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9863rd meeting

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Provisional

<i>President:</i>	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang/Mr. Fu Cong	(China)
<i>Members:</i>	Algeria.	Mr. Koudri
	Denmark	Ms. Lassen
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Greece	Mr. Sekeris
	Guyana	Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Panama	Mr. Alfaro de Alba
	Republic of Korea	Mr. Hwang
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sierra Leone	Mr. George
	Slovenia	Mr. Žbogar
	Somalia	Mr. Osman
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America.	Ms. Shea

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Security Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

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 Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

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

I give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having convened another emergency meeting of the Security Council on the recent developments in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the need to find a way out of a crisis that poses a clear threat to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

This meeting is being held against the backdrop of the appointment of the new Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, at the AU Summit on 15 February. I would also like to congratulate His Excellency the President of Angola, Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, the African Union's mediator in the Luanda process. I hope that his mandate will be marked by the definitive silencing of the guns on the continent.

Despite repeated international calls for a ceasefire and a halt to offensives, the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23), backed by the Rwandan army, has continued its advance in the provinces of North and South Kivu. That advance has had devastating consequences, with the loss of many lives when it took control of Goma. In two weeks, the Alliance Fleuve Congo, of which the M23 is one of the primary components, has established a parallel administration in Goma, with the appointment of a governor and a mayor. In South Kivu, the M23 seized Kavumu airport and the town of Bukavu, the provincial capital, on 16 February. The M23 has since continued its advance and yesterday seized the town of Kamanyola, which is at the junction of the three borders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Burundi.

Since the capture of Goma, the M23 has imposed severe restrictions on the freedom of movement of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), preventing efforts to assess damage at the Goma airport and to assist in the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance in the city. The M23 has also prevented MONUSCO from resupplying the troops of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with water and other basic necessities. In addition, the M23 controls all the roads entering or leaving the areas under its control. That poses serious challenges for MONUSCO's civilian and uniformed personnel in carrying out the

rotations crucial to the implementation of its mandate, the priority of which is the protection of the civilian population.

In addition, MONUSCO's essential infrastructure in Goma and other localities in North Kivu is under extreme pressure. Its facilities house people who have taken refuge there to shelter under the Mission's protection, in accordance with international humanitarian law. However, they were never designed or equipped to house large numbers of people over a long period of time. The situation is made all the more critical by the fact that sanitary and hygiene conditions are deteriorating rapidly and pose a risk to both the protected persons and MONUSCO personnel. That issue is fuelling disinformation and is being used to amplify anti-MONUSCO feeling.

The human rights situation in North and South Kivu has deteriorated considerably. In addition to deaths caused by the fighting between the M23 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo security forces, MONUSCO has also documented cases of forced recruitment. There are still continuous movements of displaced people around Goma. Most of the former sites have been dismantled and looted by the host communities and displaced people. The displaced are heading either for their areas of origin or for new collective centres around Goma. Even if uncertainties remain as to the exact circumstances of those secondary displacements, the conditions for a safe, voluntary, informed and dignified return, in accordance with international principles, may not be guaranteed. In addition, we have noted multiple searches of hospitals and homes by the M23, who were looking for soldiers and civilians perceived to be opposed to the group.

The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office receives daily requests for individual protection from various social stakeholders, including human rights defenders. The latter often face threats and the risk of reprisals from the M23 in areas under its control.

(spoke in English)

The M23 offensive in North and South Kivu has increased the vulnerability of girls and women to conflict-related sexual violence. Mass displacements, the influx of combatants and prisoners, and the proliferation of weapons have considerably exacerbated that risk. At the same time, logistical and security constraints continue to hamper the United Nations ability to verify reported cases.

In South Kivu, fighting in the Hauts Plateaux has caused a high number of injured. Medical supplies must be transported to Uvira to enable assistance to the wounded. The situation is calm in Bukavu, where humanitarian actors are resuming their activities. The humanitarian response continues in Idjwi, where more than 100,000 displaced people arrived in January, as well as in Minova, where more than 200,000 displaced people are staying with host families. Humanitarian actors must continue to have access and be able to do their work unhindered to keep assisting those vulnerable populations.

(spoke in French)

I welcome the conclusions of the Joint Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, held on 8 February in the United Republic of Tanzania. The Summit reaffirmed the call for a cessation of hostilities and an immediate ceasefire. The Summit also emphasized the need for a resumption of direct negotiations and dialogue with all State and non-State parties, including the M23, within the framework of the Luanda and Nairobi processes. It also reaffirmed the demand for the neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the

withdrawal of Rwandan troops from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is imperative that the provisions of the EAC-SADC Summit communiqué relating to the restoration of essential public services, the immediate reopening of the Goma airport and the main supply routes, including on Lake Kivu, be implemented without delay, in order to relieve the population's suffering. I encourage the Chiefs of Staff of the EAC and SADC countries to meet continually to define the modalities for implementing the ceasefire and the urgent measures set out in the communiqué. In addition to the reopening of the Goma airport, requested by the Summit, the reopening of the Kavumu airport is also essential.

The United Nations, including MONUSCO, remains determined to support any effort to bring the parties back to the negotiating table in order to find lasting political solutions to a crisis that threatens to engulf the entire region. In that respect, it is important to recall the significant progress made in recent months within the framework of the Luanda process. It is crucial, as underscored in the communiqué of the meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union held in Addis Ababa on 14 February, that those gains are not lost.

(spoke in English)

It is imperative that the Council take urgent and decisive steps to avert a wider regional war. I call on the Council to hold the perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo accountable. In that regard, I welcome the adoption by the Human Rights Council on 7 February of a resolution establishing a fact-finding mission (Human Rights Council resolution S-37/1), to be followed by the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate and document violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, I call on all parties to uphold their obligations to protect civilians in full compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law. That includes the inviolability of United Nations premises and installations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the safety and security of individuals under MONUSCO's protection.

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

I now give the floor to Mr. Huang Xia.

