



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

9142nd meeting

Friday, 30 September 2022, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière/Mrs. Jarraud-Darnault	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Gabon	Mr. Biang
	Ghana	Mr. Korbieh
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Mr. Mythen
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	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/2022/709)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org>).

2260732 (E)



Accessible document

Please recycle



The meeting was called to order at 10 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/2022/709)

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 Mr. Emery Mudinga, Director of the Angaza Institute.

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/2022/709, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Special Representative Keita; Ambassador Biang, Permanent Representative of Gabon, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Mr. Mudinga.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to take the floor today to present the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/709).

I welcome the presence of Mr. Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, and Mr. Emery Mudinga, a Congolese civil society representative who joins us from Bukavu.

Since the previous report (S/2022/503), significant progress has been made in the preparations for the general elections to be held by December 2023. The promulgation of the revised electoral law on 29 June and the development of its implementation measures by the Independent National Electoral Commission, the establishment of thematic consultation frameworks with women, young people, political parties and civil society, and the preparations for the launch of voter registration next December are all important steps. I welcome the efforts of the Government, the Parliament and the Independent National Electoral Commission to establish the legal framework and conditions for the proper conduct of the elections.

However, major challenges remain — notably in relation to reaching a broad consensus on the various aspects of the electoral process. In that regard, I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and its good offices to facilitate dialogue and ensure a transparent, inclusive and peaceful process held within the constitutional time frame, while supporting the active participation of women and young people at every stage.

The ordinary parliamentary session that opened on 15 September, dedicated to the 2023 budget, offers an opportunity to address the socioeconomic challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Prime Minister tabled the 2023 budget bill with the National Assembly. The draft budget of \$14.6 billion represents an increase of approximately 32 per cent over the 2022 budget. That is the result of good macroeconomic performance and record tax collections, marking significant progress in financial governance, which has been supported by efforts in the area of accountability, notably through the operationalization of the Court of Audit.

The adoption of the budget should make it possible to accelerate the implementation of the development programme for the 145 territories and to provide the Independent National Electoral Commission with the necessary means to conduct the electoral process. I would also like to emphasize the strategic nature of the 2022-2025 military programming law, estimated at \$1 billion per year, which Parliament must examine. That instrument is essential to allow the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) to grow in strength and to carry out security sector

reforms, both of which are fundamental to meeting the country's security challenges.

(spoke in English)

My call to empower the FARDC stems from the persistent security challenges in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Armed groups continue to pose a significant threat and commit violence against civilians. Most abuses are being perpetrated by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in Ituri and North Kivu, while Mayi-Mayi groups and other militias have intensified attacks on civilians in South Kivu.

That insecurity fuels human rights violations and has exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation. An estimated 27 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, with many having protection needs. A clear indicator of the deteriorating situation is the surge in internal displacement since January 2022, which has brought the total number of displaced people to 5.5 million — the largest caseload in Africa.

In that context, I strongly condemn attacks against humanitarian workers, which reached their highest level since the beginning of the year in the month of July, with 34 security incidents recorded. I call on the Congolese authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel and installations and to provide security for the delivery of life-saving assistance.

I applaud the commitment of the humanitarian community to stay and deliver and scale up its operations. Its ability to do so will require long-term engagement with communities and other key actors, as well as predictable funding. To date, the 2022 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo has received 37 per cent of the \$1.88 billion required. I therefore call on donors to continue their support, while thanking them for the life-saving contributions already provided.

MONUSCO remains fully mobilized to address the persistent insecurity created by the criminal activities of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The force has continued to engage with military governors and operational commanders and has maintained a robust posture, while providing operational, logistical and tactical support to both the FARDC and the Congolese National Police in

the fight against all armed groups. The Mission is working with the FARDC to conduct joint offensive operations in areas affected by the ADF and CODECO, in compliance with the United Nations Human Rights Due Diligence Policy. Those efforts are supported by information-sharing through the Centre de Coordination des Opérations, which was set up in Goma in November 2021. The Mission continues to prioritize the allocation of resources to support the implementation of its protection-of-civilians mandate and has adopted a new lay-down to compensate for the redeployment of units to contain the M-23 in the Rutshuru territory.

In addition to the efforts of MONUSCO and the national security forces, regional initiatives are also under way to support the stabilization of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the easing of regional tensions fuelled by the M-23's resurgence. Those regional initiatives require consistent international support. On 22 July, the Heads of State of the East African Community (EAC) appointed the then-President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, as Facilitator of the Nairobi process and directed that a special fund be established for military operations. On 8 September, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the East African Community secretariat signed a status of forces agreement for its regional force to be deployed in the eastern part of the country for an initial period of six months. As I speak, a contingent of the Burundian armed forces has already deployed in South Kivu, while Operation Shujaa, the joint operation against the ADF between the FARDC and the Uganda People's Defence Force, is continuing in North Kivu and Ituri. I want to stress the vital importance of effective coordination between MONUSCO and all the forces deployed on Congolese territory in order to enable the Mission to fully carry out its mandate for the protection of civilians.

I welcome the adoption on 6 July of the Luanda road map by President Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and President Kagame of Rwanda, through the mediation of President João Lourenço of Angola, current Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, who has been mandated by the African Union to de-escalate tensions between the two countries. I also welcome the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda's reactivation of their Joint Permanent Commission, which at its last meeting called for the rapid deployment of the East African regional force, a

cessation of hostilities by the M-23 and the disarmament of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and their splinter groups.

The Commission also urged Angola to fast-track the establishment of the proposed ad hoc verification mechanism to monitor incidents at the border between the two countries. I encourage them to pursue the implementation of the road map for the sake of their populations and the peace and stability of the region. The discussions in support of the Nairobi and Luanda processes between President Tshisekedi Tshilombo and President Kagame, facilitated by President Macron of France on the margins of the general debate of the General Assembly, constitute another positive step in the right direction.

Meanwhile, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community, both currently chaired by President Tshisekedi Tshilombo, have also expressed support for the ongoing regional initiatives. On 31 August, the African Union Peace and Security Council decided to establish a strategic support cell to support the EAC regional force, and to explore and mobilize funding to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the possible use of the African Union Peace Fund.

(spoke in French)

Those regional initiatives and the deployment of troops from EAC countries must go hand in hand with non-military measures, without which no lasting peace is possible. The Nairobi process, in particular, is inextricably linked to the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. The people enduring violence perpetrated by armed groups have enormous expectations for the Programme, and we must therefore mobilize the operational means and resources necessary to ensure that the provincial authorities have the capacities they need to implement it. I would like to point out here that the Mission has been providing ongoing support to the Programme since its establishment. In June \$14 million was disbursed from the Stabilization Coherence Fund to support its launch. In the coming months, I encourage financial partners to provide active support to the implementation of the provincial operational plans that are now being developed, so as to take swift advantage of the current disarmament opportunities in Ituri, North and South

Kivu and Tanganyika. I also want to underscore the importance of ensuring that the Programme contributes to reconciliation through close coordination with the transitional justice process. I applaud the progress made by the Government in that regard, including through the Ministry of Human Rights' launch of national public consultations in six provinces.

I would also like to welcome President Tshisekedi Tshilombo's denunciation of tribalism and hate speech in his address at the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.5), which bolsters the measures already taken by the Government to ease intercommunal tensions, particularly in the eastern areas of the country. I encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue those efforts and strengthen its legal arsenal to prevent a deterioration of the situation, including through the adoption of a draft law to combat tribalism, racism and xenophobia that has been submitted to Parliament.

