



Security Council

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Letter dated 1 April 2021 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representatives of the members of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy of the briefing provided by Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Ms. Sandrine Lusamba, Executive Coordinator of Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development, as well as the statements delivered by the representatives of China, Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Mexico, Niger (on behalf of the A3+1; Kenya, Niger, Tunisia as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines), Norway, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and Viet Nam in connection with the video teleconference on "The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo", convened on Tuesday, 30 March 2021. A statement was also delivered by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In accordance with the procedure set out in the letter by the President of the Security Council addressed to Permanent Representatives of Security Council members dated 7 May 2020 (S/2020/372), which was agreed in the light of the extraordinary circumstances caused by the coronavirus disease pandemic, these briefings and statements will be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mr. **Dang Dinh Quy**
President of the Security Council



Annex I**Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita**

[Original: English and French]

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you today to introduce the Secretary-General's report on the activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2021/274) and to provide an overview of the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Shortly after my arrival in Kinshasa as Special Representative of the Secretary-General, I initiated a series of consultations with the main political leaders and actors and Congolese civil society, and visited the provinces in the east and Kasai where MONUSCO is present, to meet with Mission teams and assess progress in the implementation of our mandate and the challenges to come.

The first conclusion I came to following these early consultations is that the country already had its eyes on the elections of 2023. The electoral process of 2023 represents a new, critical stage in the process of democratic transition, institutional consolidation and stabilization in the country. After the peaceful transfer of power between President Kabila and President Tshisekedi in 2019 and the reshuffle of the ruling coalition over the past three months, this deadline is already informing political positions, reform proposals on the agenda of the returning Parliament and public debate. In accordance with the wishes of President Tshisekedi, Prime Minister-designate Mr. Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyege has also indicated to me that the preparation for the 2023 elections is one of the priorities of the upcoming Government.

I therefore feel that the 33 months before these electoral deadlines are a road that we must take together with the Government and the Congolese people by redoubling our energy and efficiency in overcoming the obstacles and meeting the challenges that will arise in order to continue the democratic consolidation of the country and its institutions and to move forward towards the stabilization of the east and the reforms necessary to that end. It is in this context that I would like to discuss the opportunities that the current political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo offers, as well as the risks it entails.

Indeed, we cannot ignore the challenges, persistent weaknesses and remaining obstacles; overcoming them will require the international community and the Government to speak with one voice and act with common resolve. The full support of the entire Council will be essential in this regard.

The first opportunity I see concerns the formation of the new Government and our work in partnership with it to support the implementation of much-needed reforms. Through my exchanges with President Tshisekedi and the Prime Minister-designate, I can report that there is a momentum for change that can be built. There is an opening to push forward the necessary governance and institutional reforms, which will have a direct impact in supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflicts in the east. I have been encouraged by the President's determination and willingness to mobilize all necessary resources to address the security and stabilization needs of the Congolese people in the east, as well as by the pragmatic, constructive and open engagement I enjoyed with the Prime Minister-designate and all other senior Congolese officials.

I have therefore stressed to the Congolese leadership that the new Government must act promptly on a number of priority areas, which in turn correspond to the

priorities outlined in MONUSCO's mandate. These include the reform of the Congolese military and police forces; taking ownership for the effective protection of civilians at the national and provincial levels; ensuring effective and sustainable, community-based disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); strengthening the civilian and military justice systems and support to transitional justice; and beginning plans for the 2023 electoral cycle. I am underlining to all stakeholders the need to act within the constitutional framework and to organize the elections in a timely and inclusive manner, respecting the electoral calendar.

I am committed to working hand-in-hand with our partners to ensure the success of this new Government. At the same time, I have emphasized as well the need to overcome the deadlocks that have been holding back political progress and stabilization. In collaboration with partners, the Government must address the immense and pressing security, humanitarian and development needs facing the country. In this, it must ensure that the actions needed to respond to these needs are not further delayed.

The process of MONUSCO's transition has itself helped spur other opportunities to increase cooperation within the United Nations family and with other partners. As we prepare to close in June MONUSCO's field offices in the Kasai region — and I believe we will be able to do the same next year in Tanganyika — we are expanding cooperation with the United Nations country team in the rule of law domain and in the framework of the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus, approach. This is aimed at reducing the humanitarian needs and vulnerability of the people, contributing to stabilization and sustainable development.

We are foreseeing to use similar approaches in the Kivus and Ituri, while also using the full spectrum of peacekeeping tools in view of accelerating progress towards conflict resolution. Partners such as the World Bank and the European Union are stepping in as well with much-needed assistance for community-based DDR and resilience programming, as well as infrastructure that will enhance the Government's ability to extend State authority and provide protection in conflict zones. At the same time, the Peacebuilding Fund supports reconciliation and social cohesion, inclusive local governance, community reintegration of ex-combatants and durable solutions for displaced populations.

However, the deeply rooted and complex conflict dynamics in the Kivus and Ituri mean that we are not yet at the stage of contemplating MONUSCO's withdrawal from these provinces, given the extremely serious security, protection and humanitarian challenges that are still present there.

Indeed, in my first mission to these areas, through exchanges with provincial authorities, civil society and my United Nations colleagues, I saw first-hand the challenges that this part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face. I renewed the Mission's and country team's commitment to working, together with all partners and colleagues, to help alleviate the Congolese population's long-standing, unacceptable suffering.

To silence the guns, there is no military solution, but political strategies. These strategies must take into account and address the many social, economic and governance needs, including in relation to the management of the security apparatus and addressing the underlying challenges of land insecurity and improving transparency and accountability in the mining sector.

While this will require an important military and police security guarantee to hold the space for political resolutions, the main thrust of the effort should be political. The implementation of our provincial strategies is crucial in this respect, tied as they are to the Mission's transition planning and including the necessity to

counter spoilers — those networks at the national and local levels that support the activities of armed groups and profit from an economy of war.

In this sense, we are stressing the need to accelerate the security sector reform process and operationalize the disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programme. A break with untenable policies of the past and the implementation of sustainable processes are necessary to dismantle armed groups and to ensure the ability of the Congolese security forces to fully take over responsibility for the protection of civilians.

The regional dimension is also important in this respect. Without a new regional vision and common platform to find non-military solutions to cross-border conflict drivers — whether foreign armed groups or illicit trade in natural resources — the Mission's work with our Government partners will be limited in its sustainability. In this, I will redouble engagement with the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and also request the Council's support for our joint regional engagement.

This brings me to another opportunity — President Tshisekedi's recent assumption of the chairmanship of the African Union. This chairmanship not only symbolizes the return of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the concert of leading nations of the African continent; it must also make it possible to demonstrate the commitment of the country and the region to silencing the guns once and for all in that part of the continent. It is essential that we support the commitment of President Tshisekedi and his African Union chairmanship to firmly and definitively anchoring the Great Lakes region in a dynamic of peace, security and inclusive and sustainable regional economic development. I am pleased to note and report President Tshisekedi's continued commitment to improving relations with the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which remains of vital importance to the stabilization of the eastern provinces of the country and to ensuring peace and security throughout the subregion.

I pledge to actively support our regional Special Envoy, Huang Xia, so that we can seize the opportunity of the African Union chairmanship of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to advance an ambitious programme of international cooperation in various fields, including issues of peace and security, as well as those of humanitarian aid, development and the fight against impunity.

Under my leadership, MONUSCO will focus on three core tasks: first, the deployment of good offices and political strategies to support both the protection of civilians and stabilization efforts, notably through security governance reforms, and continuing the fight against impunity; secondly, supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its regional and continental leadership to enhance peace and stability in the Great Lakes region; and thirdly, the implementation of our transition strategy, with the United Nations country team and other partners and donors, seeking an improvement of the Government's ability to ensure the protection of civilians, especially in conflict-affected areas.

