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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Kimani	(Kenya)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
	Niger	Mr. Abarry
	Norway	Ms. Juul
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. DeShong
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Lagha
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mr. Dang

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/2021/807)

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

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2021/807)

The President: 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. Nelly Godelieve Madiéka Mbangou, Coordinator of Sauti Ya Mama Mukongomani/Voice of Congolese Women.

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/2021/807, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Keita, Ambassador Abdou Abarry, Permanent Representative of the Niger, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ms. Mbangou.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for this new opportunity to address it to present the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/807) 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 would like to focus my briefing today on the overview I presented to the Council in March (see S/2021/316, annex I) and the challenges and opportunities that arise on the road that we must travel together with the Government and the Congolese people in order to continue consolidating the country's democracy, strengthen its institutions and move forward resolutely towards stabilizing the eastern provinces and ensuring the protection of civilians.

The first, and arguably the greatest, challenge concerns security and the protection of civilians in the eastern part of the country. Since the declaration of a state of siege by the Government in North Kivu and Ituri provinces, the Mission has redoubled its efforts to support the armed forces, the police forces and the judicial authorities in order to restore the presence and authority of the State in each of the territories concerned. The force's intelligence-gathering capabilities have been enhanced. Training is provided to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) on military tactics and respect for the principles of human rights and humanitarian law.

The state of siege made it possible to strengthen the partnership between MONUSCO and the FARDC, which translates into progress on the planning and execution of operations. In that regard, all rapid reaction units should be deployed by the end of October to strengthen our capacities to protect civilians during joint operations against armed groups, in accordance with the human rights due diligence policy. Nevertheless, much remains to be done, including to ensure that the human rights of the population are systematically respected in the fight against armed groups.

The promulgation of the ordinance creating the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, on 5 July, and the subsequent appointment of the national coordinator represent a great opportunity. There is a close link between the state of siege and the Programme, which takes complementary approaches to ensure the sustainable dismantling of armed groups. I assured the President and the Prime Minister that the United Nations is fully at the disposal of the Government to advance those processes, including through the sub-working group on the Programme between the Government and MONUSCO.

Finally, the Mission also intensified its political engagement with actors from the conflict zones so

that they support the implementation of the state of siege and maintain a constructive dialogue with military governors.

Although joint military operations against the Allied Democratic Forces resulted in the dismantling of several of the group's strongholds, human rights violations perpetrated by State and non-State actors — in particular in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces — remain worrisome. Between June and August, 367 people were the victims of arbitrary and extrajudicial killings, and 203 others, in particular women and children, were subject to sexual violence. In some regions, in particular in South Kivu, intercommunal conflicts have been fuelled by hate speech. I unequivocally condemn all hate speech, including recent statements encouraging the “cleansing” of Hauts Plateaux and justifying the murder of members of the Banyamulenge community. Such populist, belligerent speech poses a threat to the country's stability and should be judicially sanctioned in a way that sets an example.

The security situation and difficulties in accessing the east of the country continue to hamper humanitarian operations in a context in which one in three people requires assistance. Food insecurity and cyclical epidemics are major concerns. Attacks against schools and hospitals have exacerbated humanitarian challenges in several regions in the east, in particular in Ituri. With more than 5 million people displaced within the country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the highest number of displaced on the African continent. More than 26 million Congolese people are suffering from food insecurity, that is, 29 per cent of the population. I would urge Member States to increase their contributions to the 2021 humanitarian response plan, which provides \$1.98 billion to meet priority needs. To date, unfortunately, the plan has received only slightly more than one quarter of its financing.

I would like to underscore the unwavering commitment of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team to a zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse and to provide comprehensive assistance to victims. Following recent allegations regarding the response to Ebola, the humanitarian country team in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has strengthened its systems to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse. To do so, \$1.5 million has been made available through the humanitarian fund.

(spoke in English)

The second challenge — which I have already addressed in my previous exchanges with the Council — concerns the process of democratic consolidation. While the formation of a new Government in April this year provided an opportunity to advance on critical reforms, the focus of political actors and civil society alike is increasingly gravitating towards the 2023 elections. There is still no consensus on the composition of the National Independent Electoral Commission, and several members of the opposition have organized rallies to contest the reform of the Commission, which has already been adopted by Parliament. In this context of political suspicion, I reiterate the need for an inclusive and peaceful electoral process founded on dialogue, trust and transparency. To that end, MONUSCO continues to pursue its good offices with actors across the political spectrum, including to advocate for increased women's participation in this process.

(spoke in French)

Beyond those challenges, the implementation of the transition plan that was submitted to the Council as an annex to the current report of the Secretary-General is a real opportunity for the Congolese Government and the United Nations system. The operationalization of the plan is closely linked to the Government's programme of action and will hinge to a large extent on the ability of the authorities to finance their priorities and to create the conditions necessary for the Mission's withdrawal. The Government's draft law on financing for 2022, which focuses on security, education and health care while providing budget lines to speed up economic growth, is a step in the right direction. The ongoing resolute support of partners in achieving those far-reaching programmes will be extremely important.

With a view to the Mission's withdrawal from the province of Tanganyika in June 2022, the Mission is working closely with the agencies, funds and programmes to ensure the necessary programme assistance to build on the gains made in the province to date and to deal with the last remaining pockets of insecurity. Clearly, that will integrate the lessons learned from the withdrawal from the Kasai in June of this year.

(spoke in English)

Finally, I would like to highlight President Tshisekedi's ongoing efforts to improve the political climate in the Great Lakes region through active diplomacy and the conclusion of bilateral agreements aimed at fostering increased economic cooperation.

As I have previously noted, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's term at the helm of the African Union offers an opportunity to not only foster peace, stability and development in the Great Lakes region but also to consolidate the partnership between that continental body and the United Nations. Special Envoy Xia and I will continue to work hand in hand to support the realization of the Secretary-General's strategy for the Great Lakes region, in close consultation with the Governments of the region.

As we approach the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, I believe that the joint transition plan constitutes a road map that can help guide the work of the Mission in the coming years and prepare the ground for its orderly and responsible withdrawal. That must not obscure the fact that there is still much to do to silence the guns in the eastern provinces, foster the political dialogue necessary to pave the way for credible and transparent elections in 2023, and support the long-term strengthening of the country's institutions. I therefore call on the Council to continue to provide its full backing to MONUSCO, including by endorsing the joint transition plan with adequate financial resources and playing an active role in its operationalization.

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

I now give the floor to Ambassador Abarry.

Mr. Abarry (Niger) *(spoke in French)*: I have the honour to address the Council in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I intend to give an overview of the Committee's work since my most recent briefing to the Council, on 6 October 2020 (see S/2020/987).

Since my previous briefing, the Committee has had a total of three in-person meetings, all in 2021. Because of the coronavirus disease pandemic, it also met informally by video-teleconference on three occasions in 2020 and four in 2021. In 2020, during the informal consultations held by video-teleconference on 20 November, the Committee heard briefings on the arms embargo presented by the head of the Joint Mission

Analysis Centre of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); several representatives of the MONUSCO Arms Embargo Working Group; the head of the Programme Planning and Management Section of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS); and a representative of UNMAS in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Committee also heard a briefing from the Secretariat.

