



# Security Council

Seventy-ninth year

*Provisional*

**9736<sup>th</sup>** meeting

Monday, 30 September 2024, 10.50 a.m.

New York

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<i>President:</i>	Mr. Žbogar/Ms. Jurečko . . . . .	(Slovenia)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria . . . . .	Mr. Koudri
	China . . . . .	Mr. Dai Bing
	Ecuador . . . . .	Mr. De La Gasca
	France . . . . .	Mr. De Rivière
	Guyana . . . . .	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Japan . . . . .	Mrs. Shino
	Malta . . . . .	Mr. Camilleri
	Mozambique . . . . .	Mr. Fernandes
	Republic of Korea . . . . .	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation . . . . .	Ms. Evstigneeva
	Sierra Leone . . . . .	Mr. Kanu
	Switzerland . . . . .	Mr. Carpenter
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America . . . . .	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

## 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/2024/689)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.*

### **Adoption of the agenda**

*The agenda was adopted.*

### **The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo S/2024/689**

**The President:** In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Angola, 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. Thérèse Nzale-Kove, Programme Officer, Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item of the agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2024/689, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Keita, Ms. Nzale-Kove and Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

**Ms. Keita** (*spoke in French*): It is once again my honour to present the report (S/2024/689) of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Zenon Mukongo, Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in New York, and His Excellency Mr. Ernest Rwamucyo,

the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda. I furthermore welcome the presence of the representative of Angola at this meeting.

The context to the briefing should be welcomed. Since 30 July and the announcement of a ceasefire between the parties, made by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda at a meeting facilitated by Angola, there has been a sharp decrease in fighting between the warring parties. Peace has yet to be secured, but there is now an active framework for dialogue between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, committed and proactive mediation in which no effort is being spared to resolve the conflict and an operational instrument to support that mediation, and therefore a genuine prospect for peace can be contemplated. I would like to take this opportunity to salute the unflagging determination of President João Lourenço of the Republic of Angola and his teams to bring this process to a successful conclusion, and I renew the full support of the United Nations, including that of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

(*spoke in English*)

Since my previous briefing (see S/PV.9681), incremental progress has been made in political and institutional processes.

First, at a national level, new institutions born of the December 2023 elections have been established: both the National Assembly and the Senate have elected their respective Bureaus and the Parliament is starting its autumn session. The Prime Minister, Ms. Judith Suminwa Tuluka, submitted the 2025 finance bill, estimated at \$18 billion — a 12 per cent increase in revenue over the previous year. The Government is set and willing to deliver on its ambitious programme. The United Nations stands ready to support it.

Secondly, at the regional level, discussions in the context of the Luanda process have continued, while the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) has already conducted several operations and is providing operational training to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). I welcome the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) announcement about the establishment of an office of the Special Representative of SADC and the Head of Mission of SAMIDRC. I thank

the Council for the adoption of resolution 2746 (2024), which authorizes MONUSCO to support SAMIDRC. Coordination mechanisms to operationalize that support are already in place. In addition, the Angolan authorities have requested that MONUSCO provide logistical support, security and information to the reinforced ad hoc verification mechanism born of the ceasefire agreement. We are committed to doing so to the extent that our resources and our mandate allow.

Thirdly, donors have already contributed over \$1 billion in humanitarian assistance. By the end of the year, contributions to the humanitarian response will be greater than ever before. That saves millions of lives. However, needs are increasing faster. Even the record levels of funding anticipated this year will fall short of the almost \$2.6 billion needed to assist the 8.7 million most vulnerable people in 2024.

Despite some progress, daunting challenges remain. Over the past few months, competition over the exploitation of, and trade in, natural resources has further entrenched and exacerbated conflict dynamics in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Ituri, the recent intensification of violence is being driven primarily by armed groups' attempts to control mining areas. As profits have surged with the expansion of semi-mechanized gold mining, armed groups have become militarized entrepreneurs. As a consequence, community leaders and depleted Government forces are struggling to contain armed groups, which have become stronger both militarily and financially.

In North Kivu, the consolidation of administrative control by the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) over Masisi and Rutshuru territories in North Kivu has allowed it to establish full control over coltan production. Trade from the Rubaya area, which is estimated to supply more than 15 per cent of global tantalum production, generates an estimated \$300,000 per month for the armed group. That is deeply concerning and needs to be stopped. The criminal laundering of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's natural resources, which are being smuggled out of the country, is strengthening armed groups, sustaining the exploitation of the civilian population — some of whom have been de facto enslaved — and undermining peacemaking efforts. Unless international sanctions are imposed on those benefiting from that criminal trade, peace will remain elusive and civilians will continue to suffer.

Concurrently, efforts to improve the governance of the exploitation of natural resources by increasing the transparency and traceability of mineral production are paramount to making progress in stabilizing the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I encourage the Government to invest in the local transformation of mineral and other raw materials through the creation of value chains and to prosecute those involved in illicit financial flows.

In North Kivu and Ituri, eliminating the threat posed by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) has proven elusive. In the past three months, the ADF has intensified its attacks against civilians, exploiting the vacuum created by the redeployment of the Congolese armed forces to fight the M23. Last June was probably the deadliest month ever recorded in relation to the ADF, with 272 civilians killed. Its neutralization remains a priority for the Mission.

Since the beginning of the year, a further 2.4 million people have been displaced. Many of them are sheltering in overcrowded sites where they are particularly vulnerable to diseases, including cholera, measles and the new outbreak of mpox. With the majority of cases of mpox being in Africa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at the epicentre of the epidemic that is already affecting 15 countries on the continent.

On the political front, tensions are also growing in the media and on the streets. Opposition parties are voicing their concern about restrictions on political freedoms, arbitrary arrests and the shrinking democratic space. All steps to safeguard a peaceful and consultative political environment are crucial to create an enabling environment for the pursuit of key reforms and to bolster trust and national cohesion as an antidote to those calling for armed rebellion. I welcome the public stance and concrete steps taken by the Congolese authorities to tackle all forms of hate speech and incitement to discrimination and violence. I urge continued vigilance in that regard.

There is another part of the Congolese society we cannot ignore — detainees. On 2 September, thousands of inmates tried to break free from an overcrowded Kinshasa central prison. More than 150 detainees died in the attempted mass escape. Some prisoners entered the women's wing and sexually assaulted more than 268 women who were incarcerated. Since then, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo ordered a fast-track reduction of the prison population and an investigation into that incident. Some 2,000 detainees have now been freed.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains disproportionately affected by another plague — sexual and gender-based violence. In the first half of the year, more than 61,000 victims were treated by humanitarian partners, a 10 per cent increase from the first half of 2023. That represents one victim every four minutes, three by the end of my briefing and more than 20 by the end of this meeting. That scourge, which primarily affects women and girl victims of the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, will result in long-lasting trauma within its social fabric.

*(spoke in French)*

The risks and opportunities that I have just referred to require national, regional and international mobilization to support the Congolese people.

First and foremost, we must support peace efforts wherever conflict exists. The mediation undertaken by Angola remains the best opportunity to reduce tensions between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but peace cannot be built in Luanda alone. It also requires investment in the provinces, territories, chiefdoms and villages. In South Kivu, following the departure of MONUSCO, the United Nations is supporting the establishment of mechanisms for the protection of unarmed civilians. Sustainable tools for conflict prevention, management and resolution will also be necessary. In that regard, MONUSCO is fully committed to working with the Congolese authorities to support the establishment of a standing mechanism for dialogue in Ituri. MONUSCO is also working with national and international non-governmental organizations and religious institutions to consolidate the gains achieved after many years of investment in women's and youth communities and local institutions.

Militarily too, MONUSCO is continuing to protect civilians. In Ituri, the Blue Helmets are more agile and robust in their interventions. Thanks to the establishment of a joint coordination and operations centre with the FARDC in Bunia, the response time to alerts has fallen to less than 15 minutes in most cases. Ten days ago, the FARDC and MONUSCO deployed to Bule to put an end to an ongoing attack by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo armed group, prompting the president of the civil society of the Bahema-Badjere chiefdom to declare that, had it not been for MONUSCO's intervention, there would have been more than 100 deaths. In North Kivu, MONUSCO continues to help maintain a defence zone around Goma

and Sake. It is providing guarantees of protection for civilians by maintaining its bases at Kitchanga, Kiwanja and Kanyabayonga in areas under M23 control.

