



Security Council

Seventy-sixth year

8813th meeting
 Wednesday, 7 July 2021, 10 a.m.
 New York

Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. De Rivière	(France)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Mr. Repkin
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia	Mr. Ladeb
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe
	United States of America	Mr. Mills
	Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization
 Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2021/587)

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

Expression of condolences in connection with the death of the President of Haiti

The President (*spoke in French*): At the outset, on behalf of the members of the Security Council, I would like to express our sorrow following the death of His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti. The members of the Council are deeply shocked by the assassination of President Moïse earlier today in Port-au-Prince and are concerned about the health of the First Lady, Martine Moïse, who was also shot during the attack. The members of the Council express their heartfelt sympathy to the family of the President and to the Government and the people of Haiti.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2021/587)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Ms. Ritha Kibambe, Deputy Head of the Laboratory of Medical Biology, Ngaliema Clinic, Kinshasa.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2021/587, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to the Security Council today to present the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/587) on the activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and to provide an overview of the current situation in the country. I remain convinced that despite the serious political, security, humanitarian and development challenges, the opportunities I spoke about in my most recent briefing (see S/2021/316) remain.

What clearly links the work to be done for the political and security stabilization of the country to the ultimate departure of MONUSCO is the Government's action plan, which includes elements of civilian protection and the neutralization of armed groups, a new disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programme, as well as a commitment to hold national and local elections in 2023.

The action plan, which was adopted by the National Assembly on 26 April, also marked the inauguration of the new Government of Prime Minister Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge. I am pleased to note that the new Government has 15 women in ministerial positions, representing 27 per cent of the total number of positions. That is an increase of almost 30 per cent compared to the previous Government. The appointment of the first woman governor of the Central Bank of the Congo is another example of that encouraging trend.

In that context and as requested by the Council, I worked with the Prime Minister to set up a joint working group between the Government, MONUSCO and relevant agencies. The working group, launched on 5 July, will support the implementation of the Government's action plan and oversee the Mission's transition process. Its first task is to generate a transition plan to be submitted to the Council in September. Its activities will also contribute to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2024.

The implementation of the Government's action plan will largely depend on the mobilization of the necessary resources, but also on the stability of the new political coalition put in place in April — the *Union sacrée de la nation*. In that regard, the political manoeuvring in relation to the preparations and management of the 2023 electoral process must not distract from the implementation of the necessary reforms.

I cannot stress enough the importance of ensuring that the 2023 elections are held within the constitutional timeframe. It is essential, indeed, that a national consensus be reached on the appointment of the officials of the Independent National Electoral Commission, and then on the reform of the electoral law. I encourage the concerned leaders of institutions, political parties and civil society organizations to work together to reassure the country of the credible and independent organization of the 2023 electoral process. I also stress the need to organize inclusive and peaceful elections, while being aware of the potentially dangerous consequences of a divisive debate on nationality. Encouraging the full implementation of the Government's action plan is therefore the current focus of my good offices.

(spoke in English)

The security situation in the provinces of Ituri and North and South Kivu continues to be of grave concern. The eruption of Mount Nyiragongo on 22 May — which led to a large movement of population — further exacerbated existing vulnerabilities in areas surrounding Goma. From the recent bomb explosions in Beni to other continuing violence and Allied Democratic Forces attacks in North Kivu, as well as intercommunal tensions in Ituri and in the Hauts Plateaux in South Kivu, civilians remain under serious threat from the attacks of armed groups and the broader security context. With the transition of the Mission depending in large part on the return of peace and stability to these areas, I believe that there is still much work to be done before MONUSCO can responsibly withdraw.

The Mission continues to implement a holistic strategy to address security challenges in the east, which includes the maintenance of a robust posture to counter threats to the civilian population. In this regard, I am delighted to report that the reconfiguration and enhancement of the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) is on track with the deployment of the Tanzanian quick-reaction force in May and the arrival of the remaining three quick-reaction forces in the near future. Similarly, MONUSCO's ability to gather relevant tactical information has received a boost with the Tactical Intelligence Unit now having reached full operational capacity and the deployment of a Geolocation Threat Analysis Unit detachment to Beni, North Kivu. This has already resulted in enhanced sharing of intelligence with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in support of operations against armed groups. Furthermore, the FIB has, since

Monday, been supporting training of 1,700 FARDC troops in Ituri province, which we hope will contribute to strengthened protection of civilians in the area.

However, military means alone cannot provide lasting solutions. Without the restoration of State authority, including local civil administration, a meaningful security sector reform plan and the reconciliation of local communities, we are unlikely to see sustainable progress. The actions taken must focus on the many social, economic and governance needs, including in relation to managing the security apparatus, addressing the underlying challenges of land reform and improving governance of the mining sector.

The solution, again, rests in the hands of the Congolese Government. I am happy to report that the PDDRCS legal framework was enacted by the President on 5 July and that MONUSCO has developed a draft strategy to support its operationalization, with particular focus on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of national and foreign combatants active in Ituri, the Kivus and Tanganyika, building on lessons learned from past experience. The PDDRCS is, in fact, one of the priority areas in the newly created joint working group with the Government.

Concurrently, the Mission is also accelerating its political engagement in conflict areas, which includes my recent outreach in the context of the ongoing intercommunity violence in the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu. In this province we are supporting the Government in advancing a larger political process in support of stabilization, which will include meetings held between the governors of South Kivu and those of neighbouring areas in Rwanda and Burundi, along with forums bringing together representatives of women, youth and the private sector. Leveraging our regional partnerships, this is being done in cooperation with the Office of the Special Envoy and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. The International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy will also continue to be an important tool to support these efforts.

That is part of a broader, encouraging pattern of reduction of political tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours, which has been a priority of President Tshisekedi since his assumption of office. The relationships between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda and the Democratic Republic and Rwanda, in particular, have

turned a corner, as demonstrated by the recent meetings between President Tshisekedi and President Museveni, and subsequently with President Kagame. I am hopeful that this can provide a springboard for broader political stabilization in the Great Lakes region.

Towards that end, I am working hand in hand with Special Envoy Huang Xia, as well as with regional and continental partners, to find non-military solutions to cross-border conflict drivers. The fourth meeting of heads of intelligence and security services on a comprehensive regional approach to neutralizing negative forces — which was held in an open and cordial atmosphere in Burundi yesterday — is testament to this positive development.