Annex II**Briefing by the Executive Coordinator of Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development, Sandrine Lusamba**

[Original: French]

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to deliver this briefing today. My name is Sandrine Lusamba and I am the National Coordinator of SOFEPADI, which stands for Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development, a Congolese organization that campaigns for the defence and promotion of specific women's rights.

Following the adoption of resolution 2502 (2019), a common strategy on the gradual and phased withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) was established in late October 2020. As a civil society organization working alongside local communities and populations suffering from endless wars, we thought it would be useful to examine the lessons to be learned from 20 years of MONUSCO presence in the field, as well as the prospects for a gradual and progressive withdrawal, as envisioned under the aforementioned resolution.

Indeed, after 20 years of MONUSCO's presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the expectations of the Congolese people remain high and their needs enormous, especially in terms of opening up the democratic space. Recent efforts in this direction deserve to be encouraged, especially with regard to the participation of an independent civil society, free media and constructive political opposition in the political life of the country.

The continued activity of armed groups in the east of the country, as well as the strong tensions and community conflicts throughout the country, pose an ongoing threat to the security of the civilian population permanently displaced within or outside the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The nature, scale and duration of conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo demand a local response that is comprehensive, rapid and coordinated among several actors, including regional, military and civilian actors.

The still high number of human rights violations, the nature of these violations and the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for these violations demonstrate that the Congolese justice system has long had significant flaws.

The political, security and human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has created significant needs in terms of the fight against impunity for the most serious crimes, community reconciliation and the establishment of the truth.

Given the security challenges facing the civilian populations, especially in North Kivu — where the presence and activities of armed groups continue to seriously threaten the inhabitants of that area — MONUSCO is regularly criticized, even violently, for its limited capacity to protect civilians.

The Mission's reputation among the civilian population has been tarnished by several cases of sexual abuse and exploitation committed by its civilian and military personnel. While the United Nations has taken preventive and disciplinary measures, in particular within the framework of its zero-tolerance policy in matters of sexual abuse and exploitation, criminal proceedings are rarely initiated by the contributing States, which remain the sole judges of the acts of their nationals.

The renewal of MONUSCO's mandate in December 2020 seemed, in the eyes of the affected populations, to be a harbinger of hope for a definitive return to peace, especially in the east of the country.

But since then, there has been no significant change and the situation seems to be going from bad to worse; the activism of armed groups is growing, insecurity persists and human rights violations continue. The recent assassination of the Italian Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo while he was on a mission to the province of North Kivu is an eloquent sign of the fragility of the security situation in that part of the country, despite the more than 20-year presence of MONUSCO.

By way of illustration, in the territory of Beni, on the night of Sunday to Monday, 15 March 2021, the commune of Bulongo was attacked by the Allied Democratic Forces, killing 14 people, including 4 women, who were massacred with knives. The pictures are atrocious. Several displacements of the population were observed as they abandoned their localities and headed towards the city of Beni.

In Ituri, armed and community conflicts continue to cause massive displacement of the population. In the locality of Lopa alone, located nearly 30 kilometres from the town of Bunia, there are 17 camps for displaced persons from Djugu. Their living conditions remain poor. The city of Bunia also has four camps for displaced people, and we are witnessing an unprecedented phenomenon — children aged 2 or 3 are wandering in the city to beg.

We recommend that the Security Council:

- prioritize efforts that address the drivers of multifaceted conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including by ensuring gender-sensitive approaches to promoting intercommunity reconciliation, the governance of natural resources and conflict prevention, and ensuring that all United Nations entities monitor all attacks and threats of violence against women peacebuilders, politicians, activists and human rights defenders as part of early warning processes;
- ensure that all transition processes are gender responsive, including through benchmarks, analyses, technical gender expertise and regular consultations with various women's civil society organizations across the country at all stages of planning and withdrawal from missions, ensuring that activities related to women, peace and security are transferred in a sustainable manner;
- prioritize gender-sensitive community engagement, which includes regular consultations with women's rights groups, women peace workers and human rights defenders, within the framework of regular mission activities, and publicly recognize the essential role of women;
- ensure that all relevant United Nations entities and experts, including senior officials, such as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Humanitarian Coordinator and the Resident Coordinator, issue statements of condemnation in response to violent rhetoric and measures of repression against civil society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including against human rights defenders and peacemakers;
- encourage, within the framework of transitional justice, in the case of the mapping report, the creation of mixed chambers specializing in the prosecution of international crimes within Congolese courts, in order to resolve the problem of costs and time;
- and provide Congolese justice with expert reports adapted to the context and to the crimes, including sexual violence and forensic medicine, as recommended by the Human Rights Council in its resolution 42/34, of September 2019.

I would like to end this briefing by repeating the words of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms. Bintou Keita:

“With the help of the Force, with the political will at the central, provincial and local governments’ levels on the one hand, and on the other hand, the determination shown by all the partners including the United Nations, MONUSCO as well as bilateral and multilateral partners, it would be possible to do things in a different way.”

Annex III**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, Dai Bing**

[Original: Chinese]

I welcome Ms. Keita's appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and her first briefing to the Council. I look forward to a greater role for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and Ms. Keita's leadership in maintaining peace and stability in the country. I listened to the briefing by Ms. Lusamba as well. I also welcome the Charge d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to this meeting.

At present, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains generally stable. Meanwhile, the country's political situation is undergoing changes. Violence in the east of the country has continued to escalate and the humanitarian situation is facing serious challenges. The international community should continue to support peace and stability in the country and provide practical assistance based on its needs. In light of the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/274), I would like to emphasize the following three points.

First, there is a need to maintain political stability and steadily advance national governance. The ruling coalition of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has just undergone a reshuffle. The most urgent task is to form a new Government that is inclusive and reflects the popular will so as to ensure the smooth advancement of the country's major agenda. This is the strong yearning of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the shared expectation of the international community. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a major African country with significant influence. China congratulates President Tshisekedi on his assumption of the African Union chairmanship and looks forward to a greater role being played by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in deepening regional and international cooperation.

Secondly, there is a need to address security challenges and focus efforts on eliminating the threat of violence. The conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has dragged on for decades. The international community has made immense investments. MONUSCO and the troop-contributing countries have made great sacrifices, yet violent incidents and communal clashes have occurred from time to time. Recently, an armed group blatantly attacked a United Nations convoy, resulting in the unfortunate death of the Italian Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and his entourage. China strongly condemns this attack and expresses its condolences to the victims. This incident shows once again that it is only by tackling the root causes of conflicts, using a combination of security and development tools and engaging in regional cooperation, that we can break the vicious cycle of violent conflicts.

The new strategy for the Great Lakes region and MONUSCO's drawdown strategy provide a line of thinking for addressing these problems. The Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and MONUSCO should enhance coordination and work together to properly implement the two strategies, help the Democratic Republic of the Congo turn its resource advantage into a development edge and promote effective cooperation among regional countries in stopping the cross-border movement of negative forces. In MONUSCO's drawdown and withdrawal, full account should be taken of the situation on the ground, with detailed planning and close coordination with the local authorities and other United

Nations agencies. The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme being developed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will help turn destabilizing factors into a human resource asset, and therefore deserves greater investment.