Finally, it is essential to reduce the threat posed by armed groups by revitalizing the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and by operationalizing its national strategy and provincial operational plans. The United Nations agencies and MONUSCO are also committed to supporting the Government on that matter.

On 30 June, we ended our activities in South Kivu. At the request of the authorities, we are now engaged in an evaluation process to ensure that we consolidate our departure and to properly plan for the way forward following our withdrawal. The integrated transition team estimates that \$57 million will be required if the Government is to have the means to take up the baton in South Kivu. As a sign of its commitment, the Government has already committed \$30 million. The provincial authorities in South Kivu are also fully committed to consolidating the transition.

MONUSCO and the Government are working to define the modalities for implementing the next stages of the Mission's disengagement. That work, which will be ramped up in the coming weeks, will be aimed at ensuring that the main lessons learned from the disengagement from South Kivu and the specific challenges in the areas where MONUSCO is still present are taken into account.

*(spoke in English)*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken a path. We need to collectively remain engaged in assisting the country on its path to peace and stability. There is no alternative to a negotiated end to the conflict in North Kivu or to the successful implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and security sector reform. The United Nations and MONUSCO remain steadfast in their support to the Government's peacebuilding efforts. MONUSCO is leaving. The United Nations is staying. But until our very last day we will continue to protect civilians, support meaningful peace initiatives, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and assist the Congolese State in its stabilization efforts.

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

I now give the floor to Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove.

**Ms. Nzale-Kove** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for this opportunity to share with Council members the situation of women and girls in our country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in particular in the eastern part of the country.

I am Thérèse Nzale-Kove, a women's rights activist and Programme Officer at the Fund for Congolese Women, which provides financial and technical support to local organizations promoting women's rights.

My statement will focus on three main points: first, the impact of the current humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on women, girls and children in particular; secondly, women's participation in political and peace processes; and thirdly, the importance of special measures to protect civilians and safeguard women's rights during and after the withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is disastrous. It is characterized by a very high rate of internal displacement, rising food insecurity and the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence, which dehumanizes women and children.

More than 7.3 million people are internally displaced within their own country. The majority, 94 per cent, are concentrated in the four eastern provinces, namely, Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika. Against that background, the humanitarian response plan is undermined by the fact that it is only 37 per cent funded.

The scale of the recurrent armed conflicts and multifaceted crises in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is detrimental to civilians in general and women and girls in particular, to peace and to individual and collective development. The scale of the sexual and gender-based violence exacerbates the vulnerability of and has a disproportionate impact on women and girls. Added to that are sexual assault and slavery, torture, kidnapping, forced marriage and psychological violence, among other things. A lack of access to food, firewood and other basic necessities further exposes displaced women, girls and children. In their quest for their vital needs, they run a high risk of again being confronted with sexual violence. However, the precariousness of their circumstances also forces some to resort to transactional sex for survival, abusively termed survival sex. With more than 90,000

cases of sexual violence documented last year alone, it is clear that women and girls have no guarantee of protection. Even outside the conflict zones, including when fleeing insecurity in and around camps for the internally displaced, they still fall prey to predators. The recent case of the gang rape of 268 women and girls in Makala prison in Kinshasa is a telling example. Unfortunately, many of those survivors have no access to essential services, due among other things to fears of stigma and to the limited capacity of the health system in the troubled context of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On top of all that, thousands of displaced children have no access to education, a fundamental right enshrined in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Last year, the United Nations recorded more than 3,700 serious violations committed against children, including killing, maiming, sexual violence, abduction and recruitment into armed groups. Their schools have been forced to close owing to violence linked to recurring, bloody conflicts. Because education is a way to protect children from those evils, the time to act is now, in order to deactivate that ticking time bomb.

Congolese women and girls are working tirelessly to contribute to peace efforts and respond to the humanitarian crisis. Their impact is visible although their efforts are not sufficiently sustained. Their effective participation in the various peacekeeping, peacebuilding and peace negotiation processes remains very low, despite leaders' commitment and their willingness to implement resolution 1325 (2000). As part of an initiative of the Fonds pour les Femmes Congolaises, women have formed a think tank and action group called Synergie des Femmes pour la Paix et la Sécurité. It is essential that women in civil society be able to participate fully and meaningfully in every aspect of the current peace processes, including the Nairobi IV and Luanda processes, as well as other regional forums. Provided that it is respected, the Luanda agreement, mediated by Angola's President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, is a positive step that Congolese women support because they aspire to a lasting solution to the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The international community should listen to the cries of distress of the people in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who are living



in a state of indescribable despair. The departure of MONUSCO, which is now a matter of consensus, must take into account the challenges of the systems for protecting human rights and of social inequalities and their effects. There is therefore a need for an objective assessment, now that there are lessons to be learned from the current situation in the provinces from which MONUSCO has withdrawn, specifically Tanganyika and South Kivu.

In future it will also be important to bear in mind the complexity of the specific context in each of the remaining provinces, particularly North Kivu and Ituri. Fears of a vacuum and doubts about guarantees for the protection of civilians are anxiety-provoking factors that raise questions about the monitoring of human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, and the various forms of support for political participation, women's empowerment, human rights defenders at risk and so on. Those essential responsibilities must be transferred sustainably to the competent authorities and to other entities that are capable of taking them on, including civil society organizations and particularly women's organizations. Involving them in assessments of the process and its impact on the protection of civilians will strengthen communication with community members. I would like to conclude by making the following recommendations to the Security Council.

First, the Council should take measures that are binding on all parties to the armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work to restore peace in the region and respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Secondly, it should call for accelerating the full implementation of the Luanda road map. Thirdly, together with the Congolese Government, it should take concrete steps to counter the scourge of sexual and gender-based violence. Fourthly, it should ensure that MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government consult regularly and meaningfully with women's civil society organizations at every stage of the transition, and integrate their recommendations into all drawdown plans, including strategies for the protection of civilians. The participation of women should not be subject to any demands or conditions, because they have a legitimate role to play in building peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. The protection of women and children is non-negotiable.

**The President:** I thank Ms. Nzale-Kove for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Kanu.

**Mr. Kanu:** I have the honour to deliver this statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is my intention to provide an overview of the work of the Committee since the last briefing by my predecessor to the Council, on 28 September 2023 (see S/PV.9427).

Since that briefing, the Committee has held three informal consultations in the remainder of 2023 and four informal consultations to date in 2024. During the meeting on 10 October 2023, the Committee heard a briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the meeting on 19 October 2023, the Committee received a briefing by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, pursuant to paragraph 5 of resolution 2664 (2022). During the meeting on 7 December 2023, the Coordinator of the Group of Experts provided an overview of the main findings and recommendations contained in the Group's midterm report (see S/2023/990), following which Committee members discussed the findings and recommendations that it contained.

Committee members also met in one informal meeting at the Permanent Mission of Gabon on 15 December 2023, with the senior official of the Follow-on Mechanism on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Petit. I would like to reiterate that the Committee continues to support the Mechanism, which provides assistance to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with its investigations into the March 2017 murders of two former members of the Group of Experts, Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp, and the four Congolese accompanying the experts.

Let me now turn to the informal consultations held to date in 2024. During the meeting held with regional and other interested States on 19 February, the Coordinator of the Group of Experts provided an overview of the main findings and recommendations contained in the midterm report, following which a number of Committee members and representatives of States from the region shared their views in connection with the report.

During the meeting held on 24 May, the Committee heard a presentation by the Coordinator of the Group of Experts regarding the Group's final report (see S/2024/432) and discussed the findings and recommendations contained therein.

During the meeting held on 3 June, the Committee heard briefings by the Executive Secretary of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, a representative of the Centre for Responsible Business Conduct of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and representatives of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on natural resources.

During the meeting held with regional and other interested States on 26 July, the Coordinator of the Group of Experts provided an overview of the main findings and recommendations contained in the final report, following which a number of Committee members and representatives of States from the region shared their views in connection with the report.