The state of siege declared in North Kivu and Ituri on 6 May remains in effect following parliamentary approval for extensions. We continue to engage with civilian and military authorities on the matter and have underlined, in particular, the need for strict respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in the implementation of this measure. In this sense, MONUSCO not only continues to provide support for military operations in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy, but also seeks to ensure humanitarian access, the strengthening of the justice sector and the opening of legal proceedings on any human rights violations committed during the state of siege.

(spoke in French)

MONUSCO and the United Nations country team are working closely with the Government to develop a set of benchmarks and indicators that will structure the Mission's transition plan. This is an opportunity for the United Nations to refine the parameters of its assistance to the Government's peace and development priorities and to take the necessary steps to gradually draw down the Mission in clear conditions. In this regard, in line with the joint strategy for the drawdown of MONUSCO, the Mission ceased its activities in the Kasai region on 30 June. Working in close collaboration with international partners, the United Nations country team is actively involved in the implementation of programmes to support peacebuilding in line with the priorities identified by the Congolese authorities.

(spoke in English)

In summary, I see the immediate primary tasks before us as follows. First, there is a need to actively

support the implementation of the Government's programme of action. Secondly, we must intensify good offices encouraging the establishment of the conditions that permit the 2023 elections to be held on time and in a consensual manner. Thirdly, there is a need to intensify political engagement in the quest for non-military solutions to the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo while increasing pressure on armed groups through a more active force posture. And, fourthly, an agreement must be reached with the Government on a set of conditioned benchmarks that clearly links the Government's programme of action to the adjustment of the Mission's presence.

I ask the Council's full support in that regard and thank members for their continued engagement towards peace and stability in the country.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Kibambe.

Ms. Kibambe *(spoke in French)*: I am honoured to address the Security Council about the challenges that women have faced since the beginning of the pandemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I speak to the Council as a doctor; a social actor, through the MEJI Foundation, of which I am co-President; and as a woman.

Through a variety of experiences, we have been able to identify the major difficulties encountered during the management of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis in both professional and family spheres, difficulties that have made such management into a titanic daily ordeal. Faced with those challenges, women have risen up against COVID-19 despite their small numbers, despite prejudice, despite the fear of death.

I should like to tell the Council about those heroines, those in the shadows who through their acts of bravery have saved lives. We are telling these stories because we believe that the international community, represented here, can and must engage by way of strong resolutions aimed at the improvement of our communities' health-care and educational systems.

Let me tell you about Godelive and Thérèse, who are in charge of infection control and prevention in one of the largest COVID centres in the city-province of Kinshasa, the Ngaliema clinic. That centre experienced

large-scale contamination of health-care personnel owing due to a lack of adequate protective equipment. Ten nurses from the same unit were infected by an unknown COVID patient. Women then mobilized, and, in the space of a month, Godelive and Thérèse organized cascade training for more than 300 hospital staff. After that, we had no further serial contaminations at the level of care units.

That makes the following clear.

First, we have not only serious problems with personal protective equipment but also communication problems in our communities. People do not believe in the disease or in the vaccine. Many hide their symptoms and do not respect social distancing. As a consequence, the weakest are seriously affected and die.

Secondly, the major logistical challenges associated with care management remain the availability of oxygen, ambulances, medicines and heart monitors. Those are scarce commodities for which we urgently need support. Recently the World Bank took steps to ensure that Riposte hospitals have oxygen. However, we are seeing difficulties in the delivery of that oxygen due to the shortage of empty cylinders and the lack of transport vehicles. There is an imperative need for intra-hospital oxygen production.

The most important lesson learned is that the national health-care system is still precarious and unable to absorb even the slightest shock. Women, who are the majority of health-care personnel, have been the most affected.

Women have not only been heroines but also major victims of the pandemic. COVID-19 has had a particularly negative impact on the quality of education and on families. There are many examples of children in difficulty. During COVID, neither parents nor teachers were ready for distance learning. What level of education are we giving our children, who are like Martha, a 14-year-old girl in grade 3 of secondary school, who no longer studies math although she is still going to school? What future are we seeing for them, and particularly for these girls?

The achievement of the fourth Sustainable Development Goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is failing in our country. Urgent solutions for improving the quality of education are needed that would enable families to work with their children in cooperation with schools, and schools to maintain

ongoing contact with their pupils. That will be possible if we introduce digital support for teaching.

In conclusion, if we want to achieve the Millennium Development Goals at all, we have a duty to learn from the crises we face and to develop innovative strategies for sustainable development. We therefore hope that the Council can provide genuine, effective and lasting support in the management of the pandemic, in the life of our communities and in the support provided to women, who is at the centre of family life in Africa. How? By strengthening the health-care system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to ensure access to quality care and the safety of health-care professionals, by financing medical research for local production of health-care items and medicines, by strengthening the communication system and adapting it to our people's realities, and, finally, by creating structures for educational support that are digitally based beginning in primary school.

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

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

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. I also listened attentively to the statement made by Ms. Kibambe as a representative of civil society. I also welcome the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to today's meeting.

The current political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is generally positive. China welcomed the smooth formation of the new Government and the adoption of its three-year programme of action. That demonstrates the firm resolve of President Tshisekedi and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to maintain national stability, promote reforms, improve people's livelihoods and enhance governance capacity. China expects all parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to unite as one and work together to achieve those goals.

The security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains grim, with armed violence continuing unabated. It is hoped that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will promote the disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programme so that militants will lay down their weapons,

reintegrate into society and effectively tackle the root causes of conflict and violence.

At the same time, countries in the region should strengthen cooperation to jointly deal with the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources and prevent the cross-border movement of weapons, ammunition and combatants.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region have made tremendous efforts to advance the resolution of security issues in South Kivu and implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme in the region. China highly commends those efforts and hopes that the various entities of the United Nations system will work closely together to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the region in responding comprehensively to the prevailing security challenges.

Due to the effects of the volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo, the coronavirus disease pandemic and the Ebola epidemic, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing severe challenges. China has noted that the International Monetary Fund and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have signed a relevant credit programme. We hope that the international community will honour its commitments to providing assistance, helping the Democratic Republic of the Congo rebuild its economy, improving people's livelihoods and the humanitarian situation, and enhancing the country's capacity to respond to epidemics and natural disasters.

Under the leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, MONUSCO has done a great deal to stabilize the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. China wishes to thank the troop- and police-contributing countries of MONUSCO for their contributions. It is hoped that MONUSCO will enhance its capacity to protect and strengthen communication with the people so as to increase their trust and support for MONUSCO.

