interruptions to children's education that the situation has created, and which are just one example of how the resurgence of the M-23 has disrupted the daily lives of a civilian population that was already suffering from persistent insecurity and last year's eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. In that context, MONUSCO's robust and proactive response, in accordance with its mandate and in strict compliance with the human rights due-diligence policy, has prevented the M-23 from threatening the city of Goma and other places along Route Nationale 2.

However, following east-west coordinated attacks, the M-23 has occupied the town of Bunagana, an important border-crossing point with Uganda. In the most recent clashes, the M-23 has behaved more and more like a conventional army rather than an armed group. It has access to increasingly sophisticated firepower and equipment, including long-range mortar and machine-gun capabilities, as well as precision anti-aircraft weapons. The threat that this poses to the population and the peacekeepers, who have a mandate to protect the people, is obvious. At this point I would like to pay tribute to the nine Blue Helmets who have lost their lives — eight of them, as I informed the Council, on 29 March, in a helicopter crash caused by a hostile operation in an area controlled by the M-23, and one on 5 April, in an offensive operation against CODECO in Ituri. I would like to reiterate my firm condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by the M-23 and at the same time emphasize MONUSCO's determination to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the Council. However,

it is vital that the Council redouble its efforts to encourage a rapid de-escalation of the situation and the unconditional disarmament of the M-23.

(spoke in English)

The resurgence of the M-23 has had broad repercussions for security, human rights and the humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and for regional dynamics. The humanitarian country team has developed a response plan for the M-23 crisis and the Humanitarian Coordinator has allocated \$5 million from the humanitarian fund to jump-start the response. A Central Emergency Response Fund rapid response request is currently being developed for new needs in Ituri and North Kivu as a result of the current crisis.

As the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have redeployed forces to the Petit Nord to respond to the threat posed by the M-23, and as MONUSCO has been required to enact a similar shift of its military component, other armed groups have sought to take advantage of the resulting security vacuum. Increased attacks by the ADF in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, as well as attacks and reprisals by CODECO and Zaire forces, have taken a heavy toll on the civilian population, with more than 150 civilians killed between 28 May and 17 June. In that context, the humanitarian situation across the eastern provinces has deteriorated and the overall number of people displaced this year has risen to some 700,000.

Rising regional tensions have coincided with a deeply worrisome increase in hate speech and incitement to violence, particularly targeting Congolese Rwandophone populations. Between May and June, at least eight cases of hate speech that meet the Rabat threshold and that specifically targeted Rwandophones have been documented, with at least three coming from the Congolese military and police authorities. The United Nations has been clear in its condemnation of those reprehensible attempts to fuel intercommunal tensions. I welcome the steps taken by the Congolese authorities to publicly condemn such inflammatory speeches and bring to justice all who engage in such reckless behaviour and related acts of violence. I am greatly encouraged by the dozens of appeals for calm and the condemnations of incitement to violence that have been expressed by Congolese officials, politicians and civil-society leaders. I am also deeply moved by the successful and peaceful return of displaced

Banyamulenge families to their Rurambo home in South Kivu, thanks to the courageous determination and leadership of the local Fuliro chief. That act of courage and intercommunal Congolese fraternity and solidarity should be highlighted and commended.

In that highly charged context, it is incumbent on the Security Council to provide its full support to the region's efforts to defuse the current diplomatic and security tensions among neighbouring States and put an end to the scourge of armed groups. Should the M-23 continue its well-coordinated attacks on FARDC and MONUSCO with increasing conventional capabilities, the Mission may find itself dealing with a threat that goes beyond its current capacities. The ongoing M-23 and armed-group activities in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo threaten to reverse the hard-won progress that has been made in bringing security and stability to the country and the region.

I therefore urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to seize the opportunity of the upcoming summit that President João Lourenço will be hosting in Luanda to resolve their differences through dialogue. In the meantime, it is imperative that both countries continue to make full use of existing subregional mechanisms such as the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism to address their mutual grievances on the basis of established facts.

I welcomed the holding on 20 June in Nairobi of the Third Conclave, during which East African Heads of States confirmed their commitment to finding a sustainable solution to the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through both political and military tracks. I am encouraged by the commitment of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursuing consultations with local armed groups and encouraging them to join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Several local armed groups have expressed their willingness to lay down their weapons and enter the national programme, whose timely and effective implementation is critical to paving the way for peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the meantime, and as requested by the joint secretariat of the Nairobi process, MONUSCO is working very closely with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to devise transitional measures for the initial phases of disarmament pending the full operationalization of the programme to ensure that the momentum generated

by the consultations in Nairobi with armed groups is not lost.

I am also encouraged by the progress made by the operational cell of the Contact and Coordination Group established under the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region to address the threat posed by foreign armed groups through non-military means. In the past two decades, it is worth recalling that the implementation of non-military measures, including disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement, has already contributed to the repatriation of a majority of the foreign armed groups from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to their countries of origin.

(spoke in French)

The national political situation has also undergone significant changes since I last briefed the Council. In June, the National Assembly and the Senate enacted revisions to the electoral law, which should increase the transparency of the electoral process and promote the participation of women as candidates. However, the absence of the opposition from the parliamentary debate on revisions to the electoral law demonstrates that additional efforts are needed to create the conditions for an inclusive, transparent and peaceful electoral process.

I reaffirm my determination to use my good offices in favour of dialogue between the country's various political forces. I want to take this opportunity to call on the nation's political actors and active forces to demonstrate responsibility by working to create a peaceful political climate. I also encourage the Congolese authorities to preserve the democratic space and ensure full respect for fundamental freedoms, particularly in view of the continuing state of siege in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu.

Meanwhile, MONUSCO is preparing to take a major step in adjusting its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the final closure tomorrow of its offices in Kalemie, in Tanganyika province. I applaud the efforts of the Congolese authorities to strengthen the presence and capacity of State institutions in the province. The recent deployment of 80 police officers in areas where security challenges persist is tangible evidence of the commitment of the Congolese authorities to fulfilling their responsibilities to the population in areas where the United Nations presence will be changing. The United Nations country

team will continue to support the Government's efforts to preserve and consolidate the progress made with MONUSCO's support.

I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Government's commitment, through the joint working group, to monitoring the implementation of the joint transition plan endorsed by the Council in December. In that regard, it is essential that the Government continue with the reforms envisaged in its action plan, particularly in the security sector, so that State institutions are able to respond to the multiple challenges facing the country.

(spoke in English)

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude for the continued support of the Security Council and of troop- and police-contributing countries to MONUSCO, particularly at a time when the Mission is facing challenges to the implementation of its mandate. I salute the bravery and courage of the women and men serving under the United Nations flag and the commitment of their contributing countries under these very trying circumstances. MONUSCO remains determined to protect civilians and help tackle the drivers of conflict and violence. A unity of purpose within the Council and among troop- and police-contributing countries remains essential for the Mission to deliver on its core mandated responsibilities.

(spoke in French)

Zawede, an 11-year-old girl from Kivu in the fifth grade, wrote a slam poem for the children of her country that I was asked to transmit to the Council. It is long, so I will read only the end:

“This slam is both an expression of the love and hope that I have for my country, but also of the sharp pain, disappointment and feelings of abandonment caused by the grown-ups who should be actively involved in the peacekeeping process in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo — a place that has shed its blood, sweat and tears for a quarter of a century.

“With that in mind, I would therefore ask each member of the Security Council to take my voice, amplify it and protect it as far as possible so that the children of the world, of Africa, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of Kivu and of Bunagana enjoy their rights as human beings and as children

and that they reclaim their dignity in a climate of prosperity and stability.”

The President: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Lusenge.

Ms. Lusenge (*spoke in French*): My name is Julienne Lusenge, and I am the Director of the Fund for Congolese Women and the President of Female Solidarity for Integrated Peace and Development. On behalf of Congolese women, I would like to thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to share with the Security Council some remarks on the situation of women in the context of conflicts that disrupt our lives and destroy our community values.

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the countries that have demonstrated their commitment to Ukraine and to express my solidarity and sympathy with the Ukrainian people, especially women and children.

