



Security Council

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Report of the Security Council mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 9–12 March 2023

I. Introduction

1. In a letter dated 30 January 2023, the President of the Security Council informed the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that it had decided to send a mission to the country from 9 to 12 March 2023. The terms of reference of the mission are contained in the annex to document [S/2023/186](#). The mission was co-led by representatives of France and Gabon and comprised the following members:

Albania	Ferit Hoxha (Permanent Representative)
Brazil	Cícero Tobias de Oliveira Freitas (Counsellor)
China	Sun Zhiqiang (Acting Deputy Permanent Representative)
Ecuador	Hernán Pérez Loose (Permanent Representative)
France	Nicolas de Riviére (Permanent Representative)
Gabon	Michel Xavier Biang (Permanent Representative)
Ghana	Nana Akua Barnor (First Secretary)
Japan	Ishikane Kimihiro (Permanent Representative)
Malta	Vanessa Frazier (Permanent Representative)
Mozambique	Pedro Comissário Afonso (Permanent Representative)
Russian Federation	Anna M. Evstigneeva (Deputy Permanent Representative)
Switzerland	Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Permanent Representative)
United Arab Emirates	Mohamed Issa Abushahab (Deputy Permanent Representative)
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Fergus John Eckersley (Political Coordinator)
United States of America	Robert Anthony Wood (Alternate Representative for Special Political Affairs)



II. Visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

A. Meetings in Kinshasa

Briefing by the senior leadership of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations country team

2. The members of the Security Council mission met with the leadership of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United Nations country team and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. Discussions revolved around the implementation of the mandate of MONUSCO, the electoral process, ongoing regional processes and the future of the United Nations in the country.

3. During the discussions, United Nations representatives presented the deterioration of the security situation in the eastern provinces, marked by the continued expansion of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). Congolese authorities and people said they expected the international community to condemn and impose sanctions on Rwanda. United Nations representatives underscored the need for a political solution to the crisis and for concerted support for the Nairobi and Luanda processes, as complementary regional initiatives. In that context, the Security Council mission members said that the solution to the crisis should be political and that ongoing efforts to implement decisions made under the Nairobi and Luanda processes should be further supported. The United Nations representatives advocated in favour of support to fund the humanitarian response plan in the light of the worsening of the humanitarian situation in the country. On the electoral process, they mentioned persistent tensions around voter registration and possible risks associated with an electoral process that would not respect the constitutional deadline.

4. The members of the Security Council mission observed that MONUSCO was operating in a very hostile environment, which impeded delivery on its mandate and the work of humanitarian actors. MONUSCO representatives underlined the need to enforce the decision of the Congolese authorities not to integrate members of armed groups into the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. United Nations representatives explained that MONUSCO began providing logistical support to the Independent National Electoral Commission, at its official request, through the transport of 130 tons of electoral materials and continued to work with the United Nations country team to support efforts to consolidate the judicial system and transitional justice and prevent the recruitment of children.

5. United Nations representatives also mentioned coordination and communication between MONUSCO, the Congolese armed forces, the East African Community regional force and bilateral forces, as part of efforts to deconflict operations and ensure effective protection of civilians. Specific requests were made to Member States to provide MONUSCO with capacities and adequate means to support the implementation of its mandate, as set out in Security Council resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#). Council mission members heard further briefings on ongoing discussions between the Government and the United Nations country team to review the joint transition plan.

Meeting with the Prime Minister and members of the Government

6. The members of the Security Council mission also met with the Prime Minister, Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge, accompanied by the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Vice-Minister of National Defence, the Chief of Defence Staff of the Congolese armed forces and the General Commissioner of the Congolese National Police and

other key members of the Prime Minister's office. The Prime Minister thanked the Council for having responded to the request of the Congolese authorities to lift the notification requirement for the provision of military materiel and assistance. The Council delegation informed those present that the objective of the visit was to express solidarity with the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the context of the deteriorating security situation in the east and to identify areas where its support was needed.