MONUSCO has already withdrawn from the Kasai provinces in accordance with its drawdown plan. We hope that the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government and the entities of the United Nations system on the ground will jointly increase their input into peacebuilding. Recently, a Malawi peacekeeper

was attacked and killed. China strongly condemns attacks against peacekeepers and calls for better protection of the safety and security of peacekeepers, in accordance with resolution 2518 (2020).

China will continue to support the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve long-term peace and stability and is ready to work with all parties to make positive contributions to peace, stability and development in the country.

Mr. Kimani (Kenya): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Kenya, the Niger and Tunisia — and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

It is with immense sadness that the A3+1 has learned of the recent assassination of His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, and the injuries to his wife. We categorically condemn that egregious act and look forward to a swift investigation into the matter so that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to President Moïse's family, as well as the Government and the people of Haiti and the Caribbean region, for their great loss. Our prayers and thoughts are with our Haitian brothers and sisters during this difficult period. The A3+1 stands in solidarity with the Haitian people and prays that President Moïse's family, as well as the Government and people of Haiti, find the strength and fortitude to assuage their grief at this time of mourning.

The A3+1 thanks Ms. Bintou Keita for her briefing on the activities of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and commends her for her commitment to peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also thank Ms. Ritha Kibambe for her briefing. We reaffirm our continued support for MONUSCO's mandate and its effective response to its dynamic operating environment.

We remain concerned at the growing humanitarian needs in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are being worsened by the ongoing violence, the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic and the influx of refugees who fled the Central African Republic in the wake of the December 2020 elections.

We commend the Government for its prompt humanitarian response to the victims of the volcanic

eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. We call on all international partners to provide the necessary support to the 2021 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The A3+1 recognizes the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in addressing the incessant conflict, killings and grave violations taking place in the eastern parts of the country, including, as mentioned in the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/587), the declaration of the state of emergency in conflict-affected eastern provinces.

We support MONUSCO's continued collaboration with Government security agencies in combating armed groups. We call for the intensification of joint planning and tactical operations, including through the deployment of intelligence and surveillance capabilities for the early detection of potential threats of armed group activity. We urge the United Nations and financial and technical partners to support the strengthening of the capacities of national institutions responsible for the rule of law, security and inclusive development in order to create safe environments conducive to sustainable peace.

The A3+1 welcomes the establishment of a disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programme by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its programme of action for 2021-2023. We further acknowledge the establishment of a contact and coordination group mandated to oversee non-military approaches towards the eradication of hostile forces in the Great Lakes region.

The A3+1 stresses the importance of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation programmes that offer comprehensive solutions to ex-combatants and strengthen the resilience of the communities that host them. In that regard, we appreciate MONUSCO's role in disarming and providing reintegration support to more than 120 disengaged Congolese ex-combatants.

In view of the gradual exit and drawdown of MONUSCO from the provinces of Kasai, Kasai-Central and Tanganyika, it is critical to develop and execute a transition plan that entails, inter alia, an efficient transfer of important tasks such as early-warning networks to the host Government. The transitions should be complemented by peacebuilding efforts focusing on socioeconomic development initiatives

that promote post-conflict reconstruction to prevent potential relapse into conflict.

The A3+1 is gravely concerned by the increasing incidents of violence, including sexual and gender-based violence against women and children, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We strongly condemn those egregious acts and call for redoubled efforts to protect civilians and ensure that those involved are brought to justice. The increasing indiscriminate use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces to attack civilians and United Nations personnel is alarming. We call for stringent measures to deny such armed groups access to components for the manufacture of IEDs.

The Government should continue strengthening its justice sector to defend human rights in line with its zero-tolerance policy on gender-based violence. To that end, we call on international partners to provide capacity-building support for the relevant State institutions and agencies.

The A3+1 reiterates its commitment to the principle of subsidiarity as enshrined in the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations. We recognize the significant role of regional organizations, in particular the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, in supporting mediation and dialogue and promoting sustainable peace and security and development.

The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a whole have hardly benefited from their country's vast natural resources. Armed groups, militias and other hostile forces are highly motivated to gain access to those natural resources. The illegal proceeds are then transported to multiple countries. In that way, the natural wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has become a driver of conflict, violence and instability rather than development and prosperity.

If the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to know sustained peace, the role of natural resources must be turned around: first, by enhancing State presence in mineral-rich areas; secondly, by ensuring that the relevant agencies have the capacity to manage the entire natural-resource extraction continuum; and thirdly, by ploughing accrued proceeds into national development and peacebuilding programmes.

As such, we recognize the important role of regional cooperation in promoting the implementation of the provisions of the Addis Ababa framework agreement, including implementing tools such as the Lusaka Declaration to Fight Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources in the Great Lakes Region. We therefore welcome the recent visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the Heads of State of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda as positive steps in that direction.

We commend the efforts made by the Government, with the support of MONUSCO and Member States, to improve and strengthen its weapons and ammunitions management to reduce the risk of the diversion of arms to armed groups. We encourage continued regional approaches, such as the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States, to deal with that menace. As the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes progress in those areas, the Council should give due consideration to the request for the removal of the notification requirement for the Government to acquire weapons.

In conclusion, we reiterate our steadfast support for MONUSCO in its efforts to provide security for the civilian population and support the strengthening of key State institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We stand in solidarity with the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in their quest for sustainable peace and socioeconomic prosperity.

Mr. Ragutthalli (India): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing on the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/587), as well as Ms. Ritha Kibambe for her useful insights. I also welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at today's meeting.

The political developments in recent months illustrate the firm commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's leadership, despite challenges, to move forward on the reform agenda. We welcome the formation of a new coalition and the installation of a new Government.

Twenty-seven per cent representation of women in the Council of Ministers is indeed a positive development. The adoption of a programme of action for 2021-2023 and legislation on the reform of the Independent National Electoral Commission have

also raised hopes. We are appreciative of the progress being made towards the holding of elections in 2023. The political climate remains vibrant, which is a healthy sign. We hope that the ruling coalition and the opposition will continue to work to reduce political tensions and address the challenges that the country currently faces.

The security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains unstable. The activities of armed groups, particularly the Allied Democratic Forces, are a cause of serious concern. The civilian population in the region has come under increasing attacks in recent months. In that context, we take note of the declaration of a state of siege by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in North Kivu and Ituri provinces. We hope the military administration and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) will undertake operations to neutralize armed groups in an effective manner and address the grievances of the population.

