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Seventy-sixth year

8918th meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Abarry	(Niger)
<i>Members:</i>	China	Mr. Dai Bing
	Estonia	Mr. Jürgenson
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	India	Mr. Raguttahalli
	Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
	Kenya	Mr. Kimani
	Mexico	Mr. De la Fuente Ramírez
	Norway	Mr. Kvalheim
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Ms. Mark
	Tunisia	Mr. Cherif
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield
	Viet Nam	Mr. Pham

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization
Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2021/987)

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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/2021/987)

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

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala, women's rights activist and member of the African Women Leaders Network.

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/2021/987, 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, by me, in my capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and by Ms. Kalala.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to address the Security Council to present the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following the publication of the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2021/987). I look forward to providing this briefing in person after a long period of remote interaction due to the coronavirus disease pandemic.

In my recent briefings to the Council, I have underlined the main challenges and opportunities, particularly with respect to the protection of civilians in the east of the country. These challenges are still relevant today.

It is in that context that on 30 November, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) initiated joint military operations with the Ugandan army against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Air and artillery strikes against ADF positions in North Kivu and Ituri were followed that same day by the entry of Ugandan units into Congolese territory in Nobili, North Kivu, which were then directed towards the Kamango area, 50 kilometres from Beni. At this time, ground operations continue to neutralize enemy combatants in areas of bombardment today.

In my interactions with the highest authorities of the two States, I have taken note of the sovereign decision to carry out this joint military action and underlined the absolute necessity to put in place operational mechanisms of cooperation in order to ensure the security of the United Nations peacekeepers and allow the Mission to continue to support the FARDC in the protection of civilians and the neutralization of armed groups, in accordance with the mandate granted to it by the Council. These mechanisms are being put in place. To that end, on 2 December the Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) went to Kampala to define with the authorities the practical modalities of that tripartite coordination, which will cover, inter alia, aspects related to the security of the aviation, the protection of forces participating in operations and humanitarian access to affected populations. Tomorrow, the Force Commander will be in Kinshasa to meet with the FARDC military hierarchy in order to pursue the dialogue initiated in Kampala. I also stress that MONUSCO, within the framework of its mandate, will continue to monitor and report any potential human rights violations committed on Congolese territory.

It should be recalled that, with a view to responding to the security challenges in the east of the country, the Congolese authorities decided in May to declare a state of siege in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu, whose duration has just been extended for the thirteenth time. Given the difficulties associated with the implementation of the many criticisms that have resulted from it, the Defence and Security Standing Committee

of the National Assembly carried out an assessment of the state of siege and made recommendations to the Government, in the contexts both of security and of territorial administration and justice. I would welcome that constructive and democratic approach, which has been accepted by the Government. An interinstitutional commission headed by the Minister of Defence is carrying out a complementary assessment by consulting the population and the local political class in the provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. These consultations are also a step in the right direction.

The challenges facing the Government in implementing the state of siege highlight the limits of a strictly military approach to the protection of civilians and the neutralization of armed groups. The period of the state of siege in fact saw a 10 per cent increase in the number of violations and abuses of human rights in the country, compared to the previous period, attributable in the great majority to armed groups and the security forces in the two provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. A sustainable solution to the violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo will require a broader political commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict. If stability is to return to eastern Congo, the State must succeed in restoring and maintaining the confidence of the people in its ability to protect, administer, deliver justice and meet their basic needs. I have stressed that regularly in my exchanges with the Head of State and with the Prime Minister.

The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in the east of the country due to insecurity and epidemics, combined with limited access to basic services. The number of internally displaced people stands at nearly 6 million, of whom 51 per cent are women. This is the highest number of internally displaced people on the continent. This situation has been compounded by the emergence of new cases of the Ebola virus. In that regard, I commend the involvement of humanitarian partners that quickly mobilized to help the Ministry of Health prevent the spread of the disease. I take this opportunity to reiterate the appeal to international partners and donors to redouble their efforts under the humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has so far received only 34 per cent of the necessary funding.

Following the establishment of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme, the Government created a joint technical working group to ensure coordination

between the United Nations and the Congolese authorities in the operationalization of the programme. I hope that the group will serve as an instrument to catalyse international support for the programme.

I encourage the Government to proceed without delay to the appointment of the provincial coordinators of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme. I invite the national coordination to sensitize all the actors concerned, including the defence forces and security, on the civilian and decentralized nature of the programme, favouring the community reintegration of combatants and banning any amnesty and automatic integration into the army, in accordance with the agreed principles. International support and the success of the programme depend on it.

(spoke in English)

The implementation of the transition plan for the progressive, responsible and conditions-based drawdown of MONUSCO is making progress. At the national level, the Mission, the United Nations country team and the Government continue to coordinate the operationalization of the joint transition plan presented in October to the Council, through a joint working group.

At the provincial level, MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, in collaboration with national and international stakeholders, are operationalizing the humanitarian-development-peace triple nexus approach in Tanganyika, in anticipation of the Mission's drawdown from the province by June 2022. In recent weeks, the Mission's senior leadership, together with the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, have led field visits to jointly assess progress towards the implementation of the exit strategy and enhance coordination with provincial and local authorities.

Meanwhile, in the Kasai region, the United Nations system remains focused on continued efforts to sustain peacebuilding gains, following the withdrawal of MONUSCO. The international community, represented by the partners coordination group, has continued to show its commitment to a responsible and sustainable transition process. In October, the group undertook a field visit to Kasai and Kasai Central provinces to review the implementation of nexus-related projects and the provincial coordination mechanisms.

Long-term stability also requires a firm commitment to good governance and the rule of law.

In that regard, I welcome the holding of the general assembly for the fight against corruption, organized by the Government in October, which led to a series of recommendations for reforming and strengthening the regulatory system and State anti-corruption agencies. I encourage the Congolese authorities to continue the implementation of measures against corruption.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources is a major driver of conflict that needs to be addressed. I am encouraged by the Government's efforts to reform the mining sector and reiterate the Mission's readiness to support these efforts, within the limits of its mandate and the means at its disposal. The sustainable exploitation of natural resources is also a State responsibility vis-à-vis the international community in the global fight against climate change. I commend President Tshisekedi's intervention at the twenty-sixth Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Glasgow and his commitment to combating deforestation in the Congo basin rainforest and to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 21 per cent by 2030.

As I have underscored before, the process of democratic consolidation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo presents both challenges and opportunities. I am encouraged by the recent meetings between the presidency, the Prime Minister and the Presidents of the Senate and National Assembly with the leadership of the Catholic and Protestant churches, which have helped reduce tensions arising from the disputed appointment of the leadership of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). I also want to salute the efforts of the Congolese civil society national coordination, to which Ms. Kalala belongs, and which worked hard to help the different stakeholders find an agreement on the CENI leadership. I encourage them to continue their efforts to foster a peaceful, credible and violence-free electoral process. MONUSCO will continue to use its good offices to build trust among all stakeholders. A national consensus on the reform of the electoral law will be absolutely critical in that regard.