Mr. Huang Xia *(spoke in Chinese)*: I would like to thank you, Mr. President, and the members of the Council for the invitation to give a briefing on recent developments in the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the regional dimensions. The dire situation now requires urgent, collective attention and immediate, concerted action in response.

(spoke in French)

At the end of January, we witnessed a disturbing repetition of history, when the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), supported by the Rwanda Defence Force, stormed the city of Goma again. After just three weeks, the M23 is now in control of Bukavu and, if our information is correct, is continuing to advance on other strategic areas in North Kivu and South Kivu. At this stage, we do not know what the M23's underlying intentions are, what support they have, how far they will go or why. However, what we do know from developments in recent weeks is that the action taken on the ground and regional protagonists' public speeches is that the risk of a regional conflagration is more real than ever. That situation must end before a widespread regional war breaks out, the consequences of which will be catastrophic in many respects. We must, therefore, all redouble our efforts to avoid undermining all the efforts of the

past decade aimed at securing the stability of, cooperation between and integration of the countries of the Great Lakes region.

I pay tribute to the countries and the organizations of the region that have rallied to respond swiftly to the crisis, including by holding the East African Community (EAC) summit, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit, the Heads of State conference of the Economic Community of Central African States on the humanitarian situation, held in Malabo, and the joint EAC-SADC summit. All those summits were unanimous in underscoring the crucial importance of respecting the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They strongly condemned the M23's offensive and the support given to the group, while underlining the need for a prompt political and diplomatic solution to the crisis. In that respect, the joint EAC-SADC summit represents a key step in finally crystallizing a coordinated, concerted and unified regional approach, laying the groundwork for a consensus-based resolution of the crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The joint summit underlined the need for a political solution, appealing for a resumption of direct negotiations and dialogue with all stakeholders. It also called for the Nairobi and Luanda processes to be merged so as to enhance coordination and complementarity and to establish a coordination mechanism at the level of their secretariats.

Furthermore, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, meeting at the level of Heads of State on 14 February, endorsed the decisions of the joint EAC-SADC summit, while reaffirming the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and condemning the activities of, and backing for, the M23. The Peace and Security Council also called for enhanced coordination, technical support and the introduction of funding mechanisms to support peace efforts. It is now important to proceed with swift and effective implementation of the instructions from all those summits.

I am pleased to note in this respect that preparations are under way for the EAC-SADC Chiefs of Staff meeting, which could take place in the coming days. In addition, the secretariats of those two regional organizations and the African Union Commission are following up on the decision to set up a joint technical coordination mechanism. Consultations among the member States concerned are also ongoing to define the modalities for the merging of the Nairobi and Luanda processes, including the possible appointment of additional facilitators to enhance coordination and coherence. This is an opportunity for me to call for the inclusion of women in the mediation mechanisms, in line with the shared commitment concerning women's participation. In a similar vein, I wish to commend the role played by Congolese civil society, in particular religious leaders, who have spared no effort in recent weeks in consulting all the players with a view to bringing them back to the dialogue table.

All those steps are heartening but must be given support and be followed by results. For my part, I have started consultations with all the actors involved to promote the coordination and the swift implementation of the agreed arrangements. These are essential to securing a de-escalation of the situation on the ground, supporting humanitarian aid, protecting women and girls who have been victims of violence and ensuring the resumption of dialogue involving all stakeholders, in accordance with the Heads of States' decisions. In the coming days, I will continue to engage with stakeholders in the region in order to encourage them in their efforts and to emphasize the political and technical support of the United Nations.

As devastating as the situation might seem to us today, it can still worsen. Twelve years after the signing of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, and 19 years after the signing of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region's Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, history is unfortunately repeating

itself. We must act now — swiftly, collectively and decisively. As our Secretary-General has recalled, we must promptly ensure implementation of the following three immediate priorities.

First, there must be de-escalation by means of an immediate ceasefire and compliance by all parties with international law and the commitments undertaken in the context of regional and international mechanisms, including the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. That instrument requires the parties to neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring countries. A cessation of hostilities is urgently needed to address the disastrous humanitarian and human-rights consequences, in order to create the conditions for constructive dialogue.

Secondly, there is a need to resume dialogue. It cannot be said often enough that the solution is political, not military. Dialogue and compromise are necessary to find a lasting solution. I therefore urge all parties to return to the table and build on the provisions already agreed by the parties as part of the Luanda and Nairobi processes or the future iterations thereof, in accordance with the decisions of the region's Heads of State. I urge all parties to engage in and support those peace efforts in good faith, as they are essential to resolving the crisis and averting a regional war. Let us work together to re-establish the ceasefire, restore the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and deal definitively with the issue of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and that of the M23 in order to ensure that the security concerns of all parties are addressed. I do not believe that those points are irreconcilable, and the time has come to return to the negotiating table and have a frank discussion about the root causes of this conflict.

Thirdly, in order to address those very root causes, a holistic regional approach is needed. The region must promote a holistic approach that combines immediate and medium- to long-term measures. In that context, it is important to continue and conclude the process of revitalizing the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement as a crucial tool and to tackle, once and for all, the root causes of instability in the Great Lakes region. I take this opportunity to reiterate my call for an urgent convening of the next high-level meeting of the regional follow-up mechanism, at which the Heads of State of the countries concerned will be called upon not only to express their unanimous support for the peace efforts aimed at ending the current crisis but also to vote on the recommendations aimed at revitalizing the Framework Agreement so that it can be fully and sincerely implemented.

I would like to conclude with a direct appeal to the members of the Council, which must also bring all its weight to bear to try to end the crisis. Robust and unified action by the Council is indeed essential to avoid a point of no return and to convince the parties to return to the path of dialogue to restore peace and security in the Great Lakes region.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Huang Xia for his briefing.

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region for their briefings. I welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council is meeting once again, owing to the continuous deterioration of the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After taking Goma three weeks ago, the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) took the Kavumu

airport and Bukavu last Saturday, and it is continuing its offensive in South Kivu. The risk of regional war is increasing every day.