As the Council is aware, in the wake of the M-23's resurgence in recent months, the crisis of confidence already plaguing the Mission and the Congolese people in the east of the country has worsened. That situation has provided fertile ground for disinformation about and stigmatization of MONUSCO, which has led to violent new protests and serious incidents that have claimed the lives of dozens of protesters and four Mission employees. I want to once again reiterate my deepest condolences to the families of the victims of that violence, which I deeply deplore. I condemn in the strongest terms any incitements to hatred, hostility and violence. Lastly, I welcome the efforts of the Congolese authorities, members of civil society and those with influence in the communities to promote calm and restraint in an extremely challenging security environment, and I implore them to continue to focus on easing tensions in order to enable MONUSCO's full and unimpeded resumption of its operations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Following those incidents, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has instructed his Government to re-evaluate the transition plan in order to step up the pace of MONUSCO's withdrawal. We are ready and willing to work closely with the Government to that end.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all the troop- and police-contributing countries and their personnel for their tireless support to the Mission over the challenging weeks it has endured, as well as all national and international civilian personnel. All of us remain

committed to implementing the mandate conferred upon us by the Council, in close collaboration and partnership with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the relevant agencies, funds and programmes, and other regional and international partners of the country, so that the Mission's definitive withdrawal from the remaining three provinces in which it is deployed can be carried out in a peaceful, responsible and lasting manner.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Biang.

Mr. Biang (Gabon): I have the honour to deliver a statement in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I intend to provide an overview of the work of the Committee since my predecessor last briefed the Security Council on 5 October 2021 (see S/PV.8873).

Since my predecessor's briefing, the Committee held a total of five in-person meetings and met via video-teleconference (VTC) on four occasions, all in 2022. During the informal consultations held via VTC on 14 January, the Committee heard a presentation from the Coordinator of the Group of Experts outlining the Group's workplan for the mandate that ended on 1 August this year. Following a hold on all proposed expert candidates in the Committee on 12 July 2021, the members of the Group were appointed by the Secretary-General on 2 December 2021, with their contracts starting shortly thereafter. During the informal consultations held on 15 March, the Committee heard a briefing by Mrs. Antoinette N'Samba Kalambayi, Minister of Mines of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the illicit exploitation of mineral resources.

During the informal consultations held on 13 May, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Group of Experts on the Group's final report (see S/2022/479) and discussed the findings and recommendations contained therein. During the informal consultations held on 1 July, the Committee heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, on the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

During the informal consultations with regional and other interested States held on 15 July, the

Coordinator of the Group of Experts provided an overview of the main findings and recommendations contained in its final report, following which a number of Committee members and regional States shared their views on the report. During the informal consultations held on 15 September, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Group of Experts outlining the Group's workplan for its current mandate ending 1 August 2023, in line with resolution 2641 (2022), of 30 June 2022.

The Committee also held three informal informals via VTC with the former Senior Official of the follow-up mechanism for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Richard Roy, on 17 February, 11 April and 27 June. I would like to reiterate that the Committee continues to support the mechanism, which provides assistance to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its investigations into the March 2017 murders of two former members of the Group of Experts, Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp.

In accordance with paragraph 104 of the annex to presidential note S/2017/507, the Committee issued three press releases containing a brief summary of the informal consultations held, respectively, on 13 May, 15 July and 27 September.

Furthermore, I am pleased to inform the Council that I intend to lead a delegation of Committee members during a visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of Rwanda and the Republic of Uganda during the period from 7 to 18 November. The purpose of the visit is to gather first-hand accounts concerning the effective implementation of the sanctions measures imposed by resolution 2360 (2017), as reaffirmed by resolution 2641 (2022).

The visit will also provide an opportunity, pursuant to paragraph 30 of resolution 2360 (2017), to hold consultations with the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and representatives of civil society and the business community working on issues relevant to the Committee's mandate.

In conclusion, the notification requirements for the delivery to Congolese forces of all weapons and related materiel, except for five categories of weapons listed in annex A of resolution 2641 (2022), were abolished following the adoption of that resolution on 30 June 2022. During my upcoming visit to the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, I look forward to receiving the views of Government officials and other interlocutors on the possible sanctions designation by the Committee of additional individuals and entities whose acts may be subject to targeted sanctions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Ambassador Biang for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mudinga.

Mr. Mudinga (*spoke in French*): It is an honour to address the Security Council on the specific issue of forests and the protection of the forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My remarks will focus on three points: the state of the forests, the threats posed to them and recommendations for Member States.

First, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest share of the tropical rainforests in the Congo basin, and the country's open forests are also important. However, recent studies have established that the forest area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is contracting by 1 million hectares a year, threatening the destruction of almost all of its forest cover within a century if nothing is done. Such a development would have enormous consequences for rainfall patterns, agricultural production and food security. The disappearance of the Congolese forest would have a heavy impact on the global economy, climate change and especially on the lives of the Congolese people.

Secondly, concerning the main threats facing the Congolese forests that call for urgent international solidarity, the most important point is that the forests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been transformed into hiding places and bases for more than 120 armed groups; some 20 per cent of the armed groups operating in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are based in the Congolese forests, where they are involved in various activities related to the illegal exploitation of natural resources, poaching and the destruction of biodiversity. At the same time, the presence of armed groups, particularly in eastern areas of the country, is the main cause for the decline in tourism and is costing the Congolese economy millions of dollars.

Thirdly, the transformation of several forests, including protected areas, into illicit mineral extraction sites and the transformation of the vast expanses of the forests into economic opportunities are the root cause of the progressive deforestation.

Fourthly, the land-grabbing practices of multinational corporations and Congolese elites, which are sometimes State-sanctioned, drive rural populations to inflict more stress on the forests.

Fifthly, the irresponsibility of some Congolese authorities, who regularly break their own laws by issuing logging permits to companies that do not care about environmental protection, is a serious threat. In that regard, I would like to address my third point to the members of the Security Council.

First, I call on the Council to enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo to access weapons capable of neutralizing the armed groups, and to impose sanctions on Member States whose support for armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been documented. Secondly, we need funding for road infrastructure projects aimed at improving access to forest areas in order to ensure that illegal activities are monitored. Thirdly, I urge that sanctions be imposed with a view to preventing the sale of wood, protected animals and other natural resources by armed rebel groups and Governments. Fourthly, I call for financial and technical support to the Democratic Republic of Congo's forest policy and its development projects. I also call for the development of a specific policy on peacekeeping in forested areas.

Finally, if the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is renewed, I would like the Council to urge the Democratic Republic of Congo to include in its policy frameworks consideration of climate-related conflict.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Mudinga for his briefing.

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

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

We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita and Mr. Emery Mudinga for their briefings. We also welcome the participation of Ambassadors Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Claver Gatete of Rwanda and Zéphyrin Maniratanga of Burundi in today's meeting. We thank Ambassador Michel Biang, Chair

of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his briefing. Our statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situations.

On the political front, we welcome President Tshisekedi Tshilombo's commitment to enhancing trust between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries through continued consultation on issues of common interest, including by concluding security cooperation and economic partnership agreements for the development and prosperity for the region. We also welcome the Government's commitment to holding elections in 2023, in accordance with the Constitution. We are particularly encouraged by the comprehensive approach adopted by the Independent National Electoral Commission in planning and managing the electoral process. We welcome the revisions made to the electoral law to create spaces for dialogue and ensure the wider participation of all Congolese in the elections. We further recognize the progress made in promoting gender equality and opportunities for women in governance, judicial and administrative institutions, as well as political and peace processes.

Regarding the security situation, we are gravely concerned about the fact that armed and terrorist-affiliated groups continue to operate with impunity, especially in the eastern part of the country, disproportionately affecting civilians, especially women and children. The A3 strongly condemns those armed groups and their terror activities and reiterates the need for concerted efforts to bring an end to them. We demand that all armed groups surrender their weapons unconditionally, engage with the Government under the inter-Congolese peace dialogue process and embrace the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

Another issue of concern to the A3 is the strained relations between the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the local populations. It is unfortunate that MONUSCO forces have faced hostilities from the people who should be looking to them for protection. Every effort must be made to rebuild trust and confidence between MONUSCO and the host communities. A starting point would be for MONUSCO to focus on the many areas highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/709), including the need for the Mission to prioritize the protection of

civilians, improve troop preparedness through capacity-building and training and invest in base defences and other force multipliers.