During the informal consultations held by video-teleconference on 3 December, the Committee heard a briefing from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2020/1283) and examined the conclusions and recommendations appearing therein.

In 2021, during the informal consultations held by video-teleconference with the States of the region on 22 January, the Coordinator of the Group of Experts presented the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the midterm report, following which some States of the region made comments on the report.

During the informal consultations held by video-teleconference on 20 May, the Committee heard a briefing by the Coordinator of the Group of Experts on the final report of the Group (S/2021/560) and examined the conclusions and recommendations contained therein. During the same meeting, the Committee heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict, Mrs. Virginia Gamba de Potgieter, on the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Also in 2021, during the briefing for Member States held on 9 July, the first in-person meeting held since the start of the pandemic, the Coordinator of the Group of Experts presented the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the Group's final report, as contained in document S/2021/560, after which some States in the region shared their comments on the report.

In informal consultations held jointly on 13 July with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013), concerning the Central African Republic, the Committee heard briefings by Ms. Pramila Patten, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

During informal consultations on 30 July, at a meeting on the topic "Gold, tantalum and tungsten mined

in the Democratic Republic of Congo: the illicit trade at the national and international levels”, the Committee heard briefings by the Coordinator and experts on natural resources and finance of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo on the Group’s final report, the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Head of Due Diligence of the Centre of Responsible Business Conduct of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The Committee also held three informal consultations via video-teleconference — on 13 November 2020, 18 May 2021 and 30 June 2021 — with the Head of the follow-up mechanism for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Robert Petit. I would like to reiterate that the Committee continues to support the mechanism, which is assisting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its investigations into the murder of two former members of the Group of Experts, Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp, which took place in March 2017.

In accordance with paragraph 104 of the annex to the note by the President of the Security Council issued as document S/2017/507, the Committee issued two press releases containing a brief summary of the informal consultations held, respectively, on 13 and 30 July.

I would also like to recall that, in its resolution 2478 (2019), the Security Council requested the requested the Group of Experts to circulate to the Committee every 12 months proposed updates to the existing information on the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions list. In that regard, on 10 August 2020, a number of proposals for updating the sanctions list submitted by the Group of Experts were circulated in the Committee.

On 19 August 2020, the Committee accepted the updates for two individuals and three entities and was awaiting further responses from Member States on requests of the Group of Experts regarding the status of certain individuals on the sanctions list in order to update the information on those individuals. Having received additional information, the Committee accepted, on 2 November, the update proposed by the Group of Experts regarding one entry on the list.

In conclusion, I am pleased to inform the Security Council that I intend to accompany a delegation of Committee members on a visit to the Democratic

Republic of Congo from 5 to 10 November. The purpose of the visit is to gather first-hand accounts of the effective implementation of the sanctions imposed by resolution 2360 (2017), as reaffirmed by resolution 2582 (2021). It will also provide an opportunity, in accordance with paragraph 30 of resolution 2360 (2017), to hold consultations with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO and representatives of civil society to ensure the full implementation of the measures set out in the resolution.

The President: I thank Ambassador Barry for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Mbangi.

Ms. Mbangi (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Security Council for granting me this opportunity to address it. I would also like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, who continues to undertake many efforts for the stabilization our country.

The east of the Democratic Republic of Congo has always been the epicentre of the armed conflict and has seen a lot of trouble for more than 20 years: the inter-ethnic war in 1993, the arrival of Rwandan refugees in 1994, the liberation war of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire in 1996, the war of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie in 1998, as well as the two most recent wars and the ongoing presence of national armed and foreign armed groups, which have had a very pernicious impact on the population, in particular on women and children.

In order to ensure peace and security in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Security Council deployed a peacekeeping mission — the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). MONUSCO has been in the Democratic Republic of Congo for more than 20 years and is the largest peacekeeping mission in Africa.

Yet, despite that mission, the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo is still facing several challenges with regard to the numerous wars and intercommunal conflicts, which are ongoing in North Kivu and Ituri and have led to mass displacement of people and sexual violence against women and girls by armed perpetrators. Sometimes women say that members of the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) are committing such acts of violence and sometimes they say such acts are perpetrated by

local or foreign armed groups. Massacres of civilians have been committed in one part of North Kivu by the terrorist group Allied Democratic Forces — National Army for the Liberation of Uganda and in North Kivu and Ituri by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. Natural resources have been looted. People have been kidnapped. There have been robberies. Villages and people's possessions have been set on fire. There is unemployment, abject poverty and trauma. Children are not in school. There is juvenile crime. There has been mass recruitment of children and young people in armed groups, which is preventing women and young people from flourishing in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We commend the efforts of the Government to ensure lasting peace and the well-being of the population. The Head of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo declared, by order 21/015 of 3 May, a state of siege in North Kivu. That decision was welcomed by the population because it resolved the problem of peace and security, which the State and the people of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have so longed for.

We have recently seen, through the Government's efforts, that certain local groups that destabilize some parts of those two provinces have been disbanded. The national army has been strengthened and the State's authority has been restored in part of the province. The Head of State has resolutely launched a substantial campaign to combat corruption in the country. The Head of State has also sought to promote women's political participation through the appointment of 27 per cent of women to key positions within the national Government.

However, despite its ninth extension, the state of siege does not seem to be meeting the expectations of the Head of State — to eradicate all armed groups at the local and national levels that pose a serious threat to the integrity of the national territory. The people of North Kivu and Ituri have made some progress, overall, in the area of peace and security, but Irumu, Djugu and Beni have not fared well.

We also see a deterioration of the situation on the ground in those two provinces, despite the military operations carried out since the beginning of June. According to the civil society monitoring report for Beni and Ituri, 897 civilians have been killed, 580 have disappeared and 148 have been kidnapped. In addition,

the report notes 128 abandoned villages, 904 cases of burglary, 40 cars and 15 motorcycles set ablaze, not to mention burned villages and displaced populations. Ms. Keita provided additional statistics today relating to sexual violence.

This bleak backdrop shows the ineffectiveness of the operations carried out by the FARDC and MONUSCO. In that regard, we call on the Security Council to strengthen the Force Intervention Brigade in order to enable it to restore peace to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; to support the disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration process — a programme that will contribute to both the surrendering of armed groups and the restoration of State authority in several areas affected by insecurity; and to open an international investigation in order to establish responsibility for the crimes against humanity and genocide crimes committed against the people of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also draw the Security Council's attention to the bravery and dynamism of the women of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, who continuously contribute to the peacebuilding process through local community conflict-resolution mechanisms set up by women's networks. They are demonstrating their resilience and are helping to combat violence. They are protecting women and girls and promoting their participation in peace processes through our partnership with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, whose projects we have been implementing since 2017. The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund also supports us in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

We call on the Security Council to advocate within the United Nations to bolster support for women's organizations, which are on the front lines of looking after victims of sexual violence and other trauma related to violent extremism in conflict in order to effectively meet their needs restore their dignity and rights.