In conclusion, I wish to thank all members of this Council for their steadfast support to MONUSCO. I also wish to pay a special tribute to the troop- and police-contributing countries and all my colleagues, whether military or civilian staff, whose support makes possible the implementation of the Mission's mandate. As the country looks ahead to elections in 2023, I urge all political stakeholders to focus, over the next twelve

months, on taking forward the key reforms needed to consolidate the hard-won stabilization gains achieved so far and overcome continuing challenges, particularly in the east. I count on the Council to renew its support to MONUSCO and provide adequate resources to enable the Mission to carry out its mandate for the benefit of the Congolese people.

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

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I have the honour to speak in my capacity as Chair of the Committee. My previous briefing to the Council on the work of the Committee dates back to 5 October 2021 (see S/PV.8873), and the one before that to 6 October 2020 (see S/2020/987). Today I intend to provide an overview of my visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 6 to 10 November this year.

On that occasion, I was accompanied by representatives of the Permanent Missions of Estonia, France, India, Ireland, Kenya, Mexico, the Niger, Norway, the United Kingdom and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations. Representatives of the Kinshasa Embassies of China, the United States, the Russian Federation and India were also present.

I would first like to thank the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its close cooperation and for the relevant information it provided to my delegation. I would also like to express my gratitude to Special Representative Bintou Keita and her colleagues at the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as well as to other institutions and United Nations organizations in country, for their support and excellent reports.

Overall, as stated in the mandate, the purpose of my visit was to gather first-hand information regarding the effective application of the sanctions imposed by resolution 2360 (2017) — reaffirmed by resolution 2582 (2021) — and, in accordance with paragraph 30 of resolution 2360 (2017), to explore the possibility of holding consultations with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with representatives of MONUSCO, the diplomatic

community and civil society groups in order to guarantee the full application of sanctions measures.

During our stay in Kinshasa, my delegation held fruitful discussions with various Congolese authorities, in particular the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Special Adviser to the President in charge of youth, gender and violence against women, and the Auditor General of the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo.

We also held an exchange of views with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. David McLachlan-Karr, and took stock with representatives of MONUSCO on the political landscape, the security conditions and the human rights and humanitarian situation, in addition to a briefing with the United Nations Mine Action Service.

In addition, we had an opportunity to meet separately with representatives of the diplomatic community and civil society organizations, including women's groups.

Finally, we held a meeting with the senior official of the monitoring mechanism on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who travelled to Kinshasa with one of his technical experts.

Overall, our discussions focused on the security conditions in the eastern part of the country, including the activities of armed groups; the diversion of weapons by armed groups; the use of improvised explosive devices by suspected elements of the Allied Democratic Forces; human rights violations committed by all actors, including sexual violence in conflict; and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The effects of the state of siege in North Kivu and Ituri were also discussed. Preparations for the 2023 local and national elections were also on the agenda. Many interlocutors encouraged the 1533 Committee to consider imposing additional sanctions on individuals and entities engaging in acts that compromise the peace, stability or security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with the designation criteria set out in the relevant Council resolutions.

The situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be marked by insecurity and human rights violations. I am particularly concerned by the risks of inter-communal conflict in Ituri and by reports of hate speech and violence against

the Banyamulenge community in South Kivu. I am equally concerned about the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and the fact that such groups continue to engage in the diversion of weapons and the illicit exploitation of natural resources.

I am encouraged by the expressed will of the Government to address the multiple challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular its commitment to tackle the issue of sexual violence in conflict.

I am also encouraged by the diplomatic steps taken by President Tshilombo Tshisekedi to normalize relations with neighbouring countries. I hope that those discussions will lead to a decrease in the illicit trafficking in arms and natural resources along of the borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Ms. Kalala.

Ms. Kalala (*spoke in French*): It is once again a privilege for me to speak to the Security Council on the issue of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for which I thank the Council.

I similarly briefed the Council in March 2017 (see S/PV.7903) at a delicate stage in our history as we were to organize presidential, legislative and senatorial elections. In reviewing my statement then, I am cognizant of the similarities in the two moments, given that the issue of elections is once again on the agenda, along with the ensuing difficulties — although that time we were able to overcome the obstacles and achieve a peaceful transition of power, to the great satisfaction of the international community.

Nevertheless, the Democratic Republic of the Congo finds itself facing the same difficulties. The issue in connection with the appointment of the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission in October is one illustration of that. For while the President has indeed been appointed, the Commission must still be fully constituted given the lack of consensus with the opposition. It is therefore essential that all the stakeholders involved agree on the proper holding of the process so that it can be truly transparent, consensus-based and peaceful, as a measure of the country's stability.

Also as I reviewed my statement, I noted that instability in the east of the country also continues to be a scourge for the people today, who are displaced on a daily basis — when not horrifically killed — despite the efforts of the Government by way of the declaration of the state of siege. And all the while there is deafening silence among the major Powers as the vicious cycle continues involving the plunder of natural resources, with the complicity of transnational corporations, massacres and the proliferation of armed groups, with the ensuing phenomenon of child soldiers and the rape of women.

As for the social situation, it has not improved much despite the efforts of President Tshilombo Tshisekedi, who has stated his determination to end corruption — a scourge that erodes the business environment and heightens the precarious living conditions of Congolese. Unfortunately, I cannot dwell on this issue due to time constraints. Numerous civil society reports bear that out.

Nevertheless, as a former Minister for Human Rights and a female mediator, I cannot but be concerned about protecting women and human rights in my country. Despite, certain obvious changes, all reports point to the repeated violation of those rights. In that connection, in paragraph 21, the Secretary-General report issued on 1 December (S/2021/987) states:

“Documented violations related to democratic space increased by 131 per cent owing to increased threats against members of civil society organizations and violations of the right to peaceful assembly.”

In paragraph 24, the report states:

“The number of internally displaced persons in the country surpassed 5.7 million, of whom 51 per cent were women ... The figure represents the greatest number of internally displaced persons on the African continent.”

Unfortunately, the weak judicial system makes it impossible to hold the perpetrators responsible for those numerous violations, or to compensate the victims. It is therefore necessary for the State to continue its efforts to protect its citizens.

I also take this opportunity to express my support for the call of Dr. Mukwege and civil society with regard to the implementation of a transitional justice mechanism.

With regard to the withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), that will depend on the degree to which Congolese women — through our national African Women Leaders Network — participate in the development of the Mission’s transition plan in the areas that affect them. We believe that we should not rush the Mission withdrawal. Instead, we must take into account all the factors I mentioned, as the security and humanitarian situation remain precarious.

The activist campaign we see now throughout the country also shows the gravity and urgency of addressing violence against women, which could hinder their social and political participation and, as a result, delay the country’s development.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not mention another scourge that looms over the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I therefore join Special Representative Bintou Keita in condemning the increase in tribalism and hate speech. Regressive notions can only hamper the development of our country, with tribalism as its engine. We must therefore eliminate such ideologies in order to be able to all live together.