At a time when the eastern region of my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is experiencing unprecedented political, security and humanitarian instability, today’s meeting provides yet another opportunity to take concrete action in order to put a definitive end to a tragedy that has lasted far too long and constitutes a disgrace to humankind.

The security situation is deteriorating badly as a result of the terrorist acts committed by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23), the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and other armed groups. That is despite the efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the operations carried out by the Congolese defence and security forces, supported by the Uganda People’s Defence Forces within the framework of the state of siege decreed in May 2021 in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. Here I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita and congratulate her on her efforts to support the Blue Helmets on the ground and even the local populations during the recent clashes. I welcome her presence today and I would also like to offer my condolences to the families of the Blue Helmets who have lost their lives in my country.

The position of one of our neighbouring countries in support of the M-23 rebels is hindering peace in that area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where

more than 5.5 million people are currently internally displaced. Host populations have also been cut off from their resources. Try to imagine mothers preparing dust and soil to feed their children instead of corn or soybean porridge. Here I would like to recount the testimony of Furaha, one of my fellow countrywomen.

“A member of my family was kidnapped, and the perpetrators demanded a ransom of \$700. We pawned the family plot of land to get the money. The kidnappers showed me the way to drop off the money and demanded that I show up in person. It was a trap so that they could tie me up, beat me and undress me.

“They slit the throat of a Nande man from Beni and ripped out his entrails, which they asked me to cook. They brought me two cans of water to clean and prepare the condiments. They made all the prisoners eat the human flesh. The rest of the body was transported by the prisoners to another destination.

“Late at night they arrived at another camp, raped me throughout the night and subjected me to other physical abuse. A few days later, I was released by an element of the same CODECO militia who showed me the way. Unfortunately, I was detained again by another group in another village and held as a sex slave for several days. There too I was forced to prepare and eat human flesh. I was subjected to all kinds of degrading and inhumane treatment. One day, by the grace of God, I was able to flee and return to my village. The family member for whom the ransom was demanded had already been murdered.”

Many orphaned children are without assistance in Beni territory and Ituri. Those children are taken in by widowed women or families who have nothing. Minors engage in survival sex. The women of Oicha say they have been traumatized by the cruelty of the ADF. In providing services to survivors in conflict zones, actors face various constraints and challenges, including the continued deterioration of the security situation due to the activism of armed groups, which sometimes prevents other victims from accessing care within 72 hours. There are several obstacles that prevent victims from accessing justice, including a lack of judges, the absence of reparations after the perpetrators have been convicted, the long distances to the courts and difficulties in collecting and preserving evidence.

We are witnessing an increase in mistrust — between the population and leaders, between different communities, towards humanitarian workers and the peacekeeping mission — because of the insecurity and suffering that is growing every day. Our efforts to strengthen social cohesion and the training we do on peaceful cohabitation to mitigate conflicts within communities are being annihilated by this extreme suffering.

In the light of the foregoing, it is appropriate to make the following relevant recommendations to members of the Council. The ambiguity in the situation in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be resolved. The reports of the United Nations experts are available to the Security Council and show the involvement of the neighbouring country alongside the M-23. We must stop commending this country, which thrives on the deaths of and sexual violence against women and girls, the illicit exploitation of Democratic Republic's resources and the instrumentalization of armed groups. This is what maintains instability in the Great Lakes region.

It is necessary to strengthen actions and consultation mechanisms in order to make the protection of the civilian population more effective, especially in the eastern part of the country, as the elections approach. We must support the efforts of communities to assist the civilian population, listen to their cries of distress and support programmes that seek alternative and sustainable solutions so as to save lives.

The Council should act in such a manner that Rwanda's problems with the FDLR are dealt with in Rwanda and not in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Rwanda must therefore dialogue with the FDLR in Rwanda.

We must act effectively to establish international justice for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and make significant decisions based on the mapping report. The United Nations must stop turning a blind eye to the deaths in the Democratic Republic. Greater medical and psychological assistance must be provided to survivors.

Efforts must continue to be made to address the current global food insecurity caused by the war in Ukraine and its ramifications in Africa, especially its impact on women and children. In addition, there is an urgent need for the General Assembly and all allies and partners to convene a forum that will focus solely

on addressing this problem of food insecurity and mitigating its impacts in Africa.

More assistance is needed for orphans and widows and for internationally funded poverty-reduction-based anti-prostitution initiatives.

The President: I thank Ms. Lusenge for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Keita and Ms. Lusenge for their briefings.

France fully supports regional efforts to stabilize the deteriorating situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Civilians and the country's security forces continue to suffer from attacks by armed groups. France condemns the ongoing offensives by the Mouvement du 23 mars and the actions of other armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is carrying out its mandate with respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. Attacks on the Mission, which lost nine peacekeepers this quarter, must stop and be investigated.

The process begun in Nairobi must continue. Consultations with armed groups must lead to their disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. It is essential that the regional force announced during the most recent Conclave be complementary to a political process. It must be coordinated with MONUSCO, while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

France will continue to support the continuation of dialogue between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda within the framework of existing mechanisms and ongoing diplomatic initiatives. I am thinking in particular of the mediation initiated by the President of the Republic of Angola, with the support of the African Union.

Priority must be given to the protection of civilians. We are witnessing a resurgence of hate speech targeting communities and individuals. MONUSCO has stepped up its prevention efforts. Everyone must commit to fighting these incitements to violence, which have

led to the displacement of thousands of people. Some armed groups are targeting these civilians by attacking camps for displaced persons. France welcomes the mobilization of MONUSCO — and in particular its reconfigured Force Intervention Brigade — to protect these camps.

In the past three months, no new armed groups have committed to ceasing the recruitment or use of children. France calls for increased efforts aimed at preventing the unlawful recruitment and use of children. The Security Council's sanctions regime, which we are preparing to renew, is an additional tool that should make it possible to combat those who use children in armed conflicts.

Finally, our partnerships must be strengthened to ensure sustainable development for the benefit of populations. France welcomes the continuation of work in parliament to prepare for the 2023 elections. The protection of democratic space, transparency, inclusiveness and the participation of women will contribute to the smooth conduct of these elections.

In the area of health, support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be increased. Accordingly, France recently donated nearly 300,000 doses of vaccine against coronavirus disease. The European Union has committed €600,000 in humanitarian aid to combat an outbreak of monkeypox in Maniema province.

It is the younger generation that will build the Democratic Republic of the Congo of tomorrow. To support access to education, France will provide €500,000 to the Kinshasa Digital Foundation to prepare students in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for higher education.

I will conclude by reaffirming France's support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and MONUSCO. Their actions serve peace in the region on a daily basis.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her compelling and useful briefing this morning. I also want to thank Ms. Lusenge for her insights and her recommendations to the Security Council.

The United States remains deeply concerned by the continued campaign of violence by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in North Kivu province and by the tensions at the border between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We also echo the Secretary-

General's calls for the M-23 and all non-State armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic to cease violence against civilians, disband and lay down their weapons. Further, we encourage all groups from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization programme without conditions and for foreign armed groups to return to their countries of origin.

We ask the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to continue positive steps towards de-escalating tensions. We note our support for the Nairobi process and for the high-level engagement of the Presidents of Kenya and Angola on this issue. We wish to take this opportunity to highlight that all countries must respect their neighbours' territorial integrity. We have made clear that any entry of foreign forces into the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be done in cooperation with the Democratic Republic and must be done transparently.

Armed-group activity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as we have just heard, has very real and horrific human consequences. It drives displacement and unprecedented humanitarian needs and poses a major challenge to humanitarian access and the delivery of life-saving assistance. For example, reporting by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) from Ituri province highlights that armed groups killed nearly 800 civilians during this most recent reporting period alone.

We are extremely troubled by Rwanda's statements questioning MONUSCO's impartiality. The Mission has worked hard to carry out its mandated objectives impartially in what is an increasingly complex environment. Such statements encourage hostility to MONUSCO peacekeepers, and they are unacceptable. To be clear, any rhetoric inciting violence or otherwise increasing the risks to MONUSCO personnel and their safety and security is unacceptable.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, of course, bears the primary responsibility for protecting its own citizens. The United States pledges its continued support through our privileged partnership with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially at this challenging time.