France condemns the M23 offensive, which was made possible by the active support of Rwanda. The ongoing fighting is exacerbating a devastating humanitarian situation marked by the forced displacement of 1 million people. The clashes are accompanied by attacks on the population, in particular sexual violence and violence against children. The United Nations has recorded 2,900 deaths during the first week of the offensive. Yesterday, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights confirmed cases of summary executions of children by the M23 in Bukavu. The latter must therefore cease its offensive immediately and withdraw from the territories that it has taken control of. Support for armed groups by all parties must cease. The Rwanda Defence Force must withdraw immediately from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

France also condemns the M23 attacks against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the obstruction of its mandate and the destabilizing actions carried out against it. MONUSCO's freedom of movement and action must be ensured. Attacks against the Blue Helmets, civilians and humanitarian personnel may constitute war crimes. France reaffirms its full support for MONUSCO.

There is no military solution to the conflict. The priority is a ceasefire that is respected and the resumption of dialogue. France welcomes the regional mobilization at the most recent summit of the African Union Peace and Security Council and at the joint summit of the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community. France supports those efforts and underscores the key role of regional mediation processes. The gains of the Luanda process remain essential to achieving progress towards a settlement, which hinges on the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from Congolese territory and the dismantling of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. France calls on all armed groups, including the M23, to lay down their arms and resume dialogue.

The Security Council must provide a response commensurate with the situation in order to end hostilities, reaffirm unwavering support for Congolese territorial integrity and sovereignty, support the work of MONUSCO and create favourable conditions for dialogue. Two weeks ago, France proposed a draft resolution to that effect. We hope that Council members' sense of responsibility will lead to the adoption of that draft resolution as soon as possible.

Mr. Osman (Somalia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Algeria, Sierra Leone and my own country Somalia.

We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Huang Xia, for their insightful briefings on the current situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We salute the dedication and the services of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in particular the peacekeepers and all other operational personnel, who continue to tirelessly support the Congolese people. We also acknowledge the crucial contribution of the personnel of the Southern African Development Community Mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also welcome the representatives of Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya and South Africa to this meeting.

The A3 welcomes the convening of today's meeting, which affords the Security Council the opportunity to take stock of the recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since we last met to discuss the situation (see S/PV.9853).

At the outset, in the light of the unfolding situation in the past few weeks, the A3 wishes to express its solidarity with the communities of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, from Masisi to Sake, from Goma to Bukavu. Those communities are living in constant fear as the Movement du 23 mars (M23) advances, with no clear sense of what the future holds. Their resilience in the face of such uncertainty is commendable, yet their fate remains unclear; the threat of complete chaos that could degenerate into catastrophic violence is still very real, and people are not sure whether they will be able to return to their fields and grow their crops or whether they will need to flee once again amid further violence. The A3 calls for calm and urges all parties to ensure that no further escalation of violence takes place in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the light of the current developments on the ground, the A3 wishes to make three points.

First, in addition to the continuing violence in areas controlled by the M23, the A3 is also concerned about the continued escalation of violence in other localities, including Lubumbashi, Kisangani and Uvira, coupled with the absence of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Mission's inability to operate in those areas. We therefore strongly reiterate our call for the M23 to cease hostilities and stop its violence and to not advance or capture more territories. We also call on the M23 to lift its severe restrictions on MONUSCO's freedom of movement, preventing efforts to assess the damage to Goma airport and to assist with the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance across the city.

The violence must come to an end. The M23's continued territorial expansion threatens the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and undermines the possibility of dialogue. We cannot afford to stand and allow further losses, including the potential fall of Kisangani. That is why we firmly denounce any form of support extended to the M23 or other armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is time for the Council to genuinely support and facilitate the cessation of hostilities, including the withdrawal of the M23 from territories under their control since the turn of the year.

Secondly, the A3 is deeply concerned that, in the face of this violence, the humanitarian situation has significantly worsened. According to figures from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, more than 21 million people require humanitarian assistance across the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The escalation of violence has exacerbated the crisis, particularly with the disruption of supply routes. We therefore call for the development of a securitization plan for Goma and its surrounding areas, the reopening of the Goma airport, the reoperationalization of the Kavumu airport and the restoration of key supply routes to ensure the timely delivery of humanitarian aid, as highlighted in the joint communiqué issued by the Heads of State and Government of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council communiqué. We therefore call for the restoration of essential utilities and supply lines for food and other essential commodities so as to ensure humanitarian support to those in need, and we urge the parties to commit to upholding human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Thirdly, as the Council is aware, among the key roles of the A3 is the responsibility to bridge the gap between the deliberations of the Council and African Common Position on issues of relevance to the continent. As such, I would like to take a

moment to highlight the efforts of the African leadership in the broader search for a solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has remained consistently high on the agenda of the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and the Southern African Development Community.

Over the past three years, in particular, since the re-emergence of the M23, African leadership has responded urgently to the crisis by first, appointing His Excellency Mr. João Lourenço, President of Angola, as the designated mediator between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and current Chairperson of the African Union, as well as putting together the initial framework for negotiations between the Congolese Government and the armed groups under the Nairobi process, led by the former President of Kenya, His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta.

The involvement of SADC in 2023 also signalled that an effective solution to the crisis in Congo would be enabled only through the active participation of broader regional actors, effectively showing that African conflicts need and deserve African-led and -owned solutions. In that context, the A3 would like to reiterate to all parties the importance of the commitment made within the framework of the Luanda process and, in that regard, reiterate our call for the implementation of the concept of operations of the harmonization plan for the lifting of Rwanda's defensive measure, the disengagement of forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, as agreed in the Luanda process.

Furthermore, the A3 would like to underscore the outcome of the recent meeting convened by African subregional and continental bodies at the Heads of State level, including on the proposed merging of the Nairobi and Luanda processes. It is our hope that the harmonization of those efforts will bring the region closer to a peaceful solution.