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

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

Mr. De Rivièrè (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala for her commitment to advancing women’s rights.

I will highlight three points.

First, the progress made at the regional and domestic levels must be supported. France welcomes the positive dynamic among the States of the region. France supports President Tshilombo Tshisekedi’s initiatives to strengthen engagement with neighbouring States. The operationalization of the Contact and Coordination Group for non-military measures will be a further step to build trust. The forthcoming meeting of the follow-up mechanism of the Addis Ababa Framework agreement will contribute to promoting dialogue and stability in the region.

The fight against impunity is being bolstered by the conviction of more than 200 individuals for acts of sexual violence. France welcomes efforts to establish a reparation fund for the victims. The conviction of Mayi-Mayi leader Kolokolo for crimes against humanity demonstrates that abuses committed by armed groups will not go unpunished. Efforts to establish a national transitional justice strategy must continue.

France calls for the holding of credible, transparent, inclusive and peaceful elections in 2023. Safeguarding the democratic space is therefore essential.

Secondly, all efforts must converge to protect the people and meet their needs. France notes the recent targeted and coordinated actions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda against the Allied Democratic Forces. Close coordination between all actors on the ground, including the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the States of the region, is essential. France will remain alert to potential abuse and the protection of civilian populations. Given the increase in intercommunal violence, the fight against hate speech and incitement to violence must also continue.

Military measures will be insufficient without prospects for those who have chosen peace. The new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme must continue, and a national strategy must be elaborated for its implementation. France calls on international partners, in particular the World Bank, to support its implementation.

Humanitarian needs continue to grow. Humanitarian and medical workers must be protected and their access must be guaranteed. France condemns the abduction on 30 November of two members of the International Committee of the Red Cross in North Kivu.

Health challenges also remain. That is why the European Union has deployed humanitarian aid to help communities affected by meningitis in Tshopo province. France remains mobilized within the framework of the Franco-Congolese road map to combat epidemics.

Finally, the commitment of the United Nations remains essential to peace, stabilization and institution-building. MONUSCO and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes must act together by

enhancing integration and increasing joint programmes in order to promote stability.

The implementation of the Government's programme of action will be key to meeting the benchmarks that will guide the reconfiguration of the United Nations presence. Support from international and regional partners will need to increase in order to achieve the objectives set out in the MONUSCO transition plan.

The authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo know that they can count on France's support, particularly in strengthening Government institutions. France is proud to contribute to the modernization of the Congolese armed forces through the Kinshasa War School in a partnership for peace and stability.

As the Council prepares to renew MONUSCO's mandate, I would like to pay tribute to its personnel, who operate in an unstable environment in which they are often targets. Together, let us continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the path to lasting peace.

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

The A3+1 thanks you, Mr. President, for your work as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her briefing and commend her team for their commitment to supporting peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also thank Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala for her briefing.

We are encouraged by His Excellency President Tshilombo Tshisekedi's commitment to ensuring a timely, inclusive, transparent, credible and peaceful electoral process in 2023, in line with the constitutional timelines. We welcome the establishment of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the promotion of freedom of expression and democratic space and the meaningful participation of women and youth in decision-making positions.

The A3+1 calls on 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 security, justice and economic institutions, including by supporting the Government's programme of action for the period 2021 to 2023, which provides key tools for creating safe environments conducive to advancing lasting and sustainable peace, stability and development.

The A3+1 remains deeply concerned over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has been worsened by widespread insecurity, particularly the destabilizing activities of armed groups. We recognize the efforts being made by the Congolese Government to pacify the region and restore State authority. We underscore the importance of guaranteeing security by safeguarding the freedoms and rights of the population, promoting zero tolerance to gender-based violence and holding perpetrators of human rights abuses accountable. The need for humanitarian assistance is growing due to the alarming number of refugees and internally displaced people. We urge international partners to scale up their assistance by contributing, with a sense of urgency, to the 2021 humanitarian response plan, and we encourage the United Nations and its Member States to reinvigorate their support for refugees and the respective host countries by strengthening our collective international responsibility, in line with a comprehensive refugee response framework.

The A3+1 recognizes the efforts of the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) against armed groups. We reiterate the importance of continued support through, inter alia, enhanced joint military operations, information-sharing, training and capacity-building programmes, including weapons and ammunition management, counter-improvised explosive devices and explosive ordnance disposal. The threat posed by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be solved by military means alone. The A3+1 therefore welcomes a comprehensive approach that includes the establishment of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme and MONUSCO's engagement in supporting its operationalization.

The A3+1 recognizes the linkage between the illegal exploitation and trade of resources and the illegal trafficking in small arms and light weapons in fuelling armed conflict. We therefore encourage MONUSCO, in accordance with its mandate, to support the Congolese

Government in undercutting the economic lifelines of armed groups that benefit from the illegal exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources.

We urge for enhanced regional cooperation in promoting the implementation of the provisions of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement and other regional tools to fight the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We further call upon the international community and the various stakeholders to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in monitoring and curbing, as necessary, the supply chains for the illegally exploited and traded natural resources.

The protection of civilians in the conflict-affected regions remains crucial. In that regard, we encourage the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to redouble her efforts with regard to protection-of-civilian activities, particularly through the neutralization of armed groups by MONUSCO's Intervention Brigade. The protection of civilians is a first priority on the ground. That is why we urge all United Nations agencies and other partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to make such protection of civilians a high priority and undertake it through their engagement activities.

We welcome efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General to mobilize all partners and stakeholders in support of more effective United Nations peacekeeping through his Action for Peacekeeping initiative. We encourage the Secretary-General to undertake regular strategic reviews of MONUSCO, including the progressive implementation of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System, to describe the Mission's impact and effectiveness and facilitate, as necessary, a re-evaluation of its composition and mandate in the context of its gradual and responsible withdrawal.

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 encourage the cooperation and coordination of regional organizations, in particular the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, in supporting mediation, dialogue and the restoration of trust among Member States of the region in order to consolidate sustainable peace, security and development.

In conclusion, we reiterate our steadfast support for MONUSCO in its efforts to provide assistance for the sustainable stabilization and development of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our support to facilitate its work through the renewal of its mandate in the upcoming days can be assured.

Mr. De La Fuente Ramírez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Special Representative Keita and Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala for their briefings. I also thank you, Mr. President, for your briefing on the visit of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) to Kinshasa, and I welcome the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to this meeting.

Mexico has closely followed the political and security developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in recent months. Regarding the political and electoral reform issues, we believe that it is essential that the Security Council call on the various political actors to maintain an inclusive political dialogue, which clearly implies the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all aspects of political life.

However, the most urgent issue continues to be the deteriorating security situation in the eastern provinces of the country. In the past three months, the toll of attacks against the civilian population is regrettable, in terms of both the number of people killed or injured and the increase in new displacements caused by violence. Mexico therefore believes that the protection-of-civilian mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is crucial, and we express our support for those efforts.