I would urge East African Community (EAC) leaders to prioritize dialogue-based approaches to the

crisis. The United States insists that the deployment of any additional force in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo must be closely coordinated with MONUSCO and must be conducted in conformity with the parties' respective commitments under international law, including international humanitarian law. It must also be conducted in line with existing Security Council sanctions resolutions, and the Council must be formally notified prior to deployment.

Finally, I want to return to a theme I raised at the top of my remarks. The United States joins its allies in encouraging all actors to refrain from using rhetoric that might spark violence against United Nations peacekeepers or against Kinyarwanda speakers or people of Rwandan origin in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The elected officials of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should clearly and unequivocally condemn the use of such language in public forums and on any social media platform. The region is all too familiar with what can happen when groups manipulate their perceived differences to incite hate and violence against one another. We cannot allow that to happen again.

In closing, I want to call once more on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and other EAC members to de-escalate tensions and work to find a lasting solution to the violence and instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Agyeman (Ghana): I have the pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African countries that are members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Gabon, Ghana and Kenya.

Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her briefing and commend her efforts in support of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I also thank Ms. Julienne Lusenge for her perspective and for the recommendations that she made to the Council. I further welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda.

Our statement will focus on three main areas: the political, security and humanitarian situations.

On the political front, we welcome the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's commitment to hold elections in 2023, in accordance with the constitutional framework. We commend the adoption

of revisions to the electoral law by the National Assembly, featuring provisions that not only increase transparency but also create incentives for the greater participation of women. That is an important step in achieving gender parity.

We note the challenging security environment in some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and encourage the national authorities to adopt a comprehensive approach for planning the preparatory electoral processes in order to afford all Congolese an opportunity to participate in the upcoming elections.

We welcome the outcomes of the conclaves of the East African Community Heads of State on the peace and security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its commitment to contributing to reconciliation, stabilization and the securing of lasting peace in the region.

We acknowledge the participation of armed groups, as well as leaders of local communities, in the two rounds of the inter-Congolese peace dialogue. Their increasing willingness to surrender their arms and embrace the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is encouraging.

We welcome the announcement of the establishment of a regional force, which should contribute to the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as of the entire Great Lakes region.

The A3 calls on all stakeholders to discourage and cease the use of all offensive language, hate speech, threats of genocide and other politically inciting language. It is imperative that all communities work together to stabilize the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a view to achieving a mutually shared prosperity.

The devastating impact of armed-group violence on civilians, particularly vulnerable populations, including women, children and internally displaced persons, remains alarming. The activities of terrorist-affiliated groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continue to exact a heavy toll on civilians and civilian objects, particularly through manipulation, abuse, abductions, killings and maimings, as well as the indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices.

The A3 strongly condemns the destabilizing activities of armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the ADF, the

Cooperative pour le développement du Congo and the resurgent Mouvement du 23 mars. We call on all armed groups, both foreign and local, to immediately and unconditionally cease hostilities, lay down their arms and participate in the national and regional disarmament programmes.

The armed groups owe it to the people of Democratic Republic of the Congo to realize that there is no military solution to their challenges and that the answer lies in them embracing the call for peace, taking ownership of the inter-Congolese peace dialogue and pursuing opportunities for shared economic prosperity and development.

The A3 remains deeply concerned by the humanitarian crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with 5.5 million people internally displaced, more than half a million refugees and 27 million civilians facing acute food insecurity, compounded by the widespread insecurity. We note that as of today the 2022 humanitarian response plan, targeting 8.8 million people, has received only 15 per cent of the \$1.88 billion required.

We commend the outstanding work of the humanitarian organizations that, at the risk of their lives, provide continuous support to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), jointly with the Peacebuilding Fund Joint Steering Committee, to implement a humanitarian-development-peacebuilding triple-nexus approach in support of the 2022 humanitarian response plan.

It is important that humanitarian support be resilience-based. It should entail the rehabilitation and reconstruction of civilian infrastructure, the restoration of essential services and the provision of modern equipment and technology in support of local entrepreneurs that sustain livelihoods.

The A3 encourages States members of the East African Community, as well as the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, to work together to find durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. That should include their voluntary, safe and dignified return and reintegration into their communities of origin.

We reiterate the need for the States of the region to remain committed to addressing the root causes of

the conflict and promoting sustainable and equitable patterns of human development by fostering inclusion in all facets of life and the effective management of diversity. The A3 further encourages the States of the region to deepen their economic integration as a critical component of promoting peace, stability and economic development.

In the light of the ongoing negotiations on the sanctions regime on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the A3 underscores that the current notification requirement remains an unnecessary bureaucratic impediment that infringes on the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That requirement continues to impede the capacity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to curb the activities of armed groups as well as improve its ability to safeguard its internal security.

The notification requirement does not stop the proliferation of weapons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but serves only to make available information that should remain obscure for a sovereign State. Armed groups continue to gain weapons, including heavy artillery, as we have heard this morning, enhancing their capability to contest the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo as well as MONUSCO.

We call on the Council to respond favourably to the Congolese authorities' request to waive the notification requirement for the acquisition of weapons as well as its sovereign right to receive military training and technical support for the security and defence of the Congolese people. In that regard, we urge the regional mechanisms and the international community to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo in curbing the illicit proliferation and supply of weapons by sealing the loopholes being used by trans-border criminal networks.

In conclusion, the A3 commends the efforts of MONUSCO and the international community in promoting peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and all regional and global leaders for their support for the ongoing regional peace processes. We emphasize our solidarity with the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in their quest for lasting peace and reaffirm our respect for their country's territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her remarks and also thank Julienne Lusenge for her powerful testimony and recommendations.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's informative briefing and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/503) clearly show, the security situation in certain parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is regrettably deteriorating, specifically as a result of confrontations between the Mouvement du 23 mars and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. The Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and other armed groups also remain a constant threat to civilians. We are deeply concerned about those attacks. We are also concerned about the resurgence of hate speech and the incitement of violence in the wider Great Lakes region, together with the reports of repeated acts of violence over the past few weeks against Rwandaphones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The declaration of the state of siege has been one tool for addressing the security threats, but the intended results do not seem to have materialized. The fighting in the east is picking up regardless, and reports show that abuses and violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law continue. We are particularly concerned about the reported dramatic increase in cases of sexual violence. Norway urges all stakeholders to carefully evaluate the benefits of the state of siege before proceeding with its renewal. We reiterate that all civilians, including children, must be protected. We also emphasize that all countries must respect the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Norway encourages continuing engagement among the Congolese authorities, armed groups and regional stakeholders through the Regional Heads of State Conclave and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We support the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in that process, including members of civil society, women and young people. We also welcome the participation of additional armed groups, which could ultimately reduce the security threat to civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We encourage the further engagement of Special Envoy Xia and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita in reducing tensions in the region, and we commend the seven Heads of State of the East African

Community (EAC) for their leadership in the process. It is important that the Nairobi process support the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to the proposed deployment of an EAC regional force to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Norway would like to underline the need for thorough coordination with United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and other actors on the ground.

A new milestone will be reached when MONUSCO draws down from Tanganyika province this month. For years MONUSCO has contributed to stability, increased security and the protection of civilians in the province. In the post-drawdown period, it will be important to safeguard the gains made and draw on lessons learned. Furthermore, the Congolese authorities and the United Nations system must be ready to take over certain tasks when MONUSCO leaves. In that regard I want to underline the importance of transparency and communication among all the relevant actors.

Norway stands ready to work with all stakeholders for a sustainable and responsible recalibration of MONUSCO and for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Julienne Lusenge for their briefings and welcoming the delegations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi to this meeting. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the women and men of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for their hard work and to deplore the fact that some of them have lost their lives in delivering on MONUSCO's mandate. I would like to comment on three subjects.

The first is violence. We remain seriously concerned about the activities of armed groups in the eastern Congolese provinces. In addition to the actions of the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi, the fight against those rebel groups has resulted in large-scale violence in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. The re-emergence of the Mouvement du 23 mars and its recent ground

offensive are extremely worrisome. Above all, we are deeply troubled by the debilitating effects of armed conflict on civilians who live in and around cities such as Goma, Beni and Uvira and in rural areas of the provinces, especially women, children and internally displaced persons.