Thirdly, there is an imperative need to ease the humanitarian crisis and support socioeconomic recovery. Affected by the escalating violence, lack of public services and the impact of the coronavirus disease and Ebola, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is dire. The country is facing severe shocks to its economic and social development. The national budget cut for this year has been drastically. The international community must step up its assistance and provide sufficient resources for the humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to help combat the pandemics and alleviate the plight of the local people. MONUSCO has done an outstanding job in assisting the Democratic Republic of the Congo in fighting the Ebola epidemic. It should continue to work with other health-related and humanitarian agencies to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo meet its multiple health-related challenges. The international community should help the country, in the light of its actual needs, to strengthen its capacity for independent development.

China always stands firm with the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and will work with the international community to actively contribute to the peaceful development of the country.

Annex IV**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires of Estonia to the United Nations, Kristel Lõuk**

I thank the briefers of their comprehensive review. Let me also use this opportunity to congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, on her appointment.

At the outset, we welcome the developments in the political situation and the formation of a majority coalition. We believe that these developments bring positive prospects of stability to the Congolese people and international actors. We likewise praise commitments by President Tshisekedi to encouraging the greater representation of women in the national Parliament and their participation in public life.

At the same time, these positive developments are overshadowed by ongoing human rights violations and abuses by armed groups in eastern provinces, in particular by the Allied Democratic Forces, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity. It is critical that Congolese security and defence forces enhance the preparedness of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and its ability to conduct operations effectively, and ensure the timely and coordinated investigation and prosecution of perpetrators of the serious violations and international crimes. It is important to ensure Congolese ownership throughout the process. We note that in some provinces the attacks against civilians have slightly declined. However, intercommunal tensions and clashes between community-based armed groups, accompanied by incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, continue to escalate. We believe that raising confidence in the Congolese security and defence forces would serve as an additional tool to strengthen FARDC capabilities and reducing tensions.

In the context of human rights, it is a worrying trend that human rights violations and abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence, continue to be perpetrated by State agents and armed groups alike. We believe that further cooperation between MONUSCO and the Congolese authorities, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would help Congolese authorities in their efforts to combat impunity and bring justice to civilians who suffer atrocities.

We are still struck by the recent tragic incident and the loss of the Italian Ambassador and the World Food Programme convoy staff. The incident and complex humanitarian situation, however, underline the reality of the Congolese people. Moreover, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, the resurgence of Ebola, the migration of peoples, food insecurity and protection issues have aggravated the existing challenges, leaving 19.6 million Congolese in need of protection and humanitarian assistance and causing 5.2 million persons to be internally displaced. We appraise the commitment of the new political coalition to overcoming the humanitarian challenges, in cooperation with international partners.

The root causes of the conflict must be addressed and concrete steps taken. That includes combating hate speech and addressing the illegal exploitation of natural resources and the traffic in small arms. Alternative economic opportunities for ex-combatants and their communities should be provided through the swift implementation of decentralized programmes for disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization.

Lastly, I would like to commend MONUSCO for its effective performance in strengthening its response to threats against civilians, despite the impact of COVID-19. On MONUSCO transition, we believe that further consensus-building between

MONUSCO and local protection actors would contribute to the implementation of community-based security sector reform. We likewise see benefits in the Joint Justice Reform Support Programme addressing the strengthening of justice and prison sector reforms.

I agree with the Special Representative on the importance of introducing a joint working group to support the implementation of the joint strategy on the progressive transfer of tasks and sustainable drawdown of MONUSCO.

Annex V

Statement by the Permanent Representative of France to the United Nations, Nicolas de Rivière

[Original: French]

I would first like to thank Ms. Keita for her briefing and to assure her of France's full support for her mission. I also thank Ms. Lusamba for her intervention.

I would like to address three points.

First, with respect to the persistence of insecurity in the east of the country, France condemns the recurrent attacks on civilians and the armed forces in the Kivus and Ituri. The upsurge in attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces group and the continuation of intercommunal violence are worrying. The concentration of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the east must continue in order to protect civilians and to support the State's presence there.

Intercommunity dialogue should be promoted there, hate speech that has fuelled tensions between communities should be countered, and efforts should be pursued against the illegal exploitation of natural resources and to promote cooperation among the States of the Great Lakes region. Opportunities must also be afforded to those who have surrendered their weapons by implementing decentralized disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes.

I come to my second point — the deteriorating humanitarian situation.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo can count on the support of France in overcoming the health crisis via the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access mechanism, to which Team Europe is a major donor. As food insecurity grows and new cases of Ebola emerge, humanitarian access must be guaranteed and attacks on humanitarian workers must end. The Security Council has condemned the deadly attack on a World Food Programme convoy on 22 February. Those responsible must be brought to justice.

France welcomes the progress made in the fight against impunity, as evidenced by the conviction on 12 January of a militiaman for crimes against humanity. These efforts must continue. Human rights must also be respected, including by the Congolese security forces. I welcome the briefing by Sandrine Lusamba, who reminded us of the essential role of women in establishing lasting peace.

Finally, and this is my third point, preparing for MONUSCO's transition requires the commitment of us all.

The establishment of a joint working group of the Congolese authorities and the United Nations on this transition is essential. National capacities must at the same time be consolidated by a plan to reform the security sector and the strengthening of the Congolese National Police and the instruments of justice. On all these aspects, the commitment of the future Congolese Government will be essential. The Congolese chairmanship of the African Union must be an opportunity to accompany the Great Lakes region on the road to peace.

MONUSCO, for its part, must adapt its system to better protect civilians, in coordination with the Congolese armed forces. The implementation of the reconfiguration of the Force Intervention Brigade must also continue as soon as possible.

Annex VI

Statement by the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti

Let me begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing on the developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the progress made in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also welcome Ms. Sandrine Lusamba of Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development.

At the outset, we strongly condemn the killing of the Italian Ambassador and two other others, including from the World Food Programme, in an attack against a joint field mission of the World Food Programme near Goma last month. We convey our deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and to the Governments of Italy and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained tenuous, though efforts to end the prolonged stalemate has seen positive progress. The formation of a new coalition, the appointment of a Prime Minister and the election of the Presidents of the Senate and the Speaker of the National Assembly are welcome developments. However, the delay in the formation of the Cabinet reflects the challenges to the new coalition. We hope these challenges will be overcome with constructive engagement between all political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and thereby pave way for the much-needed reform initiatives of President Félix Tshisekedi. India also welcomes the election of President Tshisekedi as the Chairperson of the African Union for the year 2021 and looks forward to working closely with him to enhance India-Africa cooperation.

The overall security situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a matter for concern, although there has been improvement in South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika. Armed groups, however, continue to have a free run. We condemn the violence against civilians, particularly women and children, and the targeting of United Nations personnel and humanitarian aid workers. The reports of extrajudicial and summary killings are disturbing, and all such acts must be condemned and the perpetrators brought to justice.

India welcomes the encouraging initiatives towards active regional cooperation and dialogue on security issues. We believe that these initiatives are crucial to eliminating negative forces operating within the region, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. As Chair of the African Union, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is well positioned to bring the wider region together to find solutions for lasting peace in the country and the region.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities are facing multiple challenges on the humanitarian front, which has been aggravated further by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. The increase in the number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance is a result of the new surge in violence. The deteriorating situation in the Central African Republic is also affecting the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community must lend every support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in overcoming this challenge.

The illegal exploitation and extraction of natural resources are major drivers of conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Unless this challenge is dealt with, the violence will continue in one form or another. We must take measures to hold those who engage in such activities accountable, both in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and beyond. We believe that MONUSCO's transition strategy will also depend on this key factor.