The A3 welcomes the communiqué adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 31 August endorsing the Nairobi and Luanda processes for reconciliation, stabilization and securing lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. We urge the United Nations and the international community to enhance their support for those mechanisms and processes in order to sustain the peace and security efforts. To improve the effectiveness of all the forces deployed on Congolese territory, it will be essential to set up a joint coordination mechanism under the auspices of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Regarding the progress of priority benchmarks for the effective withdrawal and exit of MONUSCO, the A3 would like to remind the Council that an effective transition of the Mission should include benchmarks that ensure the successful transfer of key security-related tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo. We note with concern that some of the priority benchmarks outlined do not provide for the successful and sustainable drawdown and exit of the Mission. We support the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo's call to MONUSCO to review the joint transition plan and ensure that among other things the benchmarks encompass strengthening key defence and security institutions and early-warning initiatives, as well as preventive interventions that can mitigate any relapses into conflict.

Regarding the humanitarian situation, the A3 is deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where an estimated 27 million people are in need of assistance or protection. We commend the outstanding work of humanitarian organizations in providing continued support to the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo in difficult circumstances. Going forward, it will be important to systematically shift from short-term to long-term, resilience-based humanitarian assistance. That will entail rebuilding civilian infrastructure, restoring essential services and empowering the host communities through the provision of farm inputs for improved food security, as well as equipment and technology in support of local entrepreneurships that can sustain livelihoods.

The world is staring at a climate-change-induced energy crisis. But Africa remains rich in sustainable renewable energy sources and raw materials, and a substantial part of them are located in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In his statement to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session (see A/77/PV.5), President Tshisekedi Tshilombo expressed the Democratic Republic of Congo's commitment to managing its rich biodiversity in order to contribute to saving humankind from climate change. We encourage the countries of the region to cooperate and pursue a common approach to protecting and sustainably exploiting their biodiversity for their social and economic development. Strengthening regional economic integration is a critical component in mobilizing resources to promote peace, stability and economic development.

In conclusion, the A3 commends the efforts of MONUSCO in promoting peace and security in the Democratic Republic of Congo. We emphasize our solidarity with the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo and reaffirm our respect for its territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence.

Mr. Mythen (Ireland): I would like to thank Special Representative Keita, Mr. Mudinga and our colleague Ambassador Biang, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for their briefings today.

Ireland is deeply disturbed by the ongoing insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the recent demonstrations against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The activities of the Mouvement du 23 mars and their growing sophistication, as well as the increased attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and other armed groups, are alarming. That persistent armed group activity is contributing to the complex humanitarian crisis. It is undermining the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver assistance to 27 million people in dire need. The consequences of failing to resolve this conflict would be catastrophic.

There are also consistently high rates of human rights violations and abuses, conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence perpetrated by

armed groups and State actors. Ireland condemns those acts. We must end impunity and deliver accountability for all instances of violence, human rights violations and abuses. Accountability is necessary for all actors, and we await the outcome of the joint investigation into the Kasindi border incident.

Ireland continues to support MONUSCO's role in the protection of civilians, and we recognize the challenges that it faces. It is imperative that the Mission deliver on that role through increased communication with communities and partners.

We also remain concerned about the tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We welcome the recent meetings between President Tshisekedi Tshilombo and President Kagame, including those convened by President Macron, President Lourenço and former President Kenyatta. We hope that those discussions result in de-escalation and concerted action to address the activities of armed groups.

Ireland has consistently highlighted that regional cooperation is paramount for peace. We reiterate the importance of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and commend regional Member States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community for their efforts to ease tensions and build trust.

Ireland continues to advocate for dialogue and diplomatic solutions. We urge the full inclusion of civil society and the provision of space for women's full participation across those efforts towards peace. For any peace process to succeed and to be sustained, women must be at its centre.

We urge all parties to engage constructively with the ongoing Nairobi process. We reiterate that the deployment of the East African Community regional force should progress in tandem with the political track. The deployment must have clear objectives and must be delivered in close cooperation and coordination with MONUSCO and other actors. The regional force must comply with human rights standards and accountability, such as the commitments of the United Nations Due Diligence Policy on Human Rights.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are fundamental to a lasting peace in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo. We welcome the support of the multi-donor Stabilization Coherence Fund to the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. We also recognize the work of the Government and MONUSCO to strengthen the security and justice sectors.

Effective transitions are essential to sustaining peace. Ireland recently hosted a high-level event on “Ensuring the Success of Transitions in UN Peace Operations: implementing resolution 2594 (2021)”. The event marked one year since the unanimous adoption of resolution 2594 (2021), the first stand-alone resolution on United Nations transitions.

We reiterate the need for inclusive, integrated planning for transitions, and we urge that transition processes respond to the conditions on the ground, first and foremost. Any review of the joint transition plan must recognize that. Much remains to be done to advance towards the agreed benchmarks on the security, protection and stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ireland welcomes President Tshisekedi Tshilombo’s commitment to conducting elections in 2023, in line with the constitutional deadlines. Holding free, fair and inclusive elections is another vital benchmark towards a peaceful and prosperous future for all the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank the briefers for their relevant briefings.

Norway is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and its regional implications, particularly the recurrent and recently intensified attacks by armed groups, including the Mouvement du 23 mars and the Allied Democratic Forces.

We also note with concern the rising tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, and we call on both countries to exercise restraint and pursue a diplomatic solution.

We welcome the efforts of the region to address those security challenges, such as the initiative taken by Angola’s President Lourenço and former President Kenyatta’s leadership of the Nairobi process. We encourage the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society, women and young people, in those processes.

Close coordination between various actors, such as the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the East African regional force, once it deploys, is also essential.

We reiterate that all countries must respect the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For more than 20 years, United Nations personnel have contributed to protecting civilians and stabilizing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have done so under extremely challenging circumstances, sometimes paying the ultimate price. We are deeply troubled by the deaths of United Nations personnel during the recent violent protests against MONUSCO in North Kivu. We remain concerned that hostile and anti-MONUSCO rhetoric may incite more violence.

The joint transition plan and the timeline for the drawdown are increasingly being questioned throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As agreed with the Government in as late as November 2021, the plan lists priorities and benchmarks for MONUSCO’s withdrawal. It is important that the transition now take place based on the situation on the ground and in line with the plan for withdrawal.

Armed groups remain a real and constant threat, killing civilians, including children, and committing grave violations, such as conflict-related sexual violence. We reiterate that all civilians must be protected and that the primary responsibility for protecting the civilian population rests with the Government.

The dramatic decline of the humanitarian situation also raises the stakes of a well-planned MONUSCO exit, including the progressive transfer of its tasks to the United Nations country team and the implementation of the children and armed conflict agenda.

Strengthening the capacity of a representative, responsive, accountable security sector and rule-of-law institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are compliant with international law, is critical.

The upcoming December elections will be an important milestone. Through the United Nations Development Programme, Norway is providing financial support for the preparations carried out by the Independent National Electoral Commission. We urge the Government, as well as other stakeholders, to do their utmost to secure peaceful, inclusive and transparent elections.

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. Mills (United States of America): I want to begin by thanking our briefers today. I particularly want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. The United States appreciates her leadership, particularly at this challenging time for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

I also want to express in this forum my delegation's gratitude for the commitment and contributions of the Ukrainian aviation unit that recently departed MONUSCO after 10 years of service to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, we acknowledge that the departure of the aviation unit really limits MONUSCO's air capabilities at a time when the Mission needs all the resources that it can get. We urge the Secretariat to act quickly to fill that gap.

Without sufficient capabilities, MONUSCO will continue to struggle to protect civilians from armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including, but not limited to, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham-Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23).