Those concerns lead to my second subject, which is regional diplomacy. We reckon that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi have common interests, face collective threats and will benefit from joint, concerted actions. Both the level of threat posed by armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and their cross-border hazards point us to solutions that should be regional, at least in part. We therefore commend the efforts combining leadership both from the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We acknowledge the important role played by President Macky Sall and support President João Lourenço's efforts. We also warmly welcome the East African Community's efforts to endorse the Nairobi process.

My third subject is institution-building. Hate speech, ethnic stereotyping and attacks on civilians, peacekeepers or humanitarian personnel are crimes that claim the lives of thousands of individuals and undermine durable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We therefore call on the Congolese authorities at the local and national levels to publicly condemn such transgressions, investigate every incident and hold the perpetrators accountable.

On a more positive note, we welcome the concerted action of stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pave the way for the 2023 elections, particularly the Independent National Electoral Commission, the National Assembly and the Government. We also commend the measures that will enable a greater share of women candidates to participate, in addition to requirements fostering transparent and predictable electoral processes.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Lusenge for their briefings today. I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the countries of the region at this meeting.

I will focus on three points — the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, regional efforts and the United

Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The current spike in violence is jeopardizing the recent efforts to pursue peace and prosperity and exacerbating the already severe humanitarian situation. The risk of a war in the region is the highest it has been in many years. An immediate de-escalation on all sides and mutual respect for sovereignty are urgently needed. The de-escalation efforts should include a total rejection of hate speech and any manipulation of regional public opinion by self-interested actors.

We welcome the ongoing diplomatic efforts in this area, including through the Nairobi process led by President Kenyatta and the African Union-endorsed engagement by President Lourenço. The United Kingdom offers its support to those efforts to pursue dialogue, de-escalate tensions and make use of regional mechanisms to resolve disputes. As those efforts continue, we stress the importance of prioritizing political and diplomatic efforts over military solutions in order to deliver long-term stability and prosperity for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. It is equally vital to ensure that the regional engagement works with existing political processes, especially the new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization programme developed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which should contribute to ending the state of siege and thereby enable the re-establishment of local civilian governance. We await with interest the plans for the proposed East African Community (EAC) regional force, and urge EAC partner States to engage closely and effectively with MONUSCO to manage the potential risks of parallel military deployments. As they design their intervention, we encourage EAC partner States to draw on lessons learned from MONUSCO's deployment.

Humanitarian considerations must also be given sufficient attention by all actors to ensure that the 5.9 million internally displaced civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo receive the assistance they need. The recent acts of violence by the Mouvement du 23 mars armed group have resulted in a large spike in humanitarian needs. Kidnappings and violence against humanitarian workers are increasing and severely impacting the ability of agencies to reach

the populations affected. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work more closely with humanitarian agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to find specific and practical solutions to the threats to humanitarian delivery, including by strengthening the coordination between civilians and the military.

I want to acknowledge the challenges facing MONUSCO in this complex context. As the loss of nine MONUSCO troops in recent months has shown, the Mission is operating in dangerous circumstances, and we pay tribute to its personnel and their work. We call on all actors to avoid any statements or actions that increase the risk to MONUSCO personnel and express our full support to the Mission in the implementation of its mandate. In conclusion, let me commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, and MONUSCO as a whole, for their continued efforts in increasingly challenging circumstances.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her briefing on the activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and related developments. I also thank Ms. Lusenge for sharing her insights on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and welcome the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi at today's meeting.

Since the Council last met on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/PV.9051), the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains grim. Hundreds of civilians and several members of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) have been killed or injured. That resurgence of armed-group activity has displaced thousands of families in the country's eastern regions. Tragically, MONUSCO has also lost nine peacekeepers. India strongly condemns those dastardly attacks. The violence must end.

The resurgence of armed groups is not a new development in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their operations have also spiked in the past, particularly when military options have been given precedence over political processes. We welcome the recent endeavours to advance the political dialogue with the involvement of all stakeholders, including

the third meeting under the Nairobi process, held on 20 June. We also welcome the commitment expressed by the leaders of the region to the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to finding a swift and lasting solution to the conflict in the eastern provinces.

We reiterate the call of the Heads of State of the region for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, as well as for the intensification of the political process. Those efforts can lead to positive outcomes only if all stakeholders work together purposefully. Those with influence over the armed groups need to persuade them to lay down their arms and engage in the political process in good faith. In that regard, we welcome the Democratic Republic of the Congo's validation of the national strategy for the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization programme. That community-centred strategy is a step in the right direction. It gives provincial and local Congolese the flexibility to adapt the programme to the community's needs. We welcome the appointment of the provincial coordinators and hope that the provincial plans will be operational soon. The success of the programme will be crucial to the broader political process under way, and we urge MONUSCO to continue supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo in those efforts.

In tackling the persistent insecurity in the country, ensuring a swift conclusion to a fair and inclusive electoral process is equally important. We welcome the progress made by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards the holding of elections in 2023. We are hopeful that the differences that certain stakeholders have expressed will be resolved peacefully and through dialogue. The holding of the gubernatorial elections in May and the election of three women as governors and one as vice-governor are encouraging.

The inextricable link between instability and the illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be overemphasized. The country and the region will need to show a greater commitment to ensuring that mines are protected, regulations strengthened and regional partnerships bolstered. The Khartoum conference held in April this year provided a useful framework and direction in that regard. We welcome the recent efforts to demilitarize mining zones and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's planned deployment of mining police. In addition, the country has continued to endure multiple

endemic diseases, including a recent outbreak of the Ebola virus. The humanitarian response plan aimed at providing assistance for 8.8 million people has received only 15 per cent of the \$1.88 billion required. That issue needs the constant attention and support of the international community.

We have noted the progress made towards realizing the 18 benchmarks and indicators of the joint transition plan, and we are seeing positive momentum in that regard since the last briefing on the subject. We emphasize that the situation on the ground should guide MONUSCO's eventual drawdown to ensure that the gains made in violence-prone provinces are firmly established so as to prevent any reversal of the security situation. Strengthening the State's authority, security organs and justice institutions remains paramount. The transition and MONUSCO's eventual exit must be gradual, responsible and orderly.

India would like to reiterate that MONUSCO's role is supportive and not aimed at replacing the FARDC in implementing the mandate to protect civilians. While there is an urgent need to enhance the FARDC's ability to take on armed groups, a sustained offensive posture by MONUSCO is untenable. MONUSCO's peacekeepers should be allowed to carry out their mandate within the framework of what has been agreed by the Council. Furthermore, it is imperative that each of MONUSCO's contingents be suitably equipped, as per the mandated role. In that regard, we would like to remind the Council of the provisions of paragraph 29 (i) (e) of resolution 2612 (2021). The interpretation of peacekeeping mandates must have a strong legal basis. We also reiterate that all the components of a peacekeeping mission must be equally and impartially assessed, given their interlinkages. We will continue to call for ensuring the implementation of resolution 2589 (2021), especially the reporting requirement stipulated in paragraphs 4 (a) and (b) concerning the prevention of and accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. We hope the next report will also cover that aspect.

India's long association with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people dates back to the 1960s. A peaceful and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo will contribute immensely to the peace and development of the region. The leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has shown resolve in addressing the existing challenges, and the international community should take cognizance of that and continue supporting the country's Government.

India remains committed to assisting the Democratic Republic of the Congo on its path to lasting peace, stability and development.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing to the Council this morning. I would also like to thank Ms. Lusenge for her pertinent and disturbing testimony. The information she shared with us was truly shocking. I will focus today on the rising regional tensions, the Nairobi process and the transition plan.

Ireland is extremely concerned about the deteriorating security situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the rising regional tensions, particularly between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The increase in levels of hate speech, as well as attacks by armed groups targeting civilians, internally displaced persons, health and humanitarian personnel, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) are alarming. We are very worried by the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars group and the continued activities of the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, including attacks on civilians that have led to mass displacement and ongoing violence and insecurity. That is taking place in the context of the prolonged state of siege, as well as increased military cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. It is now clearer than ever that peace cannot be secured by military means alone.

