



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
18 March 2021

Original: English

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## United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

### Report of the Secretary-General

#### I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 55 of Security Council resolution [2556 \(2020\)](#), covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2 December 2020 to 18 March 2021. It describes progress made in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) since the Secretary-General's report of 30 November 2020 ([S/2020/1150](#)). It provides an overview of political developments, including the progress made towards the strengthening of State institutions and key governance and security reforms. It also outlines the Mission's pursuit of a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, as well as progress made in adjusting its priorities, posture and presence in accordance with the joint strategy on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO ([S/2020/1041](#)) and the Action for Peacekeeping initiative.

#### II. Political developments

2. Political dynamics were driven by the decision of the President, Félix Tshisekedi, to put an end to the ruling Cap pour le changement (CACH)-Front commun pour le Congo (FCC) coalition and to establish a new coalition by the name of Union sacrée de la nation (USN).

3. In an address to the nation on 6 December and in his annual speech to Congress on the state of the nation on 14 December, President Tshisekedi described the outcome of consultations held with political and civil society actors from 2 to 25 November, and announced the appointment of an "informateur", in accordance with article 78 of the Constitution. On 1 January 2021, Senator Modeste Bahati Lukwebo was appointed informateur and charged with identifying a new majority in Parliament, with a view to forming a new Government.

4. On 5 December, tensions within the ruling coalition increased when a group of deputies filed petitions to depose the speaker of the National Assembly, Jeanine Mabunda, and her bureau. On 7 December, several deputies disrupted a plenary session convened by Ms. Mabunda, while the Congolese National Police dispersed CACH and FCC supporters who clashed near the Assembly building. On



10 December, 281 of the 483 deputies present voted in favour of the dismissal of Ms. Mabunda and other members of the bureau. An interim bureau, led by the most senior member of the Assembly, Christophe Mboso N’Kodia Pwanga, of the Alliance des bâtisseurs pour un Congo émergent, was subsequently established.

5. The ending of the CACH-FCC coalition by President Tshisekedi was supported by 24 of the 26 provincial governors who attended the seventh conference of governors, held on 28 and 29 December in Kinshasa. At the conference, these governors committed to working to carry out the President’s vision and priorities within the framework of USN. On 3 January, the presidents of political parties and groups belonging to the FCC platform condemned the appointment of an informateur, arguing that the FCC majority from the 2018 elections was still in place.

6. On 5 January 2021, an extraordinary session of the National Assembly was convened to elect a new permanent bureau and consider any motions against the Government. On 27 January, of the 377 deputies present, 367 voted in favour of a no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba, who on 29 January submitted his resignation, and that of his Government. On the same day, the informateur submitted to President Tshisekedi his report, which outlined an agreement reached with 391 deputies, including two thirds of all FCC members, to form a new majority under the banner of USN. On 3 February, Mr. Pwanga was elected President of the permanent bureau and speaker of the Assembly. Jean-Marc Kabund-a-Kabund, of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, was restored to the position of First Vice-President, from which he had been removed on 25 May 2020. The post of Deputy Rapporteur was reserved for the FCC opposition.

7. On 5 February, following petitions lodged by several senators, the President of the Senate, Alexis Thambwe Mwamba, and the members of his bureau resigned. An interim bureau led by Senator Léon Mamboleo, of the Union pour la nation congolaise, was subsequently established until the election of the permanent bureau. On 2 March, Mr. Lukwebo, of the Alliance des forces démocratiques du Congo et alliés/USN, was elected President of the Senate and the majority of posts in the bureau were reserved for representatives of the new coalition. On 5 March, the members of the new bureau assumed office, while the First Vice-President, Samy Badibanga, who had kept his post during the petition against the former bureau, resigned.

8. On 14 February, President Tshisekedi signed a decree to appoint Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge, of Avenir du Congo, as Prime Minister. From 22 February to 1 March, the Prime Minister consulted 56 delegations from political, socioprofessional and civil society organizations on the formation of a new Government, which is expected to be inaugurated during the National Assembly ordinary session that began on 15 March. In the new Government, 30 per cent of the members are expected to be women, as announced by President Tshisekedi at a meeting with the Femmes d’exception advisory group on International Women’s Day.

9. On 25 February, the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued a press release in which it called for the appointment of an efficient Government, the adoption of laws to improve the life of the population, the impartiality of the judiciary and reforms to the electoral system.

10. On 6 and 7 February, during the thirty-fourth ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, President Tshisekedi was elected Chairperson of the African Union for one year. The priorities of his presidency include: peace and security; the ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement; integration projects and climate change; African culture, arts and heritage, which is the African Union theme for 2021; the fight against the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and other diseases; as well as investment in human capital and the fostering of the participation of women and young people.

11. On 13 and 14 February, the chiefs of the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda met in Kigali and discussed the strengthening of bilateral cooperation to face common threats in the region, including armed group activity. They issued a joint communiqué, in which they outlined recommendations and an action plan, and described their meeting as a demonstration of the commitment of the Presidents of the two countries to restore peace in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the region. On 18 February, President Tshisekedi met with a delegation from the Uganda People's Defence Forces in Kinshasa to discuss bilateral cooperation on security issues.

12. The socioeconomic situation in the country remained fragile, partly because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 State budget was adopted on 3 December 2020 and amounts to \$7.1 billion, a 21.2 per cent decrease compared with 2020. Regarding the fight against corruption, the Inspectorate General of Finances launched an investigation into alleged fraud and the misuse of public funds in the education sector. On 1 February, the World Bank announced that it had put on hold a payment of \$100 million to support the free primary education system.