We strongly condemn the killing of a peacekeeper from Malawi and five civilians during an armed attack in North Kivu on 10 May. I express condolences on behalf of my Government to the families of the peacekeepers and to the Government and the people of Malawi, as well as to the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The perpetrators of the crime must be swiftly brought to justice. It is unfortunate and worrisome that crimes against peacekeepers are on the rise and consequently we need to take urgent and effective measures to protect the protectors.

We believe that the proactive regional diplomacy practised by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will help to jointly address the problem in the affected provinces in the east of the country. The new disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programme and the implementation of reforms of the security sector and justice system have found a place in the national action plan.

We hope that the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will expedite those measures, in addition to building the capacity of the FARDC. Only concerted action can help find a long-term solution to instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to stress that the primary responsibility to fight armed groups lies with the FARDC, not the

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

The humanitarian situation has further deteriorated due to the pandemic and volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. More than 9 million people are in need of assistance. We hope that the glaring gap in funding for the humanitarian response plan will be addressed by generous assistance from the donor community.

I am happy to inform the Security Council that the Indian peacekeeping contingent in Goma extended all possible assistance to local authorities and the population during the volcanic eruption. Indian peacekeepers secured United Nations assets at the Goma airport and positioned quick reaction forces.

They also played a key role in the activation of a crisis control centre and aided and provided security to the local population during the evacuation, as well as food, water and medical assistance. Indian peacekeepers also ensured safe accommodation and medical assistance to evacuated United Nations personnel in Sake and supported the safe return of the displaced population to the area. The Indian level-3 hospital in Goma also continued to function during the volcanic eruption.

Lastly, with regard to the joint strategy for the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO, we look forward to receiving the transition plan in the next report of the Secretary General, to be submitted in September. The drawdown needs to be based on the security situation on the ground and the capacity of the FARDC to address challenges. With respect to the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, we call for its uniform implementation, covering both the uniformed and civilian components, including the leadership. There should be no selective approach, holding only the troop-contributing countries accountable for the effective performance of the Mission.

Mrs. Buenrostro Massieu (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On waking up today, we were saddened to learn about the news of the cowardly assassination of the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse, in Port-au-Prince. Mexico extends its deepest condolences to his relatives and to the people and the Government of Haiti. We categorically condemn the attack and violence in all its manifestations. We hope that there will be a full investigation into the incident. My country calls on all parties to exercise restraint and condemn the violence

so that parties can take steps to ensure peace and stability in Haiti.

We thank Special Representative Bintou Keita and Ritha Kibambe for their briefings. We also welcome the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to today's meeting.

Since the Security Council's last meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/PV. 8807) and as we have just heard, the country has undergone a number of political and security developments, such as the formation of the new Government and the declaration of a state of emergency. The humanitarian situation has also been affected by the volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. All those events have taken place alongside the phased drawdown of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

With respect to the political situation, Mexico welcomes the formation of the new Government in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We acknowledge efforts to increase the number of women in the Cabinet and encourage the Government to continue along that path.

With regard to security developments, we note the recent extension of the state of emergency in North Kivu and Ituri. However, despite those extraordinary measures, we are concerned about the ongoing violence in the east of the country. Mexico strongly condemns the actions that resulted in civilian deaths and in some cases also affected religious sites in Beni, as well as essential services infrastructure such as the General Hospital in Boga. We call for those incidents to be investigated and for those responsible to be held accountable.

We are also concerned about the increase in the use of improvised explosive devices. In that regard, we urge the competent authorities to impose stricter controls on the materials used in the making of those devices.

Turning now to the humanitarian situation, Mexico thanks the various national authorities, humanitarian actors and staff of the MONUSCO for their work to provide support to those affected by the volcanic eruption. We reiterate the importance of providing unfettered humanitarian access and ensuring that the protection of humanitarian workers is a priority.

Mexico also notes that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is now confronting its third wave of the

coronavirus disease pandemic. We know that some 36,000 doses of the vaccine have been administered. However, it is clear that that number is insufficient for a country of approximately 90 million people. We must therefore redouble efforts to facilitate universal, fair, equitable and affordable access to vaccines for the entire Congolese population. We must always bear in mind that those vaccines are a public commodity.

With regard to the phased drawdown of MONUSCO, we note the withdrawal from Kasai and Kasai-Central provinces on 30 June. We thank the Mission for its work in those provinces. Regarding the transition process, Mexico welcomes the establishment of the joint working group, comprising several entities, including the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations. Such coordinated efforts are essential for establishing benchmarks, which will ensure the continuation of the phased drawdown of MONUSCO and the transfer of functions to national authorities. Mexico hopes that process will continue and will include a diversity of voices from civil society, in particular those of women and young people.

We also hope to see the establishment of the disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programme, as well as the implementation of security sector reforms. It is also important to ensure the continuation of tasks in key areas, such as caring for children in armed conflict. That role is played by the MONUSCO Child Protection Section, together with UNICEF. We must bear in mind that the situation of children in armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is extremely worrisome and that continuing efforts to address it will prevent setbacks in that area.

In conclusion, Mexico believes that it is imperative to ramp up activities to counteract narratives that incite hatred among communities, which damage the social fabric and lead to greater violence, including sexual violence. Actions to combat hate speech must be an integral part of all the political processes currently under way in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing. It was very valuable to hear directly from her what her priorities and goals are for the coming months. We extend our continued appreciation to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO),

its leadership and the troop- and police-contributing countries. I thank Ms. Kibambe for sharing her sobering perspective on the situation concerning coronavirus disease in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It was very valuable to hear, as we look at the limited progress that has been made and the actions that are needed going forward.

Let me also join fellow Security Council members in extending my deepest condolences to the family and colleagues of Lance Corporal Kamanga, the Malawian peacekeeper who was killed on 10 May while serving in MONUSCO. The United States condemns all attacks against peacekeepers in the strongest terms.

We welcome the inauguration of the new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has a historic opportunity to deliver on crucial reforms for the Congolese people. To that effect, we also commend the appointment of a record number of women to ministerial posts, which is a key milestone for equitable gender representation. We look forward to continued progress on the ambitious goals for gender equity that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has set for itself.

