



Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

Provisional

9590th meeting

Wednesday, 27 March 2024, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Yamazaki/Mrs. Shino (Japan)

Members:

Algeria	Mr. Koudri
China	Mr. Dai Bing
Ecuador	Mr. De La Gasca
France	Mr. De Rivière
Guyana	Ms. Persaud
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Fernandes
Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
Russian Federation	Mr. Polyanskiy
Sierra Leone	Mr. Kanu
Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
Switzerland	Mr. Hauri
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America	Mr. Wood

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/2024/251)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The President: The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): As we said yesterday (see S/PV.9588 and S/PV.9589), on 25 March (see S/PV.9587) the delegation of France set a procedural precedent regarding a Security Council meeting requested by our delegation on the twenty-fifth anniversary of NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia by insisting that the Council should take all decisions regarding the holding of meetings only in the Chamber and that any previous arrangements have no significance. At France's initiative, a procedural vote was held on the agenda item even though the Japanese presidency had previously scheduled the meeting and it was on the Council's provisional programme of work. However, the presidency was unable to confirm its decision when we assembled in the Chamber.

The actions of France, as well as those of the United States and the United Kingdom in support of them, therefore resulted in a Council member being denied the ability to convene a meeting, which is a flagrant violation of every Council member's right to call any meetings that it considers necessary. We requested that a meeting be convened under one of the Security Council's most important agenda items, "Threats to international peace and security". We intend to address the procedural implications of this very serious and extremely negative precedent under "Any other business" in the Council's closed consultations this afternoon.

In order to avoid "double standards" and misreadings on the part of our Western colleagues, which are obviously political rather than procedural in nature, we are asking the presidency to put to the vote its decision to hold this meeting, since as we saw on 25 March, the presidency does not want to take any responsibility for convening the Council. We will have to do so until the Council agrees on a normal *modus operandi*.

We have again made a formal request for an open briefing on the twenty-fifth anniversary of NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia. The Japanese presidency has scheduled it for the afternoon of 28 March. We hope that this time it will not claim that the functions of the President of the Security Council are similar to those of a secretary and limited merely to booking a slot in

the calendar. It is your political decision, Mr. President, to respond positively or otherwise to our request. If someone wants to challenge that, they will have to challenge the President's decision without hiding behind circumstantial and irrelevant procedural tricks.

In conclusion, I would like to remind members that 25 years ago, on 26 March 1999 (see S/PV.3989), at a memorable Security Council meeting on the situation in Yugoslavia, Russia proposed a draft resolution (S/1999/328) that specifically included obligations for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including the withdrawal of federal defence and police forces from Kosovo and Metohija. However, the draft resolution, which could have prevented a major, deadly international crisis, was rejected by 12 members of the Council. We would like to hope that in the course of the past 25 years the members of the Council have developed a political conscience and will not make the same mistake again. Of course, there is no hope for our Western colleagues. We know perfectly well that they have instructions to do anything they can to obstruct Council discussions on this topic — an aggression by NATO against a sovereign State — which is an extremely uncomfortable one for Western capitals. But if they do make the same mistake, we will have many more reasons to remind the Council about the tragic milestones of March to June 1999 and other aggressions led by Anglo-Saxon coalitions and will do so on a daily basis.

The President: In view of the request made by the Russian Federation, I intend to put the provisional agenda to the vote.

The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the provisional agenda for today's meeting. I shall put the provisional agenda to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Algeria, China, Ecuador, France, Guyana, Japan, Malta, Mozambique, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

The President: The provisional agenda received 15 votes in favour. The provisional agenda is 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/2024/251)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda 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. Jacquie-Anna, National Technical Secretariat for the Implementation of Resolution 2250 (2015).

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/2024/251, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the presidency of the Security Council and all the members for giving me the opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to welcome from afar the presence of Ambassador Zenon Mukongo, Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, as well as the Permanent Representative of Rwanda and Ms. Jacquie-Anna, representative of Congolese civil society.

(*spoke in English*)

Since the mandate renewal briefing on 11 December 2023 (see S/PV.9500), the political dynamics have centred primarily around the presidential, national and provincial legislative electoral process. Despite major logistical challenges, the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) organized the elections on 20 December 2023, as scheduled, but had to extend the voting period over several days. I welcome the largely peaceful holding of the elections and the

CENI efforts to address some of the irregularities and operational shortcomings that plagued the process.

The Constitutional Court has now released its final ruling on the validation of the results, opening the path towards the confirmation of the majority in Parliament, the beginning of the spring parliamentary session and the formation of the new Government. I am encouraged by the adoption by the Ministry of Gender of a road map to address electoral violence against women, who faced serious physical and verbal attacks to discourage their participation during last December's polls.

The security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo further deteriorated since the end of the elections, with the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) marking significant advances and expanding its territory to unprecedented levels. That has culminated in an even more disastrous humanitarian situation, with internal displacement reaching unparalleled numbers. Meanwhile, regional tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda have been mediated by Angola, with the resumption of the Luanda process, while the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) started its deployment to North Kivu.

(*spoke in French*)

The report before you provides a detailed update on the situation on the ground. On the political front, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has been re-elected for a second term and has announced that reform of the security and defence apparatus will be one of his main priorities. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) stands ready to support the future Government in its efforts to implement security sector reform and other key governance reforms, insofar as they enjoy broad consensus, as prescribed in our mandate. As negotiations on the composition of the new Government continue, the Mission welcomes the President's reiterated support for the appointment of a spokesperson for the opposition, a gesture of openness that is crucial to enabling the opposition to play its part in the democratic process.

(*spoke in English*)

As the Council has regularly reiterated, echoed by a recent statement of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, all foreign forces illegally operating in the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

need to withdraw, and national and foreign armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), need to be disarmed. There is no sustainable military solution to the conflict, which must be anchored in a sustainable political process addressing the root causes of violence. In that context, I would like to express our full support for the Luanda process and commend the efforts currently undertaken by Angola's President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço. The recent meeting led by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of both countries to craft a path for a de-escalation of the crisis is encouraging.

(spoke in French)

While the M23 crisis attracted a great deal of attention, we must also highlight the atrocities of the ADF and their disastrous consequences for civilian populations, in particular on the border between North Kivu and Ituri. Almost 200 people have been killed there since the start of the year. In Ituri, insecurity remains dramatic, fuelled in particular by the atrocities of the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, Zaire, Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri and Force patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo militias, as well as the ADF.

In South Kivu, despite significant progress, we have seen a resurgence of tension in recent months, fuelled by armed groups and inter-community rivalries. Frequent rumours about the presence of M23 elements and the extension of the conflict from North Kivu towards the south have greatly contributed to that. In addition, the escalation of tensions between Rwanda and Burundi, which led to the closure of the border by Bujumbura, is a further factor likely to destabilize the province and the region as a whole.

To protect civilians, MONUSCO and the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (FARDC) continued to carry out joint operations in Ituri and North Kivu. The defensive Operation Springbok, carried out by MONUSCO on various routes leading to Goma, was reinforced in February this year. It has helped to protect the Goma area by containing the M23 offensive in the Sake area, in support of the FARDC. On an almost daily basis, our peacekeepers have come under direct and indirect fire from various warring parties. More recently, mortar fire from positions occupied by the M23 landed on MONUSCO bases in the Sake sector, wounding eight peacekeepers, some of them seriously,

and six MONUSCO civilian staff in a second incident. I strongly condemn those attacks against our personnel.

(spoke in English)

As the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF) withdrew completely by the beginning of January, the M23 managed to occupy all former EACRF positions, subsequently allowing it to move further South to encircle Sake and Goma. In the meantime, SAMIDRC continues its deployment, with 2,000 soldiers having already been deployed. SAMIDRC has started to provide its assistance to the FARDC on various operational fronts and saw its mandate endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council on 4 March.

As highlighted earlier, the military engagement must go hand in hand with a continued investment by the Congolese authorities in regional, national and local peace processes, complemented by a profound reform of the security sector and the operationalization of the disarmament, community reinsertion and stabilization programme, which the United Nations system plans to support through a joint programme.

(spoke in French)

Allow me now to raise the humanitarian situation and to sound the alarm at the catastrophe unfolding before our eyes, not least because of the escalation of the M23 crisis in North Kivu, but also because of the prolonged armed violence in Ituri and South Kivu. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 7.1 million people are internally displaced in the country, an increase of 800,000 since my last briefing in December, some three months ago. Some 23.4 million people are food insecure, which means that one in four Congolese faces hunger and malnutrition, making the Democratic Republic of the Congo the country worst affected by food insecurity.