7. The Prime Minister gave a briefing on the security situation in the east and called upon the Security Council to examine evidence of support by Rwanda for M23, as contained in the reports of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to impose sanctions against Rwanda. The Prime Minister requested the support of the Council for regional efforts, an update of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (commonly known as the Addis Ababa framework agreement), in the light of the current security situation, and the implementation of the recommendations of the mini-summit held in Luanda on 23 November 2022. Referring to the memorandum of 10 March 2023 on the new partnership between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations, which was subsequently handed over to the Council delegation, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, noted that the new partnership should focus on the following three priorities for the Democratic Republic of the Congo: peace and security; political stability; and social and economic development. On MONUSCO, the Council's interlocutors explained that the President had instructed the Government to work with the United Nations country team to review the joint transition plan, in order to focus the Mission's role on the following four benchmarks: security; the protection of civilians; the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme; and the electoral process. They urged the Council to adapt the Mission's mandate from peacekeeping to peacemaking or to provide the MONUSCO force with an effective Intervention Brigade.

8. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the Nairobi and Luanda processes, while calling for a review of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. He called upon the United Nations to mobilize resources to support the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. The Vice-Prime Minister also reaffirmed the commitment of the Congolese authorities to hold elections in 2023, in accordance with Constitutional deadlines but cautioned that the persistent security situation in the east could impede the holding of an inclusive electoral process. On the issue of the repatriation of refugees, the Vice-Prime Minister reiterated his call upon the United Nations to support, through resource mobilization, the implementation of the 2010 tripartite agreement among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. On the illicit exploitation of natural resources, he called upon the Security Council to impose sanctions on perpetrators and to strengthen verification mechanisms.

Meeting with the President of the National Assembly and the First Vice-President of the Senate

9. The Security Council delegation met with the President of the National Assembly and the First Vice-President of the Senate, accompanied by members of their respective bureaux. The Council members presented the objective of the visit and sought the parliament's view on the role and future of MONUSCO in the country, progress in ongoing regional initiatives and security sector reform. The Council members also stressed that MONUSCO was deployed in the country to protect

civilians and to help to restore stability, adding that United Nations personnel should be protected by the host country.

10. The President of the National Assembly thanked the delegation for the continuous support of United Nations Member States since the country's independence, citing successive United Nations interventions to address political and security unrest and secession attempts. Referring to the cooperation among MONUSCO, the Congolese armed forces and the East African Community regional force, the President of the National Assembly thanked the troop-contributing countries for their efforts and sacrifices. The President of the National Assembly called for all foreign support for the "aggression" against the Democratic Republic of the Congo to end and urged the Security Council to examine the report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo regarding Rwandan support for M23. He called for sanctions against countries conducting attacks against the Democratic Republic of the Congo in violation of the Charter of the United Nations. The President of the National Assembly stated that the Congolese authorities were ready for dialogue, but stressed that M23 should withdraw from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He also called for the cessation of all external support and the withdrawal of all foreign armed groups from Congolese territory.

11. On the future of MONUSCO and the United Nations in the country, the President of the National Assembly noted that the perceived inaction of MONUSCO in areas where attacks against civilians occurred had prompted demonstrations against MONUSCO in July 2022. He called upon the Security Council to strengthen the Mission's mandate and to give MONUSCO the capacities to implement its mandate to protect civilians. On the cooperation between MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces, the President acknowledged that the Mission was providing support to the Congolese armed forces in terms of medical evacuation and information-sharing.

12. The members of the Security Council mission encouraged the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to work towards peaceful, transparent, inclusive and credible processes for the presidential and legislative elections scheduled in 2023, in accordance with the Constitution and electoral law, and stressed the importance of avoiding incitement to violence and of stepping up efforts to widen democratic space. The President of the National Assembly noted that the elections would be held in 2023 and called upon the international community to help to restore peace in the eastern provinces, so as to enable the holding of an inclusive election. The President also informed the Council delegation that efforts had been made to ensure that opposition candidates operated in a conducive and secure environment and invited international observers to oversee the electoral process. He also thanked MONUSCO for providing logistical support to the Independent National Electoral Commission by transporting election materials.

Meeting with representatives of civil society organizations

13. Representatives of civil society organizations stressed that the persistent security situation in the eastern provinces and the lack of credibility with regard to the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court were the main constraints for the holding of inclusive, free and fair elections. According to the members of the civil society organizations, if the United Nations was convinced of the need for elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the aspirations of the Congolese population to vote within the constitutional deadline, it was imperative that the Security Council put in place measures to help to restore peace in the country, including sanctions and notification regimes for States supporting armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to strengthen the MONUSCO force Intervention Brigade.