On MONUSCO's mandate, tackling security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and supporting the efforts of the country's security forces remain top priorities for the Mission. In this regard, we have taken note of Mission's targeted and area-based strategies to enhance the core protection of civilians function. The steps taken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with MONUSCO's assistance, on security sector and justice sector reforms are encouraging. We hope that the new national structure — combining the mandates of all agencies responsible for demobilization, reinsertion, community reintegration and stabilization — will become a reality soon. That would allow the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and MONUSCO to narrow their focus areas in effectively dealing with armed groups. We encourage more participation of women's organizations and women leaders in all processes, as this will be critical to bring peace and reconciliation.

We appreciate the progress achieved in the first phase of the MONUSCO comprehensive performance assessment system. We look forward to the implementation of the integrated performance policy framework to systematically assess all Mission components equally, since the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/274) provides performance evaluation in percentage terms only for formed police units.

India has close and cordial relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indian peacekeepers played an important role in protecting the territorial integrity of the newly independent Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1961. Currently, Indian peacekeepers, including a female engagement team, are playing an important role in MONUSCO. During the peak of the COVID-19 outbreak, at the request of the Secretary-General, India upgraded its hospital at the MONUSCO Command and Control Centre in Goma — operational since January 2005 — from a level-3 facility to a level-3-plus facility. India has also handed over last week 200,000 made-in-India COVID-19 vaccines to the United Nations for all peacekeepers.

India has been supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government through a development partnership and capacity-building programmes as well, including in critical infrastructure projects. In the context of the pandemic, earlier this month India provided COVID-19 vaccines as grant assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have also facilitated the supply of more than 1.7 million doses of made-in-India COVID-19 vaccines to the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. India remains committed to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the path towards lasting peace, stability, and prosperity.

Annex VII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations, Geraldine Byrne Nason

[Original: English and French]

I too would like to congratulate and thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, on her appointment and her very important and relevant briefing this morning. I would also like to thank Ms. Sandrine Lusamba for her enlightening briefing and concrete recommendations.

For Ireland, the current political transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo constitutes a unique opportunity to seize in order to create momentum and chart a positive course.

The establishment of a new coalition within the Union sacrée de la nation coalition has created the possibility of change and reform. This could benefit the Congolese people in a significant way, including by strengthening the stability and systems of governance and the fight against impunity corruption.

We welcome the deepening of regional cooperation led by President Tshisekedi. This includes dialogue with neighbouring countries on common threats, including the continued activity of armed groups.

To repeat what Ms. Keita said this morning, the election of President Tshisekedi as Chairman of the African Union could deepen the engagement of the African Union in the region and facilitate cooperation with other regional organizations, such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

Ireland welcomes President Tshisekedi's prioritization of the participation of women in peace negotiations during his African Union term. We recognize the important steps that are being taken domestically. The President's commitment to ensuring that 30 per cent of the new Government will be women sends a strong signal. What matters, of course, and what makes the difference is that women be in the room and at the table when peace is made. Ireland knows well that the more inclusive the process, the more durable the result. The full, equal and meaningful participation of women is not just a mantra, it is critical. Women need to have a say in shaping peace in their own country. We call on the Government, with the active, focused support of the United Nations, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and all relevant actors to make this a reality.

Significant challenges, as we have heard this morning, remain to be overcome in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The deteriorating security situation, particularly in the eastern provinces, highlights how vital MONUSCO's engagement remains. Central to this is the prioritization of the protection of civilians.

We welcome the deployment of the Geolocation Threat Analysis Unit to MONUSCO. We see this as part of broader efforts to support the Intervention Brigade to intervene in a timely manner to protect civilians when and where required.

For Ireland, it is crucial that the withdrawal of MONUSCO be conditions-based and in step with the security situation on the ground. It is also important that the transition be coordinated with other agencies on the ground. How MONUSCO manages the Kasai withdrawal will be watched closely.

We believe that the implementation of the drawdown must also include reforms in the justice, disarmament and security sectors, drawing on tools and actors across the peace, humanitarian and development nexus.

Similarly, effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are essential for that durable and sustained peace.

The ambush of a World Food Programme convoy last month, resulting in three deaths, including that of the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy, was tragic. Sadly, this incident is not an exception, but is a stark reminder of the ongoing insecurity and danger faced by the Congolese people themselves on a daily basis.

Human rights violations and abuses are of deep concern. It is essential that there be accountability for such violations. Ireland therefore welcomes the news this morning that the International Criminal Court (ICC) Appeals Chamber has upheld Bosco Ntaganda's conviction and sentence for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Ireland is a strong supporter of the work of the ICC, which plays a key role in the fight against impunity not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also worldwide. Survivors must be provided access to the necessary care and services. Reports of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, as we have heard, remain in a matter of real concern.

The situation of children in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must also remain in focus in light of the ongoing and serious challenges.

The humanitarian situation is stark. Some 19.6 million people now in need of assistance. The current pandemic is, of course, contributing to this deterioration, though the health system and humanitarian aid workers have already had to contend with a further Ebola outbreak and with cholera, malaria and measles; these are also continuing to be ongoing challenges.

We condemn attacks against humanitarian workers in the strongest, most unequivocal, terms. With over the half of the population in need in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is absolutely vital that humanitarian workers be able to operate and that humanitarian space be respected.

In conclusion, it is obvious that we are at a critical moment in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Progress on the political front is encouraging, but it cannot be denied that several challenges remain in relation to the security and humanitarian situation. This requires the continued support of the international community and, no doubt, of the Council. I assure you of the deep support of my country, Ireland.

Annex VIII**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, Alicia Guadalupe Buenrostro Massieu**

[Original: Spanish]

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, and Ms. Sandrine Lusamba for their briefings. As this is the first meeting attended by Ms. Keita in her new capacity, I take this opportunity to wish her success and offer the support of Mexico in her new responsibilities.

Similarly, we acknowledge the work of the former Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui.

Mexico remains attentive to political changes in Kinshasa, particularly with a view to the formation of the new Government. We welcome the announcement by President Félix Tshisekedi that this Government will be made up of 30 per cent women. We also congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo on assuming the chairmanship of the African Union.

However, Mexico views with concern the increase in incidents of violence in the eastern provinces, particularly in North Kivu and Ituri, where the Allied Democratic Forces have increased their attacks. We condemn the attack on a World Food Programme convoy, in which the Italian Ambassador, the security officer and the driver of the vehicle were tragically killed. We reiterate our condolences to their families. The increase in violence has had regrettable humanitarian consequences. In recent months, 86 per cent of the new displacements have been caused by armed attacks.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the most critical. Almost 20 million people require humanitarian assistance. The pandemic and the resurgence of Ebola further exacerbate the fragile situation in which the Congolese population lives, particularly in the eastern provinces. As the violence continues, the food insecurity situation will deteriorate. As the Secretary-General recently said, “if you do not feed people, you feed conflict”.

The protection of civilians mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is critical, not only because of its direct work in providing protection to communities, but also because of its stabilization efforts and work in building the peace that the Congolese people so yearns for.

With a view to reducing the Mission’s presence and transferring MONUSCO’s functions to national authorities, institution-strengthening work has a particularly important role to play. We take note of the visit of the Special Representative to Kasai Central and of her joint work with the United Nations country team, as well as with the national and provincial Governments, to achieve the transition objective. Mexico believes that the drawdown of MONUSCO’s presence should be gradual and based on actual security conditions on the ground and on a greater presence of the State and the strengthening of its institutions.

To achieve a successful withdrawal and to strengthen the foundations towards a lasting transition, Mexico urges the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursue its efforts to carry out the necessary reforms in the security sector and the national framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as to address the root causes of violence, such as intercommunity conflicts. We also urge all regional partners to work with the Democratic Republic of the Congo to end the illegal exploitation and trafficking of natural resources.