The violence also affects humanitarian personnel and their operations on the ground, as demonstrated by the 215 attacks and five deaths of humanitarian workers that were recorded between January and October this year. We condemn those attacks. It is necessary to protect such activities, which are essential to meeting the needs of the civilian population.

Given the recent joint operations by the Ugandan and Congolese armies in Ituri and North Kivu, it is crucial that they be in full coordination with MONUSCO so that it, in turn, can fulfil its protection-of-civilians mandate, as well as of course protect its own Mission personnel.

While we understand the urgent need for joint operations to restore order and security, and as was noted by the Sanctions Committee's mission to the country,

it is clear that there are no purely military solutions. We also stress that obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, must be observed.

With regard to MONUSCO's transition, we recognize the active role that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has played, and continues to play, in developing and implementing the transition plan. We welcome the initiatives for the establishment of a national transitional justice strategy.

The Government's involvement and its close collaboration with MONUSCO make it possible to better address the various security threats. The diversion of, and illicit trafficking in, small arms and light weapons, as well as the use of improvised explosive devices, necessitate capacity-building.

In view of the upcoming renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, we recognize that transitions are complex processes that require the full involvement of national and local actors and that decisions must be based on progress on the ground. The effective implementation of the transition plan will undoubtedly be a key tool in the process.

I conclude with a reference to the efforts to combat impunity. We welcome the sentencing of Chance Mihonya Kolokolo for crimes against humanity, the recruitment of children and the illegal extraction of natural resources, one of the causes of the conflict and destabilization in the region. We urge the continuation of investigations and prosecution of all those responsible for committing sexual violence, including members of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the Congolese National Police.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): As this is the first opportunity I have, I want to welcome you, Mr. President, to the presidency and wish you, Sir, all the success possible over this coming month. I would also like to thank Mexico for its presidency last month and the very dynamic programme it put forward for us.

I thank you, Mr. President, for your superb leadership of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) and your insights from your visit to Kinshasa. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for briefing us at this critical moment for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and for the Congolese people, and I thank Ms. Kalala for her insights. I would also like to welcome the Democratic Republic of the Congo Permanent Representative's presence with us today.

Today I would like to discuss three aspects of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: the changing security environment, the role of MONUSCO and its eventual drawdown, and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse allegations.

First, the United States is encouraged by the improvements in the security situation in Tanganyika. But as the briefers highlighted, the security environment in North and South Kivu and Ituri remains dire. The United States is closely following the situation in the Hauts Plateaux and Moyens Plateaux of South Kivu, including the role of hate speech in inciting violence. We know what this kind of language can lead to, and it must be stopped immediately.

Our expectations for today's meeting were overturned by the breaking news last week that Congolese and Ugandan troops had launched joint military operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We will be watching that situation carefully. The United States commends the efforts the Congolese Government is making to face the ISIS-Democratic Republic of the Congo threat. As we have all come to know, combating terrorism requires international cooperation. In that vein, I urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ugandan Governments to coordinate and include MONUSCO officials in their planning. That is essential for success. It will ensure military operations are coordinated with peacekeepers and humanitarian actors and they are conducted in compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law and are clearly communicated to civilian populations. It would also strengthen the military operations themselves.

In addition, I urge MONUSCO to fully implement the Mission's robust civilian protection mandate through the conduct of joint and offensive operations, including through the Force Intervention Brigade. We hope the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes will do its part to keep the region informed of developments in a swift and transparent manner, lowering tensions and stopping the flow of funds and recruits to terrorist groups.

Let me be clear, though: military solutions alone are not sufficient to solve the problem of terrorism, and they will not address the root causes of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One important way of ameliorating conflict comes from ensuring people's voices are heard. To that end, we note that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will next hold elections in 2023. The United States stands ready to support the Congolese Government and the voting public in the holding of free, fair, transparent and inclusive elections within constitutional timelines.

Secondly, although last week's developments are still fresh, we look forward to working closely with our fellow Council members on MONUSCO's mandate renewal to position the Mission for positive results and plan for its eventual drawdown. Transitioning MONUSCO will not be easy; it will require coordination with the United Nations country team as the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo works to provide strong and good governance in the years to come.

Fortunately, we have seen progress on the key indicators laid out in the joint transition plan, guided by an assessment of conditions on the ground. Security conditions in Kasai enabled the Mission's exit, and we welcome the United Nations country team's expanded engagement with civilian counterparts before and after MONUSCO's departure. An effective MONUSCO transition also requires the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government to implement its community-based Demobilization, Disarmament, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme. We urge our Government counterparts to devote all the necessary resources to that programme. Combatants need to see participation as a viable alternative to armed group membership.

Thirdly, we must press for an end to sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping. MONUSCO recorded more than 20 new allegations this year alone. Those terrible acts erode confidence in the United Nations. They undermine mission effectiveness. And they endanger the very populations our peacekeepers are deployed to protect. The Mission must continue to promptly investigate all allegations. We urge all countries contributing personnel to MONUSCO to take prevention seriously and hold their personnel accountable. The United States will remain unequivocal in its calls for an end to sexual exploitation and abuse

across the United Nations system, no matter the setting or perpetrator.

And finally, we note the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's call for additional support on the humanitarian front, given the increased numbers of displaced. As usual, she can depend on the United States continued support for those efforts.

Mr. Pham (Viet Nam) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative Bintou Keita, Ambassador Abdou Abarry and Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala for their briefings.

(*spoke in English*)

I also especially thank Ambassador Abarry for his dedication and leadership over the past two years as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And I welcome the participation of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in today's meeting.

My delegation notes the ongoing political tensions among political parties, including in preparation for the 2023 elections. Therefore, we encourage efforts to settle differences through dialogue and negotiations, as well as ensure inclusive participation in the political process, including by women.

Unity is vital with a view to bringing back stability in the east and focusing on development, including through the implementation of the Government's programme of action for the period 2021 to 2023.

It is greatly concerning that insecurity and its drivers are deeply rooted in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is unacceptable that civilians have always been the main target of attacks by armed groups.

The situation in Ituri and North Kivu continues to be extremely volatile in the face of the state of siege. Meanwhile, the security situation in South Kivu also gravely worsened.

My delegation strongly condemns all attacks against civilians, as well as humanitarians and peacekeepers, and calls on all parties to abide by obligations under international humanitarian law.

Insecurity, socioeconomic difficulties, epidemics, displacement, among other factors, continue to put a strain on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 5.7 million people

remain displaced — the highest number in Africa. At the same time, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the new Ebola outbreak further exacerbate those challenges. We call for generous and timely support for the humanitarian response plan, which was only 34 per cent funded, as mentioned in the Secretary-General's report (S/2021/987). Technical and financial assistance is needed more than ever to overcome the impacts of COVID-19 and ensure vaccination for all.

Peace and stability will continue to elude the people in the affected regions if the underlying causes of instability and violence are not fully addressed. New and advanced strategies are needed to ensure the protection of civilians, restore State authority, deal with illegal activities relating to natural resources, promote reconciliation among communities and address hate speech.