### **III. Security situation**

#### **A. Ituri Province**

13. In Ituri, the security situation deteriorated because of continued attacks on civilians and State security and defence forces by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and the Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) on the outskirts of Bunia town. On 7 January, a retaliatory attack in the Lengabo neighbourhood by FPIC against a search operation carried out by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) resulted in the killing of at least one civilian.

14. Intercommunal tensions between the Bira and Hema communities continued to increase in the wake of FPIC attacks on civilians. Between 2 December 2020 and 2 February 2021, over 55 incidents were attributed to FPIC, resulting in the killing of at least 37 civilians, including at least 4 women. Moreover, FPIC continued looting, torching homes, abducting civilians and recruiting members. These incidents triggered an increase in retaliatory attacks in the Irumu and Djugu territories by Zaire, an armed group mostly composed of young people from the Hema community.

15. In Irumu territory, the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) committed exactions, while the implementation of the peace agreement signed between the Government and FRPI remained stalled. Suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) fighters carried out 15 attacks in the southern part of Irumu, targeting civilians and FARDC. On 13 January, another suspected ADF attack resulted in the alleged killing of 16 civilians, including 6 women and 8 children, from the Mbuti community in Avombi village.

16. In Djugu territory, CODECO factions carried out attacks against FARDC positions and committed exactions against civilians. Internal clashes for the control of several gold mine sites in northern and western areas of Djugu continued.

#### **B. North Kivu Province**

17. In Grand Nord, the security situation has continued to deteriorate, amid attacks on civilians and FARDC positions. Since December, ADF has conducted 44 attacks in Beni territory, resulting in the killing of 178 civilians, including 48 women and

2 boys. In December, ADF concentrated its targeted attacks on the Rwenzori sector, bordering Uganda, while remaining scattered across four areas in Beni territory. On 28 December, ADF occupied Loselose, killing 7 civilian men and 12 FARDC soldiers, torching houses and abducting civilians. FARDC recaptured Loselose on 1 January, with MONUSCO support. ADF also attacked Lulo, on 3 January, and Kyvikere, on 4 January, allegedly killing 16 and 23 civilians, respectively, including 9 women.

18. The deterioration of the security situation and inflammatory statements made by some local opinion leaders further eroded confidence in the Congolese security and defence forces. Consequently, an increase in the use of “mob justice” against suspected ADF members has been observed since December, which has led to the death of nine FARDC soldiers in seven separate incidents. On 26 December, the local population of Bulongo killed two FARDC soldiers and one of their spouses after confusing them with ADF elements. On 8 January, in Lume, the local population attacked the convoy of a FARDC battalion commander and set his vehicle ablaze. On 16 January, residents of Lume also killed a FARDC officer and a former member of the Mai-Mai group, Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo, on a demobilization campaign in the area.

19. In Petit Nord, the security situation deteriorated in most territories, in particular in Masisi and Rutshuru, following a spike in armed group activity. In early January, sporadic clashes between the Mai-Mai forces patriotiques populaires-armée du peuple (FPP-AP) and the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) Guidon faction resulted in the displacement of approximately 3,000 people to Lubero territory. Clashes between the NDC-R Bwira faction and a coalition of armed groups, including Nyatura, Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, increased as the NDC-R Bwira faction attempted to reclaim territory previously lost in Masisi territory. At least nine civilians (five men, three women and a boy) were killed and three others injured. Reportedly, on 2 February, the NDC-R Bwira faction also launched attacks against the Coalition des mouvements pour le changement/Nyatura in Matenge. On 10 January, alleged Mai-Mai Jackson elements ambushed and killed six rangers of the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation in Nyamitwiwi. FARDC increased its operations against armed groups in Rutshuru and Masisi territories, resulting in the killing of at least 14 civilians, including 2 children, and some displacement of the population. On 1 February, a FARDC soldier was reportedly killed and 250 households were displaced from Showa village to Masisi centre during a FARDC operation against APCLS. On 23 January, FARDC soldiers clashed with Mai-Mai FPP-AP at the barrier in Buleusa, northern Walikale territory, resulting in the death of two civilian boys, three FARDC soldiers and two armed group members.

20. The security situation improved in areas around Pinga, where the two NDC-R factions had previously clashed following the movement of the NDC-R Guidon faction towards the north of Walikale territory. Overall, there was a 67 per cent decrease in security incidents in the territory, despite 19 reported attacks against civilians that resulted in the killing of 10 civilians (5 men, 3 women and 2 boys). In late January, however, FARDC launched an operation against the NDC-R Guidon faction near Irumbu, which resulted in the killing of at least 25 elements of the NDC-R Guidon faction. The faction, along with Mai-Mai Simba Mando, counter-attacked FARDC positions near Mundjuli and Irameso in Walikale territory.

### **C. South Kivu and Maniema Provinces**

21. In South Kivu and Maniema, the security situation improved, as the number of human rights violations and attacks against civilians declined. However, clashes between community-based armed groups led to an upsurge of violence in Fizi and

Shabunda territories in South Kivu, and in Kabambare, in Maniema. On 1 January, more than 50 civilians, including six women, were killed in Bijombo and more than 500 households were displaced. Meanwhile, sexual violence escalated in northern Shabunda following confrontations on 24 December between Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions and the killing of two leaders, Mabala and Walike.