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

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of the Niger for his briefing and his work as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to

resolution 1533 (2004). I am also grateful to Ms. Nelly Mbangu for her briefing.

The Democratic Republic of Congo and the States of the region are showing determination in the face of persistent threats. With the support of the United Nations, it is this path of cooperation and perseverance that we must follow towards peace. I would like to make three points.

First, the past few months have seen progress that the international community must support. With regard to security, France welcomes the adoption of the order on disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization. It must be rapidly implemented and receive appropriate funding to offer prospects to those who have chosen peace.

France also welcomes the efforts made in the area of justice and the fight against impunity, as demonstrated by the conviction of nine *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* fighters for crimes against humanity in Bunia and the conviction of members of the armed forces and the national police for serious human rights violations. Those efforts must continue. Justice also contributes to peace on the ground. That is why it is important to spread the model of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission established in Kasai-Central.

The participation of women in decision-making processes must also be promoted, like in the recent appointments to the Central Bank of the Congo and to the heads of the Lualaba and Bas-Uele provinces.

At the regional level, the signing of bilateral cooperation agreements and the commitments made at the Khartoum workshop on natural resources should help build confidence and promote sustainable development.

Secondly, much remains to be done to stabilize the east of the country. Our priority must be to focus efforts on the fight against armed groups in the Kivus and Ituri. The Congolese armed forces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) must coordinate better and increase joint operations. The reconfiguration of the Force Intervention Brigade should enable the Mission to be more effective and to deal with an asymmetrical threat, particularly that of the Allied Democratic Forces. Measures to counter and prevent improvised explosive devices must continue.

The use of force alone will not be sufficient to defeat the negative forces. The state of siege will have lasting effects only if it guarantees respect for human rights and international humanitarian law, the rule of law and access to justice for all. Sexual violence must not go unpunished.

At the regional level, the continuation of exchanges initiated recently between heads of security services must contribute to the fight against armed groups. The Contact and Coordination Group must also rapidly operationalize non-military measures against such groups.

Finally, the reconfiguration of the United Nations presence must continue. The transition plan sets out a clear road map for the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO. A partnership approach is critical. On the one hand, it is up to the Congolese authorities to implement the 2021-2023 action plan, particularly in the area of governance and institution-building. On the other hand, MONUSCO and the country team will continue to support the Government's efforts in the areas of stabilization and the protection of civilians.

In order for the transition to succeed, international and regional partners must step up their support. The improved security situation in Tanganyika will allow MONUSCO to withdraw in 2022. United Nations agencies and the country team should take over. In the Kivus and Ituri, the development of joint programmes among MONUSCO, the country team and local actors must create the conditions for a successful and sustainable transition.

The return to peace and stability will require the commitment of all. In view of the 2023 elections, all stakeholders must engage in dialogue. Let us establish the conditions for a credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful process starting now.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Keita for her briefing. Ireland commends her dynamism and leadership. We are encouraged by the progress made in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). My thanks also go to Ms. Nelly Mbangu for her briefing and for her work in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I also wish to thank my colleague Ambassador Abarry for his briefing regarding the important work of

the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I assure him of the support of my country, Ireland, for the Committee and its Group of Experts. I express Ireland's deep appreciation for the work of the Group of Experts, which monitors the implementation of sanctions. Their important work must be facilitated, and we look forward to the lifting of any restraints on the appointment of experts to the Committee.

Regional cooperation is growing, as demonstrated by the meetings in July among the heads of the intelligence and security services of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania. Ireland welcomes the increased political engagement in the region, and we congratulate President Tshisekedi Tshilombo on his election as Chair of the Southern African Development Community from next year.

The elections scheduled for 2023 will serve as an extremely significant opportunity for the Democratic Republic of Congo. MONUSCO's support will be crucial to ensure that political and electoral processes in the country are credible, transparent, inclusive, peaceful and based on gender equality. We regret the rising tensions over the Independent National Electoral Commission. It is essential that any disputes in relation to the Commission's reform process be resolved in an inclusive, transparent and timely manner.

Ireland is very concerned about the growing insecurity, the humanitarian crisis and the large number of human rights violations and abuses, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The high rates of food insecurity, severe malnutrition and displacement are extremely worrisome.

(spoke in English)

The state of siege has now been extended multiple times. What was envisaged as a temporary, exceptional measure now risks becoming the norm. Ireland notes that the provisions in the state of siege declaration are impacting timely access to justice and the extension of pre-trial detentions, as well as contributing to prison overcrowding.

Ireland is extremely concerned by persistent reports of pervasive sexual and gender-based violence and other grave human rights violations and abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including by

State actors. We stress that the situation of children and the protection of civilians in armed conflict must be prioritized. Furthermore, it is essential that humanitarian and democratic spaces be respected. Ireland condemns, in the strongest terms, all threats and attacks against humanitarian workers, members of civil society and journalists.

MONUSCO's ongoing efforts to support the Congolese authorities in combating impunity and providing justice to victims and survivors by holding those accountable for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations are most welcome.

Ireland also welcomes the creation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme, which offers a real opportunity for the Government, the United Nations and key partners to work together to make progress in that critical area for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Progress continues to be made on the women and peace and security agenda, with positive indications around the meaningful participation of women in political processes. I want to say that MONUSCO's contribution here is impactful, and Ireland notes in particular the Special Representative's work to include women's voices and perspectives in the transition plan and conflict-resolution processes. The inclusion of young people in the transition plan is also of critical importance, as they must have a say in their own futures.

Ireland commends the publication of MONUSCO's transition plan, which is conditions-based and clearly linked to the evolving security situation. The 18 identified benchmarks are comprehensive and should indeed provide a clear and predictable road map for MONUSCO's phased withdrawal. The withdrawal from the Kasai provinces in June and the much-needed bridging supports show that the goals of the transition plan are achievable.

We consider it crucial, however, that there be sufficient flexibility in the plan to allow for setbacks and unexpected challenges. Timelines and benchmarks must be closely monitored and adjusted as necessary in the coming period. It is also essential that civil society continue to be included in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the transition.

(spoke in French)

In conclusion, for Ireland, the transition is a gradual process, leading to a reconfiguration of the strategy, the footprint and the capacity of the United Nations in a way that enables and supports long-term peacebuilding efforts. We hope that resolution 2594 (2021), which the Council adopted unanimously (see S/PV.8852), can serve as an important contribution to our deliberations and to our approach to sustainable transitions.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative Keita, Ambassador Abarry and Ms. Mbangu for their briefings.

I will focus my intervention primarily on two issues, namely, the state of siege currently in place in the North Kivu and Ituri provinces and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) transition strategy.