During the meeting held on 16 September, the Committee heard a presentation from the Coordinator of the Group of Experts outlining the Group's workplan for its current mandate ending 1 August 2025, in line with resolution 2738 (2024) adopted on 27 June 2024.

Committee members also met in two informal informals at the Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone, on 6 March and 23 April, with the senior official of the Follow-on Mechanism on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Petit.

In accordance with paragraph 104 of the annex to the note by the President of the Security Council contained in document S/2017/507, the Committee issued eight press releases containing a brief summary of the informal consultations held on 10 October, 19 October and 7 December 2023, and on 19 February, 24 May, 3 June, 26 July and 16 September 2024.

**The President:** I thank Ambassador Kanu for his briefing.

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

**Mr. De Rivi re (France)** (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone and Ms. Nzale Kove for their briefings. Allow me to focus on three points.

First, let us not allow the crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to become a forgotten one. Every effort must be made to put an end to the humanitarian crisis, to facilitate access to vulnerable populations and to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers. France calls on the international community to continue to mobilize in order to meet those needs, which are currently largely underfunded. France is doing its part by supporting the humanitarian response, contributing more than €22 million this year. France also calls for an end to the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed by armed groups. Those well-documented atrocities must end, as must any support given to those groups. France commends the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) and its Group of Experts. Sanctions remain a valuable tool with which to make an impact on the ground.

Secondly, a political solution is more essential than ever to achieving a lasting resolution to the conflict. I welcome the mediation conducted by Angola and President Louren o. The recent ceasefire is a step in the right direction. It must be respected. France supports that process and all regional efforts aimed at resuming dialogue. The President of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, is personally involved and regularly discusses the situation with Presidents Tshisekedi Tshilombo and Kagame. We must all mobilize to support Angola's efforts and bring the parties to an agreement. We hope that those efforts will lead quickly to concrete results in terms of the withdrawal, cantonment and disarmament of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and Rwandan forces and of the plan to dismantle the Forces d mocratiques de lib ration du Rwanda, in order to restore trust among the parties. There is an urgent need to do so, both for the sake of the victims of this crisis and in order to enable the Democratic Republic of the Congo to regain its full sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, I welcome the work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and that of Special Representative Bintou Keita; their efforts continue to play a key role in protecting civilians. In July, the Council authorized MONUSCO to support the regional force deployed under the auspices of the Southern African Development Community. We call on the different parties to ensure good coordination between the Southern African Development Community Mission

in the Democratic Republic of Congo and MONUSCO. This year, MONUSCO began a gradual withdrawal process. I welcome the conclusion of its first phase. Lessons must now be drawn from it. First of all, we must consolidate the transfer of responsibilities to the Congolese Government in South Kivu before taking the next steps, by taking into account developments in the security situation. The protection of civilians must be the top priority, and any withdrawal must be carried out in the light of that imperative.

The capacity of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take over responsibility for the security of the entire Congolese people and to establish a presence in the service of all its citizens must be a decisive factor. That is why we are working to build the capacity of Congolese forces to combat improvised explosive devices. It is also essential to support the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. MONUSCO contributes to those efforts day after day. I would like to salute the Mission's commitment and to thank it.

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

At the outset, the A3+ would like to express its gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her leadership and efforts and those of her team. We highly appreciate her valuable briefing today on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We take note of the briefing by the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we also listened attentively to the insights of Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove. We welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Rwanda in today's discussions.

As the Council convenes once more to address the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is important to remember the devastating impact of the conflict on civilians, including children. Many of those children have known only war from the time of their birth, and tragically, many have died in it. Those children and their families have a strong desire for

one thing: peace. The Council must therefore continue to support all efforts aimed at achieving peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The A3+ extends its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2024/689) on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Having carefully considered the report, we wish to emphasize the following points.

First, we welcome the ceasefire agreement reached between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, under the mediation efforts of President João Lourenço of Angola. We believe that the effective supervision of the reinforced ad hoc verification mechanism is crucial for ensuring the full implementation of the ceasefire. We urge MONUSCO to provide robust support to this mechanism, particularly the operationalization of a plan to neutralize the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), as outlined in the ceasefire agreement.

We also reaffirm the position of the African Union Peace and Security Council that the Nairobi and Luanda processes remain the most viable frameworks for resolving the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is essential to continue strengthening these processes. We therefore welcome the ongoing engagement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to jointly address their respective security concerns. We urge their continued commitment to dialogue and cooperation in the interest of both the Congolese and Rwandan peoples.

Secondly, despite the ceasefire agreement, the A3+ remains gravely concerned about the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in South Kivu. The effectiveness of the ceasefire is being undermined by the daily confrontations between the Movement du 23 mars, the Wazalendo and the FDLR, despite the agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

It is civilians who continue to bear the brunt of the hostilities, as seen in the recent shelling of camps for internally displaced persons. The A3+ condemns those attacks in the strongest terms and calls on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and to prioritize the protection of civilians. Furthermore, we deplore all actions that undermine the ceasefire reached by the Democratic



Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. We are therefore deeply concerned about the presence of foreign armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, a serious violation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Thirdly, we are deeply concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, characterized by an unprecedented displacement crisis, the presence of epidemics, especially the mpox virus, and grave violations of international humanitarian law. We have noted that the resurgence of the mpox virus has seen an alarming increase among children and commend the efforts of the World Health Organization in declaring mpox a global public health emergency of international concern. While we welcome the steps taken to ameliorate the situation, the A3+ is of the view that additional efforts are needed to safeguard the health of the Congolese people, who are already grappling with the effects of a multidimensional conflict. We therefore call on Member States to support efforts to curb the spread of the virus by ensuring the availability of the necessary vaccines and other resources. According to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, there are only 200,000 vaccines available, while at least 10 million doses are required to halt the spread.

Fourthly, the A3+ welcomes the completion of phase one of the disengagement plan, particularly the adherence to strict environmental protocols, in alignment with United Nations standards. We also acknowledge the signing of the provincial road map for the transition in South Kivu. We emphasize the importance of consolidating the transfer of responsibilities to provincial and national authorities and of strengthening national institutions and capacities, particularly on the protection of civilians. That is the only way to ensure that a security vacuum is not left upon MONUSCO's withdrawal, which would provide opportunities for armed groups to fill that vacuum.

In conclusion, the A3+ urges the United Nations to continue its close cooperation with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in protecting civilians and addressing the ongoing humanitarian and health crises in the country. Those efforts are critical, especially for the children affected by the conflict. Lasting peace, stability and prosperity for the Congolese people can be achieved only through progress on the political front.

**Mr. De La Gasca** (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu and 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 their informative briefings. I also thank our civil society representative, Ms. Nzal-Kove, for her briefing. I acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Angola at this meeting.

On 15 July, the African Union Peace and Security Council reiterated that the Nairobi and Luanda processes remain the only viable frameworks to crystallize peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, the convening of the second quadripartite meeting by the African Union Commission will undoubtedly strengthen the path towards peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The mediation led by President João Lourenço of Angola, under the Luanda process, which resulted in a ceasefire agreement, has been a milestone, as is the proposal he put forward to reach a peace agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

On the ground, the security situation remains serious and even registers the expansion of the Movement du 23 mars and the Allied Democratic Forces, despite the humanitarian pause and the ceasefire agreement. The operation of these and other armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must stop immediately. So too must human rights violations, gender-based sexual violence and grave violations against children. The protection of civilians is a priority. The crimes perpetrated against them cannot go unpunished.

The declaration of an international mpox epidemic emergency has further aggravated the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community must respond in a manner commensurate with the pressing needs of more than 6.4 million displaced persons.

It is of concern that despite the humanitarian truce that has been agreed in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, violations of international humanitarian law have not completely stopped, affecting, in particular, the refugee camps, where the fighting has not receded.

I highlight the work of MONUSCO and its commitment to the women and peace and security agenda, which in coordination with UN-Women, the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Gender, Family and Children, contribute to the construction of the third-generation plan, for the period 2024–2028, in furtherance of resolution 1325 (2000). I also highlight the work of MONUSCO in the areas of its mandate: the protection of civilians; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; the reform of the judicial system and the fight against impunity, among many others.