14. Some representatives of civil society organizations encouraged the participation of civil society in discussions about the transition plan. Women leaders advocated in favour of the meaningful participation of civil society, including women's groups, in ongoing political and peace processes and called for better protection of victims of sexual violence.

Meeting with members of the opposition

15. Discussions with some opposition leaders were also focused on the security situation in eastern provinces and the electoral process. They denounced foreign support provided to M23 and called for sanctions against States supporting armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They called for the review of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and for the adjustment of the Mission's mandate from peacekeeping to peace enforcement. On the electoral process, some opposition leaders called for a consensual review of the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Constitutional Court and warned of the risk of political instability if the electoral process was not consensual, transparent, inclusive, credible and respectful of the constitutional deadline.

Meeting with the President of the Republic

16. The President of the Republic, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, received the Security Council delegation on 10 March 2023 in the presidential palace in Kinshasa. Council members gave a briefing on the objective of the visit and sought the President's views on the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, efforts to combat the illegal exploitation of natural resources, progress made in preparations for the electoral process and the role of MONUSCO.

17. The President's remarks were focused mainly on the deterioration of the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of relations with Rwanda. He stressed that the instability in the eastern part of the country was linked mainly to the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The President called upon the Security Council to put an end to the current instability and violence. He expressed regret over the silence and inaction of the international community, despite the crisis having resulting in more than 10 million deaths.

18. The President noted that hostile actions by some segments of the population against MONUSCO were partly owing to the inaction of the international community to resolve the M23 crisis. He underscored that to regain the credibility of MONUSCO, the Security Council should strengthen the Intervention Brigade to enable it to conduct offensive operations against M23. The President also stressed that the Democratic Republic of the Congo was in urgent need of stability to hold free and fair elections within the constitutional deadlines.

B. Meetings in Goma, North Kivu Province

Meeting with the Governor of North Kivu, the Minister of National Defence and Former Combatants and the Minister of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and National Solidarity

19. In his briefing to the members of the Security Council mission, the Governor of North Kivu provided information on the activities of local and foreign armed groups, namely the Cooperative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), Mai-Mai, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and M23. He commended MONUSCO for its support, but expressed regret that that support had become passive since the resurgence of the M23 in November 2021, which had prompted distrust of MONUSCO among the population. He denounced the terrorist attacks on civilian

populations by the ADF group affiliated with Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh) and the use of increasingly sophisticated explosive devices. The Governor called upon the Council to support the implementation of decisions made under the Nairobi and Luanda processes, to examine the reports of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to impose sanctions on Rwanda, to support the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and to facilitate the return of foreign armed groups to their countries of origin, notably the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. The Minister of National Defence and Former Combatants called upon the Council to assume its responsibility by restoring peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to provide the latter with the military and economic means to defend itself.

20. The Governor also provided information to the Security Council delegation on the illegal exploitation of natural resources and called upon the Council to require States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to respect the Protocol against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources of 30 November 2006 and to require international organizations involved in mining governance to launch a mechanism on the traceability of minerals exported by Rwanda.

Ceremony to pay tribute to fallen peacekeepers

21. During a wreath-laying ceremony, the members of the Security Council mission paid tribute to the fallen peacekeepers who had paid the ultimate sacrifice in the service of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Meeting with key actors of the Nairobi and Luanda processes

22. The Security Council delegation engaged with the following key regional actors: the High Representative of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Serge Tshibangu; the Commander of the East African Community regional force, Major General Jeff Nyagah; and the Head of the ad hoc verification mechanism established under the Luanda process, Lieutenant General João Nassone. Lieutenant General Nassone gave a briefing to the members of the Council mission on the work of the mechanism and informed them that M23 was not respecting the various timelines for its withdrawal. Major General Nyagah gave a briefing on the new deployment posture of the regional force and noted that control of supply roads to Goma by M23 was having a serious impact on the price of basic commodities, on humanitarian access and on freedom of movement and stressed the need to support the political tracks of the Nairobi process and the Luanda process through diplomatic pressure on M23 and its allies. While calling for financial support for the regional force, Major General Nyagah also identified areas where technical support was needed from MONUSCO. Professor Tshibangu gave a briefing on preparations for the holding of the fourth round of consultations within the framework of the Nairobi process and called for financial and technical assistance to support “transitional measures” under the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, pending the release in August 2023 by the World Bank of \$250 million allocated to its programme to improve stability and resilience in conflict-affected eastern provinces.