The continued deterioration of the security situation, the increased frequency of attacks by armed groups, rising casualties and the harrowing humanitarian situation amid the state of siege continue to give us serious cause for concern. Ms. Mbangu's testimony was very powerful on that point. We condemn the ongoing violence and displacement of civilians. The 1.3 million people newly displaced this year and the nearly 400 civilians killed in the past three months serve once again to highlight the desperate need for change in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United Kingdom welcomes the improved operational collaboration between MONUSCO, including its reinforced Force Intervention Brigade, and the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We encourage the relevant stakeholders to continue that collaboration in strict compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy under the state of siege.

We welcome the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's recent evaluation of the state of siege. We call on the Government to ensure the delivery of basic services and that the state of siege remains transparent and time-limited. It must also be implemented with respect for human rights and international law.

A further positive development is the signing of the disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization ordinance. However, it is regrettable that combatants who had previously surrendered

are reportedly returning to the bush. We strongly encourage the timely development of the disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization strategy and mechanisms for its delivery.

Before I come to MONUSCO's transition, let me express our concern regarding sexual exploitation and abuse. We were deeply disappointed to learn of seven new cases reported to MONUSCO during the latest reporting period. In the same week as the final report of the Independent Commission on the review of sexual abuse and exploitation during the response to the tenth Ebola virus disease epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is timely to reaffirm the need for robust action to prevent, tackle and ensure accountability for such incidents. In that regard, we call on MONUSCO to expedite delivery of its action plan on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Turning to MONUSCO's transition, the United Kingdom welcomes the strategy and the identified benchmarks, agreed with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and recently transmitted to the Security Council. Ultimately, the Democratic Republic of the Congo bears responsibility for creating the long-term conditions for peace and MONUSCO's withdrawal. We are therefore encouraged by the strategy's combined focus on United Nations and Government actions and welcome the establishment of the joint working group.

Given that many of the current challenges in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue after MONUSCO's eventual departure, we also recognize the utility of dividing the benchmarks into the minimum conditions required for MONUSCO's exit and priority areas for collaboration with the United Nations country team. We encourage MONUSCO to focus on ensuring that the minimum conditions for its withdrawal are met, while simultaneously preparing the handover of other tasks to the United Nations country team and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo against a clear timeline. The successful delivery of the benchmarks will also require donor support and continued engagement after MONUSCO's departure. We therefore encourage enhanced coordination, in particular with the World Bank as well as donors, humanitarian agencies and the further inclusion of civil society.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: We thank the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, for her substantive briefing. We would like to thank the Permanent Representative of the Niger, Mr. Abarry, for his briefing on the work of Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We listened carefully to the remarks by Ms. Nelly Mbangu.

We are following with concern the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the situation in the eastern provinces of the country. Regrettably, Congolese armed forces and MONUSCO peacekeepers have not yet managed to curb the activities of the numerous illegal armed groups in the area, in particular the Allied Democratic Forces.

A source of concern is the ongoing increase in violence and the number of civilian victims. According to the tragic statistics of the United Nations from June to September, fighters killed more than 600 civilians in the Ituri and North Kivu provinces. We also note the ongoing problem of the illicit exploitation by armed groups of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We believe that, in order to successfully combat those fighters, there is a need for further coordination between peacekeepers and Congolese security forces to help bolster their capacity. We support the Mission's plans to set up a joint centre with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, as well as to strengthen the Force Intervention Brigade. We also commend Ms. Keita's efforts to establish contacts among peacekeepers, the authorities and local populations on the ground, as it creates the much-needed positive environment. Furthermore, we note that the situation in the Kasai region and Tanganyika province is gradually improving.

The humanitarian situation is very complex. We are concerned about the low level of funding for the United Nations humanitarian appeal, in particular given the increase in the number of internally displaced persons. There is clearly a need for additional efforts to respond to the common challenge — the coronavirus disease pandemic. We trust that the Government will be able to restore control in the area of security and focus efforts on improving the humanitarian situation. We trust that the Government will foster socioeconomic development and resolve border disputes with its neighbours,

address intercommunal conflicts and implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy for former combatants.

We have taken note of the transition plan drafted by the United Nations, in coordination with the Congolese authorities, for a gradual withdrawal of peacekeepers from the country. We will study it carefully. It is our principled position that it will be impossible to bring about long-term normalization in the Democratic Republic of Congo through military means alone. It is important to continue efforts to fully implement the foundational Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region in eastern provinces and the Great Lakes region itself.

One of its key areas is to expand cooperation between countries of the region in the area of security. We welcome the resolve of regional players to develop cooperation to normalize the situation in the Great Lakes region. We note the recent meeting between the heads of the intelligence and security services of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, as well as the recent Congolese-Burundian and Congolese-Rwandan summits. Russia, inter alia, as a member of the Group of friends of the Great Lakes Region, intends to continue to actively promote the peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the region as a whole.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing on the most recent developments concerning the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate. I also thank Ambassador Abdou Abarry for his briefing on the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and civil society briefer Nelly Mbangu for her insights. I welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in today's meeting.

Political developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the past three months have been reassuring. The reform measures concerning the Independent National Electoral Commission will strengthen the electoral process. The Government's action to address the security situation in the eastern

Democratic Republic of the Congo has received the support of all stakeholders, including the opposition. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has also engaged proactively with neighbouring countries to address the threat of armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO). Those efforts have resulted in the adoption of a two-year action plan and the establishment of an operational cell in Goma. President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has been elected as the next Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community. The heightened bilateral engagements with Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda have contributed to the regional approach for peace and development in the region.

The reform measures of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have also received the support of the international financial institutions. The participation of women in the political process has been further advanced, including with the appointment of the first female Governor of the Central Bank. We welcome those positive developments. We hope the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and opposition parties will maintain the positive trajectory in the run-up to the 2023 elections.

On the security front, the situation in Ituri and Kivu has remained volatile, with increasing activity by the ADF and CODECO. The attacks against civilians by armed groups have intensified, despite the state of siege. The assertion made by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in his speech to the General Assembly at its seventy-sixth session last month (see A/76/PV.3) about the presence of terrorists operating under the cover of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the ADF in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema needs to be taken seriously.

The interconnected link between the presence of armed groups and the exploitation of mineral resources in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has always been a major factor for instability in the region. In that regard, my delegation underscores that the primary responsibility to protect civilians lies with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO's role is to support the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo in addressing the threat of armed groups and in disarmament and demobilization efforts. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of the Disarmament, Demobilization,

Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and look forward to its effective implementation.

We have taken note of the details of the transition plan, including the 18 benchmarks, agreed between MONUSCO and the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The assessment of progress on the benchmarks needs to be realistic. In that regard, the continued implementation of the security strategy at the national and provincial levels, as well as a plan of action for security sector reform, will be crucial. The stabilization of conflict-affected provinces will depend on curbing the illegal exploitation of mineral resources.

The transition plan also needs to be in line with the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Every effort needs to be made to ensure that the transition and exit of MONUSCO is gradual, responsible and orderly.