There is no gainsaying that the Council and the international community at large should strongly support these African initiatives. It is time for the Council to lend them real support, act constructively to strengthen them and go beyond simply paying lip service.

Looking ahead, it is clear — as it has been reiterated many times in the Council — that there is no military solution to the conflict, which makes it all more urgent to secure an unconditional and immediate ceasefire in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, we call for all parties to agree to a ceasefire and to commit to putting down their weapons and creating the necessary space for a negotiated political solution. The A3 echoes the call issued during the East African Community and SADC meeting for the monitoring of such a ceasefire by the EAC and SADC Chiefs of Defence forces.

Along similar lines, we also look forward to the resumption of peace talks as called for by the EAC and SADC and endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council Heads of State and Government meeting. In that regard, we look forward to the implementation of the follow-up actions to be taken up by the joint meeting of EAC and SADC Ministers to address all residual issues relating to the attainment of sustainable peace and security in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, we have heard countless times — both within and outside of the Council — the calls for lasting peace. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo need and deserve to live in their country peacefully. The territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should not be violated, and its sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected. Now is the time to move beyond rhetoric

and to act decisively in our deliberations in order to find a solution that addresses the current crisis and, ultimately, addresses the root causes of the conflict.

The A3 stands in solidarity with the children, women and men of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and underscores the importance of fully respecting its sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): The delegation of Pakistan thanks you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent meeting of the Security Council. We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita and Special Envoy Xia Huang for their briefings on the disturbing situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the participation of the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of other African Permanent Representatives in the meeting.

Both our briefers have mentioned that history is repeating itself, and we must remember the adage that those who ignore history are condemned to repeat it.

In defiance of the Council's position, expressed in its press statement of 26 January (SC/15982), and the African mediation processes, the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) has continued its advance. Since the Council's meeting on January 26 (see S/PV.9849), the M23, backed by external forces, has attacked and taken control of the city of Goma, the airports of Goma and Kavumu, and now, Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations stated at the African Union Summit last weekend, the M23 offensive "threatens to push the entire region over the precipice. Regional escalation must be avoided at all costs".

We condemn in the strongest terms the occupation of Goma and Bukavu by the M23. It must immediately accept a ceasefire, stop its advance, withdraw from the territories it has taken over and do so without preconditions. We reiterate our support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call for the withdrawal of all uninvited forces, including Rwandan forces, from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A wider war must be prevented at all costs.

We are extremely concerned about the reported violence committed against civilians in areas under the control of the M23, including extrajudicial killings. These must be immediately stopped, and those responsible must be held to account. Immediate and unhindered access must be provided to humanitarian organizations to alleviate the humanitarian crisis, including by repairing and opening the airports to fly in medical and other essential supplies.

We have received information on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in North Kivu, largely owing to the presence of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in North Kivu. However, owing to its untimely withdrawal from South Kivu, we must be concerned that, away from the eyes of an impartial entity, the violations of human rights in South Kivu could be much worse than in North Kivu.

We are all agreed that there is no military solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Pakistan respects the African regional processes to bring an end to the hostilities and promote a resolution of the conflict. We welcome the African Union communiqué and the East African Community (EAC)-Southern African Development Community (SADC) joint communiqué calling for a cessation of hostilities and an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. It is important that the understandings reached at the SADC-EAC Joint Summit be implemented urgently.

Similarly, there is a need to carry forward the Luanda and Nairobi processes, and we note the move to merge those processes. The understandings reached under the Luanda process for the withdrawal of Rwandan Defence Forces and the neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda must be both implemented.

At the same time, it must be recognized that the Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with the principles of Charter of the United Nations. It is the Council which has the authority to enforce the decisions of the international community, including those reached within the African processes. Pakistan is, therefore, working constructively to evolve effective Council action that enjoys the widest possible support within the Council and responds to the threat posed by the M23 offensive and the danger of a wider conflict.

Pakistan is particularly concerned about the challenges facing MONUSCO due to the volatile security development in and around Goma, its overcrowded facilities, limited rations, the spread of disease and the restrictions that have been imposed on the movement of MONUSCO by the M23. The Security Council must be unequivocal in demanding that MONUSCO be assured of freedom of movement to carry out its operational activities and to perform its mandate to protect civilians, including outside its bases. The M23 and its supporters must be told categorically that attacks on United Nations and other peacekeepers and civilians constitute war crimes for which those responsible will be held accountable.

At the same time, there is a need to review the present and future role of MONUSCO. It is positive that the new Force Commander has joined MONUSCO. We call on all troop-contributing countries and police-contributing countries within MONUSCO to respect the chain of command and to show their commitment and solidarity with the Mission in these difficult times. Close consultations are also needed to develop options for MONUSCO's future role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the evolving scenarios for the dénouement of this conflict.

Finally, we urge the Security Council to seriously address the root cause of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, that is, the illegal exploitation of its natural resources. That requires greater oversight and traceability mechanisms, working in coordination with the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government and regional and international partners. Pakistan, in that context, recognizes the important role of the Special Envoy, Mr. Xia Huang, in that endeavour.

Mr. Sekeris (Greece): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Special Envoy Xia Huang for briefing us in this urgent meeting today and to commend the courage of all of the personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in these very difficult circumstances. I would also like to welcome the participation of the Honourable Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in our meeting.

Allow me to emphasize briefly four key points.

First, we strongly condemn the capture of the cities of Sake, Goma and Bukavu by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). We reiterate that the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be fully respected. The presence of Rwandan troops on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and their support for the M23 are very concerning and are strongly condemned. We call on Rwanda to cease its support for the M23 and to immediately withdraw its forces.