22. During the reporting period, local Twa militia groups attacked seven villages and other localities in Bahaya, south-east of Kabambare territory, Maniema Province. According to local civil society and early warning networks, at least 52 people have been killed and more than 70 cases of sexual violence have been recorded.

#### **D. Tanganyika Province**

23. Although the security situation improved, 19 incidents, attributed mostly to Mai-Mai Kabeke and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale, operating along the Kalemie-Bendera road, were recorded in Kalemie and Nyunzu territories between 1 December 2020 and 31 January 2021. On 13 December, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale ambushed a FARDC convoy between Mukumba and Mutabi villages, killing two soldiers and a civilian man. On 22 December, Mai-Mai Kabeke also ambushed six civilians, including three women who were allegedly raped. The volatile security situation in the northern part of Nyunzu territory continued to limit humanitarian access.

#### **E. Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces**

24. The security situation in Kasai and Kasai Central remained precarious, with 28 security incidents reported, including four incidents of sexual violence against women. On 16 January, a Twa community-based armed group attacked State security and defence forces in Batwa Kadimba, Mweka territory, Kasai Province, resulting in the killing of five police officers and five civilians. On 17 January, the security and defence forces arrested and transferred to Kananga two elements of the group, including its leader, Katende Tshiombo, and a FARDC detachment was deployed to the area.

### **IV. Human rights situation**

25. In December 2020 and January 2021, MONUSCO documented 1,111 human rights violations and abuses, an increase of 2 per cent compared with the previous period, mainly owing to an increase in violations committed by the Congolese National Police in North Kivu during the enforcement of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Armed groups perpetrated 51 per cent of the violations, while State agents were responsible for 49 per cent of them. More than 90 per cent of these violations were committed in conflict-affected provinces, in particular in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. At least 350 people were victims of extrajudicial and summary killings, including 76 women and 28 children, which is down from the figure of 415 recorded over the previous two months. Violations related to democratic space decreased by 58 per cent, with fewer documented cases of threats, intimidation and arbitrary arrests for the exercise of fundamental freedoms.

26. In January, as part of its advocacy for the protection of civilians and human rights, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo issued two public reports highlighting the upward trend in human rights violations and abuses committed in Ituri and North Kivu by armed groups, as well as by members of the national security and defence forces. The Congolese authorities

continued internal investigations into the violations documented by the Office, which had allegedly been perpetrated by State agents.

27. MONUSCO provided technical, financial and logistical support to the Congolese authorities in efforts to combat impunity and prosecute those accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations. On 12 January, the garrison military court of Bukavu sentenced Takungomo Mukambilwa Le Pouce, a deputy to the leader of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki Charlequin, to 20 years in prison for crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, torture, sexual slavery and enforced disappearance, and to the payment of damages to victims, which is enforceable through the seizure of all of his property. The courts also ordered that the victims be enabled to return to their villages.

28. MONUSCO also supported the military judicial authorities in investigations into allegations of serious crimes committed in 2019 and 2020 by FARDC in Djugu territory in Ituri. One of the cases includes Major Patrick, also known as Sandoka, who is accused of the murder of at least 13 people and the disappearance of 9 others in Gudji. A provisional arrest warrant against him was issued on 6 January.

## V. Humanitarian situation

29. The number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance has increased from 15.6 million in 2020 to 19.6 million in 2021. In 2021, the Humanitarian Response Plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has a budget of \$1.98 billion, is intended to meet the needs of 9.6 million of the most vulnerable, of whom 49.9 per cent are women and girls, 58.5 per cent are children and 15 per cent are people living with disabilities. This increase in funds is the result of a new surge in violence, especially in the eastern provinces, and increased food insecurity, amplified by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some 3.4 million children under the age of 5 have been recorded as acutely malnourished. The structural lack of access to basic social services is a major aggravating factor that has an impact on people's resilience, while the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the situation by disrupting crop cycles and access to markets.

30. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has registered 5.2 million internally displaced persons, the highest number in Africa and the second highest worldwide. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the country also hosts some 500,000 refugees, an increase that is partly due to the arrival of refugees from the Central African Republic, fleeing violence in the wake of the December 2020 elections. As at 8 March 2021, a total of 46,575 citizens of the Central African Republic had been registered as new asylum seekers. The humanitarian community is providing multisectoral support to internally displaced persons, refugees and Congolese host communities.

31. On 7 February, the Minister of Health confirmed the death of a woman in Butembo, North Kivu, on 3 February from the Ebola virus disease. As at 14 March, 11 confirmed cases and one probable case of Ebola had been recorded, with six fatalities and four survivors. The humanitarian community immediately provided support to the Government, especially through the rapid implementation of ring vaccinations by local vaccinators trained by the World Health Organization (WHO) during the tenth Ebola outbreak. The United Nations, through the Central Emergency Response Fund, allocated \$4 million to the Ebola response, including for strengthening mechanisms against sexual exploitation and abuse. As at 14 March, over 1,515 people had been vaccinated, including 76 front-line health workers. Meanwhile, cholera, malaria and measles still represent major challenges, and the bubonic plague is resurgent in Ituri.

32. As at 15 March, the Democratic Republic of the Congo had registered 27,077 COVID-19 cases in 23 of the 26 provinces, which had resulted in 717 deaths. On 22 February, President Tshisekedi authorized the reopening of schools, which had been closed since December 2020 owing to the spread of the virus.