As we heard today, insecurity and violence in eastern Congo continues to threaten civilians and imperil the fragile gains made by MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We remain deeply concerned about the deteriorating security situation and the upsurge in civilian deaths owing to attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, more commonly known as the Allied Democratic Forces, and other armed groups.

The extraordinary state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu provinces continues. It is critical that the security services respect human rights and guarantee humanitarian access throughout all conflict-affected areas. The Congolese Government has the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians and should cooperate with MONUSCO as it implements its mandate to protect civilians. In all stabilization efforts, we call for transparency and coordination among regional partners across the Great Lakes region.

The United States also welcomes the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's new disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization framework and we encourage continued steps to operationalize it, in partnership with

MONUSCO. The Congolese Government must also work to continue advancing gender-responsive security sector reform.

Confronting all the challenges in eastern Congo requires the full implementation of the commitments made under the African Union's Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework to enhance security, end impunity for human rights violations and abuses and support stability. We reiterate the importance of addressing the root causes of violence, including by tackling the illegal exploitation of minerals and trafficking in small arms and providing alternative economic opportunities to former combatants and their communities.

MONUSCO continues to play a key role in stabilizing the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reducing intercommunal tensions and helping minimize the impact of military operations on civilians. We are very encouraged by MONUSCO's efforts to implement Force Intervention Brigade reforms, including the participation of new troop-contributing countries and the deployment of new quick reaction force units. But the real test will be in the Brigade's performance, especially in executing its protection of civilian missions. We commend MONUSCO's critical contributions in the fight against impunity and its support for the Congolese authorities in prosecuting crimes involving human rights violations.

The United States remains concerned about reports of rape and other forms of conflict-related sexual violence. Women and girls remain disproportionately impacted by violence, but they also play pivotal roles in conflict prevention and resolution. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to promote women's meaningful participation in the security sector and we commend MONUSCO's ongoing efforts to support that important work.

We welcome the extension of the mandate of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the renewal of the arms embargo, the travel ban and the asset freeze for another 12 months. Those measures will continue to promote peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Group's reporting continues to be of great value to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the Security Council.

Looking ahead, we welcome joint efforts by MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to set benchmarks to guide future transition planning and the transfer of tasks to the United Nations country team in what will be the eventual Government ownership that will allow the peacekeeping mission to end. Strengthening the capacity of local authorities, supporting community-level mediation and building rule-of-law and judicial systems remain critical to ensure that MONUSCO's contributions underpin long-term stability and peace for the Congolese people.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): Let me also start by offering my deepest condolences to the people of Haiti for the killing of President Moïse and the wounding of his wife. We strongly condemn those horrific crimes.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Kibambe for their briefings.

I would like to start by welcoming the establishment of a new Government and the progress made towards greater representation of women in public life. We praise the commitments of the Government to implement security and justice reforms under its programme of action and facilitate the protection of women's rights. It is important that the implementation of those reforms remain high on the agenda, together with preparations for the 2023 elections.

We remain concerned that, despite the declared state of siege, the security situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to deteriorate. It is worrisome that multiple armed groups and State agents continue to perpetrate human rights violations and abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence.

In that connection, we condemn the recent attack against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), which took the life of a peacekeeper as she served to ensure the protection of civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Accordingly, it is crucial to make further efforts to address the root causes of the conflict, investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of serious violations and bring them to justice. In that regard, we commend the work of MONUSCO, together with its Force Intervention Brigade, for its continued support for the

Congolese authorities and civilians in providing area security and combating impunity.

It is equally concerning that the number of grave violations committed against women and children remains very high. In that regard, we encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursue its commitments and efforts to prevent such violations. We also express support for the work of MONUSCO, UNICEF and other partners for their engagement in preventing such violations.

The recent volcanic eruption has triggered additional hardship for the Congolese people and put more pressure on the dire humanitarian situation. We praise the efforts carried out by the Congolese authorities, MONUSCO, international partners and humanitarian actors in response to the eruption's devastating effects. We encourage the Government to continue its efforts in addressing the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In conclusion, we commend the progress made on the implementation of the Joint Justice Reform Support Programme. We also believe that it is crucial to further advance the implementation of the national strategy on the security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

Lastly, we welcome the Special Representative's continued engagement with the Congolese Government in the implementation of the joint strategy for the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO. It is important that the transition plan include benchmarks and indicators that are objective and measurable. The Government should also ensure equal opportunities for all stakeholders, including civil society and humanitarian actors, who are engaged in the development and implementation of this plan.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I would also like to express our shock and deepest condolences with regard to the assassination of Jovenel Moïse, President of Haiti, and the attacks on his family. Our thoughts are with his family and the people of Haiti.

I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting. I also thank Special Representative Keita and Ms. Kibambe for their informative briefings. Let me start by highlighting some recent positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The installation of a new Government, with more women than ever before, and the adoption of the Government's

programme of action for 2021-2023 both provide a solid basis for advancement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the same time, we urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in the current electoral reform efforts. Norway expects everyone's voice — including civil society, women and youth — to be heard in this comprehensive effort leading up to the Presidential election in 2023.

While we welcome progress in some areas, we cannot downplay the serious challenges related to humanitarian needs and the protection of civilians in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These challenges have only been exacerbated by the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in May.

The increasing violence, particularly in Ituri province, and the growing number of violations against children is deeply concerning. We condemn all attacks and demand that all actors respect and comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. That also applies to Ituri and North Kivu provinces, which are both presently under a state of siege.

As the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is drawing down, root causes of conflict must be addressed. Security sector reform and a sustainable framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are crucial. Yet, these efforts must also be complemented by initiatives to promote peace and reconciliation, including through strengthening the fight against impunity and providing greater support to transitional justice and dialogue.

Peace and reconciliation efforts need to encompass and empower the people affected by instability and violence, including victims and survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. In that regard, we commend the extraordinary work of organizations and individuals, such as Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mr. Mukwege, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

One thing is clear — innovative grassroots initiatives led by local people are needed if we are to reach a more stable situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, these initiatives must be supported by the Council, the broader United Nations membership and countries and organizations

of the region. My delegation hopes that the formation of a new Government will create new momentum to address those challenges.

We are at a turning point in terms of MONUSCO's presence. The complete drawdown from the Kasai region this month will be followed by the exit from Tanganyika province next year. Norway expects MONUSCO to continue to work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the drawdown remains sustainable and that the stabilization and peacebuilding priorities outlined in the mandate can continue. The Mission's role in ensuring the protection of civilians must remain a priority, even with fewer troops. In that respect, we are looking forward to receiving the transition plan for MONUSCO in September, as requested in resolution 2556 (2020).