The city and outskirts of Goma are facing massive waves of internally displaced people. At the end of last month, at least 104 displacement sites were recorded around Goma alone, hosting more than 630,000 people. Cases of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation have also reached new records. In January 2024 alone, 10,400 cases of gender-based violence were reported throughout the country, a much higher increase than in previous years.

That humanitarian disaster requires an adequate response from the international community. However, in February, the country's humanitarian response plan for 2023 remained significantly underfunded, at only 40 per cent of the \$2.25 billion required to date. That is a sharp fall from 53.2 per cent in 2022 and does not bode well for the 2024 humanitarian response plan, which was launched with the aim of raising \$2.6 billion, and for which funding has only reached 14.2 per cent so far. I therefore reiterate my urgent call to donors to provide the necessary resources to ensure that adequate humanitarian assistance reaches those in desperate need.

(spoke in English)

As we advance with the implementation of phase 1 of the disengagement plan, it has become evident that sustaining our withdrawal efforts will be critical, notably with regard to the transfer of the protection-of-civilians responsibilities, as well as the handover of bases to the FARDC and Congolese National Police. To that end, we have continued to work closely with national and provincial counterparts on the implementation and monitoring of the progress, while assessing the various impacts on the population for which the Mission's presence has been providing protection so far.

As a first milestone, MONUSCO handed over the base of Kamanyola on 28 February to the National Police. Given the challenges, I thank in advance the many stakeholders committing to support the joint police programme, designed to support MONUSCO's transition. In that context, I commend Japan for its commitment to continue to expand its existing police project, to contribute to covering areas of MONUSCO's disengagement to implement community policing modalities.

In my engagements with the population in South Kivu, it has become evident that, while adhering to the stipulated timelines is a joint commitment, we must ensure that the concerns and voices of affected populations are heard for a responsible drawdown. In that respect, let me highlight that national and international non-governmental organizations are now integrated in the provincial transition teams that resume their work after the elections, and we have already held multiple briefings with international partners on progress regarding the disengagement plan. Lessons learned from phase 1 will also be applied to the drawdown of subsequent phases.

Disengagement and transition are being conducted concomitantly. That will enable the United Nations country team to support the Congolese Government in sustaining and consolidating MONUSCO's gains and handle activities that will fall under the United Nations country team's responsibilities, to be supported by an enhanced Resident Coordinator's Office. Financial resources are necessary, and we count on the enhancement of voluntary contributions, while, thanks to the Peacebuilding Fund's support, we are prioritizing transition activities this year.

MONUSCO continued to face sophisticated disinformation campaigns during the reporting period, which undermined its efforts and put the lives of its peacekeepers in danger. With Operation Springbok, disinformation campaigns have led to our convoys being attacked by the local population. To counter those tactics, we have strengthened our collaboration with dozens of journalists and civil society members in Goma and elsewhere to help to debunk misinformation and clarify our mandate. We have seen some progress with some harsh critics now explaining the complexities of our mandate. Despite those encouraging signs, I remain alarmed by the propagation of misinformation and disinformation, as well as hate speech, and reiterate my call on all stakeholders to refrain from such practices and urge the Government to ensure accountability.

In conclusion and echoing my remarks during the most recent briefing (see S/PV.9553), I would like to reiterate that the Mission continues to spare no efforts to address the misconduct of some of our staff members, be they members of the force or of the police or civilians. In that vein, we continue to improve our response to cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. Over the past months, we have conducted comprehensive risk assessment missions to all locations where MONUSCO personnel are deployed to ensure that effective prevention, timely investigation and adequate victim support remain at the core of our work to fully address the indelible stain that sexual exploitation and abuse presents to our work.

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

I give the floor to the Ms. Jacquie-Anna.

Ms. Jacquie-Anna *(spoke in French)*: I thank the Security Council for the honour of briefing its members on the progress in the implementation of the agendas on women and peace and security and on youth, peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would like to indicate that the structure I am representing — the National Technical Secretariat for the Implementation of Resolution 2250 (2015) — is a mechanism that was put in place by the Government to implement the Security Council's recommendations to Member States.

We have been in existence since 2020, and are an offshoot of our country's Ministry of Youth, New Citizenship, and National Cohesion, with which we have worked to develop a national action plan, which was validated and officially launched on 12 August 2022 and adopted by the Council of Ministers on 18 November of the same year. That makes the Democratic Republic of the Congo the third country in the world, after Finland and Nigeria, to have a national action plan for the implementation of resolution 2250 (2015).

We are working in a difficult context, given that the National Technical Secretariat for the Implementation of Resolution 2250 (2015), a new structure which has been working relentlessly to comprehensively implement the youth, peace and security agenda, has encountered some difficulties in establishing itself throughout the entirety of the country to strengthen information and initiatives to promote peace among young people, as it is working without adequate resources to effectively implement and monitor the agenda. Since its adoption by the Council of Ministers, the National Technical Secretariat is awaiting the signing of the national action plan by the Head of State, the Prime Minister and the Ministry in charge, before being sent to Parliament and then published in the official journal. The national action plan will then become part of the country's legal framework to protect young people working on peace and security issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to strengthen the participation of young people at the decision-making and negotiating table in the area of peace and security.

Young people and women make up a very large proportion of the population in our country, but are also the most vulnerable to the consequences of war, as the victims of choice in the full sense of the term.

The National Technical Secretariat, in its mission to boost and enhance the participation of young people at the decision-making and negotiating table and to report on activities in line with the agenda, sees itself as a mechanism to facilitate that involvement, in close collaboration with the other ministries involved in building and consolidating peace. Indeed, in a country

with such a high proportion of young people, ignoring and sidelining them from decision-making would be a suicide for the country.

I will make some observations with regard to the security situation in the country.

For more than two decades, Rwanda's aggression against the Democratic Republic of Congo, disguised as a rebellions with names such as the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie*, the *Congrès national pour la défense du peuple* or the M23 terrorist group, has been destroying everything in its path, especially the peoples of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That aggression is causing general precariousness and anxiety for young people who have lost all their bearings, all hope for the future; young people who, owing to the circumstances, have become a source for recruitment of child soldiers and easy prey for violent extremism; uneducated young people who have known nothing but war, violence and the bloodshed of loved ones and family members and have been exposed to all kinds of abuse in refugee or displaced persons camps, where they are totally destitute. The Democratic Republic of the Congo no longer has a future, as its youth are savagely destroyed by the effects of Rwanda's war of aggression when they escape violent death.

Rape and all kinds of sexual violence are being used as weapons of war by the Rwandan army of occupation. Congolese women no longer have any dignity; they have been reduced to a mere object in order to exert pressure and prove that the Rwandan aggressor is a superior man, and the Congolese husband is an inferior man. Hundreds of thousands of women in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have to face the moral dilemma of killing their own child, a product of rape. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, all women, including the youngest girls, know bitterly well what it means to be raped or sexually abused.

The multiplicity of armed groups in other provinces, most recently the Mobondo in Kwilu, means that young people experience insecurity and increased recruitment into those groups.

How long will this situation last? How many more women will have to be raped in front of their husbands and children? How many young people will have to see their future stolen by being recruited into armed groups? How long will mothers have to endure the ignominy of having to sleep with their sons in front of their husbands and other family members before the international

community, which — let us be honest — makes lofty speeches and adopts lofty resolutions, wakes up to say no, enough is enough?

We Congolese young people want only peace. Resilient young people want to be at the decision-making table and at the negotiating table in order to represent Congolese youth. We want to work hand in hand with the authorities in taking action under the five pillars of resolution 2250 (2015), but also in promoting the equal participation of women, without discrimination. We are poised to support humanitarian actors but also to serve as key players in the search for and delivery of solutions. We want to help capture the demographic dividend from every angle.

We ask the Council to invest in Congolese youth by helping to advance our goals. We need the support of the Security Council in order to promote the participation of Congolese youth who work within the system to promote the agenda and the implementation of the resolutions adopted by the representatives of the States gathered here. The Congolese youth, in their efforts to promote and consolidate peace, are resilient and have given everything to advance those goals and ensure their effective implementation, as is only right.

I thank the President of the Security Council, the members of the Council, the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi, and Ms. Bintou Keita. We are eager to participate at the decision-making table in order to share our knowledge and aspirations. The Council has placed its trust in us by adopting and working to implement the resolution, but we want to work and to participate effectively — not just be for show.