33. Access and security remain major constraints to the delivery of humanitarian assistance. In January 2021, 37 security incidents directly affected humanitarian workers and assets across the country. On 22 February, during a humanitarian field mission, a World Food Programme (WFP) convoy was ambushed by armed elements on the road between Goma and Rutshuru, North Kivu, resulting in the death of the Ambassador of Italy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, his close protection officer and one national WFP staff member. The tragic incident illustrates the complex security environment that humanitarian workers face. The United Nations Department for Safety and Security has launched a fact-finding mission, while the Congolese authorities are conducting a criminal investigation and launched a commission of inquiry on 25 February.

## **VI. Protection of civilians**

### **A. Mission strategies and political processes**

34. MONUSCO continued to develop and implement targeted, area-based strategies to enhance the protection of civilians. In February, the Mission conducted a review of the implementation of the strategy for Ituri, as a pilot for the wider introduction of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System. The development of an operational plan for the implementation of the strategy for South Kivu Province was completed in January. The remaining operational plans are being finalized.

### **B. Field-level responses**

35. MONUSCO deployed 20 standing combat deployments, 6 joint protection teams and 20 joint assessment missions in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, Tanganyika and Kasai and Kasai Central. The Community Alert Network system received, on average, 330 early-warning alerts per month, compared with 310 alerts during the previous reporting period. This represents an increase of 6 per cent. Alerts originated mostly from North Kivu and South Kivu, which represented 49 and 45 per cent, respectively, of all alerts, compared with 44 and 47 per cent during the previous reporting period. The national security and defence forces and/or MONUSCO responded to 64 per cent of these alerts.

36. The management of small arms and light weapons continued to improve. MONUSCO, through the United Nations Mine Action Service, provided 15 weapons storage solutions in substations of the Congolese National Police and organized awareness training on the safe storage and use of weapons. In Bukavu, MONUSCO, through the Mine Action Service, also ran a four-week weapons and ammunition training programme for 25 FARDC and Congolese National Police armourers and ammunition storekeepers. In addition, MONUSCO, also through the Mine Action Service, completed the marking of 20 State-held weapons in Tanganyika. These efforts contributed to ensuring that weapons and ammunition used by national security and defence actors do not fall into the hands of non-State armed groups.

37. In Ituri, MONUSCO increased joint patrols with the Congolese National Police and FARDC to deter attacks in Bunia town and its outskirts. The Mission also continued to reinforce early warning and alert networks to ensure a timely and coordinated response to the growing threats to civilians in that area. This was

accompanied by enhanced community engagement to defuse tensions between communities and deter armed groups. MONUSCO also further expanded its alert network along the national highway 27, a key trade route with Uganda. In Djugu territory, patrols were conducted in farming areas where civilians and internally displaced persons had previously been targeted, significantly reducing the number of attacks associated with the harvesting season.

38. In Grand Nord, North Kivu, the Intervention Brigade continued to provide area security in support of FARDC operations to deter ADF retaliatory attacks against civilians. Following the deterioration of the security situation and the launch of FARDC operations in December, MONUSCO deployed standing combat deployments in the Rwenzori sector and on the border between North Kivu and Ituri. In addition, MONUSCO held a series of workshops with civil society, community and youth representatives, including 10 women, in Beni, Lubero, and Boikene to improve information-sharing with the Congolese security and defence forces, as well as the Mission. From 18 to 22 February, MONUSCO also conducted a review of early warning and response systems in Lubero territory to strengthen the Mission's response to protection threats in that area through a reconfigured civilian, police and military presence and enhanced coordination between the Mission's field offices in Goma and Beni.

39. In Petit Nord, North Kivu, MONUSCO strengthened its response to threats against civilians. It maintained its standing combat deployment in Lukweti, which had been in deployment since 20 September 2020, and conducted three joint assessment missions in Walikale centre and Pinga, while facilitating the return of the local authorities and the Congolese National Police to the area. In addition, MONUSCO organized three workshops in Tongo, Nyamilima and Kitshanga to reinforce the capacity of local protection actors to efficiently contribute to early warning and protection mechanisms and expand the Community Alert Network system. In Pinga, the workshop organized by MONUSCO with local authorities and community leaders resulted in the reactivation of an inclusive local conflict-resolution committee.

40. In South Kivu, from mid-December to the beginning of January, MONUSCO facilitated intercommunal dialogue meetings in Uvira, Mikenge and Bijombo. The Mission also conducted, in coordination with FARDC, long-range and aerial patrols to deter confrontations between community-based armed groups. On 29 January, MONUSCO deployed a standing combat deployment in Kipupu to enable the launch of human rights investigations. In Shabunda and Walungu territories, the Mission undertook immediate response and preventive actions, including the establishment of standing combat deployments in Byangama and Kigulube, to deter armed group in-fighting and facilitate the return of internally displaced persons. These actions also enabled the deployment of two joint protection teams that provided assistance to survivors of sexual violence, in partnership with the Fondation Panzi. Similarly, the deployment of a standing combat deployment in Kulwa contributed to securing humanitarian actors access to assist internally displaced persons.

41. In Kasai Central, MONUSCO and the provincial government jointly organized a workshop in Kananga on the role of local authorities in security governance, which was attended by 48 local authority representatives, including 1 woman. Following the workshop, local authorities reported improved collaboration among themselves and better coordination in the resolution of community conflicts and the protection of civilians.