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam): I would like to express our condolences to the family of President Moïse of Haiti and the Government and the people of Haiti for this tragic event.

I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for her informative briefing, and Ms. Ritha Kibambe for sharing her insights. I also welcome the participation of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at today's meeting.

Viet Nam welcomes the steps taken by the newly formed Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure political stability in order to carry out key reforms towards sustainable peace and development. This support is evident in the nearly unanimous endorsement of the Government's programme of action for 2021-2023 by the Parliament. We also commend genuine efforts to increase the representation of women in Government, resulting in a 10 per cent increase — from 17 to 27 per cent — in the number of women members of the Government.

However, on the security front, my delegation is troubled by the deterioration of the situation in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri due to the increase of illegal activities of armed groups, as well as persistent intercommunal violence in those three provinces and Tanganyika. Many innocent civilians, including women and children, have fallen victims to those hostilities. We reiterate our strong condemnation of attacks against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel, and call for strengthening their protection.

The humanitarian situation continues to be alarming due to the volatile security situation, combined with the impact of socioeconomic hardship, displacement, the coronavirus disease epidemic and natural disasters, such as the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo. The number of people in need of assistance has risen from 15.6 million in 2020 to 19.6 million this year — 21 per cent of the population. In addition, 27.3 million people — 29 per cent of the population — more than half of whom are women, are facing food insecurity, 6.7 million of whom are at emergency level 4 of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

We call on the international community to step up its assistance to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The current situation in the country necessitates sustained and coordinated action to address the root causes of instability. We encourage greater concerted efforts to combat the illegal exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources, as well as to promote reconciliation among communities, address hate speech and promote socioeconomic development and education. To that end, we also support efforts to accelerate activities relating to disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization programmes, as well as security sector reform. My delegation values the importance of intensifying regional cooperation and the support of the international community in addressing those root causes.

Stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region requires meaningful cooperation among regional parties. We take note of the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and countries of the region in order to deepen cooperation in the fight against common security threats. We also welcome the engagement of President Tshisekedi in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union.

At the same time, it is critical that efforts to ensure peace and development for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo be coupled with the assistance of international partners. We call for the continuation and expansion of this valuable support.

My delegation strongly supports the important role played by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) on the ground. With regard to the Mission's exit strategy, we take note of the close coordination among the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Mission, the United Nations

country team and other partners to implement the joint strategy for the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO.

Given the uncertainty in several parts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is important to preserve the prior hard-won achievements by ensuring a conditions-based transition of the Mission in the light of the evolution of this situation. A detailed transition plan, as requested in resolution 2556 (2020), will be greatly instrumental in evaluating our steps forward.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): Before I begin my statement, I would like to join others and you, Mr. President, in condemning the abhorrent murder of President Moïse of Haiti. We send our condolences to the people of Haiti and to President Jovenel Moïse's family, and our thoughts are with the injured first lady. The Security Council should continue to closely monitor developments in Haiti, and we must ensure accountability for those responsible for the murder.

Let me begin my response to this morning's briefing by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her comprehensive briefing and also for her reassuring leadership. I would also like to express through Special Representative Keita our condolences on the killing of the peacekeeper, Lance Corporal Chitenji Kamanga, who was simply trying to protect civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and do her job. It is appalling that she should be murdered, and we condemn that. I am also very grateful to Ms. Kibambe for her first-hand account of responding to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) under what are very challenging circumstances.

I will focus my statement on three issues: the state of siege in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the humanitarian situation and the transition of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), including the Special Representative's action plan.

The United Kingdom continues to be concerned by the deteriorating situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in North Kivu and Ituri. The civilian population continues to withstand appalling attacks by armed groups, and personnel from MONUSCO and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) continue to lose their lives as they attempt to tackle these armed groups. Concerted efforts are required to combat the armed

groups and, critically, to disrupt support from their political and economic backers.

We take note in this context of the state of siege announced by President Tshisekedi on 6 May, his acknowledgement of the challenges the FARDC need to overcome in order to tackle armed groups effectively, and his commitment to addressing those challenges. The manner in which the state of siege is implemented will determine its success, and in this regard, the United Kingdom urges the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the state of siege remains transparent and time limited and that it continues to be implemented with full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law. We also encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to increase FARDC collaboration, including joint planning with MONUSCO, to ensure coordinated efforts to tackle the armed groups.

On a related note, we look forward to the completion of the enhancements brought to MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade later this month, and we also agree wholeheartedly with Special Representative Keita's assessment that military means alone cannot provide or guarantee security. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must focus on using security to enhance governance.

As we have noted several times before, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is dire. We remain concerned about the ongoing threat posed by COVID-19, which makes, as we have heard today, the country extremely vulnerable to the health, food, security, social and economic impacts of the pandemic. The United Kingdom has provided almost \$17 million to support the Democratic Republic's response to COVID-19 and the rapid, and the effective response to the recent resurgence of Ebola in North Kivu demonstrated the importance of responding to health emergencies through local health structures and leadership.

Turning to the transition of the United Nations presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Kingdom welcomes the establishment of the joint working group between the Government and the United Nations. We encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage fully with MONUSCO and the United Nations country team through the joint working group, including on

the articulation of a joint transition plan that is being provided to the Council in September.

Effective coordination between MONUSCO and the United Nations country team will also be essential to the success of the transition, and we encourage continued efforts to overcoming remaining coordination challenges. In this respect, we welcome the progress that has been made in Tanganyika to bring MONUSCO, the United Nations country team, local authorities and civil society together to operationalize the provincial transition plan. In addition to the cessation of MONUSCO's operations in the Kasais, these joint efforts in Tanganyika will enable MONUSCO to focus its efforts on the three remaining provinces in the eastern Democratic Republic heavily affected by conflict. As MONUSCO's transition progresses, it will be important to reflect on the experiences and lessons learned in provinces from which the Mission has already departed.

Finally, we want to support Special Representative Keita's four objectives, which she set out so clearly in her briefing this morning. We agree that it is critical that the Mission support the Government in the implementation of the Government's action plan. We agree that it is particularly critical that the elections in 2023 happen on time, and we encourage her to continue to press for the right appointments being made now so that the Democratic Republic of the Congo can prepare effectively and deliver credible elections. We also think that political engagement to ensure non-military solutions to the violence should be pursued energetically. Lastly, we agree that, where it comes to the transition benchmarks, we need to see a clear connection between the Government's action plan and the results that drive the transition process.