As noted in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/709), attacks by those and other groups killed hundreds of civilians and perpetrated more than 500 human rights violations between June and August. That continued violence is unacceptable, and the United States calls on those groups to discontinue their assaults on the Democratic Republic of the Congo's most vulnerable populations.

The United States also remains deeply concerned by the ongoing M-23 campaign and by the assistance that the group receives from external actors, including the Rwanda Defence Force. We note that M-23 remains designated under the sanctions regime of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Member States are therefore required to freeze the assets of this armed group and ensure that no funds or economic resources are made available to it.

United States Secretary of State Blinken also made clear during his recent visits to the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and to Rwanda that State support for illicit armed groups and the disregard of territorial integrity are unacceptable and must end immediately. More specifically, in the case of the Democratic Republic, the United States reminds the Council that all countries must notify the Security Council in advance on matters involving defence cooperation, including the deployment of troops and the provision of arms. We encourage regional leaders to continue to bear this obligation in mind, as well the need to respect human rights, as the planning for the East African Community regional force moves ahead.

East African Community leaders and officials of the Democratic Republic of the Congo alike must also ensure the regional force does not disrupt the important and life-saving work of the country's armed forces, MONUSCO and United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations. Similarly, to further safeguard the Mission's personnel and operations, it is important for all relevant parties to work earnestly with the United Nations Mission to enable it to more fully fulfil its mandate.

Speaking out against anti-United Nations rhetoric, which has tragically led directly to the deaths of United Nations peacekeepers and civilians in recent months, is critical in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in all contexts where myths and disinformation are undermining the ability of peacekeepers to carry out the mandates the Security Council has given them. The United States is clear-eyed about the challenges MONUSCO is facing in executing its mandate. We share with our United Nations counterparts a desire for peacekeeper accountability, especially with regard to situations like the shooting in Kasindi in late July, and we urge the Government of the Democratic Republic and Tanzanian authorities, in coordination with the United Nations, to continue and complete a thorough investigation into this senseless act and to hold perpetrators fully accountable.

Finally, in conclusion, I would like to make a comment on Mission transition. No one would argue MONUSCO should remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo forever. The Mission has already jointly established with the Government of the Democratic Republic, as we have heard, a plan for its phased and benchmark-driven drawdown, and it is making progress on that, as demonstrated by the discontinuation of operations in Tanganyika province earlier this year and the Kasai last year.

But today, the work of the Mission remains critically important, and MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo need the Security Council's complete and unequivocal support. The United States stands with Ms. Keita and her team of dedicated peacekeepers. We thank her again for her commitment to supporting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Mr. Mudinga for their briefings.

We commend the Special Representative for her continued efforts in what are increasingly challenging and, in some cases, deadly circumstances. I also thank the representative of Gabon for the briefing on behalf of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), and I welcome the participation of representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi in this meeting.

I will focus on the security and humanitarian situation in eastern part of the 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 by the security situation in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The redeployment of resources to tackle the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) has undermined the protection of civilians and created a vacuum that armed groups like the Allied Democratic Forces have exploited. We again call for the withdrawal of M-23 from their current positions.

Since 2017, United Kingdom funding has provided over 2.5 million people with humanitarian assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge all actors to address the humanitarian impacts of the violence, ensuring that those affected, including the 1.29 million newly displaced this year, receive the assistance they need.

We condemn recent violent protests against MONUSCO, which undermine its ability to implement its mandate, including civilian protection. We call on MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic to engage in a structured dialogue that clarifies roles and responsibilities in a responsible, conditions-based drawdown of MONUSCO.

A military solution will not bring peace. A credible and legitimate political process needs to be the foundation of any lasting settlement. Diplomatic efforts and dialogue through existing regional processes should continue to help de-escalate tensions and end violence in the east.

While military pressure has a role, it is important that international and domestic efforts complement rather than contradict each other. The East African Community force and armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must substantively engage with MONUSCO on deconfliction of forces to ensure the protection of civilians, safety of peacekeepers and effectiveness of operations.

Implementation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Demobilization, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme (PDDRCS) should be accelerated to ensure willing armed groups are disarmed, protect civilians and bring stability to the east. We encourage MONUSCO to continue supporting PDDRCS to overcome internal coordination issues and agree appropriate fiduciary arrangements to facilitate their better funding.

Finally, as Mr. Mudinga has reminded us, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congo basin are central to tackling climate change. At the twenty-sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow, the United Kingdom committed \$200 million to the Congo Basin pledge and will become chair of the Central African Forest Initiative in June 2023.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation appreciates the very important report introduced by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (S/2022/709). I welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi in this meeting.

Mexico reiterates its concern over the continuing deterioration of the security situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As it has done for the past year, my country insists that it is necessary to effectively stem the illicit flows of weapons and trafficking of natural resources so as to deprive armed groups of their ability to continue to destabilize the country.

I will focus my remarks this morning on four issues.

First, we very strongly condemn the activity of armed groups such as the Mouvement du 23 mars, Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and Allied Democratic Forces. We particularly deplore the attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure, as well as the recruitment of children. The violence of these groups forces the civilian population to abandon their homes and livelihoods, thus increasing the number of internally displaced persons in a country that has already recorded more than 5.5 million internally displaced people.

At the same time, armed clashes limit the access of humanitarian personnel to the population in need of assistance to meet their basic needs. We therefore urge all actors in the conflict to ensure that humanitarian organizations operate unhindered and have access to the population. In that context, we pay tribute to the efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and of the Special Representative.

Secondly, Mexico believes that the successful holding of peaceful, fair, credible and inclusive elections is key to making progress towards better governance, which will then make it possible to address the structural causes of the conflict. With this conviction, we support the Secretary-General's call for the institutions in charge of the process to broaden consultations with all political groups to agree on an acceptable electoral calendar and procedures that guarantee the right to vote for all citizens, including women and youth, throughout the national territory. However, without a doubt, the advances made are extremely encouraging.

Thirdly, my country is concerned about the tensions that persist between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, in view of their potential effects on the region as a whole. We urge the parties to avoid escalation and use dialogue to resolve their differences. In that regard, we welcome the efforts undertaken in recent days, in particular those of the President of France.

We also welcome the efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to achieve the adoption of the Luanda road map, as well as the personal involvement of the President of Angola. We recognize the work of the East African Community, which through the Nairobi process has demonstrated the interest of the region as a whole in contributing to peace in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, it is clear that the African Union and its subregional processes have been very active and have driven those efforts.

We note the progress made towards the deployment of the regional force agreed in the framework of the Nairobi process, and we call for its deployment to be effectively coordinated with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

Finally, I would like to once again reiterate Mexico's support for MONUSCO. Mexico condemns the disinformation campaigns orchestrated against the Mission's work, which have led to violent demonstrations against it and have resulted in the regrettable deaths of peacekeepers and, of course, of civilians. We hope that the joint investigations into those regrettable events will make it possible to establish who was responsible and ensure justice for the victims' relatives.

We note the interest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities in reviewing the MONUSCO transition plan. We also ask that that exercise be carried out with prudence and caution, in the light of the limited progress on the benchmarks linked to that plan and recent events. Consequently, any potential changes or adjustments to MONUSCO's mandate should not be made in haste. Mexico believes that it is essential that any potential adjustments to the transition plan prioritize the protection of the civilian population and not exacerbate the worrisome trends in terms of security and regional dynamics that we are currently witnessing. In any scenario, it is essential that the national authorities fully cooperate with the Mission for the protection of its personnel and ensure compliance with the status-of-forces agreement.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her update on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the situation in the country. I also thank Mr. Emery Mudinga for sharing his insights with us, as well as the Permanent Representative of Gabon for his briefing on the activities of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi at today's briefing.