Secondly, we call for urgent de-escalation, and we stress that it is more imperative than ever that, in particular, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo commit to the ceasefire, as agreed in August, re-engage in the political dialogue and implement all decisions and commitments agreed under the Luanda process. We encourage African-led initiatives and regional efforts, including those by the African Union, the East African Community and the Southern African Development

Community, and we call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to return immediately to the negotiations table.

Thirdly, we are deeply concerned about the grave humanitarian security consequences of M23's offensive, in both North Kivu and South Kivu. All parties must respect international humanitarian law and ensure unrestricted humanitarian access. We strongly condemn all forms of human rights violations, abuses, violence against civilians, summary executions, maiming, sexual and gender-based violence and the recruitment and use of children.

Fourthly and lastly, we reiterate our full support for MONUSCO, which is acting within its mandate and doing critical work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, stress our strong commitment to the safety and security of its peacekeepers and condemn the attacks committed against its personnel. MONUSCO must be granted full access and freedom of movement. Its personnel must be allowed to return to Goma in order to effectively fulfil the Mission's mandate, in particular as regards protecting civilians and addressing urgent needs. The protection of civilians and humanitarian and medical personnel must remain an absolute priority. Attacks against peacekeepers may constitute war crimes, and the attacks against MONUSCO peacekeepers also form a basis for potential sanctions designation.

We stand ready to support any further engagement of the Council, as necessary.

Mr. Žbogar (Slovenia): I would like to thank the briefers, Ms. Bintou Keita and Mr. Xia Huang, for briefing us. We wish to welcome the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the representatives of the region to the Chamber.

Given the rapidly evolving security situation and escalating humanitarian concerns, we believe that this Security Council meeting is critically needed. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the situation is swiftly and visibly deteriorating into one of mounting peril. Civilians are caught in the eye of a violent storm. In the words of the Special Envoy, there is a risk of regional conflagration, and that risk is real. Regional peace and security is in danger. Following the seizure of Goma, reports show a shocking death toll and thousands with life-altering injuries. The violence must stop immediately. There is no justification for the horrific instances of summary executions, including of children, the widespread conflict-related sexual violence, the widespread displacement, the recruitment of children and the intimidation of human rights defenders and civil society actors. We categorically condemn all targeting of, and threats and attacks against, humanitarian workers and denounce those actions in the strongest possible terms. It remains imperative that those responsible be held accountable.

The gravity of the crisis extends far beyond the immediate human tragedy. The rapid offensive by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), supported by the Rwanda Defence Force, now making its presence felt in South Kivu with the seizure of key locations such as Kavumu Airport and the city of Bukavu, poses a significant threat to the broader stability of the Great Lakes region. We demand that M23 withdraw unconditionally from all territories they have occupied. The immediate and unrestricted reopening of the airport in Goma must be ensured so that the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the rotation and resupply of United Nations peacekeepers and other personnel can proceed safely. Unhindered humanitarian access, with secure humanitarian corridors to reach those in need, must be ensured without delay. All parties must adhere to international humanitarian and human rights law.

We echo the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community in urgently calling for an immediate halt to all hostilities and a return to diplomatic dialogue. We continue to support strong African

engagement and regional diplomatic processes, in particular through the merged Luanda and Nairobi processes.

We continue to call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to exercise the utmost restraint, de-escalate tensions, re-engage in dialogue, address the root causes and prioritize peace and stability for the region. We condemn any violation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Unauthorized military presence in Democratic Republic of the Congo is a blatant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. We call on Rwanda to fully withdraw its forces immediately and to end any support for M23. We call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to stop cooperating with the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and other armed groups.

Finally, we condemn in the strongest terms attacks, hostility and threats against the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) and its personnel. We further denounce the severe restrictions imposed by M23 on MONUSCO and its freedom of movement, which have not only impeded the implementation of its mandated tasks but also have contributed to compromising the situation at its bases. That is unacceptable.

In conclusion, I reiterate what we stated during the first emergency meeting (see S/PV.9849): the Council must not remain passive in the face of the crisis. We have clearly heard the calls from the field and received an abundance of reports. We must now step up.

Ms. Shea (United States of America): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita and Special Envoy Xia Huang for their briefings and their leadership.

The United States extends its fullest support to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and all United Nations personnel supporting peaceful and humanitarian responses to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

How many times must we meet to discuss these predictable cycles of violence? For months, we have consistently watched the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and Rwanda ignore ceasefires, seize territory under false pretexts and deny intentions of further expansion only to start the cycle anew. We have witnessed M23 sow chaos and wage brutal violence against civilians on the streets of Masisi, Goma and now Bukavu — all under the disingenuous guise of “liberation” or “restoring order”.

The United States strongly condemns the seizure of Kavumu Airport and the city of Bukavu by M23 and Rwandan forces. We continue to stand in full support of the Congolese people and their country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Once again, we urge M23 to immediately cease its offensive and withdraw from all territories of which it has taken control. We urge Rwanda to cease supporting M23, immediately withdraw its forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and hold accountable those who perpetrate human rights abuses and violations. We now have confirmed reports from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of summary executions of children at the hands of M23 in Bukavu, among other serious human rights abuses. We condemn those abuses, for which there cannot be continued impunity.

We watched with concern Monday's demonstrations at MONUSCO's bases in Goma. We remain alarmed by reliable reports that M23, with Rwandan support, is orchestrating the protests, which have killed peacekeepers and civilians in the past. We condemn those and all actions that harm United Nations peacekeepers and undermine MONUSCO's civilian protection mandate, which is so instrumental at this moment in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. M23 must immediately

cease its hostile threats against MONUSCO, reopen the Goma Airport and ensure the United Nations full freedom of movement, in particular at border crossings.

In the light of Rwanda's support for M23's hostility towards MONUSCO, we reiterate that the United Nations should immediately engage the Rwandan Government at the highest levels to underscore the importance of peacekeeper safety and security. Without a change in Rwanda's behaviour, the United Nations should re-evaluate Rwanda's ability to participate constructively in United Nations peacekeeping.