Meeting with the Mission force

23. The members of the Security Council mission thanked MONUSCO for its efforts to implement its mandate amid various constraints. Discussions revolved around challenges faced by MONUSCO in the delivery of its protection of civilians mandated task, cooperation with the Congolese armed forces and the East African Community regional force and how the Council could best support the Mission.

24. The exchange with the MONUSCO force revealed that the Mission had adapted its posture through physical presence and escorts, in order to better address the threat posed by armed groups such as ADF, CODECO and Mai-Mai, which continued their attacks against civilians in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The MONUSCO force presented its posture and strategy with regard to M23. In that context, the Mission's actions were limited by disinformation and restrictions of movement imposed on its convoys. Nonetheless, MONUSCO stressed that it continued to ensure protection of civilians in areas controlled by M23.

25. On the cooperation between MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces, the Mission noted that it continued to provide support to the Congolese armed forces, in compliance with the United Nations Due Diligence Policy on Human Rights and in accordance with resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#). Emphasis was placed on the need to accelerate security sector reforms by ensuring the professionalization of the Congolese armed forces, with a structured and clear chain of command. MONUSCO also provided information to the Security Council mission members on its cooperation with the East African Community regional force through coordination and information-sharing. MONUSCO reiterated its requests for the generation of additional capabilities for its force. The mission members indicated that the Council looked forward to receiving options for the reconfiguration of MONUSCO from the Secretary-General.

Meeting with experts in natural resources

26. During their interaction with the members of the Security Council mission, experts on natural resources provided briefings on regional initiatives with regard to the transparent and legal management of natural resources and highlighted the progress achieved since the high-level workshop held in Khartoum in 2021. A presentation was also given on the initiative regarding batteries and electric vehicles between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, which was supported by the Economic Commission for Africa.

27. Experts made the following recommendations to strengthen security in artisanal mining areas: to provide support to States demonstrating a high level of commitment to the implementation, at the national level, of measures relating to the responsible sourcing of minerals; to support the implementation of initiatives that promote fair trade in minerals in the Great Lakes region; to advocate in favour of multi-donor support to strengthen the capacity of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the governance of the mining sector; to provide technical support to the National Commission to Combat Mining Fraud; to promote the use of national initiatives and the operationalization of local multi-stakeholder structures; to encourage destination countries and consumers of mining products to set up funds to support the stabilization and development of countries of origin; and to encourage States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to respect their commitments for the establishment of responsible supply chains and to boost the stability of mining areas.

Meeting with women leaders of civil society organizations

28. The members of the Security Council mission heard briefings by women leaders on the impact of the recurring cycles of conflict in eastern provinces on women and children who were increasingly victims of sexual violence. They noted that armed group activities had worsened the humanitarian situation, in particular in North Kivu, where M23 continued to be active. They called upon the Council to help to restore peace in eastern provinces, investigate crimes committed in the east, hold perpetrators of serious crimes accountable and impose sanctions on armed groups and neighbouring countries supporting them, and called for national dialogues between

neighbouring countries and foreign armed groups. Women leaders also called for the support of the Council to ensure participation by women and young people in peace processes and to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights. The delegation reiterated the Council's support for women leaders and committed itself to continuing to work towards the restoration of peace and stability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Council members also noted that MONUSCO was in the country to support stabilization efforts.

Visit to an internally displaced persons site

29. The members of the Security Council mission visited the Bushagara internally displaced persons site (5 km outside Goma town), which was hosting 2,900 households, and was welcomed by the Minister of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and National Solidarity. Representatives of internally displaced persons called upon the Council to stop the conflict in the east so that they could return to their villages. The Minister thanked the United Nations and humanitarian actors for the assistance and noted that other internally displaced persons sites needed humanitarian assistance. The delegation took note of the situation and pledged to work towards an urgent response to provide humanitarian assistance to the population in need.

Press conference

30. The visit ended with a press conference, during which the co-leads of the mission shared with the press the conclusions that the Security Council had drawn from its mission.