## **VII. Stabilization and the strengthening of State institutions**

### **A. Stabilization and root causes of conflict**

42. On 1 December, following a disagreement between the Government and FRPI on modalities for the disarmament and demobilization of armed elements, the Stabilization Coherence Fund suspended the reintegration programme in Irumu, which had been conducted in partnership with the International Organization for Migration. Work is under way to reorient the programme to a focus on community violence reduction activities, targeting young people at risk and other vulnerable members of the affected communities.

43. On 7 December, two 18-month projects were approved as part of the 2020 Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative of the Peacebuilding Fund. Led by UNHCR, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the international non-governmental organization (NGO) World Vision International, the first project focuses on strengthening justice, social cohesion and socioeconomic reintegration for and by young displaced women and men, returnees and host communities in Kasai and Kasai Central. The second project, developed by the Congolese NGO Fund for Congolese Women, promotes women's participation in peacebuilding through "peace huts" in Tanganyika.

### **B. Security sector and justice system reforms**

44. MONUSCO continued its good offices to advocate national ownership of security sector reform initiatives and engaged with key national stakeholders to build consensus on the need for a national strategy on security sector reform. Senior Congolese officials emphasized the need for a comprehensive approach to such reform, as part of President Tshisekedi's governance reform agenda. On 23 and 26 February, the Mission convened coordination meetings with United Nations entities to initiate mapping of United Nations system-wide assistance on security sector reform. The Mission also met with international partners, which stressed the importance of a national coordination mechanism for security sector reform.

45. On 1 February, MONUSCO, in collaboration with the Collège des Hautes Études de Stratégie et Défense, supported a training programme on rules of engagement in the field of operation, aimed at strengthening the strategic leadership skills of senior officers of FARDC and the Congolese National Police. On 23 February, MONUSCO representatives met with the head of the Training Department of the FARDC general staff to discuss options for continued support for the institution-building of defence structures through the development of a yearly training strategy, a mentorship programme and advocacy for the recruitment and promotion of women in all ranks of the military. In addition, FARDC, with the support of MONUSCO, began the construction of seven company operating bases, including two in Ituri and five in North Kivu, to enhance the preparedness of FARDC and its ability to conduct operations effectively, while also addressing cross-border security issues. The first base is currently under construction at Kididiwe, North Kivu, and is planned to be completed by 30 June.

46. MONUSCO supported the Comité de suivi de la réforme de la police in drafting five decrees and ordinances, including on the organization and operation of the Inspectorate General of the Congolese National Police, and of the Fichier criminel des infractions constatées et auteurs présumés. On 13 December 2020 and 16 January 2021, MONUSCO provided training on human rights and the protection of civilians to 65 men and 24 women inspectors of the Inspectorate General, in order to enhance

accountability during investigations. MONUSCO continued providing the Congolese National Police with monthly logistical supplies in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, as part of its ongoing support for the Integrated Operational Strategy for the Fight Against Insecurity in Beni, Oicha and Butembo.

47. To advance implementation of the Joint Justice Reform Support Programme, planning workshops were held with national- and provincial-level justice sector actors and partners in Kasai Central, North Kivu, Kinshasa and Tanganyika. In the workshops, province-specific priorities and challenges were identified, such as prolonged detention and overcrowding in prisons, which will need to be addressed within the Programme in order to strengthen justice institutions, including in the context of the transition of MONUSCO.

48. MONUSCO and the United Nations Development Programme provided technical and logistical support to the Tribunal de grande instance of Bunia on the issue of prolonged detention and prison overcrowding in Mahagi and Aru territories, bringing 76 long-pending judicial cases to trial. Security issues had prevented the court from addressing some of these cases for over two years. The trials of 85 defendants, including 1 woman, began on 24 November 2020 and concluded on 26 January 2021; 62 were convicted, including 38 for sexual violence, and 23 were acquitted, including 1 woman. MONUSCO also provided logistical and technical support to the Tribunal de grande instance, the garrison military court and the Tribunal de paix in Kalemie. These proceedings resulted in the conviction of 38 defendants, including 9 FARDC soldiers, the provisional release of 6 defendants and the acquittal of 2 defendants.

49. Given the persistent threat of attacks on the Kangbayi prison in Beni, North Kivu, MONUSCO provided logistical support to the military and justice authorities for the transfer to Ndolo Prison in Kinshasa on 11 December of six detainees considered the most dangerous among the suspected ADF fighters currently in detention.

### **C. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration**

50. Consultations within the Government, led by the President, on a new national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework resulted in the preparation of a draft ordinance that envisages the creation of a new structure, combining the mandates of the government agencies currently responsible for disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion, community reintegration and stabilization. However, the draft proposal has yet to be signed by the President. At the provincial level, MONUSCO is focusing on the implementation of projects to reduce community violence, for the benefit of victims of violence and young people at risk, and with the aim of making more progress on community-based disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

51. MONUSCO demobilized 16 Congolese ex-combatants from groups including the NDC-R Guidon faction, Nyatura and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. The Mission also separated 63 children (62 boys and 1 girl) from armed groups and transferred them to child protection partners for psychosocial support and family reunification. In addition, MONUSCO demobilized 15 Rwandan and 3 Burundian combatants, along with 20 dependants (10 men and 10 women). A total of 18 ex-combatants, including 1 woman, and 17 dependants (9 men and 8 women) were repatriated to Rwanda, in full compliance with national measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

## VIII. Women and peace and security

52. In his address to the nation on 6 December, President Tshisekedi stressed the importance of the participation of women in public life and in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence, and impunity. This was welcomed by Congolese women's organizations. Nevertheless, only two of the seven positions in the new permanent bureau of the National Assembly, the Quaestor and Deputy Rapporteur, are occupied by women. In the new permanent bureau of the Senate, women were elected to three of the seven positions: Quaestor, Deputy Quaestor and Deputy Rapporteur.