Peace missions cannot be perpetuated indefinitely. MONUSCO has completed its withdrawal from South Kivu, however State presence must be bolstered in order to stop the advance of armed groups. It is imperative that the national authorities take an active and permanent role to fill those power vacuums. Only a strong State presence will make it possible to consolidate lasting peace and truly inclusive development that benefits the population. In that context, we must fight the illegal exploitation of mineral resources, the primary activity of armed groups. The establishment of tracing mechanisms are necessary to combat trafficking.

In line with the Secretary-General's commitment to apply a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual abuse, Ecuador supports MONUSCO's efforts to strengthen preventive actions in pursuit of that objective. In that regard, I highlight the work being carried out to establish community networks to denounce sexual abuse and to promote initiatives to support vulnerable women and vulnerable communities by bolstering their resilience and empowerment.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing one of the most complex displacement crises of our time. I reiterate the urgent need for respect for international humanitarian law. No civilians, including humanitarian workers, should ever be targeted.

Finally, my country reaffirms its commitment to support international efforts to counter the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and backs MONUSCO's initiatives to bolster the protection of civilians. We reiterate that only dialogue and the decisive support of the Security Council for peace efforts in that region will lead to sustainable peace.

**Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield** (United States of America): Before I give my remarks, I want to share that I was just informed that Dikembe Mutombo, a

renowned humanitarian and former National Basketball Association star, a Congolese American who worked to contribute to the well-being of the Congolese people, just died at the age of 57. May his soul rest in peace.

I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing today and for the dedicated efforts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo teams of the entire United Nations and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also want to thank our civil society briefer, Ms. Nzale-Kove, and Ambassador Kanu of Sierra Leone for their briefings.

The United States offers its full support to the ongoing ceasefire in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Angola's leadership of both the Luanda process and the ad hoc verification mechanism. We call on all parties to honour the ceasefire and to direct the armed groups aligned with them to do the same. The parties' willingness to come to the table is a positive first step, but there is still far more work to be done. They must deliver on their commitments and bring peace to the people of the region. Rwanda must immediately withdraw its more than 4,000 troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and cease its support for the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). The M23 must immediately withdraw to its November 2023 positions, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo must take immediate action against the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and cease its support to the group.

In addition, the United States appreciates the strong collaboration between the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government and MONUSCO on both the Mission's drawdown and its ongoing essential activities, including reinforcing the current ceasefire and protecting displaced civilians. We also welcome the Democratic Republic of the Congo's efforts at the local and national levels to consolidate MONUSCO's drawdown from South Kivu. That being said, MONUSCO's departure from South Kivu has left critical gaps that cannot go unfilled. For example, five of six child protection advisers who monitored and reported on violations against children have left the province. Their departure underscores the urgency of effectively transitioning MONUSCO's wide-ranging tasks to entities, particularly the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that are properly mandated and well-resourced. We encourage MONUSCO, the United Nations and the Government to

ensure that those capacities are urgently filled. And we reiterate our position that the Security Council should not authorize a further drawdown of MONUSCO without a clear plan to mitigate those gaps. To that end, we appreciate the frank efforts by MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities to reflect on the disengagement process and ensure a sequenced, orderly and coordinated approach because, ultimately, sustainable transitions will take place.

We support the technical discussions already under way between MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government and international partners to take advantage of the significant lead time in the Mission's departure from North Kivu and Ituri, especially because major challenges remain in those provinces. In North Kivu, the M23 continues to obstruct the movements of MONUSCO and humanitarian actors, while threatening violence against United Nations peacekeepers and positions. Demands that MONUSCO vacate its positions so that M23 can consolidate or further expand its territorial control are wholly unacceptable. We offer our firmest support to the MONUSCO personnel stationed in those areas, who have demonstrated great professionalism and resolve. In Ituri, we remain deeply concerned about the increasingly lethal operations being perpetrated against civilians by the armed group *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* and by the terrorist organizations of Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Allied Democratic Forces. MONUSCO's role in protecting civilians, including those in vulnerable camps for internally displaced persons, is absolutely essential, especially in areas with scant Government security presence.

Finally, the United States urges improved communications between MONUSCO and the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the collaboration as authorized under resolution 2746 (2024) does not inflame regional tensions at a fragile moment. We look forward to a detailed report by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the resolution.

In conclusion, we strongly urge the parties to take advantage of a unique opportunity to deliver peace to the region by fully committing to diplomatic processes and taking courageous steps to end this conflict. For the sake of the peoples of the Great Lakes region, we must not let this chance escape us.

**Mr. Carpenter** (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing and for the continued efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I welcome the presence of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda at this meeting and that of Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove.

As Ms. Nzale-Kove just reiterated, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo want peace. Fulfilling that aspiration means stepping up efforts to promote peace, both in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region as a whole. Peace cannot be achieved without mutual trust. As regional initiatives move forward, it is essential that all parties fully honour their commitments and invest decisively in the quest for peaceful solutions. I would like to make three key points in that regard.

First, it is imperative that the parties redouble their efforts to ease tensions and achieve lasting peace. Switzerland fully supports the Luanda process led by President Lourenço, which led to the signing of a ceasefire agreement by Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 30 July. The agreement is an encouraging step towards de-escalation, and we call on all the parties involved to adhere to it fully and to support the work of the ad hoc verification mechanism in monitoring the ceasefire. If tensions are to be reduced in the long term, the commitments made at the second ministerial meeting held in Luanda must be fully implemented. Rwanda should therefore withdraw its forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo by developing a disengagement plan, while the Democratic Republic of the Congo should operationalize the plan to neutralize the *Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda*. Furthermore, Rwanda must cease all support for the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23).

Secondly, the attacks by armed actors on civilians must cease immediately. Far from withdrawing, the M23 is continuing its territorial expansion, and like other parties to the conflict is violating international law with impunity, with intolerable consequences for the civilian population. The main victims are women and girls. Those who have already been displaced often face a cruel choice between enduring sexual violence or losing access to food or other basic necessities. Switzerland reminds all parties of their obligation to respect international humanitarian law and protect

civilians and civilian objects. We emphasize that all those responsible for violations of international law should be brought to justice whether they are members of armed groups or State forces. Peace is not merely the absence of war — it is also about breaking the cycle of violence and fighting impunity.

Lastly, it is essential to strengthen the rule of law throughout the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The attempted escape from Makala prison and the ensuing violence highlight the urgent need to strengthen respect for human rights and their protection in the country. Moreover, we remain concerned about the restrictions on civic space. The repeated attacks on the rights of human rights defenders and members of civil society must be addressed. We are also concerned about intercommunal violence and the spread of hate speech, particularly against the Rwandophone population.

It is critical that the Security Council speak with one voice and contribute to the success of the political initiatives that are essential to stability and lasting peace in the region. That requires close coordination between all actors, complementary actions and, above all, a shared desire by all parties to build a climate of confidence. In that context, Switzerland reaffirms its unwavering support to the Congolese people and to all the actors striving for peace.

**Mr. Hwang** (Republic of Korea): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and Ms. Nzale-Kove for their updates. I want to express my appreciation to the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ambassador Michael Kanu, for his briefing. I also welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Angola to today's meeting.

Since our last briefing, in July (see S/PV.9681), there have been some encouraging developments, including the 30 July ceasefire agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda facilitated by President Lourenço of Angola. The Council's adoption in August of resolution 2746 (2024), which authorizes the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to provide support to the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also aims to foster a conducive environment for ongoing regional peace efforts. However, the situation in the eastern

Democratic Republic of the Congo remains deeply troubling, with millions of civilians affected by the ongoing conflict and violence. I would like to make three points today.