I again thank Special Representative for her leadership.

Mr. Repkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We learned with great sadness of the terrible events that led to the assassination of the President of Haiti, Jovenel Moïse. We would like to express our sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Haiti and to the family of the President who was killed.

We are grateful to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Bintou Keita, for

her informative briefing. We also carefully listened to Ritha Kibambe's briefing.

Russia is closely monitoring the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where, owing to constant attacks by armed groups in the eastern provinces, a state of siege was imposed. In spite of the efforts of the Government and MONUSCO, illegal armed groups continue to maintain significant military capacity.

The main threat is represented by the Allied Democratic Forces. We are very concerned about the increase in the number of victims among the civilian population killed by the guerrillas. That number, according to the United Nations, just for the period from March to June, has exceeded 500 persons.

It is very disconcerting that the Congolese authorities have so far not been able to resolve the problem of the illegal exploitation and export of natural resources from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are used by illegal allied groups to finance their activities.

At the same time, we note that thanks to the efforts of the Government and MONUSCO, the situation in Tanganyika province is gradually stabilizing. We are also very concerned about the humanitarian situation, which is a source of concern to us. The situation has deteriorated owing to the coronavirus disease pandemic and the incipient economic downturn in the country, and it was further worsened by the eruption of the Nyiragongo volcano, in North Kivu, which killed more than 30 people and left over 20,000 homeless. Thousands were forced to flee to neighbouring regions.

We would like to particularly commend the rapid reaction of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thanks to which most people were able to return to their homes. We would also highlight the role of the MONUSCO peacekeepers, including Russian-contracted pilots, who provided assistance to refugees and victims.

We expect that the Government will manage to retake control of the security situation, focus its efforts on improving the humanitarian situation, contribute to sustainable socioeconomic development, resolve the border disputes with its neighbours and intercommunal conflicts, and implement the programme for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. In that connection, we take note

of the approved Government programme of action for 2021-2023.

At the same time, it is important to continue to work on implementing the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. One of the key pillars of that agreement is expanding security cooperation among the countries of the region. We also hope that the United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region will contribute to normalizing the situation there.

We welcome the peacekeeping role of the leaders of the States of the Southern African Development Community region and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We deem it very important for regional players to continue their efforts to establish an atmosphere of cooperation on that part of the continent.

In that connection, we welcome the peace initiatives by the States of the region and in particular the readiness of President Félix Tshisekedi, as Chair of the African Union, to offer his good offices in resolving disputes on the continent. We also welcome his meetings with the Presidents of Uganda and Rwanda. During those meetings, issues of establishing bilateral economic cooperation were discussed as well as joint measures against illegal armed groups.

Russia, including as a participant in the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, intends to continue to actively contribute to the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region as a whole.

In conclusion, we would like to express our support for the efforts of MONUSCO to stabilize the situation in the country. We were dismayed to hear reports of the protests against the presence of MONUSCO that took place in early April in North Kivu as well as attacks by the local population against the Mission. We believe that such actions could derail its activities.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): We are deeply saddened by the horrible assassination of President Jovenel Moïse of Haiti and the attack against his wife. We convey our sincere condolences to the family and to the people and the Government of Haiti.

I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita and Ms. Ritha Kibambe for their very relevant and enlightening statements. Ireland is grateful to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for its very important work and for the information provided today on the situation with respect to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also take note of the recent COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility delivery and hope that vaccine doses will be distributed and administered throughout the country.

The adoption of the programme of action of the Union sacrée de la nation is a significant step forward for change and reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region. That could benefit the Congolese people in various ways, including by improving stability, strengthening governance systems, empowering women, and combating impunity and corruption.

We welcome the efforts of President Tshisekedi, as Chair of the African Union, to deepen the engagement of the African Union in the region.

It is vital to facilitate cooperation with other regional organizations as well as neighbouring States to respond to common threats, in particular the ongoing threat posed by armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ireland commends the priority attached by President Tshisekedi, in his role as Chair of the African Union, to the participation of women in the peace process and negotiations. We also commend his efforts to increase the number of women in the Government. That trend must continue to make true strides in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

(*spoke in English*)

Ireland is deeply concerned by the rising insecurity, the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the alarming levels of human rights violations and abuses, including by State actors, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The recent volcanic eruption added to and indeed illustrated the multiple and overlapping fragilities facing the people of the country and the Great Lakes region.

President Tshisekedi's declaration of a state of siege demonstrates the scale of the violence in Ituri and North Kivu provinces. We believe that it is important that all actors respect human rights during this period.

Grave human rights violations and abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including by State actors, remain of deep concern. Ireland welcomes efforts to end impunity for such violations. However, the continuing reports of widespread sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, highlight the fact that the authorities must urgently redouble their efforts to hold perpetrators to account.

The precarious situation of the most vulnerable of all, children, affected by the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo simply must remain our focus. All victims and survivors deserve and must have access to appropriate supports and to justice. The Congolese Government has a clear responsibility to ensure that this is provided.

In our briefings today we heard that the humanitarian situation remains bleak, with a shocking 20 million people now in need of assistance. The rates of acute food insecurity, severe malnutrition and displacement are deeply worrying.

The combination of conflict, natural disasters and a resurgent COVID-19 pandemic clearly contribute to that worsening situation. Ireland is continuing to provide support to the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has provided more than €4.5 million in humanitarian assistance so far this year.

It is vital that humanitarian workers can operate freely and that humanitarian space be respected. We condemn all attacks against humanitarian workers in the strongest possible terms.

Looking forward, it is crucial that MONUSCO's gradual withdrawal be conditions-based and undertaken in step with the security situation on the ground. The implementation of the drawdown must also include critical reforms in the justice and security sectors, drawing on tools and actors right across the fields of humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution and sustainable development.

Ireland welcomes the establishment of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. We believe that it must be effective and inclusive if we are to achieve lasting peace. Recent events in Goma highlight once again the importance of the links between peacebuilding, humanitarian action and sustainable development.

The operationalization and implementation of the transition should take place with the participation of all stakeholders, including United Nations agencies, the Peacebuilding Commission, non-governmental organizations and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is absolutely fundamental that women and civil society groups be meaningfully included in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the transition. That offers by far the best prospect for sustainability.