Over the past few months, the Council has met several times to discuss the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the relentless attacks against peacekeepers. As one of the largest troop-contributing Countries in MONUSCO, we are deeply concerned at the recent turn of events. The increasing activities of armed groups, particularly the Mouvement du 23 mars, among others such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, Mayi-Mayi and so forth, call into question the overall approach towards conflict resolution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The complex set of factors that contribute to the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo require a comprehensive political solution, not a military one. It is important to draw the right lessons from the recent history of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have consistently highlighted that position in our interventions in the Council and with the Secretariat as well.

The calls for a robust mandate for MONUSCO have fed into the ongoing disinformation campaign against United Nations peacekeepers. As a result, peacekeepers were attacked by the agitating population and armed elements, resulting in avoidable killing of peacekeepers and civilians. We reiterate our strong condemnation of attacks against peacekeepers and hope that the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government will bring the perpetrators to justice. We also hope the Mission leadership accords primacy to addressing the political challenges impeding MONUSCO's effective mandate fulfilment.

In that context, the deployment of the East African Community joint regional force is a positive development. We look forward to the complete details of the deployment, particularly concerning the timelines, the concept of operations and coordination with MONUSCO troops. We also underscore the importance of proactive and purposeful regional initiatives prioritizing the development and demobilization of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and mediation efforts for the cessation of hostilities. The success of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is crucial for the broader political process that is under way. That cannot be overemphasized. But getting armed groups to lay down their weapons and

commit to the peace process will require strengthening the community reintegration pillar.

We also welcome the progress made towards laying the ground for the upcoming elections to be held in 2023. We hope political actors will work towards building consensus on key aspects of the electoral process and towards increasing the meaningful participation of Congolese women in the country's political and peace processes.

While the closure of MONUSCO's field offices in Tanganyika in June went as planned, the situation on the ground should guide MONUSCO's eventual drawdown to ensure that gains made in violence-prone provinces are consolidated. The transition and eventual exit of MONUSCO must be gradual, responsible and orderly.

The shortcomings reflected in the update on transition benchmarks need to be addressed, in coordination with the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities. We also reiterate that all components of the peacekeeping mission must be equally and impartially assessed given their interlinkages. We also continue to call for the implementation of resolution 2589 (2021), on ensuring accountability for crimes against peacekeepers.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a crucial juncture. A peaceful and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo will contribute immensely to the peace and development of the region. The country's leadership must stay the course and continue providing impetus to the political peace process.

India's commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people dates back to 1961, when India sent its peacekeepers to protect the territorial integrity of the newly independent country. Our commitment since has only become stronger. Through development partnership, including in critical infrastructure projects and capacity-building programmes, India remains steadfast in assisting the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in their pursuit of lasting peace, stability and development.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank Ms. Keita and Ambassador Biang for their valuable briefings. We also listened carefully to the briefing by Mr. Mudinga. We welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda in today's meeting.

The difficult security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires the urgent attention of the international community. We must not deviate from our shared goal to work with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help address the root causes of the violence and put the country on the path to peace and sustainable development.

In order for that to be achieved, it is essential to put an end to the violence afflicting the eastern part of the country through de-escalation and a cessation of hostilities. That call has been made repeatedly by regional actors, including the East African Community and the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States. There is also a need to address the challenges undermining security and preventing the achievement of sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the forefront of those challenges is addressing the activities of armed groups and their illegal exploitation of natural resources, as well as intercommunal violence. All those challenges undermine the capabilities of the national forces and of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to provide adequate protection to civilians. It is regrettable that, in every meeting we hold on this dossier, we express our condolences to the families of victims of new attacks in the eastern part of the country.

The situation of women and girls in areas of increased violence also requires special attention, particularly considering the concerning escalation of sexual violence against them. We hear the tragic stories and psychological trauma of women and girls who continue to suffer because of those heinous acts. We therefore reiterate our firm position to address those situations by ensuring that such crimes continue to be reported, that perpetrators are held accountable and that women and girls are provided with adequate protection and support.

Establishing security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be realized without political dialogue at both the national and regional levels. We believe that the continued and effective leadership at the regional level is pivotal and indispensable to sustainably address the political and security situation in the country. Initiatives such as the Luanda road map and the Nairobi process help regional leaders to coordinate efforts and strengthen cooperation to achieve those goals. In that context, the Security Council certainly

plays an important role by sustaining support for confidence-building measures among regional actors and for making efforts that promote overall cooperation.

We believe that multilateralism is important for the maintenance of international peace and security. In that context, the United Arab Emirates stresses its support for MONUSCO and its endeavours in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also believe that preserving the gains made by the United Nations after its decades-long presence in the country requires all stakeholders to remain constructively engaged in making the necessary arrangements for the next steps, in the context of the gradual drawdown of the Mission and its eventual withdrawal from the country.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/709) notes the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a result, millions of people are suffering, especially so in the context of the recurring Ebola and cholera outbreaks. The number of displaced people has sharply increased, reaching 5.5 million displaced people according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and, as Ms. Keita mentioned in her briefing, all of whom are in need of urgent relief assistance. In addition, that situation impacts the new academic year as many schools are now overcrowded with displaced people instead of students. There is a need to address this situation rapidly, both to alleviate the suffering of displaced people and to allow children to access education. The current circumstances require protection for the humanitarian workers and civilian infrastructure from attacks in order to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates reiterates its commitment to continue working with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with all Member States in support of efforts aimed at achieving peace and stability in the country.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I too would like to thank all of the briefers for their insights and would like now to stress a few points.

First, Albania welcomes the ongoing progress in preparing the groundwork for holding elections in 2023. We call on all parties to work together in good faith to create the conditions necessary to hold inclusive, free and transparent elections that are acceptable to all parties.

Secondly, Albania is encouraged by the public commitment expressed by national and regional actors to defuse tensions, but the security situation on the ground remains of great concern. We take note of the initiative to create a coordination mechanism between the Luanda road map and the Nairobi process.

Given the complexity of the situation, it is important for there to be effective implementation of those initiatives. The obligations and responsibilities of the East African Community regional force should be implemented in full coordination and cooperation with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in order to ensure the protection of civilians and maintain humanitarian access.

The seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly provided some additional impetus to that effort. We welcome the meeting between the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and their commitment to work together to achieve the withdrawal of the Movement du 23 mars from all occupied territories and the return of war-displaced persons, with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Thirdly, the suffering of civilians, particularly women, children and internally displaced persons, is deeply troubling. Adding to that suffering, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to rank as one of the most insecure places for humanitarian workers, affecting the ability of humanitarian partners to deliver assistance. We request that a secure environment for humanitarian partners be guaranteed. No military initiative can tackle the sources of conflict or provide a lasting solution. That is why we call on armed groups to unconditionally lay down their weapons and encourage national authorities to step up their efforts to promote national reconciliation. In that vein, the inclusive implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is a must, as is the demobilization of foreign armed groups, who must return to their country of origin.

Albania welcomes the measures taken by the Government against the recent unacceptable hate speech in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on it to further develop a wider legal framework in that regard.

Lastly, in the light of the Government's call to review MONUSCO's withdrawal plan, Albania calls for the plan to be conducted in a way that will guarantee minimum-security conditions for the Mission's staff, as well as a conditions-based exit from the provinces that constitute the focus of its operations. We further reiterate that it is the responsibility of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure the protection of United Nations assets and personnel and to hold accountable those involved in the latest violent anti-MONUSCO demonstrations.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing, as well as for her tireless work at the head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also thank Ambassador Biang for his detailed briefing on the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004). I listened with great attention to the civil society briefer. I welcome to this meeting the participation of the delegations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda.