Accordingly, my delegation welcomes the continued efforts and determination of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the region, including in the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Regional cooperation is the key to addressing common security challenges and promoting socioeconomic development for its people. My delegation also fully supports the Government's efforts to implement the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and other security sector reform projects.

The role of MONUSCO remains crucial, and we strongly support the continuation of its presence on the ground. We are pleased to see the close cooperation among the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Nations entities and other stakeholders with respect to the operationalization of the transition plan.

While the situation in Tanganyika has been improving, the situation in Ituri and the Kivus continues to require special attention. We hope that productive cooperation and critical international support will continue in order to preserve the hard-won achievements and attain desirable outcomes.

Let me conclude by stressing the indispensable contribution of the international community in assisting the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Viet Nam will continue to follow closely and support

the path towards long term peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ambassador Abarry for their briefings. I also listened attentively to Ms. Kalala's remarks. I welcome the participation of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at today's meeting.

For some time now, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has maintained political stability, accelerated economic recovery and continued to improve its relations with the countries of the region. As the rotating Chairperson of the African Union, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has made important contributions to promoting the unity and sovereignty of Africa and has actively mediated on hotspot issues.

However, many difficulties and challenges stand in the way of efforts to achieve lasting peace and security in the country. It is necessary to continue inclusive dialogue, resolve differences appropriately and maintain stability. It is also imperative to focus on national development and people's livelihoods, properly implement the Government's three-year programme of action, promote reforms in key areas, improve governance capabilities and boost national development and recovery.

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated, with frequent incidents of armed violence and successive instances of civilian kidnappings and killings. The recent violence in Ituri, for example, resulted in many civilian casualties, including the loss of life of two Chinese citizens. China strongly condemns such violence.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has imposed a state of siege in the eastern regions and launched a joint military operation with Uganda in order to vigorously combat armed group violence, thus demonstrating its firm role and determination to maintain stability. We hope that the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) will continue to coordinate and collaborate with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and continue to protect civilians through joint operations and other measures.

However, reliance on military means alone will not definitively resolve the problems in the eastern

Democratic Republic of the Congo. In order to break the vicious cycle of violent conflict, we must start at the roots, promote regional cooperation, develop and use natural resources in a sound manner, advance the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and provide the local population with more jobs and enhanced livelihoods. The new strategy and action plan for the Great Lakes region provides the reasoning and implementation path for addressing those problems. MONUSCO should step up coordination and cooperation with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region in order to address the causes of regional instability through joint efforts.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing a dire humanitarian situation, with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and epidemics such as meningitis and Ebola raging and a full vaccination rate for COVID-19 of only 0.1 per cent. There are new refugee flows from Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. The international community, particularly the international financial institutions, must honour their assistance pledges and increase inputs to help meet the current challenges.

At the opening of the eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, held recently, President Xi Jinping announced that China would provide 1 billion doses of vaccines to Africa, seek to have \$300 billion of imports from Africa in the next three years and implement nine programmes with Africa in health, poverty reduction and agricultural development, promote trade and investment, digital innovation, green development, capacity-building, cultural and people-to-people exchanges and peace and security. That will inject new impetus into the efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other African countries to fight the pandemic, improve humanitarian conditions and achieve post-COVID-19 recovery.

Since taking office, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita has led MONUSCO in effectively fulfilling the Security Council mandate and making progress in all areas of its work. MONUSCO and its Force Intervention Brigade have played an important role in stabilizing the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the contributions made by the troop- and police contributing countries are commendable. On principle, China supports a one-year extension of MONUSCO's mandate.

MONUSCO has withdrawn from Kasai province and will be pulling out of Tanganyika province in June 2022. The Mission should work with the Government, the United Nations country team and others in order to bolster the process of transferring responsibilities and ensure coordination and cooperation in the areas of withdrawal, in accordance with the transition plan and the 18 withdrawal benchmarks and risk-mitigation measures. MONUSCO should continue its work in the humanitarian, development and peace sectors in an integrated manner and implement the drawdown strategy in an orderly, responsible and sustainable way in order to irreversibly consolidate peace gains.

As Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ambassador Abarry visited the country and maintained close contact with the Government and other relevant actors. That contributed to his deep understanding of the situation on the ground and the Government's concern about an adjustment of sanctions. China welcomes the positive results of that visit and appreciates Ambassador Abarry's efforts in that regard. The Council should respond positively to the Government's concerns and thus avoid the negative impact of sanctions on capacity-building and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Kvalheim (Norway): I thank you, Ambassador Abarry, for convening this meeting in your capacity as President of the Security Council. I also thank Special Representative Keita and Ms. Kalala for their important briefings.

We are deeply concerned about the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the humanitarian crisis facing the country. Despite the state of siege, the threat from armed groups persists.

Indiscriminate attacks against civilians in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), must stop. We hope the current operations by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and Uganda to address cross-border threats from the ADF will succeed.

However, we are concerned that the operations may lead to further escalation of violence and threats against the civilian population. We urge all parties to do their utmost to protect civilians and their livelihoods. We also call on all parties to keep the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) closely informed of their activities.

We encourage the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to review the implementation of the sanctions regime for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to ensure that it reflects the evolving situation on the ground. We recall that designated individuals and entities should include those involved in acts that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is especially true of acts that constitute human rights violations or abuses or violations of international humanitarian law.

Allow me to focus on two main points: women's participation and the Mission's transition.

First, the contribution of Congolese women to peacebuilding cannot be overstated. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has made progress regarding women's participation. Yet there is potential for increased direct and meaningful participation and stronger support for local women's organizations. Women must be included at all levels and in all political and conflict-prevention processes, such as electoral reform, the 2023 election and the further transition of the Mission. It is vital that MONUSCO prioritize its support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in implementing the Joint Communiqué between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations on the Fight Against Sexual Violence in Conflict and action plans for the armed forces and the national police.

Secondly, the implementation of the transition plan requires the full attention of the Congolese authorities, the whole United Nations system and relevant partners. It is important that tasks be transferred from MONUSCO to the Congolese authorities and the United Nations country team in a sustainable manner. The Congolese authorities and the United Nations system must be capable of taking on those responsibilities before the actual transfer takes place.

While MONUSCO will exit the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we do not believe in fixed deadlines when it comes to MONUSCO's exit from Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. The benchmarks and the situation on the ground must guide us in a responsible process, which will most likely take longer than the originally envisaged transition strategy. We

therefore call for stronger collaboration among all relevant actors, including civil society, to ensure the full achievement of the joint strategy's benchmarks.

Recent developments underscore that a sustained focus on the protection of civilians is a prerequisite for the transition. It is critical to ensure a phased and gradual approach that fully considers the risk of gaps in physical protection, which may expose conflict-affected civilians to new, or persistent, risks of harm.

The return to peace and stability will require the commitment of all. Norway will work with all relevant stakeholders for an inclusive and peaceful transition that leads to sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, whom it is a pleasure to see here among us this morning, and Ms. Kalala for their briefings. Ireland is very grateful for the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also thank Ms. Keita for the information that she provided on the current situation in the country. I would also like to thank Ambassador Abarry of the Niger, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his briefing regarding the Committee's recent visit to Kinshasa. I wish to highlight four points today.