An issue of particular concern to Mexico is care for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. In this regard, we acknowledge the work of the Organization, coordinated by Ms. Lusamba, in the rehabilitation and reintegration of survivors, including psychosocial support, which is essential to overcoming trauma from sexual violence.

The recent criminal proceedings and the sentences handed down by national courts to perpetrators of crimes against humanity, including rape and sexual slavery, are undoubtedly advances in the right direction, as was the decision of the International Criminal Court on reparations to victims in the Bosco Ntagana case.

Strengthening the national judicial system and complaint mechanisms is vital, which is why Mexico calls on us to continue strengthening that avenue with a focus on survivors.

Annex IX

Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Niger to the United Nations, Niandou Aougi

I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the A3+1, namely, Tunisia, Kenya, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and the Niger.

We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, and civil society representative Ms. Sandrine Lusamba, Executive Coordinator of Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development, for their insightful briefings on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We would like also to take the opportunity of this briefing to reiterate our congratulations and best wishes to Ms. Keita on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO.

We would like also to pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her exceptional dedication and contribution to the cause of peace through the Mission at the head of MONUSCO.

Our delegations commend the leading role played by MONUSCO in the effective implementation of its mandate and salute the commitment and courage of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by armed groups against humanitarian convoys and deeply regret the appalling attack of 22 February 2021, in which the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, his close protection officer and a member of World Food Programme tragically lost their lives.

We reiterate our sincere condolences and sympathy to their families and support the Secretary-General's appeal to the national authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to promptly investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of these heinous acts.

The recent political developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, marked by the advent of a new Government coalition, followed by the election of a new bureau of the National Assembly on 5 January and the appointment of a new Prime Minister on 14 February 2021, make us more optimistic than ever. We remain hopeful that a new Government will address the real problems of the people through the implementation of a sustainable governance programme that will improve their living conditions, restore peace and security, and relaunch the country's economic and social development process.

Our delegations are equally encouraged by the willingness of the majority of political actors and civil society organizations to continue to engage in dialogue.

In terms of security, we deplore the deterioration of the situation in the east of the country and the increase in human rights violations and abuses, due to the multiplication of attacks against civilians, as well as the increase in intercommunity tensions, which have caused dozens of deaths, particularly in Ituri and North Kivu.

The A3+1 encourages the authorities to continue their internal investigations in order to put an end to these practices, which target women and children in particular. We commend MONUSCO for its technical, financial and logistical support to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the fight against impunity

and the prosecution of those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as other human rights violations.

In this regard, we welcome the continuation of the work of the military garrison tribunal and its decision against the chief of the Mayi-Mayi Raia Mutomboki Charlequin, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison, as well as the payment of compensatory damages, for murder, rape, torture, sexual slavery and enforced disappearance.

On the humanitarian front, we are deeply concerned about the increase in the number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance, from 15.6 million in 2020 to 19.6 million in 2021.

The dire humanitarian situation is further exacerbated by the surge in violence in the eastern provinces and the emergence of a new outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in North Kivu, although confirmed cases remain limited to 14, including 6 deaths.

In this regard, we commend the efforts of the United Nations, whose allocation of a \$4 million fund to fight the disease has facilitated vaccination and the reopening of schools, which had remained closed since December due to the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

The hunger crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the world's largest, with over 21 million people acutely food insecure, 5 million of whom are children who are acutely malnourished. We therefore call on the international community to renew its support to the country, in line with national needs and priorities.

We also call on the national authorities to do everything possible to facilitate both the access and the delivery of humanitarian aid, the security of which remains a source of concern.

In terms of protection of civilians, we encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to redouble its coordination efforts with MONUSCO in implementation of the zoned strategy to address peace and security challenges.

We maintain that strengthening community-based approaches and the early warning system for threats against civilians would contribute positively to security and counter misinformation and anti-MONUSCO sentiment.

Our delegations also emphasize the need for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to increase its efforts to implement its strategic approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the national and regional levels.

We are satisfied with the progress made regarding the role of women in public life, and we support President Tshisekedi's commitment, made in his message to the nation on 6 December 2020, to investing more in fighting discrimination against women, as well as sexual and gender-based violence and impunity; and we welcome MONUSCO's efforts to improve the involvement of women in the peace and conflict management processes.

The confidence-building initiatives with the countries of the region demonstrate a continued commitment to the effective implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. In this regard, we welcome the agreement of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo with the countries of the Southern African Development Community for the deployment of operational forces in the fight against armed groups.

We encourage enhanced information sharing through established mechanisms, such as the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre and the Expanded Joint Verification

Mechanisms within the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, in addition to other bilateral security cooperation agreements in the joint fight against armed groups.

We take note of the joint defence and security meeting in Kigali of Rwandan and Democratic Republic of the Congo national security officials on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the joint fight against armed groups, culminating in a joint communiqué announcing an action plan for peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, and the meeting held on 18 February by President Tshisekedi with Ugandan officials are also very encouraging initiatives.

The direct effect of the illegal exploitation of natural resources continues to lay a heavy burden on the security and stability of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, depriving the State of the productive use of natural resources towards socioeconomic development. The strengthening of close and dynamic regional cooperation, the implementation by all actors of the provisions of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement to combat armed groups and all forms of trafficking in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including by implementing tools such as regional certification mechanisms, harmonization of national legislations, establishing regional databases of mineral flows and the formalization of the artisanal mining sector remain essential. This strengthened regional cooperation is particularly vital for addressing the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources which is intricately connected to the activities of armed groups in the country.

Regarding MONUSCO's exit strategy, we note the commitments made by President Tshisekedi to establish a structure that would be responsible for the new national framework for disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration and stabilization, as well as the joint working group in charge of implementing the exit strategy and the gradual transfer of MONUSCO's tasks for a responsible withdrawal.

However, we insist on the need to take into account the structural aspects of the security problems in order to quickly make the necessary arrangements, within the framework of the transition plan, for a successful withdrawal of MONUSCO, as is the case in Kasai, where the military and civilian components will be definitively withdrawn next June.

In conclusion, we support MONUSCO in its efforts to provide security for the civilian population, as well as its good offices in favour of peacebuilding, through national ownership of initiatives to help strengthen state institutions.

Annex X

Statement by the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations

Let me start by thanking former Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui for her tireless efforts and dedication to peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I also congratulate the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, on her appointment and thank her for her briefing. Norway stands ready to work with her and her team to contribute to peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The briefing from Ms. Lusamba was also highly interesting, and we are happy to have her with us today.

I would also like to welcome the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We commend President Tshisekedi for his commitments to pursuing national unity, strengthening the rule of law and furthering political inclusiveness and peacebuilding.

Three months have passed by since this Council endorsed the joint strategy on the phased and progressive drawdown of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Now, looking ahead, let me highlight three issues that Norway considers of vital importance.

First, we are particularly concerned about the challenges to the protection of civilians and the humanitarian situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The surge in violence and persistent attacks on civilians are deeply troubling. Norway condemns all such attacks, including those recently causing a high number of civilian casualties, reportedly carried out by the Allied Democratic Forces.

All actors must respect and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the primary responsibility to address such violations and abuses. Fighting impunity is key, and we urge the authorities to redouble their efforts to ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

Furthermore, we strongly condemn the prevalence of rape and sexual violence, including against children. All parties must take immediate, and specific, steps to end and prevent these heinous forms of violence.

Survivors must have access to gender-sensitive and age-appropriate responses and protection. We urge the Government to accelerate its efforts to implement the action plan on sexual violence.