We call for the protection and the free movement of civilians seeking safety and for all parties to uphold international humanitarian principles, stop attacks on civilian infrastructure and guarantee unhindered humanitarian access.

The actions by the M23 and Rwanda have also created space for other armed groups to expand their own violent assaults on Congolese civilians. We condemn the latest horrific attacks carried out by the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo*, and we applaud MONUSCO's quick response to defend the population against further violence. This conflict has also exacerbated exploitation and trafficking in the mineral sector of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with widespread evidence that the conflict minerals tin, tantalum and tungsten are being smuggled to enter international supply chains, including through neighbouring countries. We urge an immediate cessation of sourcing of minerals from areas controlled by M23, particularly those identified as red zones by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is beyond time for the Council, the United Nations and the international community to marshal a strong and unambiguous response to M23 and Rwandan actions, which undermine prospects for peace and bring the region closer to the brink of an all-out war. We fully support the call by the African Union Peace and Security Council for an immediate resumption of negotiations and dialogue with all State and non-State parties, both military and non-military, including the M23, under the frameworks of the Luanda and Nairobi processes. Intense and sustained pressure is needed now to compel Rwanda to return to the negotiations under the Angola-led Luanda process and to work in good faith towards a diplomatic resolution to the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The United States is prepared to work with Council members on sanctions nominations in the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we urge Council members to take urgent action. Furthermore, we remain prepared to leverage all the tools at our disposal in order to hold accountable those responsible for sustaining armed conflict, instability and insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mrs. Rodrigues-Birkett (Guyana): Guyana welcomes the urgent convening of this meeting, given the recent developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in Bukavu. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and Special Envoy Xia for their briefings. I welcome the participation of Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Permanent Representatives of several other African countries in this meeting.

Guyana aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council and wishes to further elucidate in our national capacity.

We are alarmed by the recent developments in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M23) expanding its territorial gains by more than 30 per cent since 15 January and, with that, its violent attacks against

innocent civilians. The reports emanating from the United Nations about increased human rights violations and abuses are extremely concerning and demand a swift response from the international community, including the Security Council. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has confirmed cases of summary execution of children by the M23 after they entered the city of Bukavu last week. The Office has also documented cases of ill treatment, conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence, child and forced recruitment, intimidation and death threats.

Guyana condemns these violations perpetrated by the M23, reportedly with the support of the Rwanda Defence Force, and calls for an immediate ceasefire and for the group to withdraw to the pre-cantonment areas. We also call on Rwanda to cease its support for the M23 and to withdraw its forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo immediately and unconditionally. We stress that it is unacceptable for the foreign military forces of any country to enter the territory of another without authorization, and we call for full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Moreover, we call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sever its ties with the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and to implement its commitment to neutralize that group.

As with any conflict situation, it is always the innocent civilians who bear the brunt. In that regard, we urgently call for the protection of civilians and critical infrastructure and for unhindered access to essential services and delivery of humanitarian aid. We call on all parties uphold and fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights law, including by ensuring the protection of civilians and the delivery of humanitarian aid to those in need. We also reject the severe restrictions being imposed upon the freedom of movement of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), preventing efforts to assess the damage at the Goma airport and to assist with the safe disposal of unexploded ordnance across the city. MONUSCO must be allowed to implement its mandate without restrictions. We further emphasize that attacks against peacekeepers may constitute a war crime, and we call for all hostilities against peacekeepers to cease. Guyana extends its full support to MONUSCO in the implementation of its mandate and insists on full accountability for any attack against MONUSCO personnel.

The ongoing offensive in North Kivu and South Kivu poses a significant threat to the peace and security of the Great Lakes region and risks sparking a wider regional conflagration. We must ensure that that does not happen. For that reason, Guyana supports the Council's initiative to speak with one voice and send a clear message to the parties. As we continue our deliberations on the draft resolution under consideration, we urge fellow Council members to focus on the bigger picture, to support the regional efforts to address not only the current crisis but, more importantly, its root causes, and to find a lasting solution.

We also encourage the international community to work together to de-escalate tensions instead of fuelling them. As was said earlier, there is no military solution to this crisis, and now is certainly not the time for soundbite diplomacy. Any action that pulls States away from dialogue condemns their entire populations to cycles of conflict and violence, and it is always the innocent civilians who suffer. The path to a lasting solution will be found only through dialogue, diplomacy and the rule of law. In that regard, Guyana fully supports the regional mediation efforts, including the Luanda and Nairobi processes, and welcomes the ongoing efforts of the African Union, the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in responding to the crisis. We also welcome the communiqué adopted by the African Union Peace and Security Council following

its summit meeting of 14 February, which endorsed the decisions of the EAC, SADC and joint EAC-SADC meetings, and we encourage the international community to support the implementation of those decisions. More importantly, we urge Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to return to dialogue and diplomacy, to fully implement their commitments under the regional processes and to engage in good faith with each other to reach a peaceful and sustainable solution.

In conclusion, Guyana reaffirms its support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for all efforts that will bring peace to the region.

Mr. Alfaro de Alba (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the briefings by 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, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes region, Mr. Xia Huang, whose leadership is key at this critical moment for the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that of the entire region. We acknowledge the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the representatives of the countries of the region, who honour us by participating.

The Republic of Panama expresses its deep concern at the alarming escalation of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In recent weeks, the rebel group Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) has intensified its military operations, using violence to gain control of strategic cities, such as Goma, along with its airport and, more recently, Bukavu. Those actions have resulted in the loss of thousands of lives and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, further aggravating an already devastating humanitarian crisis. We are further alarmed by the heightened tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, whose relationship is at a critical point following the recent exchange of accusations of cross-border incursions and support for armed groups.

In that regard, we urge all States in the region to exercise maximum restraint and to reaffirm their commitment to existing diplomatic mechanisms, in particular the Luanda and Nairobi processes, the effective implementation of which is essential for the reduction of tensions and the establishment of lasting peace.