The President: I thank Ms. Jacquie-Anna for her briefing.

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita and Ms. Jacquie-Anna for their briefings.

France condemns the resumption of attacks of the Movement du 23 mars, as well as Rwanda's support for that group and the group's presence on Congolese territory. It must put an end to this without delay. The European Union and 11 other States made that demand on 4 March. The deployment and use of anti-aircraft systems on Congolese territory marks the crossing of a

new threshold. France condemns the actions of all armed groups in the east of the country. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected.

This escalation has serious consequences for the humanitarian situation and is leading to numerous human rights violations. In North Kivu, half a million more people have been displaced since October. All parties must protect civilian populations and internally displaced persons camps, in accordance with the principles of international humanitarian law. France reiterates its condemnation of hate speech targeting certain communities, notably the Tutsi, and of human rights violations by armed groups.

Dialogue must be resumed as a matter of urgency in order to put an end to the escalation. France supports regional efforts in that regard, particularly those of Angola. We welcome the meeting of the foreign ministers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda on 21 March in Luanda. We encourage dialogue on the basis of the commitments of the Luanda road map and the Nairobi process. France welcomes the Congolese proposal for a plan to demobilize and disarm the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the militia group that committed the genocide against the Tutsi. The proposal is a concrete response to the main threat identified by Rwanda at last month's Council meeting (see S/PV.9553) and is aimed at restoring confidence between the two countries.

France vigorously condemns the attacks against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Several peacekeepers were wounded in recent weeks by gunfire, shells or an attack on a MONUSCO helicopter. Those responsible must be held to account. We also condemn the attacks on diplomatic compounds in Kinshasa. The campaigns to manipulate information that fuel this violence are of great concern, and we welcome the statements made by the Congolese authorities to shut them down.

In 2024, MONUSCO began a gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal process. Commitments were made on both sides to ensure that the civilian population would not suffer as a result. It is with that imperative in mind that we are committed to considering the next steps in the process. The spirit of trust and responsibility in which the joint transition

plan was drawn up must therefore continue to guide our discussions.

The recent fighting has demonstrated that MONUSCO's coordination with the Southern African Development Community force currently being deployed must be bolstered. The modalities of United Nations support were clearly set out in resolution 2717 (2023), and it is on that basis that the Security Council will have to take a decision.

I would like to conclude by saluting the determined action of MONUSCO, Ms. Keita and the Blue Helmets in order to ensure the full implementation of the mandate entrusted to them by the Council under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I wish to thank Special Representative Keita and Ms. Jacque-Anna for their briefings.

We convene today with a pressing call on all parties to prioritize de-escalation. Regrettably, we continue to witness an alarming escalation of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Tens of thousands of internally displaced persons are being forced to flee from the wider Sake area towards Goma, and more than 200 civilians have been killed, including 14 children. As underlined by the Secretary-General in his latest report (S/2024/251), this recent escalation is pushing the region dangerously close to the brink of war.

Malta deems it imperative for armed groups to lay down their weapons, with an immediate cessation of all State support in order to ensure a definitive path towards disarmament. The sophisticated weaponry of armed groups, notably the Movement du 23 mars, also demands the serious attention of the Council.

Malta is also deeply concerned about recent attacks on the positions of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in and around Goma and Sake, including the recent incidents impacting MONUSCO peacekeepers, which could exacerbate threats to MONUSCO's presence in North Kivu.

Prioritizing dialogue to address underlying grievances, including through the Luanda and Nairobi processes, remains essential. We commend President Lourenço for reactivating the Luanda process and for facilitating diplomatic engagements through a mini

summit in Addis Ababa and bilateral meetings with both President Tshisekedi Tshilombo and President Kagame.

While we welcome the recent electoral milestones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are worried about irregularities and violence. We are concerned about armed groups being organized under the Wazalendo umbrella to join the new armed defence reserve, causing an increasingly insecure environment and hampering the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Despite the country's continued efforts towards strengthening human rights, we are concerned about the recent lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty. Nonetheless, we commend the efforts to address electoral violence against women, in particular through the adoption of the road map for the 2024–2028 electoral cycle. We stress the importance of upholding electoral integrity and fostering trust in State institutions.

We recall the necessity for any withdrawal of MONUSCO forces to be accompanied by the bolstering of the national armed forces. That is most needed in regions where civilians, including internally displaced persons, are relying on the Mission for protection. Ensuring that gender analysis and expertise inform the transition process, including through consultations with women's civil society organizations, is also crucial. In that vein, we recognize MONUSCO's transfer of the Kamanyola base to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO continues to play a pivotal role in multiple spheres, such as in supporting the justice system and facilitating security sector reform. We encourage the continued cooperation of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat impunity and to ensure that security forces are properly vetted.

Over the past four months, MONUSCO and UNICEF have been diligently conducting age-verification assessments for 1,229 candidates seeking recruitment to the armed forces. Of those candidates, 152 were confirmed to be children and were rightfully excluded from the recruitment process. That essential endeavour must be sustained, emphasizing the imperative for the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to collaborate closely with UNICEF to ensure continuity in safeguarding children's rights even after MONUSCO's departure. We also welcome awareness sessions on addressing deeply concerning cases of sexual exploitation and abuse within MONUSCO. We

reiterate our firm position that sexual violence remains unacceptable and intolerable.

In conclusion, with humanitarian needs escalating and resources dwindling, it is crucial that our support go to those most in need. It is imperative for all parties to abide by humanitarian and human rights law and to facilitate unhindered access to the affected populations. The safety and security of humanitarian workers is also crucial, and critical actions are required to arrest the scourge of hunger and halt the spread of diseases. Genuine efforts towards de-escalation and dialogue are imperative to alleviate human suffering and restore peace and security in the country. It is urgently needed before it is too late.

Mr. De La Gasca (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I 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 briefing. I listened carefully to the representative of civil society, Ms. Jacquie-Anna. I acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda at this meeting.

Ecuador recognizes the electoral process that took place in December 2023, which resulted in the re-election of President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, to whom we wish the greatest success as leader of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that in this second term, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo will encourage inclusive participation by all of civil society, in particular women and young people, safeguarding civic space by fostering social cohesion and combating the hate speech and intolerance that incite intercommunal violence.

My delegation would like to focus on the humanitarian and security situation, especially in view of MONUSCO's gradual withdrawal, starting with the South Kivu region, where violence is escalating. We are concerned about reports of the use of sophisticated weapons and equipment, which shows that there is external military support for the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). Those weapons were used against United Nations peacekeeping staff, and we strongly condemn that, the M23's public threats against MONUSCO and the dissemination of false information that seeks to discredit the Mission.

We echo the calls, made on the occasion of the mini-summit on peace and security in the eastern region of

the Democratic Republic of the Congo held in February and by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union on 4 March, for the immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and the cantonment and disarmament of the M23 and all other armed groups that are active in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, my delegation calls for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be respected. We also reiterate the need for humanitarian corridors to assist the now 7 million displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 6 million of whom are in the north-east of the country. The wave of violence brings with it allegations of possible war crimes, serious human rights abuses, gender-based sexual violence and grave violations against children. The perpetrators of those crimes cannot go unpunished. Respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law is fundamental.

Regional efforts should be supported, in particular the Luanda and Nairobi processes, with an emphasis on the diplomatic response. Regional, bilateral and international initiatives should work in coordination towards peace, dialogue and political stability, recognizing and continuing the work that MONUSCO has carried out in the fields of the protection of civilians, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, stabilization, security sector reform and support for the judicial system, among many others. We welcome the deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission and the support provided by the African Union Commission to ensure the effective implementation of its mandate.

Lastly, we urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to work with MONUSCO to implement the withdrawal plan in a safe and efficient manner, which will largely depend on the effective control of the entire territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Kanu (Sierra Leone): I am pleased to deliver this joint statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Mozambique and my own country, Sierra Leone, plus Guyana (A3+).

We express our gratitude to 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

(MONUSCO), for her informative briefing on the most recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We applaud Ms. Keita and her team for their unwavering dedication to their mandate and to peace and stability in Democratic Republic of the Congo despite the challenging circumstances. We also thank Ms. Jacquie-Anna for her briefing to the Council. We welcome the presence of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda in this meeting.