The humanitarian situation also remains grave, with nearly 20 million people in need. Protecting humanitarian workers and ensuring humanitarian access is crucial.

We condemn all actions that deny humanitarian access, including the attack against the World Food Programme (WFP) convoy that resulted in the death of the Italian Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, his bodyguard and a WFP driver last month.

Secondly, to ensure a sustainable and conditions-based drawdown and a recalibration of the Mission, women, as well as civil society, must be included at all levels of decision-making.

We welcome the efforts to establish a new national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) framework and MONUSCO's engagement in community-based DDR. A gender perspective must also be included in these approaches.

We also welcome the establishment of a women mediators' network in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we look forward to following the implementation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's action plan for women, peace and security.

Thirdly, Norway encourages the Democratic Republic of the Congo, neighbouring countries, regional actors and the United Nations to work together to address the root causes of conflict, including recognizing that illegal deforestation and the degradation of natural resources have led to loss of national wealth, as well as reducing rainfall, food security and energy production. The nature of these root causes calls for more bilateral and regional cooperation.

We welcome the continued proactive engagement of leaders and regional organisations working within the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Finally, creating the conditions for MONUSCO's sustainable drawdown will require strengthened coordination between the Mission and the United Nations country team in support of the stabilization and peacebuilding priorities outlined in the mandate. If they are not to lose any gains, the authorities and the United Nations country team must be ready to take over tasks from MONUSCO upon the mission's exit, starting in Kasai in June this year and Tanganyika next year.

We urge all stakeholders to work along the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, draw on synergies and ensure a responsible drawdown of MONUSCO. We look forward to working with the Congolese authorities and all other relevant stakeholders to this end.

Annex XI**Statement by the Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Anna Evstigneeva**

[Original: Russian]

We welcome the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, and thank her for the substantive briefing. We also closely followed the statement by Ms. Sandrine Lusamba.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains unstable. Despite the special operations performed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo armed forces, the illegal armed formations continue to seize territories rich in natural resource and to control the flow of smuggled goods.

A very dire security situation has developed in Ituri and North Kivu provinces, where the Allied Democratic Forces and other groups have been active recently. We have grave concerns regarding the growing toll among civilians. In 2020, militants killed no fewer than 1,000 people, and have killed over 200 since December 2020. The number of internally displaced persons is also growing. We condemn the blatant attack on a World Food Programme humanitarian convoy that took place on 22 February and killed Italy's Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Luca Attanasio, a carabinieri and a driver.

Thanks to the efforts of Kinshasa and MONUSCO, the situation in South Kivu, Tanganyika and Kasai has slightly stabilized, although the situation remains volatile. We appreciate the fact that the United Nations Mission contributes to the stabilization of eastern regions by providing a flexible response to various threats to security. The problem of illegal armed formations is also being addressed through non-military means, including in the framework of the strategy for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former militants, which is based on outreach activities with the local communes. At the same time, we are concerned that the authorities have so far been unable to solve the problem of the illegal exploitation and export of natural resources from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which the illegal armed groups use to finance their activities.

We welcome measures to step up the coordination between MONUSCO and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and to boost effectiveness of the Blue Helmets, including the Intervention Brigade. We note the ongoing consultations between MONUSCO and Kinshasa on establishing a joint working group to monitor the phased withdrawal of the peacekeepers.

We keep close track of internal political developments in the country. The Speaker of the National Assembly and the President of the Senate have been elected. We welcome the appointment on 15 February of Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyege to the office of Prime Minister. We hope that the new Government, which is to be formed soon, will be able to reinstate control of the security situation, resolve border disputes and intercommunal conflicts.

One positive moment, thanks to the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities, including the ongoing vaccination campaign, was the country's suppression of an outbreak of Ebola. Even though the overall humanitarian situation is far from easy, effective measures are being taken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

We support the efforts of President Tshisekedi to engage the neighbouring States in solving the region's problems. Recently, there have been consultations

among the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda on the issues of cooperation in the area of security. We believe that the 2021 African Union chairmanship of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will attract further attention to the problems of the Great Lakes region. We believe that the regional organizations, in particular the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, play an important mediating role in the peace process.

Russia, as a member of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, pledges its further support for the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and stabilization in the Great Lakes region in general.

Annex XII**Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations, Barbara Woodward**

Let me begin by congratulating the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, on her appointment and by thanking her and Ms. Lusamba for their briefings today. As ever, I would like to commend the continuation of the vital operations of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), despite challenges in the operating environment.

I would like to focus my intervention today on three points.

First, despite numerous multifaceted challenges, it is important to recognize the progress that is being made in Democratic Republic of the Congo. To that end, I would like to congratulate President Tshisekedi on the establishment of his Union sacrée de la nation coalition and to welcome his efforts towards forming a new Government.

It is crucial that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo drive forward urgent reforms — particularly those that will ensure free and fair elections in 2023, improve the economy for all and establish peace and security in the East. As Ms. Lusamba's briefing made clear, gender-sensitive approaches in all of these areas are critical. In this regard, I commend the President's commitment to 30 per cent female representation in his new Government.

Secondly, despite progress in some areas, I must stress again our concern about increased armed group violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The number of attacks against civilians so far this year — in Ituri and North and South Kivu particularly — is a pressing and tragic reminder of the need for renewed focus on tackling the threat posed by armed groups.

In this vein, I call on all national, regional and international actors to utilize the levers at their disposal to stop these groups from accessing weapons, from being able to trade and make money and from receiving political protection while committing atrocities with impunity. I would also like to express my deep concern at the Democratic Republic of the Congo's acute humanitarian situation, which is driven in large part by conflict.

Finally, a word on MONUSCO's transition. I welcome positive momentum at the provincial level towards the Mission's withdrawal from the Kasais. However, transition can be sustainable and responsible only if the Government is engaged fully with the process.

To that end, I urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage and coordinate at the provincial and national levels. Efforts to address the root causes of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to build a safer, more prosperous future for its citizens will succeed only if spearheaded by the Government.

Annex XIII

Statement by the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield

Let me start by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, for her briefing. We extend our appreciation to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), its leadership and its troop- and police-contributing countries for their efforts to protect the Congolese people.

And I thank Ms. Lusamba for joining us today to share her expertise and make recommendations for further action. The Security Council needs to continue to hear the views of brave civil society members like her, and her on-the-ground reality must inform our work.

The danger that so many Congolese people have to face on a daily basis is almost inconceivable. More and more innocent people die every day because of attacks by armed groups, including those attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in North Kivu and Ituri.

The ADF killed more than 840 people last year alone. These people are more than a statistic. And I would say their names — every one of them — but we cannot, because we have to protect their families from reprisal attacks. That is how dangerous the situation there is on the ground.

Each person killed by the ADF was someone's father. Or someone's mother. Or someone's child. Their deaths rip through towns. They tear holes into communities. And the survivors often lose their family's source of income or face social repercussions. One attack can lead to life-long trauma. The ADF is not the only deadly armed group operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, however.

I want to extend my deepest condolences to the families and colleagues of Italian Ambassador Luca Attanasio, Mustapha Milambo and Vittorio Iacovacci. This month we also mark the fourth anniversary of the deaths of United Nations experts Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán.

We must remain focused on the real, direct impact these tragedies have had on the individuals and on communities, no matter the perpetrators. We must do more to stop the violence.

To that end, the United States domestically has designated the ADF as a foreign terrorist organization and as specially designated global terrorists. We urge the States of the region, with the support of MONUSCO and the Council, to develop integrated, holistic strategies to stop the ADF's external funding and recruitment.