We know that MONUSCO is doing much to address increases in attacks on civilians, which is at the core of its mandate. Ireland is concerned, however, by the growth in anti-MONUSCO sentiment in the form of protests and attacks. Delivering on MONUSCO's mandate can succeed only with the support of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We will continue, for our part, to support MONUSCO's important work.

(spoke in French)

In conclusion, it is clear that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at a critical moment in its history. It requires the continued and deep engagement of the international community and the Council in particular. I wish to reaffirm the strong support of my country, Ireland, for MONUSCO and for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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

(spoke in French)

I thank Ms. Bintou Keita for her briefing. I also welcome the commitment of Ms. Ritha Kibambe and all the women on the front lines of the response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

I would like to highlight three points.

First, there is an urgent need to put a stop to the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The use of homemade bombs in Beni is a disturbing development that France strongly condemns. In view of the increase in attacks by armed groups, it is imperative to refocus the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) on the eastern provinces. The means to protect civilians must be fully mobilized by the Mission, in conjunction with the country's own armed

forces. The Force Intervention Brigade, which has just been reinforced, must play its full part in that regard.

France welcomes the commitment of several political leaders and members of civil society to fight against hate speech, which incites intercommunal violence. Hate speech must not be directed against Congolese institutions or the international presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As President Tshilombo Tshisekedi recently stated in Beni: “MONUSCO is here to help us stabilize the country”.

That brings me to my second point regarding the rights and health of the population, which must be the focus of our attention. Human rights must be respected and civic spaces guaranteed, especially in areas in a state of siege. The fight against impunity must continue and, in that connection, France welcomes the conviction of 21 Union des révolutionnaires pour la défense du peuple Congolais fighters by the Ituri military tribunal for crimes against humanity.

The humanitarian situation is deteriorating. Ms. Kibambe recalled the magnitude of the population’s needs in the face of COVID-19. As the country has been hit by a third wave of the disease, France and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have just signed an agreement for €9 million in order to strengthen the health system in North Kivu. The attacks on hospitals are unacceptable. Since the renewal of the sanctions regime concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, those who carry out attacks against medical or humanitarian personnel, as well as those who plan, support or participate in such attacks, may be designated and placed under sanctions by the Security Council.

Thirdly and finally, reforms are needed to accompany MONUSCO’s transition. Stabilizing the east of the country must remain a priority for the new Government. That includes the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy, which should prevent a new cycle of violence. The reform of the police and the army must continue. A transparent and credible framework must also be developed for the 2023 elections. Those efforts will bear fruit only with the firm commitment of the countries of the region. It is high time to provide an operational translation of the consultation undertaken between the stakeholders within the new contact and coordination group. France welcomes that initiative, which is in keeping with the spirit of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement.

The withdrawal of MONUSCO from the Kasais and then Tanganyika requires an increased presence of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The involvement of international financial institutions and regional organizations will be essential. The Peacebuilding Fund must also continue its work, in coordination with the Stabilization Coherence Fund.

The future of the Congolese people, which we hope will be marked by stability, development and peace, depends on our continued commitment.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Empole (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Before I begin, allow me to extend my delegation’s sincere condolences to the Government and the people of Haiti, as well as to the family of His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, in the wake of his assassination. We also wish his wife, who was injured, a swift recovery.

Let me also congratulate you, Sir, on France’s presidency of the Security Council for this month.

I welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/587), presented by his Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, whom I thank for her presence and sustained efforts for peace and security in my country. I also welcome the presence of Ms. Ritha Kibambe, Deputy Head of the Laboratory of Medical Biology at the Ngaliema Clinic, and appreciate her briefing to the Council.

Allow me to make several remarks on some of the points addressed in the abovementioned report, primarily on the political, security and human rights situations, as well as on MONUSCO’s exit strategy.

The political situation during the reporting period was characterized at the national level by the formation of the Union sacrée de la nation Government, the new political coalition that was set up on the initiative of His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That Government, led by the Prime Minister, His Excellency Mr. Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge,

was invested by Parliament on 26 April following the approval of its action programme.

With that approval and recognition by the elected representatives of the people, the Government was thereby authorized to implement the reforms included in its action programme, particularly in the areas of security, justice and administration, in order to improve the living conditions of the population and achieve sustainable development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the level of regional cooperation, the Head of State is pursuing his efforts to normalize relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries, both in the context of economic integration and in the quest for peace and security in the region. In that context, it is appropriate to note, in particular, the June signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda on locating Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces rebels, cross-border trade between the two countries and construction of a road from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo through Beni, inter alia. Three cooperation agreements were also signed between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, including an agreement on the promotion and protection of investments.

On the security front, news in the country was dominated by the establishment of a state of emergency in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri by the Head of State on 3 May, as well as the appointment of military and police Governors and Vice-Governors in the two provinces. That decision has made it possible to achieve significant progress in the fight against resistant armed groups and the demilitarization of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, thanks to that measure, many gains have been made, including the neutralization and surrender of many elements of those armed groups, as well as the dismantling of several illicit trafficking networks smuggling arms and ammunition, minerals and food and non-food supplies to armed groups.

My Government's announcement of the state of emergency and its results to date are an opportunity we should seize by uniting our efforts to eliminate the negative forces and end once and for all the vicious circle of violence. Furthermore, in order to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights during the state of siege in the two provinces concerned, the Government and the army have set up disciplinary mechanisms to severely punish soldiers who violate those rights.

In the context of the implementation of resolution 2556 (2020) and its recommendations on the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO, a joint working group of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO has been established to develop a transition plan to ensure the gradual, responsible, orderly and definitive withdrawal of MONUSCO. Meanwhile, the MONUSCO offices in Kananga and Tshikapa in Kasai have been closed since 30 May, thereby starting the disengagement process.

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate my Government's call on the international community and friends and partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work together to eliminate the negative forces that have operated in the eastern and northern parts of our country for the past 20 years. I assure the Council of our President's determination to restore peace in the east of our country to enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue along its steady path towards genuine rule of law. That will be achieved with an effective Administration, capable of better managing and defending its borders and exercising State authority over the entire country.

Before ending my statement, on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I must thank troop-contributing countries for their support and pay tribute to all those who have lost their lives in the quest for peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular MONUSCO Blue Helmets, including those from Malawi, as mentioned earlier.

The meeting rose at 11.40 a.m.