First, Ireland is deeply concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The state of siege was introduced as an extraordinary and temporary measure, but it has been renewed 13 times. The findings of the National Assembly's assessment of the state of siege raise significant concerns about the long-term impact of the state of siege, particularly with regard to the accountability of members of the security forces who collaborate with armed groups. Corruption and impunity are never acceptable. We note Uganda's recent engagement in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and stress the need to ensure the protection of civilians during operations.

Violence and insecurity in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including persistent attacks on civilians, continue unabated, with significant repercussions. Reports of gender-based and gender-specific violence and other serious human rights violations and abuses in the Democratic Republic

of the Congo, including by State actors, are deeply worrisome. Ireland condemns those violations and abuses in the strongest possible terms. MONUSCO's work to document such acts and support survivors is essential.

(*spoke in English*)

My second point is that the planned 2023 elections can become a pivotal moment for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The appointment of 12 members of the Independent National Electoral Commission, including four women, is significant. The recent tensions linked to the appointments are regrettable, and MONUSCO should continue to engage with key actors to promote timely, transparent, inclusive and peaceful political processes.

My third point is that Ireland commends the publication of MONUSCO's conditions-based transition plan. It is crucial that there be sufficient flexibility in the plan to allow for setbacks and unexpected challenges. We insist that women, young people and civil society continue to be fully included in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the important transition.

In particular, Ireland notes the Special Representative's work to include women's voices, for which we thank her, and their perspectives in the transition plan and conflict-resolution processes. We welcome the progress that continues to be made on the women and peace and security agenda, with some positive indications around the meaningful participation of women in political processes. We will continue to work for that and to monitor it.

Ireland sees transitions as a gradual process that builds towards a reconfiguration of the strategy, footprint and capacity of the United Nations in a way that should enable and support long-term peacebuilding efforts. We welcome the continued engagement by MONUSCO and the United Nations country team with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to that end.

We hope that resolution 2594 (2021), adopted by consensus during our Council presidency in September, represents an important contribution as to how we can approach sustainable transitions. In that regard, Ireland is particularly interested to observe how MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, in collaboration with national and international stakeholders, continue

to operationalize the humanitarian-development-peace nexus in Tanganyika and Kasai provinces.

(spoke in French)

Fourthly, and finally, Ireland welcomes the positive assessment of the performance of MONUSCO and its police components. We join in the Secretary-General's condemnation of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations, and we welcome the implementation by MONUSCO of preventive and disciplinary policies to help eradicate such behaviour.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I join other speakers in thanking the Special Representative for her briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of the Niger, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his insightful overview. I welcome the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ms. Kalala joining us today.

As this is the concluding meeting on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for Estonia as a member of the Security Council, I would like to take this opportunity to share the key messages that would empower the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its efforts to re-establish peace, stability and security in the country and the region.

First, we underscore the positive results of the Congolese Government in maintaining political stability and further commitments in facilitating electoral reforms ahead of the 2023 elections. It is important that the Congolese Government maintain that momentum in making further efforts in ensuring credible, inclusive and peaceful elections, with the full, equal and meaningful participation of women.

Secondly, we take note that, during our membership of the Security Council, the level of insecurity in the eastern provinces has not shown improvements, in spite of the declaration and regular extension of the state of siege in North Kivu and Ituri for the past seven months. In that connection, we encourage the Congolese Government to pay due attention to the flaws identified in the assessment of the state of siege and ensure transparent coordination of all forces on the ground to guarantee compliance with the international human rights and humanitarian law obligations.

Thirdly, human rights violations and abuses, accompanied by the conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by both armed groups and State agents, have long characterized the daily life of women and children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is often said that children are our future, but one can only imagine the future that will be shaped by children who undergo grave violations and forced recruitment in armed conflict. We believe that the first trial in South Kivu involving charges of recruitment and the use of children will give further impetus to addressing accountability and the fight against impunity.

In conclusion, we welcome the continued engagement of the Special Representative with the Congolese Government, MONUSCO and the international stakeholders on the implementation of the transition plan, which holds out prospects for a sustainable transition process. We believe that the implementation of the plan should ensure equal opportunities for all stakeholders, including humanitarian actors, civil society, women and youth.

Finally, I would like to thank MONUSCO peacekeepers and United Nations personnel for their service and sacrifices, and to express our unwavering support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people for a better future.

Mr. Raguttahalli (India): At the outset, allow me to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her briefing on the mandate implementation of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the most recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also thank the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo for his report. I also thank Ms. Kalala for her insights. I welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in today's meeting.

Developments over the past three months have again demonstrated the challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the eastern provinces. There has been an increase in the activities of armed groups, mainly the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has gained in strength in recent months and has committed terror attacks targeting civilians not just within Democratic Republic of the Congo,

but beyond. We condemn those attacks and express condolences to the families of those who were killed.

The expanding terror network in Africa is a matter of serious concern. In that regard, the joint operations against the ADF in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are a welcome development. We also note that measures taken by the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government to address the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have received broad support from all stakeholders.

While military action against armed groups is important and needs to be pursued relentlessly, progress in security sector reform and the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme cannot be ignored. We continue to encourage MONUSCO's support to the Government in both of those processes. The formation of the two thematic working groups — one on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and one on community reintegration, recovery and stabilization — and the identification of provincial coordination teams in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu are steps in right direction. There is also a need for greater efforts to minimize intercommunal conflicts.

There has been progress with the National Assembly's endorsement of members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). We are hopeful that the differences expressed by certain stakeholders will be resolved peacefully and through dialogue. The role of CENI towards consolidating the gains made so far remains crucial and will aid in cementing the roots of democracy through the elections of 2023. We hope that the ongoing positive momentum will be further encouraged and maintained as the upcoming elections are debated and discussed in the country.

As we continue to discuss the upcoming renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, we acknowledge the efforts made so far towards a steady transition and the benchmarks agreed between MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities. We also emphasize that the assessment of progress on the benchmarks should be realistic. The situation on the ground should guide the eventual drawdown, while ensuring that gains made in the violence-prone provinces are firmly consolidated to avoid any reversal.

The strengthening of State authority, security organs and justice institutions remains paramount. The

transition and eventual exit of MONUSCO must be gradual, responsible and orderly.

The stabilization of conflict-affected provinces will also depend on curbing the illegal exploitation of mineral resources. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the convergence of the Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes Region and the efforts of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, under the overall umbrella of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

Regarding performance assessment of the Mission, we reiterate once again the importance of assessing all components equally and impartially given their interlinkages. Similarly, we also call for the implementation of resolution 2589 (2021), especially with respect to the reporting requirements reflected in subparagraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph 4, concerning crimes against peacekeepers.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not insurmountable. The faith and confidence of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in democratic institutions to address the security and development challenges are reassuring. The Democratic Republic of the Congo leadership has shown its resolve to address those challenges. The support of the international community, including the United Nations, will be extremely important in the coming days. For 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. 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 informative briefing. We also thank the Permanent Representative of the Niger, Mr. Abdou Abarry, for his briefing on the activities of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also thank Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala and welcome the participation in this meeting of the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The situation in the eastern and north-eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains complex, and the increase in violence and the number of civilian victims is alarming. The Allied Democratic Forces remains a major threat to security.