On the political situation, we congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo for holding its presidential, national, provincial legislative and partial communal elections on 20 December 2023. We also congratulate His Excellency Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo for assuming his second term as President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We regret that elections could not be held in certain territories owing to the security situation. We take note of the outcome of the elections and of the verdict of the Constitutional Court of 12 March on the appeals contesting the results of the 20 December 2023 national legislative elections. We encourage all stakeholders to abide by the verdict in the interest of peace and the development of the country, and we for the rule of law and constitutional order to be upheld. In view of the aftermath of the elections, we encourage the authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to facilitate a process of national reconciliation and to uphold a governance system that reflects the national aspirations and character of the country.

The A3+ expresses grave concern about the deteriorating security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. The recent escalation in clashes has exacerbated already fragile security and humanitarian conditions and has heightened regional tensions, which have further exacerbated the internal displacement crisis and compromised civilian safety and security. The prolonged armed violence perpetrated by armed groups has also created significant challenges in administering humanitarian aid. Alarming, the Secretary-General's recent report on MONUSCO (S/2024/251) has noted that the number of internally displaced persons in the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu has reached a staggering 6 million, out of the total 7 million people displaced throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That places the Democratic Republic of

the Congo among the countries with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world.

We therefore call on all States Members of the United Nations and development partners to urgently scale up support for an increase in the humanitarian response plan appeal, to \$2.6 billion, launched by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and humanitarian partners to fund the 2024 humanitarian response plan. The plan remains largely underfunded, receiving only 14 per cent of its target. Support for the plan is crucial to address the state of food insecurity, particularly for people living in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to improve their currently limited access to essential services.

We acknowledge ongoing efforts to implement the joint disengagement plan and to gradually hand over MONUSCO's responsibilities to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In view of the approaching deadline of 30 April 2024 for the completion of phase one of the withdrawal, the A3+ emphasizes the importance of establishing a strong State presence in all areas from which MONUSCO will withdraw. That is critical to avoid creating a security vacuum and to effectively administer those areas. In that regard, the A3+ welcomes the relaunching of the integrated provincial transition team for South Kivu.

We also stress the need for well-trained and equipped national defence and security forces to be deployed to areas currently covered by MONUSCO. The absence of those and other complementary measures would only worsen the security and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as was the case with the withdrawal of the East African Community (EAC) regional force. The A3+ believes that those plans should, at all costs, prioritize the protection of civilians, especially women and children, and the security of Mission personnel, and provide support for the stabilization and strengthening of State institutions and key governance and security reforms, in line with resolution 2717 (2023).

The A3+ emphasizes the importance of ensuring that women are fully involved in State-building initiatives and empowered to participate in decision-making processes. An enabling environment free from violence is critical to that end, and we welcome the adoption of a road map for the prevention of electoral violence against women involved in politics as a very positive step in that context. Additionally, we acknowledge

the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO, in spite of the challenges of implementing the national strategy for the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme for ex-combatants. We urge armed groups to abide by that Programme and to support MONUSCO's gradual, responsible and orderly disengagement from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in line with the host country's request. We do so while acknowledging the challenges and complexities of the situation. We believe that concrete and actionable plans should be implemented to foster sustainable peace and stability in the region, and we remain committed to supporting all efforts towards that goal.

The A3+ has taken note of armed groups' ongoing activities and condemns in the strongest terms the actions of all armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are particularly concerned at the evidence of the use of increasingly sophisticated weaponry. We therefore call on all armed groups, including the Mouvement du 23 mars, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, the Nyatura factions and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda to immediately cease hostilities and withdraw from all occupied areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We condemn any support extended by any external party to armed groups that are contributing to the hostilities and unrest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and demand the cessation of such support.

We demand that all armed groups immediately and unconditionally withdraw from all occupied territories, as agreed upon through the Luanda process. In addition, we urge all parties to fully engage and comply with the EAC-led Nairobi and Angola-led Luanda initiatives. We reiterate the importance of regional political initiatives to resolve the conflict in Democratic Republic of the Congo and regional tensions. In that regard, we commend the role of the Angolan President and Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), His Excellency João Lourenço, for convening a mini-summit on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in Addis Ababa on 16 February 2024, on the margins of the African Union (AU) Summit. We strongly believe that effective support and coordination of all peace initiatives will lead to a unified and reinforced African response, which is necessary. With that in mind, the A3+ calls for an urgent follow-up meeting to continue

the diplomatic efforts in that regard. We urge all parties to fully cooperate and support those efforts aimed at bringing about a lasting resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We note the communiqué from the African Union Peace and Security Council regarding the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the deployment of the Southern African Development Community Mission (SAMIDRC). We affirm the call for the AU Commission to work closely with SADC and the Security Council to support the SADC Mission's mandate and develop practical ways to assist that force, which is intended to restore peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in line with the Treaty of the Southern African Development Community, the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and the SADC Mutual Defence Pact. We hope that the support provided by the SAMIDRC to the Congolese national army will contribute to stabilizing the situation by preventing the further advancement of armed groups in the region and supporting the Congolese armed forces amid the drawdown of MONUSCO.

The A3+ condemns the spread of misinformation and disinformation, which has exacerbated tensions in the region and led to the targeting of MONUSCO staff and property. That continues to affect MONUSCO's operations, threaten the lives of peacekeepers and put at risk United Nations property and installations. We call for appropriate measures to protect United Nations peacekeepers, personnel and equipment and for the Council to hold accountable those responsible.

As a Council, we should be united in our actions, and in that regard, we must reinforce resolution 2688 (2023). We also stress the significance of maintaining and enforcing sanctions against individuals and entities found to be responsible for actions that threaten the peace, security or stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome updates to the sanctions list, as appropriate, and urge all Member States to implement the sanctions measures.

Let me conclude by expressing solidarity with the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The A3+ urges continued support for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to bring an end to the violence raging in the east and to enable the Congolese people to benefit fully from their national endowment. The A3+ calls for complete

respect for the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her briefing. I have listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Jacquie-Anna. I welcome the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to this meeting.

Over the past period, the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has seen an escalation of violence and frequent border security incidents, resulting in a large number of civilian casualties and displacement. Such a situation is indeed worrisome and must not be allowed to continue. China urges the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and other armed groups to immediately stop fighting and withdraw from the occupied areas. We call on all the parties concerned to exercise restraint, resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation and make every possible effort to de-escalate the tensions.

At the same time, the humanitarian crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is worsening. China calls on the international community to step up its assistance and provide sufficient resources for the humanitarian plan in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to alleviate the dire situation of the population.

Countries of the Great Lakes region share a common interest in maintaining peace and stability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community should support countries of the region in strengthening dialogue and communication and better managing conflicts and differences, with a view to maintaining common security. China appreciates the mediation efforts made by Angola and Burundi, among others, and supports the communiqué issued by the African Union Peace and Security Council. The United Nations should remain committed to the approach of African solutions to African problems by promoting an effective role to be played by the Nairobi and Luanda processes. China expects the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, to continue to play a leading role and to work with Special Representative Keita to strengthen diplomatic efforts to create conditions for dialogue and mutual trust between the parties concerned.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is at the moment carrying out peacekeeping

operations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. China hopes that the SADC force will strengthen its coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and play a positive role in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

China supports MONUSCO's joint implementation of the disengagement plan with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in accordance with resolution 2717 (2023). In the face of the complex situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO should work with the Congolese side to ensure a proper transfer of tasks, so as to avoid a security vacuum. The Security Council should ensure that the arrangements for the future transition and mandate for MONUSCO are designed in a scientific and rational manner, so that MONUSCO can play a positive role.

Recently, MONUSCO has come under attack on several occasions, resulting in a number of peacekeepers being injured. Member States and the Secretariat must take measures to improve MONUSCO's risk assessment and contingency response, so as to provide effective safety and security for peacekeeping personnel. China, as the co-Chair of the Group of Friends on the Safety and Security of United Nations Peacekeepers, is ready to work with other members to continue to make positive efforts to enhance the safety and security of peacekeepers.

MONUSCO peacekeepers, including those from China, will soon be withdrawing from South Kivu, putting an end to their peacekeeping mission. Since 2003, China has dispatched 27 engineering and medical peacekeeping contingents to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Chinese peacekeepers have faithfully carried out their mission and accomplished their tasks in an exemplary manner in spite of the difficulties, dangers and risks. Together with the international community, China is ready to make a greater contribution to peace in and the development of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President, and thank you, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, for your briefing today and for your steady leadership during the escalating crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to thank the civil society briefer, who put forth a very sobering presentation.