First, Korea strongly condemns the actions of armed groups operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and any support provided to them. Despite the ceasefire, the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) has expanded its territorial control by 21 per cent over the past three months. Other armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, have continued to perpetrate heinous violence against civilians while much attention is focused on M23 and North Kivu.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources and the proliferation of arms, both prevalent in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, are fuelling further instability. All armed groups should immediately lay down their arms and withdraw from the territories they are occupying. Countries providing support to armed groups or intervening militarily on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should also cease such activities. If not, the consequences of those activities will lead only to further violence and instability, not only in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo but in their own countries and the Great Lakes region as a whole. That issue is particularly critical in the wake of MONUSCO's June withdrawal from South Kivu. The heightened mobilization of local armed groups from North Kivu to South Kivu poses a serious threat at a time when the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo bears the primary responsibility for protecting its people.

Secondly, we encourage all parties to continue discussions on the potential peace agreement proposed by President Lourenço of Angola. Upholding the commitments made in the 30 July ceasefire agreement will be essential in that regard. We also welcome MONUSCO's commitment to supporting the reinforced ad hoc verification mechanism. Regional peace processes are crucial because the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is a regional issue. The countries in the region, along with regional organizations such as the Southern African Development Community, the East African Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States, should collaborate to find a political



solution. Korea reaffirms its support for the Luanda and Nairobi processes and encourages the harmonization of those regional efforts.

Thirdly, the dire human rights and humanitarian situation demands immediate attention. As our briefer clearly outlined today, the recent reports of conflict-related sexual violence, especially in and around internally displaced persons sites, are alarming. Many of those women and girls face heightened risks of violence while seeking basic necessities such as food and firewood. It is crucial to ensure the safety of those sites and provide the assistance needed to ensure that women and girls are not exposed to violence while trying to sustain their daily lives. Korea will contribute \$5 million to the Democratic Republic of the Congo this year, with half of that allocated to support for survivors of gender-based violence. Furthermore, the recent incident of mass rape at Malaka prison in Kinshasa also deserves our attention. We commend MONUSCO for offering its assistance.

In conclusion, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its unwavering support for Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, MONUSCO and the regional organizations in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

**Mr. Kariuki** (United Kingdom): Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Nzale-Kove for briefing us today.

I also welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Angola in our meeting. I will make three broad points.

First, the United Kingdom thanks President Lourenço for his continued mediation efforts and welcomes the progress made under the August ceasefire agreement. The parties must now produce detailed plans outlining how and when their commitments will be met. They should also take action on the plans already in place. During his recent visits to Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, my Minister for Africa and the United Nations, Lord Collins of Highbury, encouraged all the parties to engage in political dialogue. While negotiations continue, the ceasefire must be respected. We call on all parties to the conflict, including non-State actors, to commit to de-escalation.

Secondly, the United Kingdom is grateful for Ms. Keita's reflections on the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The widespread human rights violations and abuses and the shrinking civic space are concerning. We encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure that the investigation into the incident at Makala prison is comprehensive and that those responsible are held accountable.

Despite the ceasefire, the humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains dire. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and enable unhindered humanitarian access. The United Kingdom condemns the actions of all armed groups, which cause terrible civilian suffering. The increased attacks by the Islamic State-affiliated Allied Democratic Forces are particularly concerning, as are reports of continued territorial expansion by the Mouvement du 23 mars. The significant challenges facing the civilian population are now being compounded by outbreaks of mpox, in which children account for 60 per cent of cases and 80 per cent of deaths. The United Kingdom is finalizing a further package of support for the mpox response and we encourage others to do the same. Women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are particularly vulnerable and face some of the highest rates of sexual violence globally. Strengthening the survivors' access to justice and holding the perpetrators to account is vital.

As we approach MONUSCO's mandate renewal, the United Kingdom encourages the Mission to learn lessons from its withdrawal from South Kivu. The protection of civilians must remain a priority. Lastly, and crucially, the United Kingdom also calls on all parties to ensure that MONUSCO has the access and freedom of movement required to deliver on its mandate. Obstructing, or worse yet, targeting peacekeeping missions is unacceptable. Council members must all send a clear message to the parties on that point.

**Mr. Dai Bing** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ambassador Kanu, Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for their briefings. I listened to the statement by Ms. Nzale-Kove and I welcome the presence here today of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Angola.

In his report (S/2024/689), the Secretary-General notes that the signing of the ceasefire agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in July marked a decisive step towards de-escalation. China commends Angola for its tireless efforts in facilitating the ceasefire and encourages the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to consolidate the dialogue's momentum and reach a common understanding on the plans for the disarmament and disengagement of armed groups so as to create conditions conducive to reaching a peace agreement and a final settlement of the issue of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At the same time, armed conflicts continue to occur from time to time in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, causing innocent civilian casualties. We urge all armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to honour the ceasefire agreement and maintain the momentum of the easing of the situation. The African Union and regional organizations and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region and other parties deserve recognition for their mediation efforts. The diplomatic efforts of all parties should be better coordinated to create synergy.

In addition to political and diplomatic means, a holistic approach that addresses both the symptoms and the root causes is needed to resolve the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The international community needs to help more than 6.4 million internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo gain access to humanitarian assistance, curb the spread of mpox outbreaks as soon as possible and ensure people's basic needs for survival.

The Contact and Coordination Group for the Great Lakes region established a sub-working group on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in August this year, which helped ex-combatants secure livelihoods and avoid being recruited again. The recent outbreak of conflicts between armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over land and mining sites shows that underdevelopment is an important root cause of violence and conflict. The United Nations should maintain a long-term perspective and help the Democratic Republic of the Congo enhance its capacity for independent development, improve people's livelihoods and break the vicious cycle of poverty and conflict.

Under the current ceasefire, China supports the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in effectively playing its role in peacekeeping and in providing assistance in monitoring the ceasefire and reaching a political settlement. Following the withdrawal of MONUSCO from South Kivu last June, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations have done a lot of work to consolidate the security gains. The international community should provide adequate resources to support those efforts. In the next phase, MONUSCO should strengthen communication with the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government to plan the future drawdown process in the light of the evolving situation on the ground and draw on the experience of the transition period.

Recently, there have been attacks on MONUSCO convoys, Global Positioning System jamming and other security incidents. All parties concerned should attach importance to the safety and security of peacekeepers and take effective measures to mitigate the security risks faced by the Blue Helmets.

**Ms. Evstigneeva** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ms. Bintou Keita for her briefing and the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone for his statement in his capacity as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have listened attentively to the statement by Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove. We welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Angola in this meeting.

The security and humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains dire. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face one of the worst crises in terms of the number of internally displaced persons and refugees. The crisis has affected more than 6.4 million people. The situation is further exacerbated by attacks on camps of internally displaced persons and civilian infrastructure objects, as well as by epidemics of infectious diseases.

However, we are cautiously optimistic about the regional efforts to support the peaceful settlement of the crisis in that part of Africa. In that regard, we welcome the results of the second meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo and Rwanda, achieved with the proactive role of the President of Angola, Mr. Lourenço. The agreement of an open-ended ceasefire from midnight on 4 August was a meaningful step forward.

It is now critical to maintain the positive momentum and reaffirm the commitment to respect mutual obligations on the diplomatic track. It is also vital to take tangible steps to end any cooperation of the State with illegal armed groups. Otherwise, the region is liable to relapse into an armed conflict involving the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). The M23 group maintains control of a host of regions in North Kivu that are both strategically important and rich in natural resources. There is evidence that the M23 is further infiltrating South Kivu. All of that attests to the fact that the situation is tenuous and that there is a need to redouble efforts to resolve the crisis in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

An important effort to stabilize the situation is being made by the Southern African Development Community (SADC), under whose aegis military contingents from Malawi, Tanzania and South Africa are supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo Armed Forces in countering the threat posed by illegal armed groups. An important achievement in that regard was the adoption of resolution 2746 (2024) on providing assistance to the SADC forces. We firmly believe that this step will facilitate region-wide attempts to bring the situation back to a peaceful track.

We note the conclusion of the withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) from South Kivu. That is a critical milestone for the Mission and the years-long peacekeeping efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the aegis of the United Nations. The experience gained through the implementation of that phase place stand us in good stead for moving forward with subsequent phases.

In determining the further steps in MONUSCO's withdrawal from the country, it is important to take into account the developments on the ground and to act in a flexible, gradual and responsible manner. We should not allow a security vacuum to develop. At the same time, it is necessary to remain committed to the implementation of the fundamental decisions adopted by the Security Council.