We have also taken note of the assessment of the performance of the force and police components mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/807). We also expect a similar assessment of the civilian component of the Mission in future reports. The Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System should be applied uniformly to all components of the Mission. Resolution 2589 (2021), adopted by the Council in August, requests the Secretary-General to report on certain key tasks, as reflected in paragraphs 4 (a) and 4 (b), concerning crimes against peacekeepers. We look forward to such reporting in the upcoming MONUSCO reports. We also request the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take measures to ease restrictions that are currently hampering the peacekeeper turnovers.

In conclusion, I would like to recall India's long association with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people since the 1960s. A peaceful and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo will contribute immensely to the peace and development of the region. The progress made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent years has been impressive. The international community needs to support the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this journey. On its part, India will continue to support and assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the path towards lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

Ms. Juul (Norway): I thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting. I also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Keita, for her very

informative briefing. My thanks also go to Ambassador Abarry, Permanent Representative of the Niger, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), and Ms. Nelly Mbangu for their contributions.

Let me start by highlighting some recent positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Norway is pleased to see that the political tensions surrounding the composition of the coalition have stabilized, that women are well represented in the Cabinet and that there has been progress on regional cooperation. Those efforts, as well as the adoption of the Government's plan of action, have paved the way for finalizing the transition plan, as presented by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita today. Nevertheless, tensions have increased between political and civil society actors regarding the electoral reforms. Norway calls on the Congolese authorities to ensure an inclusive and transparent processes in the build-up to the 2023 elections.

Despite the five-month state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu by the Government, the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is deteriorating. The threat posed by armed groups, such as the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* and the *Allied Democratic Forces*, to civilians is particularly concerning. The continual security challenges have led to more than 5 million people being internally displaced and has further deepened the severe humanitarian crisis.

Norway remains deeply troubled by the continued high number of human rights violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence. We urge both the Congolese authorities and the United Nations system to do their utmost to fight impunity and ensure justice for the victims and survivors. And, as a final note on the state of siege, it must not be used as an excuse to limit democratic space. The detrimental effects on the justice system, as outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/807), are also of great concern.

The high level of activity by armed groups illustrates the need for sustainable livelihoods and a well-functioning disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. We therefore welcomed the establishment of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Focus must now be on the timely elaboration of the

new integrated strategy and its implementation. It is also important to keep sustained focus, not only on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, but also stabilization efforts, including security sector reform, transitional justice, the fight against impunity and democratic dialogue and reconciliation efforts.

In conclusion, we welcome the transition plan of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for the phased and gradual drawdown of the Mission. It provides a solid basis for a reconfigured MONUSCO. But the success of the transition hinges on constructive and effective cooperation and dialogue among a range of stakeholders, including the Congolese authorities and different parts of the United Nations system. It also depends on strategic partnerships involving civil society and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women. We expect that all will play their part in those efforts, and Norway will work with all relevant stakeholders to that end.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): Let me thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Keita, for her briefing today. I also thank Ambassador Abarry, Permanent Representative of the Niger, for his leadership in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004). In addition, I commend Ms. Mbangu on her work, thank her for her briefing and welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo here today.

Today I would like to discuss three aspects of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: first, our serious security concerns; secondly, the role that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) can play; and thirdly, our concerns about exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel.

First, while we have seen some improvements elsewhere, the United States remains deeply concerned about the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Civilians there are being killed by armed groups every day. We remain particularly troubled by the number of lethal attacks by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also known as the *Allied Democratic Forces*, and the increasing threats posed by improvised explosive devices. The military of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and United Nations peacekeepers must coordinate better on joint operations under the state of siege to protect civilians using the full authority of MONUSCO's robust mandate.

Security conditions have improved in the Kasai, which allowed MONUSCO to exit from those provinces earlier this year, while continuing to provide bridging support for key stabilization and peacekeeping efforts. Transitional justice measures are also paving the way for a smooth drawdown. Similarly, we hope conditions continue to improve in Tanganyika so that MONUSCO can draw down from that province next year. Beyond those immediate steps, we need more progress to allow for a responsible drawdown in North and South Kivu and Ituri. We welcome the joint transition plan of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO to guide those conversations moving forward and hope all indicators and benchmarks will be realistic and attainable.

Secondly, given the terrible violence in the east, the United States is committed to ensuring that MONUSCO has every tool it needs for its mission. MONUSCO has a valuable role to play in protecting civilians, and it must take that role seriously. It also has a valuable role to play in stabilizing State institutions and promoting key governance and security sector reform. Each of those objectives is particularly important as the Democratic Republic of the Congo approaches elections in 2023 and as security conditions in the east grow more dire. The Mission must also continue to coordinate with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on a phased, conditions-based drawdown in the coming years.

As the regional diplomatic dynamic improves and more armed groups pursue options for civilian reintegration in the years to come, we will need to discuss how peacekeeping success is contextualized and defined. We also need to consider ways to help the Congolese security forces address armed groups that are no longer a threat to international peace and security but continue to pose a limited threat to civilians. The United States looks forward to such conversations.

Lastly, we must end sexual exploitation and abuse at the hands of United Nations personnel. MONUSCO alone has seen 17 new allegations so far this year. Those allegations are horrifying, and they are unacceptable. Most have been levelled at MONUSCO troops and

police, but a significant portion concerns the actions of civilian staff.

The United States has been, and will continue to be, unequivocal in its call for an end to predatory behaviour across the entire United Nations system, no matter the setting or the nationality of the accused. We demand accountability for parties guilty of criminal acts and for assistance for victims and survivors. I join my British colleague in calling for an immediate review of MONUSCO. We will work through the Office of the Victims Rights Advocate and the United Nations trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse to achieve justice. The Congolese people deserve an effective, efficient and accountable United Nations.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Keita, Ambassador Abarry and Ms. Mbangu for their very important briefings. I of course also welcome the presence of the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of the Congo here among us at this meeting.

In the past three months, there have been major achievements for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Of note is the departure of the Mission from the Kasai provinces, as well as the presentation of the transition plan, both of which are in compliance with resolution 2556 (2020), with a view to reducing MONUSCO's presence.

At the political level, we welcome the legislative progress in electoral matters. Mexico looks forward to the prompt appointment of the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission. The 2023 elections will be a very important step in consolidating peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We also commend the ongoing bilateral diplomatic efforts under way with Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi to promote good-neighbourliness, cooperation and stability in the region.

However, with regard to the security situation, we express our concern about the violence that has taken place in Ituri and North and South Kivu in recent months. The constant attacks perpetrated by armed groups, such as the Coalition des démocrates Congolais and the Allied Democratic Forces, continue to be the main threat to the civilian population.

In that regard, we express our concern about the increasing use of improvised explosives. We also emphatically call for all actors on the ground to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

It is necessary to address the causes that give rise to and fuel violence, apart from the special measures, such as the imposition of a state of siege, which has been renewed for the seventh time and which must not result in violations of fundamental rights. The fight against impunity through the strengthening of institutions, including the justice system, is part of the eventual solution. However, we must also combat hate speech, which fosters divisions and intercommunal conflicts. Attacks and other acts of violence against the civilian population exacerbate the humanitarian needs and displacement within and outside the country.