The aggressive military incursion into the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) — upon which the United States and United Nations have imposed sanctions — and the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) has put the Mission's uniformed and civilian personnel under immense strain. The United States deeply appreciates and supports the peacekeepers of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) risking their lives every day to protect civilians and combat armed groups amid heavy fighting.

We join the United Nations in condemning the attack on MONUSCO positions near Sake on 16 March and wish a full recovery to the eight injured peacekeepers. We have repeatedly publicly condemned Rwanda's incursions in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, its continued support for M23 — a group which has perpetrated appalling human rights abuses against civilians, including sexual and gender-based violence — and RDF attacks against MONUSCO positions and equipment. The international community's silence in the face of such brazen actions — by a major participant in United Nations peacekeeping, no less — is equally dismaying. The United Nations should immediately engage the Rwandan Government at the highest levels to underscore the importance of peacekeeper safety and security. Without a change in Rwanda's behaviour, it is clear that the United Nations should re-evaluate Rwanda's credibility as a constructive participant in peacekeeping.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo must also cease and condemn incidents — intentional and unintentional — of elements of its security forces and aligned armed actors or so-called Wazalendo firing on MONUSCO. It is unacceptable that MONUSCO troop-contributing countries should fear attack by their host State, which has the responsibility to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers.

We acknowledge that MONUSCO is stepping up to address the rising violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo while simultaneously planning and executing its drawdown. MONUSCO's tireless efforts to implement its mandate and protect civilians while disengaging from South Kivu is commendable. We continue to monitor the drawdown from South Kivu, including the handover of MONUSCO's Kamanyola base to Congolese National Police in February. We remain concerned, however, about the capacity of the

Congolese armed forces and National Police to fill the security void, especially as violence in North Kivu threatens to spill over.

The United States asks that the lessons learned from the South Kivu withdrawal be fully reflected in the mid-year evaluation of the drawdown, including the implications for the timing and pace of subsequent phases. That process will not be linear, because conflict is not linear, and we should be prepared to make necessary adjustments.

We believe that the proposal by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to establish a mechanism to identify and expel members of Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) armed group — upon which the United States and United Nations have imposed sanctions — from Congolese territory should be seriously examined. We recognize that the FDLR is a continuing threat to the Congolese people and a security threat to Rwanda that must be addressed.

In addition, any violations of the United Nations arms embargo must be taken seriously and merit a response from the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions committee.

There is no military-only solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United States strongly supports the efforts led by regional actors to resume the Nairobi and Luanda processes, which offer the most viable paths toward resolving the 30-year conflict.

Ultimately, peace is a political decision. The United States calls on the leaders of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to make the decision to pursue peace for the sake of their people, the region and the world.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I extend my gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita and the civil society briefer for their briefings. We reiterate our unwavering support for Special Representative Keita and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also welcome the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to today's meeting.

Over the past month, hostilities between the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and the Congolese armed forces in North Kivu have escalated dramatically,

pushing the region to the brink of war. The situation has been complicated by the involvement of various actors from beyond the immediate neighbourhood, raising serious concerns about its wider regional implications. That dire situation has also plunged an already critical humanitarian crisis into further depths of despair. In the light of those troubling circumstances, we would like to underline four points.

First, we strongly condemn and urge all armed groups, particularly the M23, which significantly expanded its control in the vicinity of Goma, to immediately cease their offensive in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time, all parties to the conflict must engage constructively in diplomatic dialogue to find a negotiated solution. Regional efforts such as the Nairobi and Luanda processes should be revitalized, as they are central to ending recurring violence and ensuring long-lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We applaud the mediation efforts of President Lourenço of Angola in that regard and offer our full support. Moreover, we call on all combatants, local and foreign, to immediately lay down their weapons unconditionally and commit to the disarmament process. Any kind of support to armed groups must also end to avoid further militarization in the region, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo deserve our full respect.

Secondly, we are deeply troubled by and strongly condemn the attacks targeting MONUSCO positions and assets, in particular those utilizing sophisticated weapons systems. That impairs MONUSCO's ability to effectively fulfil its mandate, in particular the protection of civilians. We are concerned about a possible security vacuum in the wake of the ongoing disengagement of MONUSCO from South Kivu.

We reiterate that the primary responsibility for the safety and security of United Nations personnel and assets rests with host States. We also expect MONUSCO to continue its strategic communications towards local communities to effectively address sophisticated disinformation campaigns that fuel those attacks.

We take note of the African Union Peace and Security Council's recent endorsement of the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We anticipate the upcoming report of the Secretary-General on logistical and operational support to regional forces to address

issues of coordination between MONUSCO and the regional forces.

Thirdly, the escalating human rights and humanitarian crises demand urgent attention. More than 400 human rights violations predominantly linked to the conflict were reported monthly in 2023, of which rampant conflict-related sexual violence is extremely disturbing. Furthermore, 6 million individuals have been displaced in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Republic of Korea urges all parties to the conflict to ensure protection against conflict-related sexual violence, as well as unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need and urges all parties to adhere to international humanitarian law and international human rights law. All perpetrators must not go unpunished.

Fourthly, the December 2023 national elections marked a significant step for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We commend MONUSCO's role in facilitating dialogue, promoting inclusive participation of women and youth and supporting the electoral process, including through the delivery of electoral materials. President Tshisekedi Tshilombo's commitment to national unity and an inclusive Government is encouraging. In the meantime, a swift and transparent resolution to investigations into electoral irregularities will be vital.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reiterates its unwavering support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity.

Mr. Polyanskiy (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing. We listened very closely to Ms. Jacquie-Anna. We welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to this meeting.

We note with regret the fact that the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is worsening. We are seriously concerned about the escalation of the conflict involving the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) illegal armed group. The offensive actions of the M23 must cease. We condemn the shelling of population centres and camps of internally displaced persons, the victims of which are civilians. We call for the unblocking of the land routes to Goma. We are seriously concerned about the use of advanced weapons systems in the area of hostilities. We condemn

their use against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and insist on the need to return to the full implementation of the agreements of the Luanda process.

The continued armed conflict in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a key reason for the deteriorating humanitarian situation and the growing suffering of the civilian population. What is happening in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo also has a direct impact on the situation in the entire Great Lakes region and affects inter-State relations and regional stability. There is no doubt that an expeditious resolution of the crisis, especially in view of MONUSCO's withdrawal, is in the interests of the countries in the Great Lakes region themselves.

At the same time, we reiterate that only political solutions will lead to a comprehensive cessation of hostilities and create genuine conditions for lasting stabilization. It is crucial to intensify regional mediation to overcome the tensions between Kinshasa and Kigali. It is also necessary to ensure that all illegal armed groups lay down their weapons and start participating in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme without preconditions. All State interaction with illegal armed groups must cease.

We support the work done by the leaders and staff of MONUSCO, whose presence in the area of conflict is an important stabilizing factor. We unequivocally condemn attacks and violent acts against the Blue Helmets. We wish a speedy recovery to the eight peacekeepers who were injured on 16 March in the Sake area. In the withdrawal of MONUSCO, it is important to take into account the situation on the ground and act in a step-by-step and responsible manner. A security vacuum must be avoided. At the same, we must abide by the withdrawal timetable stipulated by the Council in resolution 2717 (2023).

We took note of the recent decision of the African Union to grant its aegis to the forces of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). We note the support provided by SADC to Kinshasa in overcoming the crisis in line with the principle of African solutions to African problems. It is important to ensure that there is proper coordination with MONUSCO and to determine the effective modalities for joint efforts. We are ready to discuss the parameters for the Mission to

potentially provide assistance to regional forces after we receive the relevant report from the Secretariat.

As a permanent member of the Security Council, the Russian Federation will continue to facilitate the resolution of the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing today, as well as Ms. Jacquie-Anna for her remarks.

I have three points I wish to make in response.

First, the United Kingdom commends Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for their continued efforts in increasingly difficult circumstances. Attacks on United Nations helicopters, convoys and personnel are unacceptable. We urge all parties to immediately end attacks on peacekeeping troops and deconflict activities to allow MONUSCO to fulfil its mandate.

Secondly, MONUSCO's withdrawal from South Kivu risks leaving a security vacuum. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assume its responsibilities for the civilian population which is increasingly vulnerable to armed group attacks. MONUSCO's capacity-building activities with the Government of Democratic Republic of the Congo remain critical. We encourage the United Nations to continue to share its honest assessment of the withdrawal process with the Council to inform its decision-making.