53. Building on a network of more than 350 women mediators in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Kasai and Kasai Central, MONUSCO continued to encourage the meaningful participation of women's organizations and women leaders in peace processes and conflict resolution initiatives. The Mission worked with women's organizations to continue mapping security hotspots in South Kivu and Ituri where women and girls are at risk. The mapping was shared with the national security and defence forces, as well as with protection actors to be included in protection mechanisms. A high-level discussion was organized between women leaders for peace, the Governor of South Kivu and the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Denis Mukwege, to ensure women's involvement in the consolidation of peace in South Kivu. MONUSCO also engaged with approximately 200 FARDC and Congolese National Police officers, young people and representatives of civil society organizations, including 140 men and 60 women, to promote concepts of positive masculinity for behavioural change throughout Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, and in Kinshasa.

## IX. Child protection and sexual violence in conflict

54. MONUSCO verified 217 grave violations against 215 children (35 girls and 180 boys), representing an increase of 13 per cent compared with the previous reporting period. A total of 16 children (3 girls and 13 boys) were killed or maimed. Twenty girls were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence. Nine rape cases were attributed to State agents, which represents a drop of 30 per cent compared with the previous reporting period. Meanwhile, 162 children (12 girls and 150 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups. The main armed groups from which children were separated or escaped were Mai-Mai Mazembe (32 boys and 2 girls), CODECO (22 boys and 2 girls), and Mai-Mai Biloze, a group based in the Bafuliro community and operating in the Hauts Plateaux of South Kivu (20 boys and 1 girl). Of the children being used in conflict, 46 have been voluntarily released by armed groups leaders who have signed a unilateral commitment to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations.

55. On 2 February, MONUSCO facilitated the signing by the NDC-R Bwira faction of a unilateral declaration to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations against children. The leaders of Mouvement d'action pour le changement, Mai-Mai Ilunga and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale Makilo also signed up to such commitments. In total, 39 armed groups have signed up to such commitments since July 2018, resulting in the voluntary release of 2,167 children, including 308 girls. Thirteen of those groups have not recorded any new child rights violations for one year.

56. In December 2020 and January 2021, at least 92 adults, including 1 man, were victims of conflict-related sexual violence, mainly perpetrated by armed groups, especially NDC-R and Twa militia elements. Of the conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by State agents, FARDC accounted for 20 per cent, while the Congolese

National Police accounted for 7 per cent. North Kivu recorded the largest share of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence (39 per cent), followed by South Kivu and Tanganyika.

## X. Exit strategy

57. Following the adoption of the joint strategy on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO and pursuant to Security Council resolution 2556 (2020), the Mission continued to engage with the Congolese authorities on the establishment of a joint working group with the Government. On 4 March, in her introductory meetings with President Tshisekedi and the outgoing Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marie Tumba Nzeza, the incoming Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo stressed the importance of setting up and operationalizing the working group in order to support the timely implementation of the joint strategy and allow for a progressive transfer of tasks and a responsible and sustainable drawdown of MONUSCO.

58. The Mission and the United Nations country team have also begun working on detailed plans for scaling up the latter's presence and programmatic activities in the areas from which the Mission is set to withdraw. Provincial-level integrated transition task forces have been established in Kasai and Kasai Central to develop, in close consultation with the provincial authorities, joint provincial transition frameworks to promote stabilization and peacebuilding after the drawdown of MONUSCO.

59. As part of the transition strategy in Kasai and Kasai Central and within the framework of the four collective outcomes agreed upon with the Government and national and international NGOs during the national consultative workshop held in October 2019, MONUSCO supported the United Nations country team in developing four draft joint activity programmes based on key provincial development priorities. Guided by the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus approach, the four draft activity programmes aim to address: (a) food security, nutrition, basic services and the development of the agricultural value chain; (b) justice reform and accountability, and the strengthening of institutions of the criminal justice chain; (c) police reform and accountability, security and the protection of civilians; and (d) the protection of internally displaced persons, returnees and host communities, in adherence to international standards.

60. In addition, the Mission collaborated with the provincial ministry of interior of Kasai Central and civil society organizations to map existing provincial mechanisms for the protection of civilians, in view of the progressive handover of responsibilities to local actors. The Mission also held a capacity-building workshop in Tshikapa, Kasai, with 40 representatives of State security and defence forces, local authorities, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies, including 18 women, to assess the efficiency of the local mechanisms for the protection of civilians and identify areas for improving cooperation between protection actors.

61. On 11 January, the World Bank opened a new sub-office in Kananga, which plans to start investing in education, health and social infrastructure to revitalize local economies. An informal "One UN" coordination framework comprising MONUSCO, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the World Bank was set up in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces to tackle, through a nexus approach, the root causes and drivers of underdevelopment in rural areas. Planned initiatives are aimed at promoting socioeconomic resilience, sparking transformative processes for energy production and fostering the development of industry and food processing.

62. In addition, the fund for the promotion of industry in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is financing projects in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces, consistent with the triple nexus approach, to address the development of landlocked areas through the construction of key infrastructure.