Mexico welcomes the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Among other aspects, the effectiveness of such programmes also depends on the opportunities offered to former combatants, which will prevent them from seeing the return to armed groups as an option. We will monitor the implementation of that programme. In parallel, we believe that it is extremely important to develop weapons and ammunition management policies and programmes that complement the broader disarmament and demobilization strategy. At this point, it is an entire war economy that must be dismantled.

We acknowledge the recent actions in the area of transitional justice, particularly the establishment of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission in Kasai Central, as well as the establishment of a joint committee at the national level in that regard. Such actions pave the way for a new phase of reconciliation with a view to building lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With regard to the activities of MONUSCO, we applaud its ongoing efforts during a difficult period of adjustment after the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo and the resulting impact on its work.

Mexico wishes to emphasize the crucial conditions for the success of the transition plan. We believe that, without doubt, it reflects the coordination between the United Nations teams and the national Government, especially taking into account that transitions are complex processes that require the full involvement

of national and local stakeholders. In that regard, we acknowledge the active participation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the development of that plan. It will be crucial that the Mission's withdrawal not lead to the emergence of gaps that, in turn, escalate into violence.

We emphasize the importance that the decisions on transition be informed by the progress on the ground. To that end, the 18 benchmarks and indicators identified will be a guide that will enable the progress to be monitored. We particularly welcome the inclusion of parameters on the participation of civil society, particularly women and young people, as well as on accountability.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Bintou Keita and Ambassador Abarry for their briefings. I also listened carefully to the statement made by Ms. Mbangou. I welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at today's meeting.

Since the formation of the new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a number of positive steps have been taken in the political, security, economic and other fields. Meanwhile, the security and humanitarian situations in the eastern part of the country are still grim. There remain serious challenges to achieving long-term peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In connection with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/807), I would like to make the following points.

First, every effort should continue to be made to maintain political stability. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo developed and launched a three-year programme of action that serves as a road map for lasting peace and sustainable development in the country. China appreciates those efforts, and we hope that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will focus on promoting reforms in key areas with regard to improving governance capabilities. Electoral reform is essential to the national unity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. China encourages all parties to engage in inclusive dialogue to properly resolve differences under the constitutional framework.

President Tshisekedi Tshilombo and the leaders of the countries of the region reached a series of important agreements on maintaining the security of

the region, combating the threat of armed groups and strengthening economic and trade ties. China hopes that countries of the region will continue to improve their relations, strengthen exchanges and enhance cooperation in order to lay a solid foundation for lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. China welcomes the new strategy and action plan for the Great Lakes region developed by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. We believe that the efforts that I mentioned will provide new momentum for regional cooperation.

Secondly, the security issues in the eastern part of the country should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. In response to the unstable situation in the east, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo took a series of measures, including imposing a state of siege, promulgating disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and stabilization programmes and appointing a coordinator. President Tshisekedi Tshilombo also presented a relevant development in his address to the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.3). China recognizes the determination of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat the violence by armed groups and hopes that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo will continue their coordination and cooperation in order to strengthen the protection of civilians.

MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have jointly formulated 18 benchmarks and risk mitigation measures for the Mission's withdrawal and added more details to MONUSCO's drawdown and withdrawal plan, which will help all parties to follow the progress and clarify their responsibilities. In the areas where MONUSCO has withdrawn the United Nations development and humanitarian agencies should quickly follow up in order to assist the local government with post-conflict peacebuilding and ensure that the progress made with regard to peace will not be reversed.

Thirdly, development and humanitarian assistance should be increased. At present, the Democratic Republic of the Congo faces multiple health challenges, such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), malaria and cholera, as well as a large number of refugees and displaced persons in the country. Its national

development reform needs urgent financial support. Meanwhile, the United Nations humanitarian response plans severely lacks funding, limiting its ability to respond to the current serious humanitarian situation. China calls on the international community, in particular international financial institutions, to honour their commitments of assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo by increasing investment to help the country tackle the current challenges.

The global development initiative proposed by China's President Xi Jinping during the general debate of the General Assembly (see A/76/PV.3) will help the international community form synergy in assisting developing countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and help eliminate the development gap and the root causes of conflicts.

China has always emphasized that sanctions are only a means, not an end. As the drawdown of MONUSCO continues, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will gradually assume the main responsibility for maintaining national security and stability. The Security Council should actively respond to the concerns of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government regarding the adjustment of sanctions measures to avoid their negative impact on the country's capacity-building in the area of security.

China has always been committed to helping the Democratic Republic of the Congo achieve peace, stability and development. The twenty-fifth deployment of Chinese peacekeepers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo recently arrived in the mission area. Since 2003, China has sent more than 3,000 peacekeepers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to carry out thousands of security and support missions.

In addition, 400,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine provided by China recently arrived in the country.

China will continue to work with the international community to support the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve long-term national peace and stability.

Mr. Dang (Viet Nam): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita, Ambassador Abdou A Barry and Ms. Mbangou for their comprehensive briefings. We welcome the participation

of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in our meeting today.

On the political front, my delegation takes note of the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in promoting sustainable peace, stability and development, as set out in its programme of action for the period of 2021-2023.

In the run-up to the 2023 elections, we note the ongoing tension among political and civil society actors. In that regard, we call on all parties to exert every effort to settle differences through dialogue, taking into account the aspirations for stability and development of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is also of critical importance to ensure women's participation in the political process. My delegation commends the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and countries of the region with a view to further strengthening friendly relations and deepening their cooperation in the fight against common security threats. Undoubtedly, stability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region as a whole requires effective regional cooperation and support.

Viet Nam is still troubled by the continued deterioration of the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, despite the state of siege in two of those provinces. We reiterate our strong condemnation of attacks against civilians and peacekeepers, as well as humanitarian workers. The reported incident in Ofai, Ituri, on 1 September, resulting in four civilians killed and around 20 others abducted or missing, is extremely concerning.

The humanitarian situation continues to be alarming as a result of the volatile security situation, the impact the socioeconomic hardship, displacement, coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and so on. We therefore call for generous assistance from donor Governments and international aid organizations to help the more than 19 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and to assist the resettlement of more than 5 million internally displaced persons, as well as to alleviate the predicaments of over 500,000 refugees. It is also pivotal to provide financial and technical assistance to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo overcome economic and health challenges relating to COVID-19 and ensure vaccine access for its people.

Given the current dire situation, coordinated efforts to address the root causes of instability continue to be of the utmost importance to bringing about stability for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Viet Nam supports further collaboration by regional countries in combating hostile armed groups.

We welcome the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's establishment and implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which maps out a comprehensive strategy in that regard. At the same time, further efforts are also necessary to address the issue of illegal exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources, promote reconciliation among communities and address hate speech.