Thirdly, the United Kingdom condemns in the strongest terms the actions of all armed groups, including the continued advance of the United Nations-sanctioned Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). We reiterate our full support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on external actors to end their support for violent armed groups in Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the M23, whose activities have resulted in mass civilian displacement. Without serious efforts on all sides to de-escalate and end hostilities, the devastating humanitarian impact of the conflict will continue. The United Kingdom has pledged \$126 million to be delivered through a three-year humanitarian

programme, working closely with partners to address that enormous need.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom notes the arrival of the regional Southern African Development Community force — the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo — and stresses the importance of it being anchored to a regional political process such as the Luanda process. Peaceful dialogue and committed engagement to regional processes are the best routes to peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, we welcome the positive steps towards that taken recently in Angola.

Mr. Hauri (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing and for all the work done by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I would also like to thank Ms. Jacquie-Anna for sharing her observations. I welcome the presence of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda at this meeting.

We strongly condemn the recent attack on a MONUSCO position in Sake and wish a speedy recovery to the injured peacekeepers. Since our meeting last month (see S/PV.9553), the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated further. Incessant attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces, the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* and *Zaire* and ongoing clashes between the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) and the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) have led to a considerable increase in civilian casualties. The humanitarian crisis has reached an alarming level. At the end of February, there were 7 million displaced people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The situation is untenable and requires urgent and concerted action.

In that respect, I would like to highlight three points.

First, only a political solution can lead to lasting peace. As the Special Representative underlined today, the risk of further escalation and transformation of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo into a wider regional conflict is real and growing. The activities of armed groups opposed to States in the region, as well as the increased militarization in the east of the country, accentuate that risk.

Switzerland therefore once again calls on the parties to resume negotiations and to commit to a credible and inclusive political process. We welcome the efforts made within the framework of the Luanda process and encourage Presidents Tshisekedi Tshilombo and Kagame to engage in a sincere and peaceful dialogue as soon as possible.

That is why we once again call to Rwanda to immediately stop supporting the M23 and to withdraw its soldiers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also call for an end to the support provided by certain elements of the FARDC to armed groups, including the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*.

Secondly, any lasting peace requires respect for international law and the protection of civilians. Switzerland is particularly concerned about the M23's change of tactics in North Kivu, where the group is establishing its bases in civilian homes to protect itself from air strikes. Switzerland calls on all parties to strictly adhere to international humanitarian law and to take concrete measures to protect the civilian population. We regret the Democratic Republic of the Congo's decision to lift the moratorium on the death penalty, which violates human dignity.

Switzerland is also concerned about the adverse impact that the Mission's disengagement from South Kivu could have on the protection of civilians. We take note of the announcement by the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Minister of the Interior, reiterating his Government's determination to assume its responsibilities in implementing MONUSCO's disengagement plan. To that end, it is important that the Congolese defence and security forces be rapidly deployed and that they prioritize the protection of civilians.

Thirdly, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the primary responsibility to protect civilians, it also has the responsibility to protect humanitarian and United Nations personnel. Yet the positions of peacekeepers continue to be the target of numerous attacks. We note with concern that United Nations reports indicate that those attacks are being perpetrated not only by the M23, but also by elements of the FARDC and the *Wazalendo*. Such actions pose a threat to MONUSCO and prevent it from fulfilling its mandate to protect civilians. We recall the responsibilities of the host State to bring perpetrators

of such acts to justice, in accordance with resolution 2589 (2021).

Humanitarian workers in conflict-affected areas continue to be threatened and targeted by attacks. We see such attacks in many conflict situations around the world. Switzerland is therefore in favour of a Council resolution to strengthen the protection of humanitarian and United Nations personnel, including national and locally recruited staff.

In conclusion, Switzerland remains committed to finding a political solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reaffirm our readiness to support diplomatic efforts and peace talks on the ground. We call on the members of the Council to speak with one voice so that those efforts, in particular the regional efforts under Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, become a reality and lead to an immediate de-escalation of the conflict.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I also want to express my appreciation to Ms. Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and to Ms. Jacquie-Anna for their briefings. I also want to welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi to today's meeting.

Slovenia expresses its deep concern about the escalation of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The escalation is alarming and is compounding insecurity and destabilization in the wider Great Lakes region. We condemn the offensive of the Movement du 23 mars (M23) in North Kivu, especially around Sake and Goma.

Let me emphasize three points.

First, no military action can resolve the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on the M23 to immediately cease hostilities and withdraw from occupied territories, in line with the Luanda road map. We emphasize that all States have an obligation to cease support to armed groups. We condemn all such support provided to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, all external support to the M23 and all unauthorized military presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on all countries of the region to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their neighbours, and we call on Rwanda to withdraw its military presence from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We have to strengthen the sustained and coordinated efforts to address the root causes of the conflict and regional instability. The Nairobi and Luanda processes remain central to those efforts. We call for enhanced commitment to regional diplomatic efforts, emphasizing the importance of dialogue among the countries of the region.

Secondly, given the escalating security situation, specifically in North Kivu, the withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) requires strategic planning. A safe, orderly, responsible, gradual and sustainable withdrawal that maintains a protective environment for civilians must remain the focus of the ongoing partnership between the host country and the United Nations, including the Security Council.

Synchronizing the deployment of the Congolese national security forces with MONUSCO's withdrawal is critical to ensure a seamless transition. Withdrawal should be based on the prevailing conditions on the ground and the ability of national forces to take up the responsibility of protecting civilians, especially women and children.

Establishing effective coordination between MONUSCO and other regional forces deployed in the same area remains important for the protection of civilians. We condemn all attacks against MONUSCO personnel, United Nations staff and assets, including instances of harassment and restrictions of movement, and we underscore the responsibility of the Congolese authorities to ensure the security of United Nations personnel, as well as of the personnel and assets of diplomatic missions.

Thirdly, amid the relentless violence, it is the civilian population that bears the heaviest burden. Human rights violations and abuses continue to be committed by all parties. Violations, including ethnically targeted hate speech and incitement to violence, must be investigated, and accountability must be ensured.

We are alarmed by continued reports of high rates of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, directed against women and girls, in particular, including in and around internally displaced persons camps. We strongly condemn the recruitment of children and other grave violations committed against them.

Slovenia reminds all parties of their obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law and urges them to ensure swift, safe and unhindered access to humanitarian aid. We also commend MONUSCO for helping to ensure safe passages and humanitarian corridors.

In conclusion, we urge all involved parties to show restraint and work towards de-escalating current tensions. Confrontational and incendiary rhetoric must be avoided by all sides so as to facilitate constructive dialogue. Slovenia remains committed to supporting efforts to end this conflict and to ensure the peace, security and stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region.

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

I would like to express my gratitude to Special Representative Keita and Ms. Jacquie-Anna, a representative of the National Technical Secretariat for the Implementation of Resolution 2250 (2015), for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the representatives from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

Let me start by paying tribute to all the personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for their sacrifice with a view to achieving peace and stability in the region. We have been observing, with great concern, the continued heavy fighting between the Movement du 23 mars (M23) and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. The recent incident, where eight peacekeepers were injured, was a regrettable consequence of those hostilities. We wish a speedy recovery to those injured and count on the Congolese authorities' continuous support to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and installations. Continued misinformation and disinformation against MONUSCO is also our concern and should be addressed in cooperation with the host Government.

The increased offensive by the M23 is devastating the lives of local people and threatening human security. Other armed groups have been exploiting the security vacuum caused by the current focus on the M23 to further expand their activities. More people in vulnerable conditions, including women and children, have become victims of human rights violations and abuses. We strongly condemn all forms of violence

in the region. Those groups must immediately cease hostilities and lay down their arms.

Despite the repeated calls by the Security Council, regrettably, we continue to be informed of large quantities of sophisticated weaponry being brought into the theatre, and we are even hearing of the alleged presence of disguised foreign troops. Ongoing support of any kind by any States to the M23 and any other armed groups must be stopped now. Such support only exacerbates insecurity and increases the possibility of all-out regional conflict. It is of the utmost importance to preserve the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Breaking the cycle of violence in the region requires a political solution through inclusive dialogues encompassing the key demands of all sides. All regional initiatives should be well coordinated and guided by a common political strategy. Such coordination should take place all the way down to the ground operation level, including with Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO.