63. In Tanganyika, MONUSCO worked with the local authorities and national experts to begin preparing a road map, setting out concrete steps for the sustainable handover of protection activities. Progress was also made with regard to the transfer of operational responsibility for the company operating base in Bandera, on the border with South Kivu, to the South Kivu field office. Given the continued armed activity of Mai-Mai Yakutumba in this zone, MONUSCO will maintain a force presence after the planned withdrawal of the force from Tanganyika.

## **XI. Mission effectiveness**

### **A. Mission performance**

#### **1. Assessment of the performance of the force and police components**

64. In line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments, MONUSCO focused on ensuring a high performance level among its uniformed components, while enhancing its force protection procedures. In total, 10 of the 42 units were inspected: 6 were assessed as excellent and 2 as optimal. The inspection reports of the remaining two units are being processed. The Mission adopted a new cycle of inspections of operational effectiveness and developed a performance enhancement plan, which will serve as a tool to monitor the implementation of specific recommendations related to each inspected unit and will include clear timelines for execution. In addition, the force has developed a monthly report with key performance indicators, in line with the Mission's Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, to measure the effectiveness of activities related to the protection of civilians and the provision of support to FARDC.

65. Female officers represent 19 per cent of the Mission's total contingent. The integration of 15 female engagement teams in major units has contributed to improving the force's performance on community engagement and trust-building.

66. The operational tempo of the force remained high, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The force has conducted 38,495 patrols and launched 20 standing combat deployments since December 2020. The Intervention Brigade has received 15 new staff officers and the Tactical Intelligence Unit has reached initial operating capability. The Geolocation Threat Analysis Unit was deployed to the Mission area. As a result, the capacity of the Mission to conduct intelligence-driven operations to ensure the protection of civilians has been reinforced. In addition, the Mission is helping FARDC to strengthen strategic capacity, including with regard to training, logistics, human rights and operations. In turn, the FARDC third defensive zone has embedded a liaison officer in MONUSCO, thereby strengthening cooperation at the operational level.

67. In November 2020, the performance evaluations of seven of the Mission's eight formed police units indicated that improvements had been made, in particular with regard to operational capabilities, as a rating of 76.1 per cent was awarded, compared with 65.8 per cent during the previous quarter. Formed police units currently adhere to the in-mission training programme to maintain their operational readiness. Since 2 December, the Mission has organized 98 training inspections to monitor the implementation of the annual training plan for all formed police units and to take actions to ensure its continuing efficiency.

68. As at 18 March, female officers constituted 18.5 per cent of MONUSCO formed police units, compared with 16.8 per cent in the previous reporting period. The Mission has continued its advocacy to encourage police-contributing countries to increase the number of female personnel and command staff, in order to achieve the objective of women accounting for 25 per cent of police officers in formed police units by the end of 2021.

69. The Mission's police component also conducted a quarterly performance evaluation of 315 individual police officers, including 107 female officers, on 31 December 2020. Evaluation criteria included professionalism; commitment to addressing protection challenges; capacity to identify security threats and to gather and analyse information; and productivity. The overall performance assessment revealed a decline in the performance compared with the previous quarter, from 81.9 to 70.9 per cent, owing to the substantial number of newly deployed individual police officers (92) who were not evaluated during the performance cycle. To improve the overall performance of individual police officers, the Mission's police component organized 17 online training sessions for 415 police officers, including 139 female officers, including on the protection of civilians, sexual exploitation and abuse, child protection and environmental protection. MONUSCO also developed a deployment plan based on the mapping and assessment of skill sets of individual police officers.

## **2. Progress in the implementation of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System**

70. The Mission is completing its results framework, which is the first of the four phases leading up to the full implementation of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System. The results framework includes key performance indicators on the protection of civilians that are drawn from the force's monthly report, the Mission's gender-sensitive indicators, as well as outcome indicators from the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

## **3. Impact of the pandemic on mandate implementation**

71. The Mission's operational tempo remained high, although the temporary suspension of rotations for several months posed a challenge for the force and police generation processes. The Senegalese formed police unit has been operational in Beni since January 2021, while the advance team of the Jordanian unit has arrived in Kalemie and the unit will be operational in March. The rotations of contingents continued to be affected by the pandemic, resulting in approximately three weeks of additional delays and the requirement for additional transport resources. Despite challenges, the number of patrols remained consistent compared with the pre-pandemic period.

72. As at 15 March and since the beginning of the pandemic, 389 United Nations personnel had tested positive for COVID-19, of whom 274 had recovered and 6 had died after contracting the virus.

## **B. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse**

73. From 1 November 2020 to 28 February 2021, six allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, all involving military contingent members, were recorded and have been referred to the troop-contributing countries concerned for investigation. The alleged victims have been referred to the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund and their relevant partners for appropriate support and assistance. In addition, seven allegations of serious misconduct were recorded and are under investigation.

74. MONUSCO continued to consolidate preventive measures against misconduct, including through training, risk assessments and the enforcement of curfews and out-of-bounds areas. Community outreach on the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse continued, although it was predominantly pursued through radio broadcasts and text messages owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The implementation of projects under the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse started in January 2021 in Bunia, Beni, Uvira, Kalemie, Bujovu and Sake.