Regional cooperation is essential to reconciliation and lasting peace. We continue to stress the importance of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. We commend the countries of the region, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union and the East African Community for their efforts to ease tensions, support dialogue and build confidence. We also welcome MONUSCO's role in combating hate speech. The meetings and the most recent communiqué of the regional Heads of State Conclave on the Democratic Republic of the Congo have demonstrated the concerted commitment of the countries of the region to promoting peace, stability and development. We encourage all parties to cease hostilities, engage constructively

in the Nairobi process and begin a dialogue with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The proposed operationalization of a regional force must be advanced carefully. It also requires clear objectives and close cooperation with MONUSCO. We reiterate that a solution to the problem does not lie in military action alone. We also welcome the intensified efforts of regional organizations in recent months.

(spoke in English)

We welcome the validation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization programme as a national strategy and the appointment of its provincial coordinators. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is fundamental to lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and requires the adequate and timely support of partners. We stress the importance of reinforcing and reforming the security and justice sectors as well as ensuring the protection of civilians, and we recognize the work of the Government and MONUSCO in that regard.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face multiple overlapping complex crises that are affecting the wider Great Lakes region. The conflict is resulting in forced migration and displacement and alarming levels of hunger and malnutrition. Food insecurity is increasing, exacerbated by Russia's war in Ukraine and the consequent global rise in food prices. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has one of the most protracted and complex humanitarian crises in the world, with more than 27 million people in dire need of assistance. Worryingly, humanitarian organizations and actors are now operating in an increasingly dangerous environment, while the humanitarian response plan remains vastly underfunded.

Insecurity breeds impunity, and we are appalled by the persistent human rights violations and sexual and gender-based violence, including by State actors. Ms. Lusenge's remarks this morning were eye-opening and distressing in that regard. We condemn such acts and call on all actors to end all violence, violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law.

Ireland commends the coordination between the Government and the United Nations system to ensure MONUSCO's responsible drawdown from Tanganyika province. We welcome the development

of a joint programmatic transition plan in line with the triple-nexus approach, and note the importance of mobilizing and allocating resources to help preserve stabilization gains. The continued engagement between MONUSCO, the United Nations country team, the Government and civil-society organizations to assess the progress in implementing the transition plan remains vital. We welcome the updated benchmark reporting, with the inclusion of more robust analysis of progress against many of the indicators.

Finally, as preparations for the 2023 general elections continue, we look forward to the recommendations of the United Nations needs-assessment mission on possible electoral assistance and stress the importance of protecting the democratic space. We recognize that this will be a challenging period for Ms. Keita and her team, who are all making sincere and dedicated efforts on the ground. We want to assure them of Ireland's full support. We continue to urge for greater transparency and guarantees, including safety, for the full participation of women and the inclusion of young people in electoral processes. We also commend the efforts of MONUSCO and Special Representative Keita to engage them through radio broadcasts, workshops and other innovative forms of support.

Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) *(spoke in Spanish)*: We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Lusenge for their briefings. We also welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda to the Council.

My country is very concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars is certainly one of the main reasons for that, but so are the activities of other armed groups. We condemn their attacks, including on the positions of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which have led to deaths and the forced displacement of civilians.

In the face of those security challenges, we recognize the regional efforts undertaken within the framework of the Nairobi process in which the countries of the East African Community are participating, and we take note of the 20 June agreements to deploy a regional force under the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community. We are paying close attention to

the progress and developments at the political level, while reiterating that there can be no military solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is important to ensure that the armed groups participate in the dialogues if long-term agreements are to be reached. We call on those groups to lay down their arms and become more involved in the process, as well as to refrain from recruiting children.

On a different note, we express our concern about the tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Mexico believes that regional cooperation is essential to addressing these differences. We recognize the good offices of Angolan President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, in his capacity as President of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We note with concern that hate speech, whether among citizens the Democratic Republic or towards foreigners, has increased. The use of such speech can be a precursor to hate crimes, and, therefore, particular attention must be paid to it. Avoiding incitement and xenophobia is everyone's responsibility.

It is also necessary to redirect the dialogue between the main political actors following the controversy arising from the revision of the electoral legislation. We support the efforts of the United Nations to this effect, as national unity and reconciliation are paramount at a time when security issues are increasing in complexity. The achievements made in preparation for the elections in 2023 must be preserved.

With regard to the MONUSCO transition process, Mexico takes note of the withdrawal of the Mission from Tanganyika province. We emphasize that with this step, progress is being made in complying with the exit strategy outlined by the resolutions of the Security Council. In addition, we also appreciate the presentation of the progress report on the various benchmarks (S/2022/503).

In this context of transition, we underline the role played by the initiatives supported by the Peacebuilding Fund and the investment planned for Tanganyika province. We also stress the importance of the early implementation of the national peacebuilding strategy through the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization programme. It is critical to continue to combat illicit arms trafficking, which fuels the cycles of violence that have increased

in recent months, and which allow armed groups to challenge State authority and MONUSCO's efforts.

In closing, we welcome the progress towards the meaningful participation of women in political life in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the election of three women governors and one vice-governor in the last provincial elections is encouraging. We hope that this trend will continue in the run-up to the 2023 elections.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Lusenge for their briefings. I welcome the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi to today's meeting.

The recent resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) has escalated tensions and conflicts in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, leading to a dramatic increase in civilian casualties and displacement. This is worrisome. Countries in the region are part of the same community of shared security. The parties concerned shall bear in mind lessons from the past and work together to attain and maintain peace together, so as to turn the eastern part of the Democratic Republic into an engine for regional development cooperation, rather than a catalyst for conflicts and confrontation.

As a good friend to the countries in the region, China sincerely hopes that the parties concerned will respect each other's concerns and interests and properly settle their differences through dialogue and consultations to de-escalate tension. Last week, leaders of the members of the BRICS group — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — jointly issued the Beijing Declaration commending the efforts by the African countries, the African Union (AU) and subregional organizations in tackling the challenges in regional peace and security and calling for continued international support.

The AU, the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), *inter alia*, have taken actions to resolve the issue related to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, demonstrating the determination of countries in the region to jointly address their common security threats. China welcomes the efforts by President João Manuel Gonçalves of Angola, in his capacity as Chair of the ICGLR, to conduct good offices and mediation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

We commend President Kenyatta of Kenya in facilitating the EAC's third Heads of State Conclave where further progress was made in implementing the Nairobi process. We also welcome the tremendous work done by Special Envoy Huang Xia and Special Representative Keita to alleviate the situation. We encourage the United Nations to lend further support to good offices by countries of the region.

To eliminate the threat from armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, holistic measures must be taken on multiple fronts. The Nairobi process has offered a two-track solution — political and military — which we hope will effectively curb rampant armed groups and stabilize the security situation in the Democratic Republic and the region. China urges all armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to immediately heed the call of the Nairobi process, cease all violent activities and unconditionally participate in political dialogue and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes should, within their respective mandates, strengthen coordination and cooperation with countries in the region in military and non-military fields. The international community should form synergy in defusing tensions and bolstering security in the region and assist the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in improving its national governance capacity, advancing security sector reform and implementing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, with a view to genuinely safeguarding its territory and sovereignty.

China supports MONUSCO's work in fulfilling the Council's mandate and commends the Mission's police- and troop-contributing countries for their contribution to protecting civilians and stabilizing the situation. We pay tribute to the peacekeepers who have made the ultimate sacrifice in recent conflicts and call for thorough investigation to bring perpetrators to justice. MONUSCO should work with the Democratic Republic's Government to assess the current security context in a timely manner and make progress on its drawdown plan in an orderly and responsible way.

North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri are areas with the greatest number of conflicts. MONUSCO should

stabilize these areas as a priority and carry out its drawdown plan in a prudent manner.

The purpose of the Council's sanctions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to combat violence caused by armed groups, not to limit the security capacity of the Democratic Republic's Government. With MONUSCO entering its drawdown phase, it is becoming increasingly urgent for the Democratic Republic's Government to safeguard security on its own. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been calling for lifting the arms embargo in recent years. China believes that the Security Council should respond to the country's concerns by waiving the notification requirement in relation to the Government's import of weapons and ammunitions. We have noticed the improvement in this regard in the draft resolution proposed by the penholders and hope that the opinions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be fully heeded and that greater strides will be made in this context.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We were moved by the heart-rending statement of Ms. Julienne Lusenge.