Problems in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are deeply rooted, and they require balanced and long-term solutions that account for the core interests of

all parties concerned. We remain firmly convinced that all conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region as a whole must be resolved exclusively through political and diplomatic means. Russia, as a Security Council permanent member, will continue to facilitate such efforts.

**Mr. Camilleri (Malta):** I begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, Ms. Nzale-Kove and Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu in his capacity as chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their briefings.

Malta welcomes Angola's diplomatic efforts, which have been instrumental in facilitating the ceasefire agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The agreement represents an encouraging step towards de-escalation. We also commend the role played by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the work of the reinforced ad hoc verification mechanism in the monitoring of the ceasefire.

The commitments made must be fully respected, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda must continue to engage in good faith. We strongly encourage the two sides to commit to the agreed plan to neutralize the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the development of a plan for the disengagement of forces. We also avail ourselves of this occasion to reiterate our call for the cessation of all foreign military support to the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and other armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While regional diplomatic efforts have led to a reduction in violence, the M23 has continued to expand. Those actions, including external support to the group, seek only to jeopardize ongoing peace efforts. Other armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and Wazalendo have continued to violate international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Women continue to be disproportionately affected. High levels of sexual- and gender-based violence make the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman and a girl. We unreservedly condemn those heinous crimes.

MONUSCO's withdrawal from South Kivu is now complete, and we commend the cooperation between MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities. Regrettably, as the M23 crisis is spilling over and impacting the activity of armed groups, we have seen an increase in the recruitment of children in the region. Malta reiterates the urgent need to intensify efforts to safeguard children, particularly in South Kivu. The protection of children must remain an integral part of our efforts. That includes the continued presence of child protection staff, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO (S/2024/689).

The crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains inextricably linked to the country's rich natural resources. If revenues were equitably shared with the local population, alongside strengthened State institutions, we could free the region from the spiral of poverty and desperation.

Malta condemns once again the consolidation of M23 control over the coltan mining area near Rubaya in Masisi territory. During the most recent reporting period the M23 imposed a tax on production that is generating an estimated \$300,000 in monthly revenue. We echo the Secretary-General's concerns about the severe risks of cross-border smuggling. We also support the Group of Experts' repeated warnings about the significant risk of contamination in the international supply chain.

We are deeply shocked by the violence following the attempted prison break at Makala. We hope that the announced official inquiry commission will shed light on the events and hold the perpetrators accountable.

Together with the rule of law, civic space remains an essential pillar in the foundations of democracy. The attacks on human rights defenders and civil society members, and the rise in hate speech and mis- and disinformation, must be urgently addressed.

**Mrs. Shino** (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Ms. Nzale-Kove for their briefings. I also thank the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the update on its work. And I welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Rwanda in today's meeting.

We remain deeply concerned about the continued human rights violations and abuses by armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo, which have displaced local residents, undermined their human security and trapped women and children in the most vulnerable situations. All armed groups must cease hostilities, lay down their arms permanently and participate in the Government-led Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. We cannot tolerate any risk of the security situation in the region worsening further. Any States' support of any kind to the Mouvement du 23 mars or any other armed groups must cease immediately. That includes the reported large supplies of sophisticated artillery and direct interventions by foreign troops. The sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be preserved.

We welcome the ceasefire agreement signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda on 30 July as an important step in creating an environment conducive to resolving the conflict through dialogue. All parties should abide sincerely by the agreement and follow up with concrete actions. In that respect, the ad hoc verification mechanism should be fully utilized, backed up by regional cooperation. We continue to support the Luanda process, and we commend Angola for its constructive role as a regional mediator. Inclusive dialogue continues to be the key to sustainable solutions.

Resolution 2746 (2024), which the Council adopted unanimously last month, highlighted the importance of joint planning for the next steps in the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, building on the lessons learned from the completed first phase. We are encouraged by the firm resolve of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take over security responsibilities from the Mission and avoid any security gaps. Further sustainable withdrawal demands an improvement in the protection of civilians and the rule of law in the region. The increase in the number of acts of sexual violence and child abuse, especially in and around internally displaced person camps, is highly alarming. The presence of sufficient professional national security forces is essential to the safety of local residents, and we therefore continue to encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo to accelerate its reform of its nationally owned security sector. Japan has been a long-time partner in the Government's efforts to develop community policing through capacity- and institution-building. Female officers are included in training, and we look forward to seeing them play a crucial role in improving access to justice against gender-based violence.



The already difficult conditions that people are facing in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are now being worsened by the recent outbreak of mpox. The number of cases has increased significantly since November, including in South Kivu and further expanding to the north. That makes the improvement of humanitarian access, including for proper medical treatment, all the more urgent, and all parties must ensure access in accordance with international humanitarian law. Notes concerning the grant of mpox vaccines and special inoculation needles were exchanged between the Governments of Japan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 18 September. Those vaccines and needles are expected to contribute to measures against mpox.

Japan will continue working together with all partners for sustainable peace and stability in the region.

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

I want to express my gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her comprehensive briefing and her work. She can count on Slovenia's continuing support for the critical role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the protection of civilians. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone for his briefing and Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove for her impactful messages. I welcome the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola and Rwanda to this meeting.

The briefing by Ms. Keita shows that the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains troubling. We strongly condemn the deadly actions of armed groups, particularly the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), the Allied Democratic Forces and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo. The continued territorial expansion of M23 must stop. We call on all armed groups to stop fighting, disarm and fully withdraw from occupied territories. I would now like to make three points.

First, during our last briefing (see S/PV.9681) we urged the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to engage in an inclusive political dialogue. We welcome the recent progress that has been made in that regard and reiterate our support for the Nairobi and Luanda processes. The ceasefire facilitated by Angola marks a significant step forward that should not be reversed. Slovenia commends President João

Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço's strong commitment to peace and stability in the region. We call on Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to respect and fully implement the Luanda agreement. Let me also reiterate the importance of women's full, equal and meaningful participation in all peacebuilding efforts, including the Luanda and Nairobi processes. We emphasize that all external support for armed groups, particularly the M23, must cease. We remain alarmed by the unauthorized foreign military personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and urge Rwanda to immediately withdraw its military presence and fully respect the Democratic Republic of the Congo's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Secondly, civilians continue to bear the brunt of the protracted crisis. We strongly condemn the widespread sexual and gender-based violence that is disproportionately targeting women and girls. Protection mechanisms, particularly within displacement camps, remain alarmingly scarce. Health care for the survivors is essential, and it must be ensured. We often hear the same sentiment echoed by survivors — they seek justice, protection and the opportunity to live without constant fear. All who are responsible for violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law must be held accountable. I would like to recognize the work of local organizations, especially those led by women. Their commitment is both inspiring and essential to community resilience, and we heard about one such example from Ms. Nzale-Kove today.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains very dire. Conflict is intensifying hunger, driving alarming levels of food insecurity and malnutrition, and escalating forced displacement. Children, pregnant women and new mothers, especially in internally displaced person camps, are dealing with shortages of food, clean water and health care as aid workers struggle to access them in the face of ongoing violence. Humanitarian workers must not be targeted in any circumstances. We must not allow this complex emergency to become a forgotten crisis amid other global challenges.

In conclusion, we hope that the current political process will serve as a basis for building trust, ultimately contributing to lasting peace for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider Great Lakes region.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

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

**Mr. Mukongo** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): As this is the first time that I take the floor in the Security Council as September draws to a close, I would be remiss if I did not welcome your presidency of the Council and congratulate you, Mr. President, on the quality of the work that you have done and the spirit of openness that you have displayed. Allow me to reiterate here as well my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, and to Ms. Bintou Keita, his Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for their tireless efforts for peace in my country. I would also welcome the presence of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Allow me to assure him in advance that he and his delegation will be very welcome in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on their upcoming visit. I would also like to thank all Council members for their prompt response in agreeing to meet on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after such an intense and busy high-level week. Finally, allow me to express my gratitude and encouragement to my sister Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove, who spoke on behalf of Congolese civil society.