The worsening security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the east is making it more challenging to conduct a gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO. The concurrent establishment of an effective presence of State authorities with sufficient security forces is essential to avoid any security vacuums and ensure the rule of law. For that purpose, Government-led security sector reform, especially national police reform, remains an utmost priority. Just one month ago, MONUSCO's first base in Kamanyola, South Kivu, was handed over to the Congolese National Police. To further the process, close coordination among all the stakeholders through good communications is essential. As a long-term partner alongside the Democratic Republic of the Congo in that sector, Japan continues to support the Government's efforts to develop community policing through capacity- and institution-building by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. Here, I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita's acknowledgement of that support.

To conclude, Japan reaffirms its commitment to continue working together with MONUSCO and all partners for sustainable peace and stability in the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

Mr. Mukongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): Some days before the end of your term as President of the Security Council, Madam President, I have the pleasure and honour to congratulate you on the excellent work carried out throughout your term. My delegation is pleased to see you presiding over this open meeting of the Council devoted to considering the situation in my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his continued commitment to restoring peace in my country. Lastly, allow me to thank 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 (MONUSCO) for her informative briefing this morning. I also welcome the virtual presence of Ms. Jacquie-Anna, who painted a stark picture of the situation for young people and women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the aggression to which the country has been subjected.

My delegation takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of 21 March, contained in document S/2024/251, the contents of which call for some relevant context to be provided and observations made, including attempts to address the concerns raised by the members of the Council.

The political situation in my country, as highlighted in the report under consideration, has primarily been dominated by the holding of general elections and the continued regional and international efforts aimed at reversing the spiral of insecurity in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In fact, regarding the elections, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the appreciation of my Government and the Congolese people for the Security Council, MONUSCO and partner and friendly countries, which have spared no efforts in providing substantial logistical and material support for the successful holding of the elections. In all other respects, the elections took place peacefully and within the constitutional deadlines. The re-elected President, His Excellency Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, was sworn in on 20 January after taking his constitutional oath. As members will have noticed, the

formation of the country's remaining institutions is in its final stages.

From a security point of view, the deterioration of the situation in the eastern part of my country has not left the Secretary-General indifferent, as he states in paragraph 91 of his report that

“I am deeply troubled by reports of MONUSCO assets being targeted by sophisticated weapons systems and condemn the recent string of attacks on MONUSCO positions in and around Goma and Sake by Government forces and associated armed groups.”

Without any possible ambiguity, the Secretary-General aims that reprimand expressly and exclusively at the forces of the Government of Rwanda — the Rwandan Defence Force — and the terrorists of the M23 who are associated with them because it is that infamous axis of evil coalition that has repeatedly launched missiles targeting MONUSCO forces, in Sake, where it wounded eight MONUSCO peacekeepers, and in Goma.

The particularity of this report is that it clearly states that: first, Rwanda no longer denies the presence of its army on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; secondly, Rwandan army troops are actively participating in the fighting using more sophisticated weapons on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and thirdly, the Rwandan army has on several occasions arrogantly tested the performance of its newly acquired surface-to-air missiles on MONUSCO helicopters and civilian aircraft parked in the Goma airport parking lot. So, like a judge who will not be swayed before a criminal who has become a notorious repeat offender, the Security Council must cross the Rubicon of impunity to apply sanctions on Rwanda that are commensurate with its criminal recidivism. Faced with that situation, the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the young patriotic Wazalendo resistance fighters remain mobilized to defend the territorial integrity of our country until the total restoration of State authority over all coveted areas.

At the regional level, political and diplomatic efforts are continuing, under the mediation of the Angolan President, His Excellency Mr. João Lourenço. Several meetings were held in this context. For the record, those meetings include the Addis Ababa mini-summit of 16 February, held on the margins of the thirty-seventh Summit of Heads of State and Government

of the African Union; the separate bilateral meetings in Luanda between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola and between Angola and Rwanda, on 27 February and 11 March, respectively; and the tripartite ministerial meeting in Luanda of 21 March, which brought together the three Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The conclusions of that meeting were submitted to the Heads of State for consideration. A second tripartite ministerial meeting will be held soon, in preparation for the tripartite meeting of the three Heads of State scheduled for April.

As it awaits that tripartite meeting, the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains determined to restore lasting peace throughout its territory. My country will not accept arrangements that are mere window dressing that will only perpetuate the insecurity and confusion that encourage the Rwanda Defence Force/M23 coalition to continue to shamelessly exploit its strategic minerals.

In the short term, a reaffirmation of the Luanda and Nairobi processes remains the only way out, and that entails a cessation of hostilities, the unconditional withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the withdrawal of the M23 from the positions it is occupying, pre-cantonment followed by cantonment in Maniema and follow-up to the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Beyond the current negotiations, my delegation hopes that the Council will be able to demand that the M23 lay down its arms and join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. The return of displaced populations remains a priority, given the deteriorating humanitarian situation on the ground.

In view of the capriciousness observed in the many previous negotiations, my delegation hopes that the Security Council will be able to maintain a vigilant stance throughout the current talks and to continue to exert multifaceted bilateral and multilateral pressure on Rwanda until the M23 withdraws and Rwandan troops leave Congolese soil.

Still on the subject of regional efforts, I will now turn to the deployment of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional force, the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In line with the Extraordinary Summit of SADC Heads of State and

Government held on 8 May 2023 in Windhoek, which authorized the deployment of the SADC Mission, on 4 March the Peace and Security Council of the African Union approved the deployment of the SADC Mission in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as a regional force aimed at restoring peace.

More recently, following the SADC Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit of 23 March 2024, SADC reaffirmed that the deployment of the SADC Mission is aimed at restoring peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with the SADC Treaty, the SADC Protocol on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and the SADC Mutual Defence Pact. That approach is also in line with the principle of subsidiarity and the principle of African solutions to African problems.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo also welcomed the adoption of resolutions 2717 (2023) and 2719 (2023), under which the Council provided a support framework for regional forces. I appeal to the members of the Security Council to consider more favourably, when the time comes, providing substantial support to the SADC Mission regional force in order to protect civilians and consolidate the negotiation process that is under way between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The humanitarian situation is bleak. The number of internally displaced persons is close to 7 million. People have poured into Goma, exacerbating an already precarious situation. The 2024 emergency humanitarian aid plan launched by the Government in an attempt to curb the crisis requires more funding to ensure its implementation. To date, at least 80 per cent of the funds have yet to be raised.

With regard to MONUSCO's disengagement plan, as enshrined in resolution 2717 (2023), I would like to emphasize that, to date, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been cooperating fully with MONUSCO in implementing the first phase in South Kivu. On 14 March 2024, an evaluation meeting was held in Kinshasa between the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Security and Customary Affairs; the main contributing countries, namely, the United States, Great Britain, France, Switzerland, Italy, Germany and Japan; international organizations, including the European Union, the Japan International Cooperation Agency, the African Development Bank, the World

Food Programme and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs; and MONUSCO. During the meeting, MONUSCO and the Government presented the actions carried out on the ground during the launch of the disengagement plan at the Kamanyola base of the Congolese National Police.

The Government would like to reassure the Security Council that it is determined to shoulder its responsibilities in implementing the road map established by mutual agreement with the United Nations. The established principle of assessment will be applied before launching a new phase.

Allow me to conclude with a few recommendations. First, substantial support should be provided to the regional force of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in view of the urgency of the situation, pending the Secretary-General's imminent presentation of support options, in line with the requirements of resolution 2717 (2023). All armed groups, without exception, should be required to lay down their arms and join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which should be given increased support. Finally, pressure should be brought to bear on Rwanda and its M23 proxy, to compel them to withdraw their troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to make the M23 comply with the requirement to participate in pre-cantonment and cantonment.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Rwamucyo (Rwanda): Thank you, Madam President, for giving me the floor. I thank the briefers and the representatives of Member States for their statements.

I would like to start my remarks by reminding the Council of a few facts. As of June 2023, the United Nations had spent \$24.3 billion on the Democratic Republic of the Congo peacekeeping mission. Despite the mobilization of those important resources by the States Members of the United Nations, the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken a turn for the worse. The number of illegal armed groups has soared, reaching more than 250 today.

The havoc caused by illegal armed groups has worsened the human rights situation and led to tremendous suffering for the civilian population. Hate

speech, persecution and ethnic cleansing targeting Congolese Tutsi communities reached unprecedented levels under the watch of the international community.

More than 16,000 troops and three decades later, the international community continues to fail to address the root causes of the conflict and understand the complexity and history of our region. Unfortunately, any progress by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is made in vain, owing to the lack of political will and ownership on the part of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We cannot repeat the same wrong prescription repeatedly, expecting a different result.