During more than two decades of the presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of MONUSCO and its predecessor, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the dramatic security and humanitarian reality in parts of the country has become all too familiar to the members of the Council. There were some improvements. The Secretary-General's report (S/2022/709) points out, for example, to a significant decrease in human rights violations in June and July, as compared to both the previous months and to the same period in 2021. However, the overall security and humanitarian situation remains dire, with 1.3 million people newly displaced since January, bringing the total to 5.5 million internally displaced people. There are almost 25 million people in need of assistance and protection. Needless to say, the 2022 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo has received only a fraction of the required amount, as has been the pattern in several other countries.

In spite of the continuity of the humanitarian crises and of the activities of armed groups, I would like to highlight two important developments.

First, the new revised electoral law and the announcement of the period for voter registration

by the Independent National Electoral Commission represent important steps in the implementation of the electoral calendar. Brazil welcomes the commitment of the Government, the Parliament and the Electoral Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to holding elections in 2023. It is important that the elections be held in line with the constitutional deadlines. Also, the Congolese authorities should take account of the concerns of the opposition and of civil society about aspects of the new law and preparations for the elections.

Secondly, we have observed a renewed impetus for regional diplomacy and cooperation. Brazil welcomes the convening of the Nairobi process, facilitated by Kenya, which has already resulted in the accession of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the East African Community (EAC) and in the decision to deploy an EAC regional force in the east of the country. The adoption of a concept of operations for the new force in June and of its status of forces agreement earlier this month shows how determined the countries of the region are to contribute to addressing the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The arrival of Burundian troops in August and Kenyan troops last week marks the actual start of that new initiative.

Brazil looks forward to tangible progress on both the political and military tracks of the Nairobi process in the near future. The mediation of President João Lourenço of Angola, which brought about a meeting in Luanda between President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and President Paul Kagame of Rwanda that led to the adoption of the Luanda road map, is another laudable instance of regional diplomacy. We commend the consistent role played by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in the pursuit of regional peace and security and development.

Against that backdrop, we witnessed with consternation how protests against MONUSCO in late July deteriorated into riots, resulting in the deaths of three peacekeepers and dozens of Congolese nationals. While we reiterate our support for the right to peaceful protest, we firmly condemn acts of violence and intimidation against United Nations personnel. We expect the investigations into those attacks, and into the incident on 31 July at the Kasindi border post, to shed light on who is responsible for the violence. They must be held accountable for their actions. We also note with concern reports that some Congolese authorities

may have encouraged the protests against MONUSCO due to the Mission's perceived inaction in the face of threats to the civilian population.

Furthermore, the increasing number of disinformation campaigns directed at MONUSCO hinder the Mission's ability to implement its mandate and threaten the safety and security of peacekeepers. We therefore emphasize the need to continue enhancing MONUSCO's strategic communications capabilities and scaling up community engagement activities and quick-impact projects. We commend the efforts of the United Nations and MONUSCO leadership to address such issues, always in close coordination with the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, for instance, I would point to the visit by Under-Secretary-General Lacroix and Military Adviser Diop to the country immediately after the incidents. I also commend Special Representative Keita and Force Commander Lieutenant General Affonso da Costa for their skilful navigation in such difficult circumstances.

The current domestic political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, combined with renewed regional efforts to address the conflict, bodes well for the implementation of MONUSCO's transition plan. Transitions are a delicate moment in any peace operation, particularly in such a long and complex conflict as that in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The protests in July have highlighted the importance of taking the transition into account in all aspects of MONUSCO's planning.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative Keita for her briefing and listened carefully to Mr. Mudinga's remarks. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Gabon for presenting the report on the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda in this meeting.

Like all of our Security Council colleagues, we are following the situation in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with concern. We note with regret that despite the state of emergency that has been in force in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu since May 2021, as well as the military operation led by the Forces armées de la République

démocratique du Congo and Uganda and the efforts of the peacekeepers of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the situation in the eastern part of the country has not improved. While at the moment we are seeing a certain level of calm thanks to the absence of large-scale hostilities, particularly between the Mouvement du 23 mars and Government forces, the numerous illegal armed groups operating in the east continue to terrorize the local population and fight actively among themselves over natural resources, using the revenues from the illegal exploitation of those resources to finance their illicit activities and expand their armed capacity.

As a result of militants' attacks, dozens of Congolese civilians are dying every month while thousands of men, women, children and the elderly end up internally displaced or refugees. The humanitarian situation is also worsening. The recent spike in clashes between the local population and peacekeepers was an additional challenge. We strongly condemn the attacks on MONUSCO facilities in North Kivu in which Blue Helmets and Berets, as well as local residents, were killed and injured. We have no doubt that the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities will conduct a thorough investigation into the incidents and take all the necessary measures.

For our part, we consider it important to do everything in our power to resolve these issues without violence. We believe it is therefore vital to significantly increase the coordination and exchange of information between MONUSCO and the official structures of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With regard to the implementation of the joint transition plan for the phased downsizing and subsequent withdrawal of the Mission from the country, we believe that first and foremost it is essential to take the evolution of the situation on the ground into account and to act gradually and responsibly. We believe that the events that took place this summer have confirmed that our top priority should be to ensure peace and stability in the region through political means. It is therefore essential to achieve a comprehensive cessation of hostilities and create the conditions for constructive dialogue with a view to fostering a sustainable stabilization process. In our view, the key to resolving security issues lies in constructive cooperation between regional players.

In that regard, we welcome the resolute approach of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours

to overcoming the escalation in the east and launching new conflict resolution mechanisms in the Great Lakes region. We commend the peacekeeping efforts of President Lourenço of Angola. We are also closely monitoring the Nairobi process, launched in April, and we welcome the significant decisions taken by the States of the region during the consultations in the Kenyan capital, including the decision on the creation of a joint force. It is important to ensure that they are implemented with the support of the international community and in direct coordination with MONUSCO, with Kinshasa playing the leading role. At the same time, it will be vital to continue working for the full implementation of 2013's fundamental Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region.

We want to reaffirm our principled support for the efforts of MONUSCO, its leadership and its peacekeepers, as well as the activities of Xuang Shia. We hope that together with the peacekeeping Mission and its partners in the region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be able to regain control over the situation and begin to implement long-overdue measures to address the root causes of the crisis in the east of the country. Normalizing the security situation will be crucial to improving the humanitarian situation, achieving sustainable socioeconomic development and strengthening integration processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as with regard to the preparations for the presidential elections, scheduled for the end of 2023.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore that responsibility for the country's fate ultimately lies with the Congolese themselves. The future of their families and of their State is in their hands. We are convinced that, with the support and engagement of the international community, the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be able to overcome all its difficulties and return to peace and development.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ambassador Biang for their briefings. I also listened carefully to Mr. Mudinga's remarks.

I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi at today's meeting.

The recent reporting period was marked by ongoing turmoil and escalating violence in the eastern

Democratic Republic of the Congo, ensnaring innocent civilians and seriously undermining peace and stability in the country and the wider region. During the recently concluded general debate of the General Assembly, the situation drew heightened attention from the leaders of the region and the international community. In the light of the Secretary-General's report (S/2022/709), I would like to highlight the following points.

First, restoring stability is the top priority. The Mouvement du 23 mars and other armed groups continue to wreak havoc, resulting in heavy casualties and the displacement of millions of people. The Congolese Government, working alongside the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the countries of the region, has taken military action to combat the violence. China expresses its support. We urge all armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to provide an immediate response to the call of the Nairobi process, cease violence without delay, and participate unconditionally in political dialogue, reconciliation and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Political stability is the cornerstone of the peaceful development of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. China welcomes the efforts of the Congolese authorities to appoint the President of the Constitutional Court and amend the electoral law. We welcome the announcement of the Independent National Electoral Commission concerning the date for voter registration and call on all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to enhance consultations, bridge differences and create a favourable political atmosphere for the smooth and timely holding of general elections.

Secondly, we should support regional efforts as an effective way to address the situation. The Kenyan and Angolan leaders have been actively engaged in providing their good offices. The operationalization of the joint regional force of the East African Community continues to make progress. The Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met recently in Luanda and adopted a road map. Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Special Envoy Huang Xia visited several countries in the region. China applauds those developments.

The situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo affects the stability of the entire region. The international community should continue to support

efforts to resolve African issues with African solutions, support the synergy between the Nairobi process and the Luanda process and help the countries of the region to respect each other's interests and concerns and resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation, with a view to de-escalating the situation as soon as possible.

Thirdly, delivering on the MONUSCO mandate is key. MONUSCO peacekeepers have braved hardship and peril and made enormous sacrifices for the maintenance of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time, MONUSCO must keep abreast of the evolution of the situation and meet the expectations of the Congolese Government and people.

In accordance with presidential statement S/PRST/2022/6, on capacity-building for sustaining peace in Africa, which was adopted in August, the Security Council should streamline and optimize MONUSCO's tasks, roll back and curb mandates that are beyond the Mission's capabilities and devote resources to core tasks such as protecting civilians and maintaining security and stability. MONUSCO should continue to communicate with all sectors of the Congolese community, through various channels, in order to enhance mutual understanding and trust.

We express our condolences to the families of the peacekeepers and civilians who died in the recent clashes and hope that there will be a timely investigation and a proper handling of the incident.

China supports MONUSCO in strengthening its coordination with the Congolese authorities on the drawdown plan, while respecting the concerns of the host country and implementing the drawdown plan in a steady, orderly and responsible manner, in accordance with the situation on the ground and in keeping with exit benchmarks.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has repeatedly requested the Security Council to lift the arms embargo. President Tshisekedi Tshilombo again raised that issue during his statement at the general debate (see A/77/PV.5). The Security Council should respond positively to that request.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of France.

I thank Ms. Keita and the other briefers for their statements.

Security must be restored in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Civilians and security forces remain the targets of armed groups. A coordinated response from the States of the region is urgently needed. France welcomes the efforts of the East African Community and Angola. The Nairobi process and the Luanda process should help to demobilize armed groups and restore trust in the region. The support of the United Nations, the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region will be crucial.

At the initiative of President Macron, the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met last week in New York. They agreed to work together towards the withdrawal of the *Mouvement du 23 mars* from occupied areas as soon as possible. Commitments have been made to put an end to the activities of all armed groups in the region.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) must regain the freedom to take action to protect civilians. France deplores the death of Congolese citizens and Blue Helmets during the recent demonstrations against the Mission. It is primarily up to the Congolese authorities to ensure the safety of the United Nations and to combat disinformation.

The status-of-forces agreement must be respected, and the Mission's freedom of movement must be restored. A full investigation of the serious incident that occurred in Kasindi must be carried out. France notes the request from the Congolese authorities for a review of the MONUSCO transition plan. That transition is already under way.

The Mission left Tanganyika province in June, where the country team needs to be strengthened in order to preserve the gains achieved. Ultimately, the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO will depend on meeting the benchmarks set out in the transition plan. Until then, MONUSCO must continue to implement its robust mandate on the protection of civilians. The Mission can count on France's support in that regard. That same goal — the protection of civilians — should also guide the regional force announced in Nairobi, which should work in close coordination with MONUSCO.

Lastly, efforts to stabilize the country must not waver ahead of the 2023 elections. Measures have

already been taken by the Congolese authorities in the lead-up to the elections. The European Union has the means to assist the country in its preparations for elections, if requested by national authorities. Meanwhile, efforts must continue towards stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular through the emergency humanitarian response, the protection of human rights, the fight against hate speech, the sustainable exploitation of natural resources and the fight against illicit trafficking, which will all be additional determining factors for peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Nzongola-Ntalaja (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I thank the briefers — Ms. Bintou Keita, Mr. Emery Mudinga and the Ambassador of Gabon, in his capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo — as well as all members of the Security Council who made statements on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your country's presidency of the Security Council in September and to thank you for convening today's meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I also wish to thank the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his commitment to my country's cause.

I would like to commend all the members of the Security Council, friends and partners who stand with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to single out the three African countries that are members of this key organ for their commitment to and sacrifice for my country and for Africa as a whole. I would also like to welcome Mr. Emery Mudinga, Director of the Angaza Institute, based in Bukavu, for his very relevant briefing.

I will say it once again — the Congo, which has remained on the Security Council's agenda almost continuously for many years, is more than ever in need of peace in order to further its development. As we sit in this Chamber, the city of Bunagana, an integral part of my country's eastern territory, remains

under occupation by Rwanda through its control of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23). Families have been decimated. The Congolese women and children of Bunagana are suffering under the yoke of oppression. This continuing series of aggressions is unacceptable. The Council, which is very well informed by its own Group of Experts, must stop turning a blind eye. We earnestly ask the Security Council to join the Democratic Republic of the Congo and President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo in demanding loudly and clearly, in unambiguous terms, that the forces of aggression and occupation immediately leave that area of my country, Bunagana, and that they do so without preconditions or subterfuge.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/709) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the Mission, just presented to us. I commend her on her commitment and express my Government's deep gratitude for the work she is doing in our country. Our thanks also go to the MONUSCO troops in general, and the quick-reaction forces of the Mission's Force Intervention Brigade and the Southern African Development Community in particular, for the sacrifices that they continue to make to achieve peace. I would now like to make a few remarks on the issues discussed in the report and the various concerns raised by Council members. There is a lot to say, but, given the time constraints, I will focus on the most critical points.

The Nairobi process, which has had a technical delay, will be relaunched in the coming days. The political component of the process is still ongoing. The rebel groups that have adhered to it will be processed by the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. The President recently appointed the regional coordinators of the Programme, who will be deployed on the ground, and the full operationalization of that vital programme will require funding. With regard to the military component of the Nairobi process, we would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to a number of negative forces that have continued to be the most resistant to the process, as Ms. Keita mentioned earlier. They include the M-23 terrorist group supported by Rwanda; the Allied Democratic Forces terrorist group; the armed forces of the *Coopérative pour le développement du*

Congo and Zaire, in Ituri; and lastly, the Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba in South Kivu.

Where foreign armed groups are concerned, there can be no possibility of discussion. My Government demands that they lay down their weapons unconditionally and return home. While we do not intend to infringe on the sovereignty of the countries concerned, the Democratic Republic of the Congo will ask the countries of origin of those negative forces to show good faith by setting up the processes and conditions necessary to absorb the fighters. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is not a way station. The military component of the Nairobi process, which is also being fully implemented, will address both of those issues through a resumption of joint military operations by the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) and MONUSCO, as well as the regional force of the East African Community, which continues to be deployed.

Concerning the regional force, my Government would like to assure the Security Council that it will cooperate with MONUSCO. The MONUSCO force is there to support the FARDC, and the regional force will not operate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo without the FARDC. For that reason, the joint command of that force will also be provided by the FARDC under the leadership of General Kaputu, and the force's focal point is therefore the FARDC. Furthermore, to avoid friendly fire, my Government will encourage cooperation, information-sharing and so forth. In our humble opinion, cooperation is a self-evident necessity.

As the report before us indicates, the political situation in my country has been mainly dominated by preparations for the holding of the 2023 elections, mediation initiatives to de-escalate tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and anti-MONUSCO protests. Concerning the elections, the revised electoral law was adopted on 29 June. The electoral calendar will soon be published by the Independent National Electoral Commission. The Government is in the process of ensuring preliminary financing for the process. The Democratic Republic of the Congo welcomes the support from MONUSCO and the United Nations country team that it has requested for the electoral process.

As far as de-escalation efforts are concerned, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has shown good faith through the good offices of the President, who

has agreed to participate in the various mediation initiatives, including in Kenya, in Angola with President João Lourenço, and most recently under the auspices of President Emmanuel Macron of France. The only observation that we would make is that Bunagana remains under attack and occupation, despite President Kagame's statements during the meeting with President Macron.