The Council is considering the Secretary-General's report on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2024/689), dated 20 September 2024. My delegation has taken due note of the report and wishes to make the following observations.

In terms of security and diplomacy, it is worth recalling, as was so well expressed by the President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo during his address on 25 September 2024, delivered from the rostrum of the General Assembly at its seventy-ninth session, that

"The situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is particularly disturbing. The resurgence of the Rwanda-backed terrorist group Mouvement du 23 mars has caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis with more than 7 million internally displaced persons. That aggression constitutes a grave violation of our national sovereignty. We call on the international

community to firmly condemn those acts and to impose targeted sanctions against Rwanda for its destabilizing role. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Rwandan troops from our territory. Although recent diplomatic initiatives, such as the Luanda talks, are encouraging, they must in no way obscure the urgency of that crucial action".

I would also like to reassure the Council of my Government's determination to work to establish a lasting peace in the eastern part of the country and to promote the economic development and social well-being of those communities that have been ravaged by armed conflict. The Democratic Republic of the Congo will remain open to all opportunities that will bring about that peace, provided that as those opportunities in no way undermine its sovereignty, much less its territorial integrity. It is from that vantage point that we need to view the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to implementing the road map adopted during the Luanda process, which promotes a high-level dialogue aimed at restoring confidence between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The Luanda process is essential in order to restore peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the mediator designated by the African Union, His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, for his tireless efforts to achieve peace in the region.

Contrary to the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, which was devoid of any binding measures, it is essential for the implementation of the Luanda process to be accompanied by guarantees of success and of justice. In other words, my Government is asking that those responsible for treason and the resulting serious human rights violations be brought to justice and punished if deemed necessary.

In terms of the drawdown of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), my delegation welcomes the completion of phase 1 of the MONUSCO disengagement plan in South Kivu since June. We have currently entered the transition phase, in which tasks are now being transferred to the Government, with the assistance of the agencies, funds and programmes. As we see in paragraph 63 of the report, the operations for the transfer of bases have gone well in general, with

the exception of the Mikenge, Minembwe and Uvira bases. That is the consolidation stage of phase 1 of the disengagement. In terms of phases 2 and 3 — that is, North Kivu and Ituri — that engagement will be carried out as needed and as soon as security conditions allow. In other words, MONUSCO will disengage wherever the need for support is no longer felt. In the meantime, the joint technical secretariat is already preparing for the disengagement in North Kivu and Ituri by reactivating the integrated provincial transition teams.

As I stressed in my most recent statement in the Council (see S/PV.9681), the time has now come to consolidate the post-MONUSCO transition activities in order to prevent a security vacuum. To that end, in cooperation with MONUSCO, as of 1 July my Government began to implement the provincial South Kivu transition road map, in tandem with the launch of the United Nations support plan for the transition in South Kivu. My Government has pledged to allocate half the funds needed to finance the road map for transition. For the remainder, we must continue our efforts to mobilize funds in order to close that financing gap. My delegation takes this opportunity to launch an appeal to partners to ensure that lasting peace in South Kivu remains firmly on track.

Similarly, and at the encouragement of the Head of State, His Excellency Mr. Felix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, my Government will continue to implement the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. That programme is the linchpin of our national strategy to disarm to mobilize and reintegrate combatants by offering them viable and lasting economic prospects while also stabilizing areas affected by conflict. The Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is a crucial lever for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we invite our partners and friends to support it. I welcome the initiative of the Group of Friends of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, which will hold a special meeting on the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Tuesday, 1 October here at the United Nations. And I cannot close this chapter without insisting that it is absolutely necessary for the foreign combatants that have remained in the east of my country for far too long to be repatriated. In that regard, my delegation expects the Council to be firmer with all countries that have

combatants and proxies on Congolese territory, so that they can initiate sincere dialogue with their combatant nationals, who must return to their countries of origin.

My Government is aware that the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme remains an essential tool for the protection of civilians and the establishment of lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, it continues to believe that, just as the Government's active participation and clear vision of the way forward remain essential to guarantee the sustained support of international partners for that crucial Programme, so too does MONUSCO's support remain decisive for the operationalization of the Programme. In that respect, my Government believes that there are areas where we can make rapid progress, such as in Ituri, where the reconciliation process is under way. Basically, the Programme can be launched wherever feasible.

With regard to the requirements of resolution 2746 (2024) and the choice of option 2 in the Secretary-General's strategic document S/2024/519, authorizing MONUSCO to provide limited support to the Southern African Development Community to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) force, my Government would like to reiterate to the members of the Security Council the need for continued and substantial support for the SAMIDRC force. The ongoing situation in the east of the country is intolerable. It is a crisis that has lasted for more than 30 years and has led to several million deaths and an indescribable humanitarian situation, with more than 7.8 million internally displaced persons.

With regard to sanctions, my delegation reiterated the request made by the Congolese Head of State in his address to the United Nations for targeted sanctions to be applied against Rwanda, the main architect of destabilization in the Great Lakes region. The Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, whose Group of Experts has produced well-documented work on the realities on the ground in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, has a heavy responsibility. The Committee must no longer be sclerotic and must do justice by the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the United States and the European Union on the various sanctions they have imposed on certain political and military leaders of the

negative forces operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as the Movement du 23 mars (M23).

Before concluding my remarks and in order to contribute to a lasting diplomatic solution to the security crisis in the east of my country and to promote peace and stability in the Great Lakes region, my Government requests that the Security Council define a sanctions regime applicable to Rwanda and its leaders; sanction the Rwandan State, its leaders and all legal or natural persons involved in this aggression, war crimes, crimes against humanity and serious human rights violations committed by the Rwanda Defence Force and the M23 on Congolese territory and officially demand the unconditional withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on pain of individual and collective sanctions. My Government further requests that the Secretary-General and MONUSCO provide more substantial support to SAMIDRC so as to enable it to fulfil the mandate entrusted to it by the Southern African Development Community Heads of State and Government.

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

**Mr. Da Cruz** (Angola): Allow us to begin by congratulating the Republic of Slovenia on its successful presidency of the Security Council in the month of September. We welcome the presence of 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) and take positive note of the Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the implementation of the priorities of the MONUSCO mandate (S/2024/689). We commend His Excellency Ambassador Michael Imran Kanu, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, in his capacity as Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the pertinent information he provided and for the work of the Committee. We also extend our appreciation to Ms. Thérèse Nzale-Kove, representative of civil society from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for sharing her vision on the developments in her country.

We recognize the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo, Ambassador Zenon Ngay Mukongo, and of Rwanda, Ambassador Ernest Rwamucyo, in this meeting.

The Secretary-General's report presents an overview of concern and hope regarding developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the eastern part of the country. The reason for concern is the continued instability, in terms of security, resulting from the continued occupation of territory by the Movement du 23 mars and its systematic attacks, as well as those of other negative forces, leading to an alarming number of human lives lost and the forced displacement of people, especially in North Kivu and Ituri. The reason for hope is that substantial steps have been taken in the mediation framework, with the revitalization of the Luanda process and progress made in the disengagement of MONUSCO forces.

We call on all relevant stakeholders to continue to support the ongoing efforts to seek peace and stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to redouble their political pressure on armed groups to immediately and unconditionally cease all their actions.

The Secretary-General's report highlights the diplomatic efforts made to promote peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, reduce political tensions in the region and restore a climate of trust between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, based on the Luanda and Nairobi processes. It also notes the commitment of His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, as the African Union Champion for Peace and Reconciliation in Africa and mediator mandated by the African Union, to resolving the political crisis between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and achieving peace and stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are encouraged by the commitment and confidence of His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Republic of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, to the Luanda process as a mechanism for a political solution to the instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Indeed, within the framework of the Luanda process, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda signed a ceasefire agreement on



30 July, which came into force on 4 August, thereby making it possible to ease tensions and facilitate the search for a negotiated, peaceful and lasting solution.