Let me once again highlight our strong support for the important role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) on the ground. We are pleased to see the close cooperation among the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO, other relevant United Nations entities and stakeholders with respect to the formulation of the transition plan for the progressive and phased drawdown of the Mission. The plan clearly outlines benchmarks and indicators, sets out minimum conditions and assesses risk factors for the implementation of the exit strategy. We hope that fruitful cooperation and indispensable international support will be continued during the implementation process in order to preserve the hard-won achievements and attain desirable outcomes.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I thank Special Representative Keita, Ambassador Abarry and Ms. Mbangi for their presentations.

First, I would like to commend the Congolese Government for maintaining political stability in the country and making further progress in relations with the neighbouring countries.

Furthermore, we take note of the commitments of the Congolese Government to facilitate electoral reforms ahead of the 2023 elections. We particularly support the commitments of the Government to further advance equitable representation of women in public life. At the same time, the importance of the implementation of other key reforms under the Government's programme of action should not be underestimated. Taking note of the complexities with respect to the electoral reforms, we encourage the Government to make efforts in tackling

hate speech and incitement to violence. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to join the Special Representative in underlining the important role of timely, inclusive and peaceful elections.

Secondly, we continue to be concerned by the unabated violence in the Kivu and Ituri provinces. We regret that, in spite of the state of siege and military operations against negative forces, the circle of violence continues.

Incidents in conflict-affected provinces involving armed groups and State agents have recently resulted in the killing of at least 600 civilians, while almost 300 people, mostly women, were victims of sexual violence. It is equally concerning to learn that several journalists have been threatened by both armed groups and State agents, which fuels the existing insecurity even more.

In our view, that has a spillover effect on the dire humanitarian situation. The country ranks high with regard to the number of internally displaced persons in Africa. We also remain concerned about the ongoing threat posed by the coronavirus disease and other endemic diseases, such as malaria, that affect the health and economic situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In those circumstances, we encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in partnership with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other stakeholders, to do its utmost to address human rights violations and abuses committed against civilians, as well as the phenomenon of conflict-related sexual violence. It is crucial that measures to curb the violence and restore safety for its population go hand in hand with the principles of the rule of law. In that connection, we welcome the step to establish the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, which will be tasked with investigating human rights violations and abuses, as well as supporting justice and the rule of law. We likewise encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to pursue its commitments and efforts to curb the high number of grave violations committed against women and children. We believe that the way out of this circle of violence is to address the root causes of the conflict and further advance the fight against impunity.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Special Representative for her leadership and joint efforts — in partnership with the Government of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations country team — to develop a transition plan for the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO by 2024. We welcome the proposed benchmarks to empower the Government and affirm its role in ensuring a sustainable transition process. We are of the view that continued engagement among the Government, MONUSCO and international stakeholders, as well as greater national Government ownership of the transition process, is key to the successful implementation of the plan. We are confident that initial steps taken by the Government towards the new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme already demonstrate the positive prospects for the transition process.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of 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 — as well as Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

The A3+1 thanks Ambassador Abdou Abarry for his work as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The A3+1 thanks Ms. Bintou Keita for her briefing and commends her for her commitment to peace and security efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also thank Ms. Nelly Mbangou, Coordinator of Sauti Ya Mama Mukongomani, for her briefing.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation in conflict-affected areas in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is alarming. More than 1.3 million people have been displaced this year, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons across the country to more than 5 million, excluding the 536,000 refugees from neighbouring countries hosted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While we thank international partners for their support in addressing the humanitarian needs, we urge them to scale up their assistance by contributing to the 2021 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The A3+1 is encouraged by the positive regional dynamic during the reporting period, thanks to the commendable efforts led by President Tshisekedi Tshilombo and leaders of neighbouring countries in

view of further consolidating their bilateral ties and mutual cooperation, which, we believe, will reinforce regional peace and stability.

The A3+1 condemns all forms of human rights abuses and violence against civilians, including sexual exploitation against women and girls, as well as the recruitment and use of children by foreign and domestic armed groups. We demand that all armed groups cease such despicable atrocities. Furthermore, we emphasize that those violations must not be allowed to persist with impunity.

In that regard, the A3+1 commends the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the progress made in reducing armed group activities, particularly through the declaration of a state of siege in conflict-affected eastern provinces. The joint offensive operations carried out by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in combating those armed groups is commendable and should be intensified.

However, the A3+1 underscores the need to undertake non-military approaches to address armed groups. We therefore welcome the establishment of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its programme of action for the period 2021-2023. We also acknowledge the establishment of a Contact and Coordination Group and the adoption of a two-year action plan by heads of intelligence and security services of the States of the region mandated to oversee non-military approaches for the eradication of negative forces in the Great Lakes region.

We urge the international community and financial and technical partners to continue to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in strengthening the capacities of its national institutions responsible for governance, the rule of law and security and development, including support for the Government's programme of action for the period 2021-2023, which are key tools for creating safe environments conducive to advancing lasting and sustainable peace, stability and development.

We further call on the Government to 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.

Armed groups, militias and other hostile forces are highly motivated by access to the abundant natural resources in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That has turned the country's natural wealth into a driver of conflict and instability, rather than development and prosperity. It is time that the role of natural resources be transformed to sources of legitimate socioeconomic opportunities that lead to expanded revenue streams for the Government to provide basic services.

In that regard, we recognize the important role of regional cooperation in promoting the implementation of the provisions of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement and other regional tools to fight the illegal exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources in the Great Lakes region.

We commend Government efforts, with the support of MONUSCO, to improve and strengthen its weapons and ammunitions-management systems. In that regard, the Security Council should give due consideration to the request for the removal of the notification requirement for the Government to acquire weapons. Meanwhile, we encourage continued regional approaches such as the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

The A3+1 takes note of the joint transition plan for MONUSCO, including the benchmarks and indicators for determining the level of preparedness for a responsible and sustainable drawdown and exit of the Mission. It is important that the transition plan be implemented following a clear evaluation and assessment of the benchmarks achieved, which should include, inter alia, an efficient transfer of important tasks such as early-warning networks to the host Government and enhanced peacebuilding efforts focusing on socioeconomic development initiatives that promote post-conflict reconstruction.

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. In that regard, 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, security and development.

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.

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*): At the outset, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, and your brotherly country, the Republic of Kenya, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of October.

At the same time, I welcome your initiative to convene this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, for his commitment to, and support for, my country's cause. In addition, I extend my thanks to all members of the Security Council for the special attention they have always given to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2021/807), which has just been presented by his Special Representative and the Head of MONUSCO, Ms. Bintou Keita. I welcome her presence and commend her sustained efforts to promote peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Allow me to add my delegation's voice to this discussion in order to give my Government's point of view on the concerns raised in the report and to make several remarks, mainly concerning the security, political and humanitarian situation, as well as human rights issues and MONUSCO's exit strategy.