Concerning anti-MONUSCO sentiment, the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have made efforts to calm the population. My Government hopes, however, that its efforts will not be undermined by the concurrent announcement of the withdrawal. MONUSCO is an important partner in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's quest for peace and stability in its eastern regions, as President Tshisekedi Tshilombo reminded us in his address to the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.5). The re-evaluation of the transition plan and the gradual withdrawal of the MONUSCO force are essential. A group of experts is already being set up at the Government level to work on the transition. They will examine progress on the 18 benchmarks one by one from our national perspective. The work will then be followed up jointly with MONUSCO.

With regard to the Mission's mandates, as I underscored to the Council in June (see S/PV.9081), under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the most important element in a situation of war 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 to make its presence felt and be a deterrent on the ground, it will struggle to discharge its mission and main mandate to protect civilians. To that end, the Democratic Republic of the Congo once again calls on the Council to allocate sufficient resources to MONUSCO to update its weaponry and improve the quality of its equipment.

With regard to the humanitarian situation, the greatest challenge remains raising the funds necessary to cover the immense needs. We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our appeal to donors and other funding agencies to fill the 67 per cent gap in overall funding. Before concluding my remarks, on behalf of my delegation, I would like to make the following requests to the Council:

First, I call on the Council to ensure respect for the integrity and inviolability of the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Second, I call on the Council to demand an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Rwandan and M-23 troops from the city of Bunagana in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Third, as our President stated at the general debate of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly (see A/77/PV.5), the Democratic Republic of the Congo reiterates its request for the Council to take up, without any complacency, the report (see S/2022/479) of the United Nations Group of Experts on the aggression on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to draw all the appropriate conclusions therefrom.

Fourth, I call on the Council to clearly and firmly condemn the criminal aggression of the M-23 — and its backers, starting with the State of Rwanda — against the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Fifth, I call on the Council to support the Nairobi process.

Sixth, I call on the Council to urge all armed groups, without exception, to lay down their weapons in order to join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. I also call on the Council to provide increased support to that programme.

Seventh, I call on the Council to strengthen sanctions against the mafia networks inside and outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo that illegally exploit its natural resources, including the entire supply chains from their points of transit to their destinations — namely, the multinational corporations that benefit from such illegal trafficking.

Eighth, the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls on the Security Council to fully — and not partially — lift the prior notification clause required by the 1533 Sanctions Committee on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I want to thank the delegation of China for raising the issue in today's meeting. The fact is that such a notification measure is not useful, is totally unfair and does not enable us to defend our country properly. Our President also requested that the clause be lifted during his address at the general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.3).

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Gatete (Rwanda): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing, as well as the members of the Security Council for their remarks. I also thank Mr. Emery Mudinga, Director of the Angaza Institute, for his briefing.

We take note of the Secretary General's report (S/2022/709), in particular its comprehensive coverage of the impact of domestic and foreign armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The report comes at a time when the East Africa Community's regional force is being deployed to implement the Nairobi process. Implementing the two tracks of the Nairobi process provides solid ground for ending the presence of foreign and domestic armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda is also committed to the Luanda road map and its implementation, as elaborated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda's Joint Permanent Commission for ensuring its implementation.

Those two processes complement each other, and we trust that a sustainable solution can be implemented through them. As Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, noted in his statement at the general debate of the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly,

“There is an urgent need to find the political will to finally address the root causes of instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The blame game does not solve the problems. Such challenges are not insurmountable, and solutions can be found.” (see A/77/PV.6)

The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and its splinter groups continue to pose a serious threat to Rwanda. Troubling concerns therefore arise when the FDLR and splinter groups receive support and operate comfortably alongside the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). Such treatment enables those destructive forces to reorganize, recruit and conduct cross-border incursions on Rwandan territory. The FARDC must stop forging alliances with hostile and sanctioned armed groups such as the FDLR.

The FDLR's presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should never be underestimated. We should not be evaluating a genocidal ideological group on the basis of its numbers. Whatever the size of the FDLR, if it can conduct cross-border attacks on

Rwandan territory, inflict damage, kill people and loot, that demonstrates that it is in a position to continually undermine Rwanda's security.

Rwanda has on several occasions suffered cross-border attacks from the FDLR that were entirely preventable. In November 2019, the group attacked Rwanda from its base in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, killing several of our people. The FDLR, with support from the FARDC, also fired multiple rockets into Rwandan territory three times in 2022 — in March, in May and again in June. In view of those attacks, the FDLR and splinter groups clearly represent a credible threat to Rwanda's security, and assertions to the contrary are disingenuous.

Rwanda wishes to reiterate that the tendency of some Congolese leaders to make Rwanda a scapegoat in order to gain political attention serves only to deepen anti-Rwanda sentiment and xenophobic behaviour that leads to the escalation of the conflict among communities in Democratic Republic of the Congo. If the hate speech continues, it will exacerbate the problems in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and further divide the country by deepening hatred and mistrust among Congolese communities.

Furthermore, the attitude of always externalizing the problem or blaming others for the internal failures of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is problematic. Rwanda believes that all the problems I have mentioned can be dealt with if there is political will. In that regard, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should accept its obligations under regional agreements and implement the existing signed and agreed peace arrangements.

Rwanda reaffirms its support for the Nairobi process and the Luanda initiative. As I said earlier, we believe that those processes are essential and complement existing regional and subregional arrangements for dealing with the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in a sustainable manner. The problem is not the mechanisms but rather the lack of implementation of existing agreements. Rwanda will always do its part, while also ensuring its constitutional obligation to protect its people and sovereignty.

In conclusion, Rwanda believes that the successful implementation of the Nairobi process and Luanda initiative requires the political and material support of various stakeholders and — most important — the

political will and ownership of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to commend France for organizing today's meeting. We welcome the very valuable contributions made today by the Permanent Representative of Gabon in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and by Mr. Emery Mudinga. My delegation would like to commend Ms. Bintou Keita for the work she and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) are doing in a somewhat difficult context.

My delegation is pleased with Burundi's excellent diplomatic, commercial and socioeconomic relations with all of its neighbours, especially the Democratic Republic of Congo, as reflected in several agreements related to trade and the free movement of people and goods, among many other areas. We would also like to remind the Security Council that Burundi has welcomed with dignity and warmth thousands of refugees from the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where several local and foreign armed groups are active.

Given the complex security environment in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi joined the efforts of the East African Community (EAC) to stabilize the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in the context of the Nairobi process. In that spirit, Burundi deployed a contingent of the Burundi National Defence Force to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assist in restoring peace and security in South Kivu province.

In view of the recurring security problems, my delegation strongly supports the regional approaches and, in particular, the Nairobi process, initiated by the East African Community, as reflected in the

communiqué of 21 April and in the outcome of the 20 June summit, in order to improve the security situation and try to address the building of a genuine peace process in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo between armed groups and Government forces, on the one hand, and among local communities, on the other, in response to the somewhat complex conflict situation.

My delegation is strongly encouraged by the determination of the region's leaders to strengthen political and military efforts to build lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we request the multifaceted and multidimensional support of the United Nations and the Security Council members for the Nairobi process.

My delegation wishes to reaffirm that Burundi, which holds the rotating chairpersonship of the EAC, will do its utmost, in its national capacity and in its capacity as Chairperson of the EAC, to actively participate in all United Nations and/or African initiatives to restore peace. The Government of Burundi will never abandon the urgent and noble task of assisting in restoring international peace and security wherever the need arises.

With regard to the situation in the South Kivu region, my delegation believes that it is essential not only to counter the destructive terrorist forces, which are sowing havoc in the subregion, but also to develop an approach aimed at reconciliation among the local communities in order to establish a culture of peace in the minds of the communities required to coexist peacefully.

Burundi is therefore ready to draw on its experience to provide the necessary means and tools for the peaceful coexistence of all communities living in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.