The violence unleashed by armed actors not only impacts the civilian population, but also represents a serious challenge for MONUSCO, which faces increasing threats and operational restrictions. We also reiterate our rejection of any form of violence that threatens the security and physical integrity of the civilian population, and we urgently call for bolstering the protection of the Blue Helmets.

Likewise, we support the call of United Nations entities for the implementation of temporary humanitarian pauses in critical areas, as well as for the establishment of safe and effective humanitarian corridors that guarantee access to vital assistance.

Panama strongly condemns serious human rights violations, including sexual violence as a weapon of war and the forced recruitment of children by armed groups. Those atrocities cannot go unpunished. We urge the Security Council to strengthen the sanctions regime against those who perpetuate violence and to ensure that those responsible are brought to international justice.

Finally, we reaffirm our firm and unwavering commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on the M23, in particular, to cease its advances and to withdraw completely and immediately, in strict compliance with the ceasefire and the ongoing mediation processes. At the same time and for the same reasons, we urge Rwanda to cease its support for the M23 and to use its good offices to de-escalate the conflict and withdraw its armed

forces withdraw from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as possible.

Ms. Lassen (Denmark): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for informing us of the current situation on the ground, and Special Envoy Huang Xia for his briefing on regional peace efforts. I welcome the presence in this meeting of Her Excellency Foreign Minister Kayikwamba Wagner and all representatives from the region.

Denmark strongly condemns the ongoing offensive by the Movement du 23 mars (M23), backed by the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF), as well as the recent capture of Kavumu airport and the city of Bukavu. The offensive has resulted in immense suffering and risks plunging the region into an even deeper and wider conflict.

There can be no military solution, only a political one. What is urgently needed is the resumption of dialogue with all State and non-State actors — including the M23 — within the framework of the Luanda and Nairobi processes, respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights law and full respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We call on Rwanda to immediately withdraw its forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to cease its support to the M23, which must immediately halt and reverse its ongoing offensive and withdraw from the territories of which it has taken control. We call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo to cease its support to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda.

Allow me to make three key points.

First, what we are witnessing in North and South Kivu is nothing short of a human-made humanitarian catastrophe. Hundreds of thousands of civilians are urgently seeking protection from violence, persecution, rape, disease and death. Humanitarians have been attacked and killed, humanitarian warehouses and facilities have been looted, access and supply routes have been obstructed and civilian infrastructure has been attacked. That leaves civilians, including women and children, at even greater risk. That is unacceptable. Denmark demands full, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian and medical staff and demands that all parties immediately uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we are appalled by the reports of ongoing serious human rights violations and abuses taking place in North and South Kivu, including summary executions and sexual and gender-based violence. We condemn all attacks and threats against journalists, human rights defenders and members of civil society organizations. Those responsible must be held to account. We welcome the recent decision by the Human Rights Council to support such efforts.

Thirdly, we reiterate our unwavering support to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) as it continues its mandated tasks in a highly complex environment. The actions of the M23 and RDF are not only putting peacekeepers at risk, but also obstructing the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The safety and security of United Nations and humanitarian personnel and civilians, including those sheltering in MONUSCO bases, must be ensured. That also applies to the freedom of movement of MONUSCO. We reiterate that targeted attacks against MONUSCO peacekeepers constitute a breach of international law, may constitute a war crime and may serve as grounds for the imposition of United Nations sanctions.

Let me conclude by commending the African-led efforts to reach a solution to the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those efforts, spearheaded by Angolan President Lourenço, last year yielded a glimpse of hope in the Luanda process. That momentum must be maintained.

We reaffirm our unwavering support for any future joint peace process owned by and for the region, including by the East African Community, the Southern African Development Community and the African Union. As a matter of international peace and security, however, the Security Council has a responsibility to take action for the peaceful resolution of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It is our duty to urgently consider how to utilize the available means to halt and reverse this escalation, ensure humanitarian access and safeguard stability in the region. Denmark stands ready to work with all members to that end.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation): We thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, for their briefings. We welcome the participation in the meeting of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, as well as the representatives of Rwanda, Angola, Burundi, Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Let me begin my statement today by expressing our condolences to the families of the citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo citizens who died and continue to die due to the escalation of the Movement du 23 mars (M23) in recent months. Russia expresses its solidarity with the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this difficult period. We insist on the need for unconditional respect for the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and unity, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We also express our condolences to the families of the fallen United Nations peacekeepers and soldiers of the Southern African Development Community. We stand in solidarity with the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the States that have lost their service personnel. Attacks on peacekeepers are unacceptable in all circumstances.

Russia firmly condemns the actions of the M23. We call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and for the withdrawal of the fighters of this illegal armed group from the settlements it captured and from the Democratic Republic of the Congo territories it occupied. We also call on Rwanda to react to the relevant demands from members of the Security Council and the African Union to lift its defensive measures and to withdraw its military units.

The escalation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be stopped. However, there is no military path to resolving the crisis. It will be possible only through a political agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which need to return to the negotiating table, reaffirm their commitments to their mutual obligations under the Luanda process and agree on how to stabilize the situation.

The conflict has a long and very bloody history, and its root causes need to be addressed. A lasting settlement will be possible only when the State ceases its interactions with illegal armed groups, in particular with the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. On a separate note, we emphasize that without a decision on the status of the M23, within the framework of inter-Congolese dialogue, there will be no viable political formula for ending the conflict. The parameters for those processes must be defined jointly by Kinshasa and Kigali. Otherwise, the current situation risks escalating into a regional conflict between States. We already see more and more preconditions for that to happen.

Russia welcomes the efforts by States in the region and African leaders to promote stabilization in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We take note of the important decisions made at the Summit of the African Union, the Joint Summit of the Southern African Development Community and the East African

Community, and the Summit of the Economic Community of Central African States. We hope that the parties will heed the voices of their neighbours on the continent, and that the measures they have announced will be adopted and bear fruit.