His Excellency President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço met with his counterparts — from Rwanda in Kigali on 11 August and from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Kinshasa on 12 August — to present the proposal for a peace agreement, the terms of which were discussed by the parties at ministerial level in August and September in Luanda. The next ministerial meeting is scheduled for the first half of October, with the aim of reaching an understanding leading to a summit of Heads of State that could seal a definitive peace and the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Angola believes that we must focus our diplomatic efforts on actions that consolidate the progress made in the process. The first action is the preservation of the ceasefire reached on 4 August. The second action is an immediate and unconditional cessation of support for armed groups by all the relevant actors. The third is ensuring the effective and uninterrupted operationalization of the joint ad hoc verification mechanism established in the framework of the Luanda process. The fourth is deepening the political dialogue at the technical and ministerial levels, with a view to resolving any differences that may still persist in the proposed peace agreement presented by the mediation to enable the holding of a new ministerial meeting in the coming weeks in Luanda. The fifth is the consolidation of mutual trust to create a political environment conducive to holding a summit of Heads of State to sign a peace agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

The realization of the hopes for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo depends in part on the implementation of the Security Council's decisions. The diplomatic efforts of President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of Angola, as mediator of this complex peace process, will succeed only with the firm commitment and active participation of all the parties involved, as well as other relevant actors, in collectively contributing to the creation of a climate of security and stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider region. Angola remains committed to playing an important role in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and the promotion of peace and democracy in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes

region, through diplomatic initiatives that strengthen the permanent political dialogue, mutual trust and cooperation between States.

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

**Mr. Rwamucyo (Rwanda):** Let me take this opponent to congratulate you, Madam President, and Slovenia on your country's able and successful presidency of the Security Council this month. I want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing and to recognize the briefing by Ms. Nzale-Kove. I am also grateful to the other Member States for their statements and for the opportunity to speak on the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2024/689).

After having reviewed the report on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), we are particularly focused on the fact that the current strategies being used must be thoroughly reassessed, with a firm commitment to addressing the root causes of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ongoing violations of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo paint a deeply grim and concerning picture. With more than 60 per cent of the violations attributed to State actors within the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including military and security forces, it is surprising that the report expresses little condemnation or desire for accountability, including in the Council. That trend is unfortunately not new but has been reported on for many years.

We cannot overlook the serious threat posed by the Congolese armed forces' integration, arming, training and financing of the genocidal militia of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), a group responsible for the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. In addition, the near absence of any mention of the FDLR in this report is alarming, especially when compared to the mentions of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) or the Allied Democratic Forces, which are referenced twice as often. The report continues to downplay the ongoing collaboration between the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the FDLR, which is not only a danger to regional peace but a direct security threat to Rwanda, as has been repeatedly pointed out in the Council. The failure of MONUSCO and the Security Council to

adequately address the issue raises serious questions about their commitment to ensuring genuine peace in the region. That lack of action is further evidenced by the striking absence of statements or concerns raised by Council members regarding the Democratic Republic of the Congo's recent refusal to endorse the harmonized neutralization plan for the FDLR. I should add that the plan was endorsed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo's own security organs, in collaboration with Rwandan and Angolan experts. It is deeply concerning that there has been no reaction from the international community to the blunt and public refusal of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to commit to peace and regional stability.

Regarding the African Union mandated peace process, Rwanda commends the mediation efforts led by Angola with the facilitation of President João Lourenço. Angola's role in promoting dialogue and regional cooperation has been invaluable, and we believe that the path to lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo lies in diplomatic solutions and dialogue, not military means. The diplomatic dialogue needed to resolve such a complex crisis requires a display of good faith on the part of all of the parties involved. In that context, it is imperative that the Democratic Republic of the Congo demonstrate its commitment to peace by acting in good faith and fostering trust in the framework of the Luanda process. That would be a crucial step in ensuring the credibility and success of the ongoing efforts. Besides that, in addition to the Angola-led process there is also the East African Community-led Nairobi process, aimed at addressing the political root causes between the Congolese parties themselves. In that regard we should point to the significant role played by the East African Community Regional Force, which not only brought about a ceasefire between the warring factions but enabled the M23's withdrawal from 80 per cent of the territory that it controlled last year.

Furthermore, I want to remind the Council of Rwanda's reservations regarding its support for the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC). Rwanda stresses that the alliance of the SAMIDRC, MONUSCO and the FARDC, with armed groups such as the FDLR embedded within it, poses a serious threat. In the light of those dangers, it is crucial to recognize that the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot continue

to shift from country to country or from region to region in its quest for military assistance as a substitute for meaningful dialogue with its own citizens.

Before I conclude, allow me to reaffirm Rwanda's full commitment to the regional peace processes. Rwanda believes that dialogue is the only viable solution to the challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on the international community to support those regional efforts, rather than pursuing fragmented approaches that only complicate the path to peace and allow the Democratic Republic of the Congo to evade its responsibilities. We propose the following concrete steps to address the root causes of the conflict and promote regional stability.

First, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must genuinely commit to the Nairobi and Luanda processes, which are the best pathway to addressing the underlying issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo conflict.

Secondly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must end its support for the FDLR, including its financing and distribution of weapons and its integration of the group into the Congolese armed forces. Rwanda also calls on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to endorse the harmonized neutralization plan approved by its own security organs.

Thirdly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must put an end to hate speech and violence targeting Congolese Tutsi communities. Targeting any ethnic group for who they are is a grave violation of human rights and seriously undermines any prospects for lasting peace.

Fourth and lastly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo must organize the safe and dignified return of Congolese refugees. That is not just a humanitarian imperative but an important building block for peace and reconciliation between Congolese communities.

**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 did not intend to take the floor again, but the language used by the representative of Rwanda was wholly inappropriate.

Council members will have noted that Rwanda systematically said that the Democratic Republic of the Congo "must", as if the Democratic Republic of the

Congo were the only party with the obligation to do anything, while Rwanda is a country that has invaded the territory of another country, where it has currently stationed more than 4,500 troops and is committing serious violations of human rights, including bombing camps such as the Mugunga camp, as we all know. When we refer to hate speech, do we do so for pleasure or out of habit? Someone goes to a person's home, expels him — kicks him out of doors. He cannot farm his fields, he is out in the rain and living in overcrowded conditions, and that someone expects him to write them a love letter? And then people come here to grandstand about hate speech. I am very sorry, but what does “hate speech” mean? If a victim complains about a grave human rights violation, does that amount to hate speech? The General Assembly and the Security Council are incapable of striking a balance between the women raped, the children killed and the displaced persons camps bombed as a result of the Rwandan army's aggression, on the one hand, and what is now being termed hate speech on the other. Where is the balance? Rwanda wants to pontificate about the issue of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which is its pretext for remaining on Congolese territory, but I say that if right now we could pinpoint where the FDLR is and eradicate it, Rwanda would argue for “hate speech” in order to remain on Congolese territory.

In reality, the problem lies not with the FDLR or so-called hate speech, but in the plundering of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's resources, as has been said in this Chamber. In the areas controlled by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) — or should I say by the men controlled by Rwanda, because in terms of current numbers, it has been proved that Rwanda is deploying 4,500 troops on Congolese territory, while the M23 did not have even 2,000 troops on the ground — it means that the situation has changed. It is

not Rwanda that is supporting the M23 but rather that the M23 is coming to assist the Rwandan troops who have invaded Congolese territory. Those are not my words but rather those of the report (see S/2024/432) by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, those who the Council dispatched to the field with the task of verifying the situation and reporting back to it on the situation on the ground. The Council knows that as well as I do.

The issue is therefore not primarily about the FDLR but about the plundering of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's resources, and about the fact that irrespective of the circumstances, international law does not permit one country to invade another's territory on any grounds whatsoever. It has been established that the sole purpose of the Rwandan army's presence on Congolese territory is to plunder the Democratic Republic of the Congo's resources. It is not connected to the FDLR issue because, in any event, it has been demonstrated — and this too can be found in the Group of Experts' report — that every time those FDLR elements are repatriated to Rwanda, Rwanda recycles them by integrating them into its army and sending them back to fight in the Congo. The report proves that, and we have said as much on a number of occasions here.

I am not going to take up too much of your time, Mr. President, but I just wanted to make this point so that the Security Council can consider the matter in full knowledge of the facts and without being hoodwinked by the unverified statements that are being made here every day.

**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 on the subject.

*The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.*