## **XII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel**

75. Ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities remained a priority, in line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments. A total of 192 security incidents affecting United Nations personnel and facilities were recorded, including 6 incidents related to armed conflict, 83 to crime, 41 to civil unrest and 62 to hazards. Of the personnel affected, 50 were international staff (43 men and 7 women) and 57 were national staff (47 men and 10 women). This represents a 21.6 per cent decrease compared with the previous reporting period and is attributed to COVID-19 measures and restrictions.

76. The trial in the case of the two United Nations experts murdered in Kananga in 2017 continued before the military court of Kananga. Two of the accused, who have so far been prosecuted in absentia, appeared before the court in December. However, the trial was subsequently suspended because of the death on 15 January of the FARDC Auditeur général who had conducted a part of the initial investigations and the non-appearance of the defence counsel at the hearings.

77. On 8 March, the Military Operational Court of North Kivu convicted three defendants, accused of the attack on an Ebola treatment centre and of the murder of a WHO doctor in Butembo in April 2019. The Court acquitted five other defendants, including three women. A further 16 defendants, tried in absentia after escaping from Beni prison in October 2020, were convicted of criminal conspiracy and terrorism. Reportedly, 7 of the 15 defendants awaiting trial for the destruction of the office of the mayor of Beni and the MONUSCO base in Boikene in November 2019 had also escaped from Beni prison, while the remaining 8 had been provisionally released.

## **XIII. Observations**

78. The political and security environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains volatile. I take note of President Tshisekedi's efforts to form a new governing majority, geared towards advancing the key reforms required for placing the country firmly on the path to lasting peace, stability and sustainable development. I am encouraged by the appointment of a new Prime Minister and look forward to the imminent formation of an inclusive and effective Government that will take on the urgent task of addressing the pressing challenges facing the Congolese people, in particular the deteriorating security situation in the eastern provinces. It is crucial that the urgent actions needed to foster stabilization, good governance, as well as security sector and justice reforms, are not further delayed. I particularly welcome President Tshisekedi's commitment to ensure that women represent at least 30 percent of the new Government. I call on all political stakeholders, whether from the majority or the opposition, to ensure that momentum and progress towards these goals are maintained ahead of the 2023 elections. I further urge them to desist from resorting to intimidation, hate speech and violence, as well as to transactional politics to further their political aims, and strictly uphold the tenets of the Constitution.

79. I am concerned by the increase in armed group activity in the eastern provinces, in particular by ADF in North Kivu and Ituri, which has caused multiple civilian casualties and has had a disproportionate impact on women and children. I am also concerned by the continuing intercommunal violence in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika. I call on the Congolese authorities to take concrete steps to address the root causes of violence in these areas, including by combating hate speech, addressing the illegal exploitation of natural resources and trafficking in small arms, and providing alternative economic opportunities to ex-combatants and their communities through the swift implementation of decentralized programmes for disarmament, demobilization, community reintegration and stabilization.

80. I congratulate President Tshisekedi on his assumption of the presidency of the African Union and express my commitment to strengthening the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations and to working to make progress on our common priorities.

81. I remain committed to a gradual, conditions-based transition of MONUSCO that reflects the evolution of the security situation on the ground in the provinces where the Mission is still present. I am encouraged by the commitment of the Congolese authorities to continue working towards the achievement of this goal, with the support of the United Nations and international partners. I look forward to the continuation of discussions with the Government on the development of the detailed transition plan requested by the Security Council, based on the joint strategy on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO.

82. I am deeply troubled by the persistent human rights violations and abuses, including conflict-related sexual violence, committed by armed groups and State agents. I urge the Congolese authorities to redouble their efforts in the fight against impunity to ensure that the perpetrators of these acts are held to account. The court order in the Le Pouce case is a positive step towards bringing justice to victims. I also encourage the authorities to take further steps to protect human rights defenders and victims of human rights violations and abuses.

83. The humanitarian situation in the country, marked by a significant increase in the number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance and compounded by armed group violence and the challenging overall protection environment in conflict-affected areas is extremely concerning. I am appalled by the heinous attack on a WFP convoy in Kibumba, North Kivu, on 22 February, in which the Ambassador of Italy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, his close protection officer and a WFP staff member tragically lost their lives. I extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and wish those who survived a speedy recovery. I unreservedly condemn all attacks against humanitarian actors and urge the Congolese authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. In addition to the fact-finding mission conducted by the Department of Safety and Security, the United Nations stands ready to support investigations into this awful crime.

84. The resurgence of Ebola in the eastern part of the country adds to the multiple challenges facing the Congolese people. I commend the swift reaction of the Congolese authorities, reiterate the support of the United Nations to prevent the further spread of the disease and call on international partners to continue providing all the assistance necessary.

85. I am committed to ensuring that MONUSCO delivers on its core mandated responsibilities as effectively and efficiently as possible. I also reiterate my commitment to enhancing the protection and security of all peacekeeping personnel, in line with the Action for Peacekeeping initiative. I count on the continued support of Security Council members, troop- and police-contributing countries and key

regional partners to ensure the timely implementation of the envisaged improvements to the MONUSCO force, including its Intervention Brigade.

86. Lastly, I wish to express my gratitude and deep appreciation to my outgoing Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her exemplary leadership and dedication to the cause of peace. I call on all stakeholders to provide their full support to my new Special Representative, Bintou Keita, who will continue my good offices with the aim of helping the country to lay the foundations for long-term peace, stability and sustainable development. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to all MONUSCO personnel, my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and troop- and police-contributing countries for their continued commitment to peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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