We welcome the participation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi at this meeting.

We are greatly troubled by the ongoing hostilities in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We condemn attacks by illegal armed groups against civilians, units of the Democratic Republic's armed forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We emphatically condemn the actions of the fighters from the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23). We see that the M-23 has qualitatively stepped up its capacity, which now allows it to mount offensive operations and effectively seize territories, as was the case with Bunagana, on the border with Uganda.

Against the backdrop of the active hostilities and confrontation with the M-23, other illegal armed groups continue to terrorize local populations. There are internecine clashes for control over natural-resource deposits, the main victims of which are civilians. There have been hundreds of casualties. The humanitarian

situation is deteriorating, and the number of internally displaced persons and refugees is rising.

We hope that the Congolese armed forces, alongside United Nations peacekeepers and international partners, will manage to restore control over the security situation and prevent any further escalation of violence.

We thank MONUSCO peacekeepers, who have been valiantly discharging their duties, consistently risking their lives for the sake of peace in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

A key priority now is the cessation of hostilities and the beginning a full-fledged dialogue, as military measures alone will not result in any meaningful normalization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on illegal armed groups to cease their attacks, abandon violence and embrace negotiations with the Congolese Government. We note and welcome the increase in the number of those participating in consultations under the relevant track of the Nairobi process, including a growing number of armed-group representatives.

We welcome the proactive efforts of African States in facilitating the reaching of a settlement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our hope is that the negotiations in the Nairobi Conclave will yield in agreement on measures and steps that will ultimately result in meaningful and sustained improvements.

We believe that the key to progress towards a long-term resolution and reconciliation lies with transparent and constructive cooperation among regional stakeholders. There is an important need to refrain from hostile rhetoric and to overcome the persistent mistrust and conflict. We also welcome the mediation efforts of regional organizations and subregional mechanisms, specifically those of the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and we welcome and support the efforts made to resolve the situation by the leadership of MONUSCO, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Huang Xia, and the United Nations as a whole. We reiterate our principled support for the efforts of the United Nations.

We believe that we cannot allow any recurrence of the violence of recent years or any backsliding into large-scale armed hostilities, the consequences of which we and the citizens of that country will have to grapple with for decades. We call upon those members

of the international community that have influence to bear to spare no effort to stabilize the situation.

At the practical level, we deem it important to fully leverage the tools offered by the Regional Monitoring Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the implementation of the agreement. We also believe that there is an important need to focus efforts on the development and implementation of programmes for the disarmament, demobilization and social reintegration of former combatants. Such programmes would significantly increase the number of those willing to leave the ranks of armed groups forever.

Our hope is that Kinshasa, with support from the United Nations, the States of the region and the international community, will be able to stamp out those heightened threats and ultimately refocus on meeting State-building and socioeconomic development objectives. That is particularly important in the light of the presidential elections planned for late 2023, which will represent an important stage in the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We believe that the resilience and the strength of the country's central authorities are key to surmounting the consequences of the country's colonialist past, strengthening its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and ensuring its control over its wealth of resources and prosperity for the people.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her comprehensive briefing and for her efforts and leading role in fulfilling the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We listened carefully to Ms. Julienne Lusenge's briefing, and I welcome the participation of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the representatives of Burundi and Rwanda in this meeting.

I would like to focus in my statement on the security, political and humanitarian aspects in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to the current security situation, we stress the importance of de-escalation, especially in the light of the rising tensions in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, driven by the increasing number of violent attacks by armed groups. We

also stress the need to spare no effort to ensure that armed groups lay down their weapons so as to enable progress to be made in the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

We also express particular concern over the situation of women and girls in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as they continue to face risks as a result of the deteriorating security situation. In that context, the United Arab Emirates condemns all forms of sexual violence and stresses the need to hold perpetrators accountable, with the possibility of sanctioning them under paragraph 7(e) of resolution 2293 (2016).

Improving the security situation requires allowing time for the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as those of neighbouring countries, to exchange ideas and forge a common understanding on how to address the increasingly complex threats posed by armed groups. In that regard, the principles outlined in the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework remain essential to that end. In the context of the third Heads of State Conclave, convened on 20 June in Nairobi, we would affirm the need to continue efforts that strengthen regional cooperation and achieve peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Long-term stability also requires addressing the root causes of the conflict, particularly in the light of recent reports on the escalation of hate speech and incitement to discrimination across the country, which the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has condemned. We commend in this regard all efforts made to address those challenges and to establish a culture of tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including through initiatives led by MONUSCO.

Similarly, we stress the need for the international community to redouble its efforts to tackle the worsening humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Various United Nations reports indicate that almost one third of the population there is in need of humanitarian aid and that the number of forcibly displaced people is increasing owing to the continuing acts of violence. It is imperative to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers as well as the safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities.

Finally, I reiterate the continued support of the United Arab Emirates for MONUSCO. We stress the importance of its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deterring armed-group activities. MONUSCO's cooperation with all relevant political stakeholders remains essential to helping ensure an environment conducive to the upcoming elections.

In the context of the Mission's withdrawal from Tanganyika province pursuant to resolution 2612 (2021), we look forward to continuing to build on the gains achieved. The United Arab Emirates also supports all efforts that contribute to alleviating the suffering of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and help the country to achieve a sustainable peace.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Albania.

Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing and Ms. Lusenge for her presentation and recommendations to the Security Council. We also welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi. Today I will address two points regarding the regional and internal situations.

First, we took note of the outcomes of the third regional Heads of State Conclave, held in Nairobi on 20 June, including the constitution of the East African Community force. Any new actors deployed on the ground to fight armed militant groups should operate in close cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to achieve lasting results. A military solution alone would not be able to eliminate the root causes of conflict, while the dual-track approach set out in Nairobi provides a more comprehensive response. We urge all armed groups to lay down their weapons and take part in the ongoing negotiations to advance the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization programme. We also call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to redouble its efforts to ensure the inclusiveness of the process, to which we acknowledge MONUSCO's contribution.

We are concerned about the fact that relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda may affect the enhanced diplomatic outreach between the countries of the region. We encourage both countries to prevent any actions that could provoke further tensions. We echo the Secretary-General's

call to both countries to engage in a sincere dialogue to de-escalate tensions and resolve their differences peacefully and bilaterally through existing regional mechanisms. In that context, we commend the mediation efforts of President João Lourenço of Angola to resolve bilateral disputes.

Secondly, the positive election preparations for 2023 have been overshadowed by the deteriorating security situation. Albania would like to remind the Council of the importance of the meaningful participation of women and the inclusion of youth in the electoral process. It is discouraging to see the democratic space shrinking. We are deeply concerned about the numerous foreign groups operating in the country and the allegations that several States and actors are to some degree responsible for that. The efforts to achieve peace in the region and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are being threatened by armed groups, especially the Mouvement du 23 mars, which has been able to seize control of a vast area in a very short time. We are also witnessing a dangerous rise in hate speech, which we strongly condemn. That must stop.

Another cause for alarm is the devastating impact of the general instability on civilians, with an alarming growth in the number of internally displaced persons, all caused by armed groups. There can be no prospects for peace and reconciliation if those responsible for crimes and abuses on all sides are not brought to justice. Unfortunately, the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/503) once again highlights the high number of grave violations against children, their recruitment and cases of conflict-related sexual violence. That is unacceptable.

Albania reiterates its support for the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its support for MONUSCO, which must be fully equipped if it is to effectively deal with the multiple challenges on the ground. We call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours and partners to continue to engage with genuine political will and with a view to stabilizing the country and the rest of the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I would like to draw the attention of speakers to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to

deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Nzongola-Ntalaja (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Before delivering my statement, I would first of all like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing and Ms. Lusenge for her briefing on the situation concerning the women and children in the eastern part of our country. I have a number of comments to contribute.