We are closely following developments in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu, where a state of emergency has been in effect since May. We hope that the Government will be able to regain control of the security situation in the area. That will make it possible to ensure the strengthening of State institutions on the ground, improve the humanitarian and socioeconomic conditions, resolve intercommunal conflicts, and implement, together with MONUSCO, the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme for former combatants.

The illegal exploitation by the insurgents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's natural resources, which are used by illegal armed groups to finance their activities, remains an acute problem. There is a need to regain control of the situation and to ensure transparency in this area.

We highly appreciate the successful interaction of the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO, to which the leaders of some other United Nations missions can refer as a role model when building relations with host countries. In that regard, we commend Ms. Keita's efforts to promote the interaction of peacekeepers with the authorities and people on the ground, which creates a much-needed positive environment. We welcome the launch of a joint centre with the Congolese armed forces in October, and the strengthening of the Intervention Brigade.

We are concerned over reports about the humanitarian situation. The statistics indicating that the United Nations humanitarian response plan has been financed only by 34 per cent is particularly worrisome, especially given the increased number of internally displaced persons. Additional efforts are assuredly required to address the common calamity of the coronavirus pandemic and the sporadic outbreaks of Ebola.

When working on the Security Council draft resolution on the renewal of the MONUSCO mandate, we take into account the transition plan for a step-by-step drawdown and withdrawal of the Mission that has been elaborated jointly with Kinshasa. We believe that

the evolving situation on the ground must be accounted for during the implementation of that document.

We proceed from the assumption that lasting normalization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be achieved through military measures alone. We need to advance our work to ensure the full-fledged implementation of the fundamental Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework in the eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. We welcome the steps taken by President Tshilombo Tshisekedi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's neighbours aimed at normalizing the situation in the Great Lakes region. One of the key tracks is the extension of cooperation among the Great Lakes States in the area of security. We underscore that when it comes to joint action to oppose illegal armed groups, proper coordination is fundamentally important, including in the context of the presence of peacekeepers on the ground.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): May I begin by welcoming back Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita to the Chamber. It is very good to see her here in person, and we are very grateful for her briefing. I am also grateful to Ms. Kalala for her briefing and to you, Mr. President, for your insights on the visit of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and your role as its Chair.

I will focus my intervention on three issues: Uganda's intervention in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the state of siege and the mandate renewal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

First, the United Kingdom is closely following developments in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following the launch of joint operations by the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) against the Allied Democratic Forces.

Coordination will be essential to maximize operational impact and minimize the risk posed to civilians, United Nations personnel and humanitarian actors, as well as the risk of unintended action between the forces. We therefore stress the need for effective information-sharing and coordination between the UPDF, the FARDC and MONUSCO on any military

action, including location, nature and objectives, and also with humanitarian actors so as to enable access to those likely to be displaced or affected. We welcome the steps taken by the parties to begin sharing information and the role that the Special Representative has played in the region in facilitating that process.

The United Kingdom also underscores the necessity of conducting all operations in full respect of international human rights law and international humanitarian law and, where appropriate, in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. In that connection, it was reassuring to hear that the Special Representative reports human rights compliance by all actors in her territory. While UPDF-FARDC operations take place against the backdrop of improved regional relations, we encourage all Governments to use existing regional mechanisms to share information about those operations in order to reduce the risk of unintended harm.

Turning now to the state of siege, the United Kingdom acknowledges FARDC and MONUSCO efforts against armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo but remains concerned about persistent armed group activity and consequent civilian death, injury and displacement. We reiterate our call for the Government to ensure that the state of siege is transparent, time-bound — and we note today that we are in its thirteenth extension — and implemented with full respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It was worrying to hear in today's briefing about the rise in human rights abuses across the country.

We also urge the Government to ensure that the necessary resources reach the responsible actors in the east. We welcome investigations into allegations of embezzlement of funds for military operations and encourage the Government authorities to ensure accountability for those responsible. We encourage the Government to follow the other recommendations of the joint Defence and Security Standing Committee, including the development of an exit strategy from the state of siege.

As we approach MONUSCO's mandate renewal, let me briefly highlight the United Kingdom's priorities. We want to see progress in the implementation of the Mission's transition plan. Continued discussions by the joint MONUSCO–Government of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo working group will be essential in that regard. We also wish to see further consolidation of MONUSCO's presence in Ituri and North and South Kivu in order to enable the Mission to focus on the minimum conditions required for its eventual exit. We expect the full and effective engagement of all protection-of-civilian components, including MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade, to achieve that.

Advancing MONUSCO's transition and enabling a focus on the minimum conditions in Ituri and North and South Kivu will also be facilitated by preparations for the early transfer of certain tasks — those that are not central to meeting the minimum conditions for withdrawal and those for which the Government, the United Nations country team and other international partners could already reasonably assume responsibility.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom supports a gradual, sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO, guided by an end state, rather than an end date. MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to have our full support in their efforts to achieve that and to ensure a more peaceful, stable and prosperous country.

Finally, May I thank the Special Representative and through her thank all of her staff and the peacekeepers in MONUSCO in what we know continue to be very difficult conditions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now 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 the Republic of the Niger on the presidency of the Security Council for the month of December. I also welcome the holding this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank His Excellency Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment and support to my country's cause. I welcome his report (S/2021/987) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). This report was just now presented by his Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO, Ms. Bintou Keita, whom I thank

for her sustained efforts to promote peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I also welcome the report that you just presented, Mr. President, in your capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the activities of that Committee.

Finally, I also welcome Ms. Marie-Madeleine Kalala to this meeting.

Allow me to add my delegation's voice to this discussion to make a few comments on some of the points addressed in the report, mainly on the political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation, as well as on the exit strategy and the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate.

The political situation remains calm. At the national level, as we heard, discussions remain focused on the issue of organizing the 2023 elections.

In that regard, following the appointment of the members of the Independent National Electoral Commission on 22 October by the Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, the time has come to assess the actual requirements for the holding of good and credible elections within the time frame provided for by law. At the end of that process, the Government could decide on possible needs for assistance from its partners, both bilateral and multilateral.

In that context, the President of the Republic held talks on 26 November with the bishops members of the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and exchanged with them proposals to support the electoral process, which everyone wants to be transparent, peaceful and efficient.