Before that, however, allow me to thank Ambassador Abdou Abarry, Chair of the Security

Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his briefing on the Committee's activities. I also welcome the presence of the civil society representative from North Kivu, Ms. Mbangi.

As the Council is aware, the major challenge that my country has been facing for just over two decades is related to the security situation, particularly in the east, where a number of rebel armed groups continue to spread terror and desolation among the population, affecting women and children in particular. To put an end to that, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, is relying on both internal solutions and partnerships at the bilateral and multilateral levels, as well as on both military and non-military solutions.

In order to strengthen the fight at the national level, eradicate those negative forces once and for all and put an end to that vicious circle of violence, the Head of State took the decision, in accordance with article 85 of my country's Constitution, to declare a state of siege in two eastern provinces in which the security and terrorist threat level is very high. Thanks to that decision, significant progress has been made in the fight against rebel armed groups and in reducing tensions in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The measures taken under the state of siege continue to be reinforced by my Government, with the support of its bilateral and multilateral partners, in order to maintain the pressure on those negative forces and their accomplices, in particular by increasing the number of troops and the military presence in those provinces and through the resumption of joint military operations by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and MONUSCO.

Given the results obtained to date thanks to my Government's implementation of that exceptional measure, the state of siege will be lifted only when the circumstances that caused it to be declared have disappeared. At the regional level, the Head of State is continuing his efforts to effectively normalize relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours and advance both the promotion of peace and security and economic integration in the region.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has signed a number of memoranda of understanding, notably with Uganda on tracking down Ugandan Allied Democratic Forces terrorist rebels, on cross-border trade and on

the construction of a road through the town of Beni in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Similarly, three cooperation agreements were signed with Rwanda on investments, the prevention of tax evasion and gold mining cooperation. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has also signed several memorandums of understanding with Burundi on politics, diplomacy, security and infrastructure, including on the development of a railway that will connect the city of Kindu, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to Gitega, in Burundi.

The implementation of the state of siege has led to the voluntary laying down of arms by many combatants and warlords from both national and foreign armed groups, thereby increasing the number of demobilized persons that must be taken care of. That is why there is an urgent need for an operational disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy that is adapted to that reality.

To that end, on 4 July and 7 August, the Head of State signed two ordinances creating the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and appointing its members. The implementation of the Programme will accelerate the processing of several hundred combatants who surrendered since the declaration of the state of siege and beyond. The new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme promotes an integrated, community-based approach that harnesses local resources, with the overarching goal of ensuring the stability and security of local communities in order to promote development for all.

It is true that certain challenges, in particular with respect to security and financing, will complicate the realization of the programme. It will therefore be necessary to mobilize the donation of resources. In that regard, the contributions of donors and other partners, notably MONUSCO, the Peacebuilding Commission and the World Bank, *inter alia*, is very important.

As part of the implementation of resolution 2556 (2020) and its recommendations on the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO, a working group has been established between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO. That joint working group, which has been expanded to include other United Nations agencies and civil society, has produced a transition plan (see S/2021/807, annex), which will ultimately allow for the gradual transfer of

responsibility and the orderly and definitive withdrawal of MONUSCO by 2024.

Therefore, it is time to unite and mobilize in order to implement that joint transition plan, which requires financial, logistical and technical support. Furthermore, during the transitional period, the Democratic Republic of Congo expects the United Nations and the Security Council to assist and provide all the necessary means to MONUSCO and its Force Intervention Brigade so that it can fulfil its mission and mandate in accordance with resolution 2556 (2020).

We would like to stress the need to ensure that the troops deployed on the ground have the necessary means and capabilities, including the necessary training, to meet the requirements of the reality on the ground and to deal with the asymmetrical warfare currently being waged by the armed groups and Islamist terrorist groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is also vital to ensure that the deployment of the expected units and forces, particularly of quick-reaction forces, be carried out in accordance with resolution 2556 (2020) and within the stipulated time frame.

It is also important to strengthen the joint operations planned by the FARDC and MONUSCO, particularly in the provinces under the state of siege, where the security threat remains high, in order to maintain pressure on the rebel armed groups and force them to lay down their arms.

It is important to note that, politically, the Democratic Republic of Congo has resolutely set its sights on the organization of democratic, free and transparent national elections to be held in 2023. The Government of my country is preparing for those elections, and a schedule has been drawn up, covering everything that needs to be done and all the conditions that need to be met by that time.

In that connection, on 3 July the President of the Republic promulgated the law amending and supplementing the organic law on the organization and functioning of the Independent National Electoral Commission. That law aims to strengthen the independence, neutrality and impartiality of the Commission, as well as to combat all attempts to use it for inappropriate purposes. A process to select the leaders of that institution to support democracy is also under way.

The issue of human rights violations and restrictions on democratic space has been at the heart of the President's efforts since his accession to power. Indeed, the Head of State made a commitment to work for the promotion of the rule of law in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and combat corruption and impunity. The fight against impunity therefore remains a major priority for the Government. Significant measures have been taken to ensure that flagrant human rights violations do not go unpunished and to support the creation of a transitional justice mechanism.

With regard to the fight against corruption in particular, the Head of State established an anti-corruption agency, attached to his Cabinet, with the goal of detecting and discouraging all illegal operations, but also ensuring respect for the proper management of public affairs, without which it is challenging to achieve social well-being. In addition, to promote and protect human rights during the state of siege in the two provinces concerned, my Government and the army have established disciplinary mechanisms to severely punish soldiers who violate those rights.

The humanitarian situation, which was already worrisome in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo with the large number of refugees and internally displaced persons following a spate of armed violence, was exacerbated by the coronavirus disease pandemic and by the volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo in May. With regard to the eruption in particular, my delegation would like to thank the international community for the spontaneous outpouring of support for the Congolese people and the efforts of the Government to assist them.

Allow me to commend the briefing by Ambassador Abarry and to assure him of the readiness of my country's authorities to continue working with the members of the 1533 Committee. Furthermore, I would like to take this opportunity to recall the two requests made of United Nations bodies, in general, and of the 1533 Committee, in particular, by the President of the

Democratic Republic of the Congo on 21 September during the general debate of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly.

The first request was to lift the measures imposed on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in paragraph 5 of resolution 1807 (2008), concerning advance notification to the Committee of any shipment of arms and related materiel for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or any provision of assistance, advice or training related to the military activities of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, in particular as the Government is mandated by the Constitution to ensure the safety of people and goods throughout the national territory.

The second request was to impose harsh and exemplary sanctions on all mafia networks, be they in transit or destination countries, and on multinationals that engage in the illegal exploitation of my country's mines and provide armed groups with weapons and ammunition, thereby perpetuating the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region.

And, if I may, here is my third request. My country would like the Committee to make greater efforts to ensure that discussions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Arab Emirates on the regular trade of gold from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are currently at a standstill, can resume as quickly as possible.

In conclusion, on behalf of my Government, I would like to thank all MONUSCO personnel, as well as troop- and police-contributing countries, for their tireless support to bring about peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.