I heard here a whole chorus on hate-related issues and that there are people who have entered my country to spread hatred. I have lived enough years in Africa to know that we have always faced problems of xenophobia here and there, but we have never before heard such a chorus about xenophobia-related incidents in a number of African countries in which people are killed simply because they are not from the region or because they are from elsewhere. I do not have any information concerning the numbers of people who have been killed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the last few years or months as a result of the conflict in the country's eastern regions. Undeniably, there are people who will shout, who will insult, who will do things, but that does not represent our Government's position. The Government has condemned every incident of xenophobia and threats against Rwandans in the Congo. Many churches, civil society and organizations have also risen to the occasion to condemn such behaviour among our people. I therefore do not think that it is truly one of the major issues. And I do not recall hearing anyone here condemn the many crimes committed in our country by Rwanda in the past 26 years.

The International Rescue Committee — an American organization — has estimated that more than 6 million Congolese have lost their lives since 1998 as a result of Rwanda's incursions into our country, not only in the east but also in Mbandaka, on the border with Congo-Brazzaville, when they were pursuing the Hutus. There were many deaths that have not been talked about. Dr. Mukwege, a Nobel laureate, is urging that we at least consult the 2010 mapping report. I do not know why the United Nations does not want us to analyse the report's findings and prosecute the crimes

against humanity that were committed. I believe that merits our attention.

I would first of all like to congratulate you on Albania's presidency of the Security Council for the month of June, Madam President, and to thank you for convening this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and inviting us to participate. I would also like to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment to my country's cause and his report (S/2022/503) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the subject of our discussion today. In addition, I want to thank all the members of the Security Council, with a special mention for Ghana, Kenya and Gabon, the three representatives whose presence within the Council is a source of pride for the African continent. And I want to acknowledge all the other members of the Council, friends and partners who have stood by my country's side, some of them since we achieved independence in 1960.

Earlier in today's meeting, someone mentioned that some long-time members address only the issue of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today the country is in mourning, as the remains of Patrice Lumumba were returned from Belgium and will be buried tomorrow. What caused his death and why were his remains not in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for more than 60 years? We know that he was the victim of a vile assassination. Why was he assassinated? It was because he was a patriot who wanted to ensure that the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo were used for the good of its people, not just pillaged. That is why, 62 years later, we are facing the same situation.

The resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are being pillaged by foreign multinationals and by neighbouring countries, without the component some members have underscored today. Members pointed out that Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo should join forces to develop their countries together. We were colonized by Belgium. Since 1925, Ruanda-Urundi was part of Belgium. When I was growing up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I did not believe we were in another country. Our two countries were known as the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi. Some Rwandans and Burundians worked in our country and some Congolese worked in Bujumbura or Kigali. That is why I do not understand why we should be at war today.

Furthermore, it was the Democratic Republic of the Congo that took the initiative to establish the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries, which is headquartered in Rwanda. That means that we intend and are willing to cooperate with our neighbours. Since President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo came to power, he has attempted to foster good neighbourliness and dialogue with our neighbours. He has done his utmost to enable Rwanda to trade with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda has resumed trade with us. Rwanda was authorized to participate in the sale of gold and other items. We have done nothing but promote cooperation with our neighbours.

My delegation has taken note of the Secretary General's report on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which is headed by Ms. Bintou Keita. I had the pleasure of discussing the report and the security situation in my country with Ms. Keita last Monday. I learned a great deal from her. I would like to congratulate her for her commitment and would like to express my Government's deep appreciation for her excellent work in my country at this sensitive time. She can rest assured of our full cooperation to ensure success in her role.

We also thank MONUSCO troops and the Mission's leadership, in general, and all Quick Reaction Forces of the Force Intervention Brigade. We thank them in particular for the sacrifices they continue to make to restore peace to the east of my country.

Allow me to make a few remarks on issues mentioned in the report and the various concerns raised by members of the Council.

To date, MONUSCO remains an important partner — even a crucial one — for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its quest for peace and stability in the east of the country. In reading the report, we were pleased to note that efforts are being made within the Mission to improve its efficiency and effectiveness.

With regard to its mandates, the most important element in a situation of war, under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, is civilian protection. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, citizens are not convinced that MONUSCO's highest priority is the protection of civilians. It is therefore crucial for MONUSCO to work on that area. A robust offensive position is also essential. If MONUSCO is unable make its presence felt and be a deterrent on the ground, it

will struggle to discharge its mission and its civilian protection mandate. To that end, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would like to request the Security Council to allocate sufficient resources to MONUSCO to update its weaponry and helicopters and improve the quality of its equipment, in general.

As underscored in the Secretary General's report, the political situation in my country is dominated by preparations for the 2023 elections and the security situation in the east of the country. Election preparations are under control, given the commitment of the authorities of my country to improving the electoral process and system. Thanks to useful pre-funding from the central Government and support promised by the United Nations, it appears that a well-organized election process is possible.

With regard to the security situation, there is the Nairobi process, under the leadership of Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, as well as the African Union's initiative to resolve the conflict between the two Presidents, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Paul Kagame of Rwanda, which is mediated by Angolan President João Lourenço. In that regard, I would like to underscore that any outcome depends upon the willingness of all sides, as well as pressure from the African Union and the international community, to advance the peace and security process.

Given the time constraints, we cannot go into detail on the next point. Allow me to summarize the situation by shedding light on one of the most important actors in the conflict — the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23).

It is clear that the resurgence of the M-23 looms large over the security situation. They were defeated by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Force Intervention Brigade in 2013. The M-23 resurfaced eight years later in November 2021. As Ms. Keita just told us, today the M-23 has a better arsenal of weapons than those of MONUSCO and the FARDC. It is able to shoot down military helicopters, terrorize North Kivu province and commit other crimes in the east of the country.

How do we explain the reappearance of the group after such a long absence? Who is behind the group, which had been disarmed, under the supervision of Rwanda and Uganda? I have another question. Why do the international community and the United Nations not want to associate the group with the State of Rwanda?

We talk about foreign groups here in the Council, but we make no mention of their origin. We know about the Allied Democratic Forces, but we fail to mention other groups.

Is the M-23 not a foreign group? Is it a group from the Democratic Republic of the Congo? The origins of the M-23 are well known. I have a note here that I can give to whomever wants to see it. It is entitled "Note to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Head of MONUSCO" and it was written by Mr. Kalev Mutond, who was the Administrator-General of the National Intelligence Agency. The note contains a list of commanders, their equivalents and troops of the M-23 who are not eligible to be included within the ranks of the FARDC.

The note states that our services have the essential duty of transmitting a list of the 78 commanders, their equivalents and soldiers, out of a total of 1,700 persons, who were ineligible for integration into the FARDC. The list was drawn up at the request of the former Minister for Defence of Uganda, Mr. Crispus Kiyongo, following a working meeting that he chaired with an M-23 delegation on 11 and 12 September 2013 in Mbarara, Uganda.

What does the report tell us? Of those 78 commanders, officers of the highest ranks — generals, colonels, lieutenant colonels and majors — only one of them is a captain, while all of the others are of a higher rank. None of them are Congolese. They are all Rwandan, and they were enrolled in Mr. Kagame's army, namely, the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

When the war began against the Habyarimana regime in 1990 and after Kigali, was taken, the Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie was formed in Goma. The Congolese people were well aware that, when Kagame took power, the Chief of Staff of the FARDC, Mr. James Kabarebe, was not Congolese, but Rwandan. His deputy, too, was Rwandan. Therefore, the fact is that Rwandans infiltrated our army.

I have heard it said here that it is the primary responsibility of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect its own borders and its own population. We agree wholeheartedly, but who decided to integrate Rwandans within our army? It was the international community.

Every time there is a small rebellion, we are told that we must negotiate. Then, when we negotiate, we

are encouraged to include certain people within our army. Those people come with a self-appointed rank; one says he is a general, another that he is a colonel or a major. They are not actually given military training that justifies the rank they are given. Therefore, we have an army that has been infiltrated. How is that army supposed to be capable of truly protecting the population when its loyalties do not lie solely with our country? There are elements within our army working for another side. That is a very significant issue that must be closely examined and addressed.

Returning to the note from Mr. Kalev Mutond of the National Intelligence Agency, I would be happy to make it available and share it with the Council. I will also mention a few of the names listed therein.

The Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie was formed in 1998. We then saw the formation of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple, led by Mr. Laurent Nkunda. That organization was also under Rwandan control. Mr. Bosco Ntangada, who was born and raised in Rwanda, came to the Democratic Republic of the Congo with Mr. Laurent Nkunda and entered into the system led by Mr. James Kabarebe. He also became a member of the Rassemblement Congolais pour la démocratie in Goma.