We are also deeply concerned about the atrocious acts of gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Reports of rape are heartbreaking and they are appalling. What is more, since women and girls must play pivotal roles in any effective conflict-prevention and resolution efforts, these horrific acts slow down the peace process.

We therefore welcome MONUSCO's work with women's organizations to map security hotspots where women and girls are at risk. And we strongly support MONUSCO's efforts to integrate 15 female engagement teams in the force's major units to advance community engagement and trust-building.

Confronting the challenges in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo also requires the full implementation of commitments under the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and

the region. That means enhancing security, ending impunity for human rights abuses and supporting stabilization efforts.

This is an opportunity for regional and international partners to step up. With their help, we can achieve real peace and stability and ensure that the region's rich economic potential comes to fruition. This includes all of the countries in the Great Lakes region. All Great Lakes Governments play a vital role — a vital and important role — in furthering peace and stability.

So, we encourage the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region to be more forward-leaning and to press regional actors to improve good governance, strengthen rule of law and promote human rights.

Meanwhile, we support MONUSCO's efforts to strengthen the Intervention Brigade's capacity to prevent and respond to ADF attacks. That work should continue, in conjunction with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also note that we are encouraged by the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/274) that consultations have begun between MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to plan for the eventual transition and responsible exit of peacekeeping forces.

As part of that holistic approach, we support regional engagement to block illicit funding of armed groups. Responsible and conflict-free mineral supply chains and efforts to counter smuggling in natural resources will weaken the ADF and strengthen the local economy.

Finally, we are looking forward to discussing these issues further during next month's briefing on the Great Lakes. We hope that these back-to-back briefings will draw more attention to the urgent need for action. After all, there is so much ripe potential here today.

Together, we turn the page on several decades of violence and launch a peaceful and prosperous era for the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire Great Lakes region.

Annex XIV**Statement by the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, Paul Losoko Efambe Empole**

[Original: French]

Allow me first of all to extend my warm congratulations to you, Madam, on the manner in which your country, the United States of America, as well as yourself, have assumed the presidency of the Security Council during this month of March 2021. I would also like to thank you for having convened this meeting, which concerns the situation in my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and for having accepted the participation of my delegation.

I take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his support for the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in favour of a return to peace.

I further thank all members of the Security Council for the special attention they continue to pay to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2021/274), which was introduced earlier by his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms. Bintou Keita, whose presence and dynamism I welcome. Indeed, from the very beginning of her term in office, Ms. Keita has been highly committed and sensitive to the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where she has already launched a tour to inquire personally about the socio-security situation, dominated by atrocities committed by armed groups. She has also visited Kasai province, which must, according to the agreed withdrawal schedule, see the peacekeepers leave by the end of June 2021 and be replaced by elements of the Congolese National Police, as well as agencies, funds and programmes that address humanitarian and development aspects.

I also welcome the presence at this meeting of Ms. Sandrine Lusamba, Executive Coordinator of Women's Solidarity for Peace and Integral Development.

Allow me therefore to add the voice of my delegation to this exchange on the concerns raised by the report and to make a few comments, mainly on the political, security and humanitarian situation, as well as on human rights issues.

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains dominated by the appointment and installation of new leaders at the head of certain institutions of the country after the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, put an end to the Cap pour le changement-Front commun pour le Congo (CACH-FCC) coalition, and following the establishment of the Union sacrée de la nation coalition and the recognition of a new parliamentary majority. The principle changes involve the new bureau of the National Assembly, chaired by the Honourable Christophe Mboso N'Kodia Pwanga since 3 February 2021; the new Senate office, led by the Honourable Modeste Bahati Lukwebo since 2 March 2021; and the new Prime Minister and Head of Government, His Excellency Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge, since 14 February 2021. We await the release very soon of the full team of the Government of the Union S\acrée de la nation.

The Head of State's decision to put an end to the CACH-FCC coalition was motivated by the fact that, two years after the democratically secured political changeover following the 2018 elections, the resulting coalition proved limited in its ability to respond positively to most of the expectations of the Congolese people. Moreover, the President of the Republic created the Union sacrée de la nation

coalition in order to advance the main reforms required to place the country firmly on the path of peace, stability and sustainable development.

It is perfectly natural that, at this time of transition and as we await the appointment of the full team of the new Government, Government activity has somewhat slowed.

Again on the political level, it is important to note that, during the thirty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the President of the Republic was elected Chairperson of the African Union for one year. The priorities of his chairmanship, which are repeated in paragraph 10 of the report under consideration, revolve around nine pillars underlying the main theme of his term of office: “Arts, culture and heritage: Levers for building the Africa we want.”

As described in several passages of the Secretary-General’s report, the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains dominated by the activism of refractory armed groups in the eastern part of the country, mainly in the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri and Tanganyika, as well as by some intercommunity conflicts.

These armed groups, both national and foreign, continue to sow death and desolation despite all the efforts of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), with the assistance of its partners, including the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), to eradicate them and protect civilians.

These armed groups come together and dissolve according to the interests and networks of those who support them. The activity of the armed groups has become a lucrative business, with complicity at several levels, both inside and outside the country, which supplies them with arms, ammunition and other necessary instruments of war in exchange for minerals and cash.

This situation remains worrying and a top priority for the Head of State, who in October 2019 decided to launch a major offensive by the FARDC to restore peace and re-establish State authority in that part of the country.

The people are tired of crying and counting their dead. They do not feel truly protected against this tragedy and ask that something be done in the face of the strategy of terror applied by the armed groups, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Faced with this feeling of dissatisfaction, we are even witnessing an increase in the use of mob justice against individuals suspected of belonging to the ADF.

And yet a number of initiatives have been taken at the national, regional and international levels to end the suffering of the people of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo after more than 25 years’ lack of peace and security. We commend all such initiatives in favour of peace and security in the east. However, we invite and encourage all partners associated with them to coordinate our efforts so that the results we hope for materialize and peace and security actually return to the East. There is a great need to find cohesion in all the initiatives that have been launched and to strengthen our common strategy for the protection of civilians. We need to find a mechanism to maximize the impact of these initiatives, notably through cohesion, collaboration, dialogue, regular consultations and political will.

At the regional level, it would be necessary, for example, to revive the Addis Ababa Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and to strive for the implementation of the subregional initiatives to promote peace, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region certificates on trade in minerals. It will be necessary to strengthen

the dialogue being conducted at the level of Heads of State and for a joint strategy at the regional level. The regional strategy of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region should be coordinated with the national strategy and with MONUSCO, and a detailed action plan jointly put in place.

Likewise, military operations and non-military solutions should increasingly come to fruition with the Office of the Special Envoy for the region.

Our efforts to fight effectively against these armed groups must also include sanctions against all the mafia networks of those who buy and support the trade in blood minerals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — all those brigands who supply arms to armed groups, in total violation of the embargo.

In this regard and for their part, the Government and the FARDC are currently carrying out actions against all those who violate domestic regulations and collude with the rebels. Several networks have already been dismantled by the security forces and have been brought before military justice. This is particularly the case with the dismantling of a large network that traffics in arms and munitions of war that are routinely stolen from Kinshasa to supply Central African armed groups via Gbadolite and Gemena. The Government and the FARDC would be grateful if anyone with information on these mafia networks could share it with the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are thinking here particularly of MONUSCO and its drones, which can provide critical information that could help in the hunt against these armed groups and their supporters. It is important that this information be shared with the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are on the front line in the fight against these armed bandits.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo expects the United Nations and the Security Council to assist and provide all means necessary for MONUSCO to properly fulfil its mission and mandate, including political support; to ensure that the troops in the field have the required means and capacities, including the necessary training, to meet the demands of the reality on the ground and of the asymmetric warfare currently being waged by armed groups; and to ensure that the deployment of the expected units and forces is carried out in accordance with resolution 2556 (2020) and in a timely fashion.