At the regional level, the Head of State is continuing his contacts with his peers to improve good-neighbourly relations and cooperation in various areas of common interest. In that regard, the signing of economic and security agreements with Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi and Angola should be noted.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo's chairmanship of the African Union, the President of the Republic invited his peers, as well as regional and international organizations, to the first conference of Heads of State and Government on the elimination of violence against women and girls,

held in hybrid format on Thursday, 25 November, in Kinshasa under the theme "Positive masculinity" and in which several Heads of State and Government took part. At the end of the conference, the Heads of State and Government committed to positive masculinity approaches to end the scourge of violence against women and girls in Africa.

Concerning the security situation, it must be said that it remains under the control of the defence and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, as the report under consideration emphasizes, the destructive presence of national and foreign armed groups continues to inflict havoc and loss of life among the population of the eastern part of the country. That worrisome situation remains a priority for the President of the Republic, who is determined to continue the fight against all armed groups until they are completely eradicated so as to enable the population of that part of the country to live in peace.

To that end, pursuant to his constitutional prerogatives, the President of the Republic decreed a state of siege, which to date is still in force. For the same purpose, major joint offensive operations by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda were launched to reinforce those of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in order to fully restore peace, re-establish the authority of the State and protect the population.

On the subject of the state of siege, it should be said that, in order to optimize its outcomes and effectiveness, the Government dispatched an assessment mission, led by a joint parliamentary-FARDC committee under the supervision of the Minister for Defence and Veterans, for any possible adjustments.

With regard to the regional understanding on targeted joint operations of the FARDC and the Uganda People's Defence Force, it is focusing on the eradication of the Allied Democratic Forces/Madina at-Tauheed wau Mujahedeen terrorists and their affiliates. Indeed, based on intelligence-sharing in June, the two armies moved to the implementation phase on 30 November. For the Head of State, that momentum should be seized and the significant gains of the state of siege should be built upon to put an end to those negative forces and neutralize the armed terrorist groups that are rampant

in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As was just described, the humanitarian situation is mainly dominated by the resurgence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the return of Ebola, as well as the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons.

With regard to COVID-19 in particular, and to forestall a possible fourth outbreak and the discovery, a few days ago, of the Omicron variant, the Government adopted new measures given the current evolution of the pandemic in order to ensure the protection of our populations. Those measures, which are complementary to those already in force, essentially seek to reduce the importation of infected cases, the main source of contamination, and increase the vaccination coverage in the target groups so as to strengthen immunity and reduce the impact of the pandemic in the country.

As for the issue of displaced persons and refugees, the Secretary-General's report estimates that there are approximately 5.7 million displaced persons and about 500,000 refugees. As Council members can see, those numbers are too high and do not allow for the proper monitoring and care of those who are truly displaced and in genuine need of humanitarian assistance. The identification of the displaced persons and their return to their places of origin are security measures that will greatly help the protection of civilians. The same is true for refugees, who are sometimes victims of suspicion linked to the security situation, particularly those who do not respect the instructions related to their status. Consideration should therefore increasingly be given to encouraging the voluntary return of those who are willing and able to do so in accordance with the relevant international law, as humanitarian assistance should not be an end in itself. Appropriate measures must therefore be taken to definitively resolve the problem of displaced persons and refugees.

The human rights situation, particularly in the east of the country, is mainly linked to the situation of armed conflict and military operations there. We must urgently restore peace in the east and steadily bring the Democratic Republic of the Congo back towards the building of a true State based on the rule of law, with an effective Administration capable of better managing and defending its borders and exercising State authority throughout the national territory, in order to better resolve the human rights issue.

In the conditions that I just described, in accordance with resolution 2556 (2020), MONUSCO is preparing to leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Security Council to renew the MONUSCO mandate for another year.

With regard to the gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO, a joint working group of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO was set up. It produced a reference document for both parties, which serves as a joint strategy and allows for the gradual transfer of responsibility and the orderly and definitive withdrawal of MONUSCO. That gradual withdrawal of the MONUSCO force will take place in parallel with a temporary reinforcement of the police and civilian component, which will support strengthening the sovereign functions of the rule of law and assist the gradual transfer of the Mission's tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the support of the United Nations country team and the other partners involved.

In that regard, it should be noted that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, whom I applaud once again, and Prime Minister Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde Kyenge signed the transition plan (S/2021/807, annex) for the phased departure of MONUSCO on 15 September, which was presented to the Council in October (see S/PV.8873).

With regard to MONUSCO's new mandate, my delegation believes that the two strategic priorities previously entrusted to the force should be maintained, namely, the protection of civilians and support for the stabilization and strengthening of State institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In order to ensure the success of its mandate to protect civilians, among other things MONUSCO will have to reinforce its effectiveness with a robust and focused posture in areas affected by armed conflict where the threat remains very high and worrisome, particularly the three provinces under siege. It will need to continue to strengthen the operational capabilities of the Intervention Brigade, the quick reaction forces and MONUSCO as a whole, as well as to bolster its geolocation and engagement capabilities adapted to asymmetric warfare and complete the reconfiguration and deployment of troops that have not yet been fully achieved in accordance with the previous mandate, in particular the quick reaction forces. Targeted offensive military operations, whether unilateral or in collaboration with the FARDC, will need to be intensified and extended to all units of the

force. Priority should be given to offensive deterrent operations against armed groups. The unarmed approach should be applied where necessary.

I will now move on to support for the ongoing state of siege, the use of drones and sharing information gathered with the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On the topic of support for institutions, MONUSCO should support the Government in the implementation of its Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme as a priority action in order to enable the sustainable demobilization and reintegration of combatants from local armed groups and envisage a regional approach to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration in resolving the issue of foreign armed groups through dialogue with the country of origin and by involving the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

The Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is an important component because the dynamics of joint FARDC-MONUSCO and FARDC-UPDF operations will increasingly force armed groups to surrender. It will also involve the transfer of capacities, including through training and technical and logistical support to the security forces and the justice system, which will facilitate and accelerate the transfer of tasks.

Allow me to welcome once again the report that you, Mr. President, have just presented, in your capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the Committee's activities.

I take this opportunity to reiterate the two requests addressed to the United Nations in general and to the sanctions 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 (see A/76/PV.3), first, for the

lifting of the requirement, imposed by paragraph 5 of resolution 1807 (2008), that the Democratic Republic of the Congo notify the 1533 Committee in advance of all importation of military goods by my country's Government or any provision of assistance, advice or training related to military activities of the armed forces and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially since the Government has, as our Head of State has underscored, the constitutional mandate to ensure the security of persons and property throughout the national territory; and secondly, for serious and exemplary sanctions to be imposed on all mafia networks, whether they be in countries of transit or destination, and against multinationals that illegally exploit my country's minerals and, in exchange, supply the armed groups with weapons and ammunition, thereby perpetuating the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region.

In conclusion, allow me to remind the Security Council that the renewal of the MONUSCO mandate is a very important exercise for the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, its sons and daughters, and even the entire Great Lakes region. Through the mandate resolution, thousands of lives can be saved through measures taken within that context and their implementation on the ground.

I thank the members of the Security Council for the special attention they continue to give to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to express the gratitude of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the troop-contributing countries for their support, and to pay tribute to the memory of all those who have lost their lives for peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.