The Security Council should take a clear stand on its support for dialogue and the Nairobi and Luanda political processes. It should reject any support for a military solution, emboldening the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its coalition of illegal armed groups — some of which are under sanctions by the Council. Both options cannot coexist.

The international community should avoid any exploitation of the departure of MONUSCO. Its departure should not justify support for partisan forces that favour continued fighting regardless of the collaboration between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the genocidal Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR).

I believe it is important to remind the audience that the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo force replaced another regional force from the East African Community (EAC). The EAC regional force made strides in imposing a ceasefire and supporting the peace process. Sadly, it was met with fierce opposition by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which only wanted the force to serve its own goal of pursuing a military solution. That move further showed the lengths to which the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is willing to go to reach that goal, even manipulating entire regions against each other.

Rwanda reiterates that any initiative that neglects to uphold the rights of Congolese Tutsi and Kinyarwanda-speaking communities will not yield sustainable results. That repeated injustice continues to push hundreds of thousands of people to take refuge in two neighbouring countries, including more than 100,000 hosted in

Rwanda. People who are denied their inherent rights will always find a way to regain them.

Rwanda's concerns remain unaddressed. The concerns are twofold: first, the presence and preservation of genocidal forces; and secondly, the recent public announcements by leaders in our region. Rwanda is concerned by the support given by the FARDC to the FDLR. Those negative forces are being financed, armed and embedded within the FARDC, alongside various Wazalendo militia groups. That support must cease, and those FDLR elements should be disarmed, demobilized and repatriated to Rwanda.

Rwanda is also concerned about the declarations of the Presidents of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They have repeatedly threatened to inflict regime change on Rwanda. According to the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, both countries are fighting alongside the FDLR genocidal militia against the Mouvement du 23 mars, in an attempt to end a political problem through military means.

Rwanda takes those threats very seriously. That is why we appeal for the current security issues to be resolved politically among the Congolese. We will not accept the problems of the Democratic Republic of the Congo being externalized into Rwanda by force once again.

As members might be aware, this coming April, Rwanda will mark the thirtieth commemoration of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. As we come together to remember and honour the victims, we should also raise awareness about the dangers of genocidal ideology, which has spilled over into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That ideology stems from and is spread by the same people who committed the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. This time, they are operating close to Rwanda's borders, across the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda appeals once again to the Council to take the matter seriously. The international community must avoid being bystanders in the face of a genocide unfolding against the Congolese Tutsi community.

To conclude, I wish to bring to the attention of the Council the following. Efforts made by MONUSCO have not produced the expected results despite colossal material and human resources available, owing to a lack of national ownership by the host country. Rwanda asks the Council to find a lasting solution to the threat posed by the genocidal FDLR force, which has been wreaking havoc in the Great Lakes region for the last 30 years.

Rwanda takes seriously the collaboration between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the FDLR, and the related threats to cause regime change by the Governments of both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

Rwanda appeals to the Council to be vigilant and to take action to stop the spread of hate speech targeting Congolese Tutsi. Let there be no other genocide in our region and beyond.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by thanking Japan, which holds the presidency of the Security Council during the month of March, for having organized this meeting and, at the same time, reaffirm our full support for your mandate. My delegation takes note of the report before us (S/2024/251) and thanks Ms. Bintou Keita and Mrs. Jacquie-Anna for their briefings.

My delegation commends the efforts of the Secretary-General, through his Special Representative, to bring about a lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the cardinal principles of the Charter of the United Nations are being violated, making it de facto difficult to promote peace, security and sustainable development to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population. Burundi is following developments in the security and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo very closely and is taking this opportunity to reaffirm its solidarity with and support for the Congolese people.

My delegation believes that, given the seriousness of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, characterized by flagrant violations of international humanitarian law, the international community should be even more attentive to the legitimate—I would emphasize, legitimate—demands of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the messages from the Congolese people who, for two decades, have known very difficult times due to the instability prevailing in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On the subject of the report before us, Burundi would like to make a few comments in its national capacity.

First, Burundi welcomes the positive cooperation between the Republic of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, through bilateral defence

cooperation, to combat the local and foreign armed groups and terrorists that are proliferating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, Burundi also welcomes the deployment of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional force, which should do everything in its power to reoccupy all the former positions of the East African Community regional force that have fallen into the hands of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23).

Thirdly, in view of the seriousness of the humanitarian situation, Burundi supports the observations made in the Secretary-General's report, in particular those relating to the commitment to provide logistical and operational support to the SADC regional force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Fourthly, good neighbourly relations feature prominently in Burundi's foreign policy. Burundi enjoys good relations with all the countries in the region, with only some concerns about Rwanda, our northern neighbour, from whom we are still demanding the handover of the 2015 putschists, who are now masterminding the criminal and terrorist group Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi, which has recently attacked peaceful people who were either sleeping or in mourning, twice in a row since December 2023. Rwanda has a choice between good relations with Burundi or keeping that group of criminals with no political future on Rwandan territory. The choice between the two options should be obvious and simple. We urge Rwanda to opt for a choice that will put it on the right side of history.

For Burundi, respecting the commitments made by the Rwandan leadership to hand over the group of criminals who are on the run and being sheltered in Kigali would contribute significantly to combating impunity in the region and to upholding legal instruments in the region on peace and security.

Fifthly, with regard to regional efforts to restore peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, we are deeply concerned by the resurgence of M23 attacks in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the M23 to comply with the decisions taken by the Heads of State in the region within the context of the Luanda and Nairobi processes, in order to give peace a chance in that part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has suffered so much.

Sixthly, and in the same vein, we are also concerned about the spread of terrorism in the region, with the risk of the Allied Democratic Forces linking up with other terrorist groups in the Sahel, the Middle East or northern Mozambique. Further efforts on that front are sorely needed to nip the spread of terrorism throughout the continent in the bud before it is too late. Ongoing conflicts in other parts of the world should not overshadow those on the African continent. Peace and security being one of the three major pillars of United Nations action, we should tackle the current conflicts with the same determination and attention and with a united vision and approach.

In conclusion, the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains very delicate at present, and special attention by the Security Council is required to avert a regional spillover. Burundi reaffirms its support for all initiatives aimed at a peaceful settlement of the conflict and will spare no effort to bring peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and our subregion.

The President: The representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Mukongo (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I will not keep you much longer, but I would just like to point out that the atmosphere Council members are witnessing today in this Chamber is precisely the atmosphere that prevails on the ground.

In the subregion, there is a single country that thumbs its nose at all its neighbours. Council members can see that for themselves in what the representative of Burundi just said. Rwanda claims — and I have discussed this issue and I will not dwell on it for much longer — that it is in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure the security of the Tutsis. However, therein lies the contradiction. Are there Tutsis in Burundi? There are no Burundian Tutsis living in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Why is it only Rwandan Tutsis? The representative of Burundi says, “We do not want to externalize the Congolese conflict, which is a domestic conflict.” Then what are Rwandans doing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo if it is a domestic conflict? Stay home. The Rwandans do not want the Congolese conflict to be externalized, but at the same time they send their forces onto the Congolese territory, and then they shout that Tutsis are being exterminated

and that there is hate speech and that there are the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR). The FDLR that Rwanda is talking about are not Congolese; they are Rwandan. They are Rwandans who committed genocide against Rwandans in Rwanda in 1994, but they fled and found refuge in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Those FDLR forces were being eradicated by the Rwandan and Congolese forces together in the past.

On social networks — and I will look for the video to make it official — there is a video in which Rwanda's former Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mr. Vincent Karega, declared in 2018 that the FDLR, had been eradicated from the Democratic Republic of Congo to the point where they no longer posed a threat to Rwanda. That was stated, and that videos exists. The representative of Rwanda stated so at the time. I am saying this to show Council members that, in reality, Rwanda is there only to exploit the wealth of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

As we said last time (see S/PV.9553) — and I am coming back to the question of the FDLR because I

did not mention it last time — but there is an aspect that must be stressed and that is that paragraph 30 of the most recent report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/2023/990) specified that, among the Rwandan contingents fighting on the territory of the Democratic Republic of Congo, there are members of the FDLR who had been repatriated to Rwanda and whom Rwanda recycled, sending them back to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fight the Congolese army. That is the game Rwanda is playing. And I would not want Council members to be deceived by that game. They have seen the extent to which its malice has been extended to ensure that all its neighbours are bothered by it. I do not doubt that there will be a third neighbour who will complain about it at the next meeting.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion of the subject.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.