It would be important for MONUSCO to strengthen its partnership with the Government, in accordance with the recommendations of the Security Council, in order to ensure that the strategies applied on the ground are harmoniously reinforced and complement each other perfectly.

It is essential to relaunch and intensify the joint and planned FARDC-MONUSCO operations, as recommended in resolution 2556 (2020). To that end, it is urgent that experts from the Ministry of Defence and those from MONUSCO get together around a table to put in place a new technical arrangement in line with the recommendation of resolution 2556 (2020), given that the most recent technical arrangement dates back to 2018. This arrangement would define the areas of collaboration and intervention.

MONUSCO should also strengthen collaboration with other partners, under the leadership of the Government, to ensure that the actions carried out are more effective and have the impact expected by all.

My delegation would also like to stress the need for regular evaluations of the effectiveness of the Mission and the performance of troops, military contingents and police units alike, and civilian personnel in accordance with the memorandums of understanding, in order to ensure the level of implementation of the mandate conferred by resolution 2556 (2020). Such internal evaluations could be complemented by

regular assessments, alongside our partners, of the effectiveness of our joint action and the activities we carry out together in the field to better reorganize ourselves in the event of need.

In order to break the vicious cycle of the problem of demobilized combatants who lay down their arms, national and foreign alike, it is important for MONUSCO to assist in activities related to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and to disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization, as defined by the President of the Republic — that is to say, a merger of DDR and the Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan in Conflict-Affected Areas of Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For more than two decades, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been the object of acts of terror perpetrated by armed groups. Indeed, all these different armed groups, be they foreign or national, commit very violent abuses against the population. However, my country is concerned about the rise of the ADF/Madina Tawheed wal Muwahideen (ADF/MTM), a rebel group allied with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, from which it enjoys great support in extending the caliphate in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Government of my country would like the true face and identity of that terrorist group to be recognized by the Security Council. The Democratic Republic of the Congo therefore welcomes the recognition by the United States Government of the ADF as a terrorist group affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, and hopes that the other members of the Security Council will follow suit.

Indeed, the jihadist group ADF/MTM is characterized by its forced recruitment, indoctrination and radicalization of children, as well as by its massacres, killings, beheadings, looting, arson, rape, kidnapping of civilians and attacks on the forces of order, defence and security, elements of MONUSCO and humanitarian actors.

It is important to point out that, with regard to the joint strategy for the gradual and phased withdrawal of MONUSCO, my Government remains willing to discuss the matter within the joint working group set up by the Government and MONUSCO, in accordance with the spirit of resolution 2556 (2020), so that the conclusions that emerge from the group will serve as a reference document for both parties in order to support the smooth implementation of the joint strategy and to allow for a gradual transfer of responsibility and an orderly and final withdrawal of MONUSCO.

With regard to the implementation of the joint strategy for the withdrawal of MONUSCO, it is necessary for the working group to rapidly define the practical modalities of the withdrawal and transfer of tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by providing realistic and measurable indicators, in addition to a timeline with the various roles and responsibilities, as well as risk assessment and mitigation strategies.

This collaboration should be strengthened and exchanges increased in order to fine-tune the exit strategy and timeline together, including the transitional phases and the establishment of common assessment indicators and benchmarks. As the months pass and the deadline approaches, the members of the working group should meet regularly.

Under the leadership of the Head of State, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is continuing its efforts to improve the human rights situation. During the period that concerns us, from October 2020 to March 2021, there were several positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to respect for human rights and the fight against impunity and serious crimes committed on its territory.

We would like to commend the assistance provided to the Congolese military justice system by MONUSCO in the investigation of several cases to combat impunity

and close several pending cases, as highlighted in several paragraphs of the report (S/2021/274) under consideration.

Among the new developments relating to the promotion and protection of human rights in the Democratic Republic of Congo, we would note the drafting and adoption by the National Assembly of bills on the rights of persons with disabilities and on the rights of indigenous peoples, sent to the Senate for a second reading; and the Government's preparation of a strategic document entitled "Comprehensive plan for the implementation of the recommendations of regional and international human rights mechanisms", with the support of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNJHRO).

In addition, the Head of State has taken several measures to pardon prisoners and release them on parole in order to relieve prison overcrowding and improve prison conditions. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has been reinstated into the United States African Growth and Opportunity Act programme, instituted by the United States for African countries, following a satisfactory evaluation of its recent progress in terms of respect for basic rights and fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, on the instructions of the President of the Republic, in the next few days the Government is to undertake discussions with all stakeholders on abolishing the death penalty. The Government's specialized committees have adopted two decrees on the implementation of transitional justice in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Interim rehabilitation funds have been granted for war victims in Kisangani.

In the specific context of the fight against corruption and impunity, we would note a few cases, in particular the following.

On 12 January, the Bukavu military garrison court sentenced Takungomo Mukambilwa Le Pouce to 20 years' imprisonment for murder, rape, slavery and other inhuman acts constituting crimes against humanity.

On 8 March, the Military Operational Court of North Kivu convicted three people accused of attacking an Ebola treatment centre and murdering a World Health Organization doctor in Butembo in April 2019.

On 20 March, 23 bandits, arrested during police patrols and accused of creating insecurity, were presented to the public by the Criminal Intervention Police.

My Government is therefore surprised that, despite all these efforts, which are recognized by all, the report under review states in paragraph 25 that 51 per cent of human rights violations were attributed to armed groups and 49 per cent to State agents, 90 per cent of which were perpetrated in conflict-affected provinces.

For my Government, there is the issue of compiling statistics which, once again, are inconsistent and contradictory concerning allegations against elements of the security forces and officials of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, even within the United Nations system. Those statistics differ depending on whether they are from MONUSCO, UNJHRO, the Group of Experts, Special Envoys of the Secretary-General or the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once again, my delegation believes that it would be better, as has been repeatedly requested, to exchange information on the methods used and the information collected beforehand and, if necessary, collate such data before making them official and publishing them.

However, given that the figure is quite high, my Government would like to have a little more detail and information on those allegations, in particular to know the kinds of violations, the precise locations where the violations were committed

and the names of those who committed them, so that its competent services can carry out the appropriate investigations and punish the perpetrators if the facts are confirmed.

On the humanitarian front, in addition to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the Democratic Republic of the Congo also faces other epidemics and diseases, such as Ebola and measles, which are straining its health system. There is also the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons, whose numbers are increasing due to the security situation. The displaced people are living in disastrous conditions, especially with the resurgence of COVID-19 and Ebola and are calling for support from both national and international partners.

Moreover, it was while bringing relief to those refugees and displaced persons that the World Food Programme humanitarian convoy was attacked, and the Italian Ambassador was killed. In that regard, I would like to inform the Council that an investigation has been opened at the Military Prosecutor's Office in connection with that attack.

In conclusion, I would once again like to thank the members of the Security Council, the troop- and police-contributing countries and the main regional and international partners for their ongoing support to ensure the fulfilment of MONUSCO's mandate and to bring peace and security to the eastern part of my country.

I cannot end this statement without expressing the deep gratitude of the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Ms. Leila Zerrougui, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her love of the Congo and her dedication to peace in the country.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the determination of the President of the Republic and the Government to remain mobilized and to continue the fight already under way, with the assistance of partners, until the armed groups are completely eradicated so that the people of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo can live in lasting peace and contribute to the development of their country.