Shortly afterwards, he joined Mr. Laurent Nkunda in the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple and became the leader of the M-23. His right-hand man, Mr. Sultani Makenga, can be found on the list of people who were in Nairobi to negotiate and be integrated into the Congolese army. He was a general at the time but was promoted to the rank of colonel. Mr. Sultani Makenga began his training in Kagame's forces in Uganda before Rwanda was taken by Kagame's regime.

It is clear, therefore, that the group is essentially a Rwandan army militia. There may be some Congolese nationals, I have no doubt about that, in the M-23, but the group is controlled by Rwanda, and its leaders, including almost all of its commanders, are Rwandan.

I must recall, with great sorrow, that several million Congolese have died in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and that, for more than 26 years now, my people have been massacred and raped in the name of the illicit and mafia-like exploitation of the mineral wealth of their soil. The Congolese people have also been following with interest the recent mobilization of the United Nations, the Security Council and the international community. The Democratic Republic of

the Congo, a full State Member of the United Nations, must have its borders and its sovereignty respected and its stability restored.

Therefore, allow me, before I conclude my remarks, to make several requests to the Council on behalf of my delegation.

First, we call for respect of the integrity and inviolability of the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Second, we call for stronger condemnation of the criminal aggression of the M-23 and all its supporters, starting with the State of Rwanda and its President, against the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Third, we ask that the M-23 be called on to leave Congolese territory, immediately and unconditionally.

Fourth, we urge support for the Nairobi process.

Fifth, we call for all armed groups, without exception, to be required lay down their arms and join the disarmament, demobilization, community recovery and stabilization programme and for greater support to the programme.

Sixth, we call for more sanctions against the various internal and external mafia networks operating on our territory and their entire supply chains, from production to transit to destination.

Seventh, the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls on the Security Council to totally, not partially, lift the prior notification clause required by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) contained in paragraph 5 of resolution 1807 (2008), as called for by President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo from the rostrum of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2021 (see A/76/PV.3). That provision, now over 14 years old, has become completely obsolete. The armed groups that massacre the Congolese population every day are not even affected by that measure.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Gatete (Rwanda): I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and Ms. Julienne Lusenge for their briefings, and the members of the Security Council for their remarks.

We take note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/503) and appreciate that it identified all the main armed groups operating in the eastern part of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) has overshadowed the presence of more than 130 armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which was founded by Rwandan former government forces and militia that committed the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. In this regard, we welcome the outcome of the third Heads of State Conclave on the Democratic Republic of the Congo held in Nairobi on 20 June 2022, where East African Heads of State agreed to a joint regional force that will work in cooperation with the military and administrative forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to stabilize the region by neutralizing all the negative forces.

Rwanda's commitment to the protection of civilians is informed by the tragic history of the failure of the United Nations to prevent and stop the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. We call for a swift and lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that this tragic history never happens again in the Great Lakes region.

I would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the false allegations that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has lodged against Rwanda and the resulting consequences, including hate speech targeting a section of the population of the Democratic Republic. As Council members know, the political and military leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have falsely accused Rwanda of backing the M-23. We have also heard it just now. It is an unfounded accusation. The problem is that, notwithstanding such statements, the Council has mechanisms to verify any accusations made against any country. In this case, there is Joint Verification Mechanism, which is never used, and then we hear such statements. Any allegations in this regard should be reported to the Joint Verification Mechanism for an independent investigation, which the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not done up to now. The grievances and concerns of Democratic Republic's domestic armed groups must be resolved through the implementation of prior agreements and political negotiations, rather than accusing neighbouring countries.

Rwanda also rejects the ongoing propaganda narrative promoted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo that countries of the region want to balkanize the eastern part of the country. These are absurd statements without basis and intended to divert attention from

complex internal issues. It is yet another attempt by the Government of the Democratic Republic to externalize its internal weakness and problems onto its neighbours.

In the last few weeks, we have all observed hate speech in mainstream media and on social media and witnessed calls for killing and extermination, intimidation and stigmatization, xenophobic and inflammatory rhetoric, genocide ideology and political manipulation targeting Tutsi in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular, and Rwandans in general. Targeting and killing innocent civilians perceived to be Tutsi may have a negative effect, as the targeted civilians may seek protection by joining local armed groups, which will lead to further insecurity.

If the hate speech and calls for violence continue, it will exacerbate the problems in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and further divide the country by deepening hatred and mistrust among communities in the Democratic Republic. In turn, this will lead to deterioration of the security situation, which means that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) may not successfully fulfil its mandate anytime soon. In this regard, Rwanda once again welcomes the outcome of the third Heads of State Conclave on the Democratic Republic of the Congo during which the Heads of State of the East African Community emphasized that all offensive language, hate speech, threats of genocide and other inciting political language must cease and must be discouraged. The Heads of State also called for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work together towards a solution.

Rwanda is aware that the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) are fighting the M-23 alongside the FDLR, which was sanctioned by the Security Council in 2012, pursuant to resolution 2078 (2012). The FARDC should avoid the tendency of forging alliances with hostile and sanctioned armed groups to fight other armed groups. It is counterproductive and undermines the commitment of the region and the United Nations to stabilize the eastern part of the Democratic Republic. This alliance also puts MONUSCO in a very difficult position, because supporting the FARDC while it fights alongside the FDLR is tantamount to supporting a genocidal armed group. We call on the Security Council to condemn this alliance and urge MONUSCO through its due diligence

to avoid any military cooperation with the FARDC, as long as the latter are allied with negative forces.

Following the deployment of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade in 2013, the M-23 was the only armed group that happened to be defeated. Rwanda remains concerned about a selective and double-standard approach to fighting armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Rwanda believes that the regional approach recommended by the second Heads of State Conclave on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 21 April 2022, is essential and complements other regional and subregional agreements to deal in a sustainable manner with the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic. In this regard, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should acknowledge its obligation under regional agreements and fully incorporate all armed groups under agreed peace arrangements.

In conclusion, Rwanda remains committed to existing bilateral, regional and international efforts to stabilize the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. Rwanda also looks forward to the planned summit hosted by Angola with a view to de-escalation in our region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Burundi would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on the manner in which you and the Albanian delegation have conducted the presidency of the Security Council in this month of June. Since the beginning of the month, we have borne witness to the importance of the points that the presidency has addressed.

My delegation would like to thank Ms. Julienne Lusenge for her extremely heart-rending briefing and would particularly like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the excellent report under analysis today (S/2022/503) and salute the courage, commitment and all the efforts made by the MONUSCO offices in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a somewhat delicate context that requires greater attention from the international community and the Security Council in particular.

In view of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Burundi delegation attaches great importance to the principles of the peaceful resolution of disputes through such universally recognized mechanisms as cooperation, dialogue and good offices. To this end, Burundi will work harder to respect the sacrosanct principles of the United Nations Charter and regional peace and security instruments. Furthermore, it will spare no effort to promote good-neighbourly relations with all the countries in our subregion so that peace can reign, thereby enabling us to tackle the main challenges that arise at both regional and international levels, such as, *inter alia*, security, climate change, economic recovery and the fight against poverty.

In line with the essential principle of African solutions for African problems, which we would like to strengthen by formulating a regional approach that lays the foundation for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, my delegation commends the leadership of the Kenyan President. We fully align ourselves with the Nairobi process on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo within the framework of the East African Community (EAC) as well as with the conclusions of the EAC summit held in Nairobi on 20 May 2022, and we give priority to respecting the regional dimension in the management of disputes in Africa.

The fight against local and foreign armed groups and terrorists in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and against proxy wars must remain a priority for the States of the region in order to stabilize this subregion once and for all. Particular attention should also be paid to the legitimate claims of the Democratic Republic with regard to respect for and defence of its sovereignty.

In conclusion, Burundi calls for the respect of the provisions set forth in paragraph 5 of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region signed in Addis Ababa and welcomes all the efforts made by the United Nations, the African Union and the East African community for a lasting peace in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I will now adjourn the meeting so that the Council can continue its discussion on the subject in closed consultations.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.