The most important thing is to end the suffering of the civilian population. We are deeply concerned about the humanitarian consequences of the escalation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are alarmed by reports of the increasing numbers of extrajudicial reprisals, human rights violations, sexual violence and the recruitment of children into the ranks of illegal armed groups. All of that must end.

We would like to make a specific point about the well-known, but wilfully ignored, issue of the activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of private military companies from Europe. We all saw them surrender their weapons to MONUSCO peacekeepers, and footage of the subsequent transportation of European mercenaries to Kigali was broadcast around the world. We believe that those events are not fully in line with Russia's view of the Security Council's mandate for the Mission. We also believe that the silence of our European and American colleagues, faced with such ambiguous facts, is at odds with their open condemnation of African bilateral security cooperation with other States. That is particularly surprising given the years-long ramped-up disinformation campaign against Russia due to its enhanced cooperation with African States on security issues. That is nothing but neocolonial double standards on full display and, incidentally, also one of the reasons that conflicts in Africa continue.

In conclusion, I would like to assure members that Russia will continue to support efforts to curb the escalation and restore the prospects for a diplomatic settlement. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo need peace, security and confidence in the future. That is what guides our work in the Security Council.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita and Special Envoy Xia Huang for their briefings today. I welcome the participation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Foreign Minister Kayikwamba Wagner in this meeting, as well as the representatives from other countries of the region.

I will make three points.

First, we express our deep concern at the continued advance into the Democratic Republic of the Congo of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and the Rwandan Defence Forces. That is an unacceptable violation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a breach of the Charter of the United Nations. The occupation of Bukavu is a serious escalation, which heightens the risk of a wider regional conflict. The United Kingdom is clear that there needs to be an immediate cessation of hostilities and a return to dialogue via African-led peace processes. There can be no military solution. As my Foreign Secretary has said, Rwanda must withdraw its troops. The United Kingdom is actively considering next steps, alongside international partners, including the possibility of a review of all United Kingdom support to Rwanda.

Secondly, urgent action is needed to halt the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation. The takeover of Goma by the M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces has displaced close to 1 million people in North and South Kivu. Hundreds of thousands are now in desperate need of life-saving support. Civilians, particularly women and girls, are at increased risk of violence, including sexual violence. We have seen harrowing reports, including of 165 women raped and many burned alive at Goma's Muzenze prison earlier this month. The parties to the conflict must adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, and humanitarian access, especially via the Goma airport, should urgently be restored.

Thirdly, the freedom of movement of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is essential to support the protection of civilians and facilitate aid delivery. Restrictions by the M23 and Rwandan Defence Forces are unacceptable. The parties must respect MONUSCO's mandate, as authorized by the Council. The United Kingdom strongly condemns all attacks on United Nations peacekeepers and recalls that attacks on MONUSCO could be grounds for United Nations sanctions.

In conclusion, the United Kingdom welcomes regional efforts to secure a lasting solution to this conflict. We welcome the contribution of the recent joint East African Community and Southern African Development Community Summit, and the African Union Peace and Security Council Summit. We urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to engage in good faith in existing peace processes. We need to see the rapid implementation of the actions agreed at the Summits, supported by urgent action by the Council.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting. I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita and Special Envoy Xia Huang for their briefings. I also welcome Foreign Minister Kayikwamba Wagner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to this meeting.

The situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is urgent. There is almost no single day that passes without a further advancement by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). When the Council met for two emergency meetings three weeks ago, Goma fell for the fifth time in history (see S/PV.9849 and S/PV.9853).

Over the past weekend, the M23 took control of Bukavu in South Kivu for the first time ever, escalating the conflict to a completely new sphere by controlling all of Lake Kivu's access points and the Democratic Republic of the Congo-Rwanda border crossings. The M23's illegitimate parallel administrations, if sustained for much longer, may also create consequences too deep-rooted to reverse. Moreover, the impact on civilians is devastating, causing hundreds of thousands to become displaced and causing a regression in terms of human rights, particularly with respect to extrajudicial killings, conflict-related sexual violence and the summary execution of children. The entire Democratic Republic of the Congo is now at stake, and the situation is literally at the brink of full-scale regional war. In the light of this perilous situation, let me emphasize three points.

First, the Republic of Korea strongly condemns the M23 and demands that it immediately cease hostilities and withdraw from all occupied areas in North and South Kivu. We also urge Rwanda to refrain from escalating the conflict through its support and participation. We should all be reminded of the fundamental principle of the Charter of the United Nations — respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. Likewise, the Democratic Republic of the Congo should also stop its support to specific armed groups and neutralize the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. Exploiting hate speech and mis- and disinformation campaigns to fuel conflict must also end. All parties to the conflict should also ensure the freedom of movement of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Any attempt to hinder the implementation of its mandate, particularly through GPS jamming and spoofing, must stop. Attacks on peacekeepers may constitute war crimes, and their safety and security must be prioritized. We cannot lose any more peacekeepers.

Secondly, we urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to urgently return to meaningful diplomatic dialogue for an unconditional ceasefire. Korea commends and supports the recent joint efforts of the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union

(AU) and in particular President Lourenço of Angola to find a political solution to the conflict. Now more than ever, we need Africa's collective wisdom and concerted action for an African solution. We hope that meaningful progress can be achieved by building on the outcomes of the recent EAC–SADC joint statement and the AU Peace and Security Council meeting. Those efforts should further advance the gains made through the Luanda and Nairobi processes, paving the way for lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thirdly, we strongly emphasize the importance of ensuring unhindered humanitarian access and opening humanitarian corridors in North Kivu and South Kivu. The Goma and Kavumu airports should be able to operate without restrictions in order to ensure the delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid. Key border crossings also need to be open to allow the voluntary and safe movement of civilians and people in need.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its steadfast support for the efforts of MONUSCO, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and regional and subregional organizations to address this tragic crisis. The Charter of the United Nations entrusted the Council with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It is time that we dedicated our best efforts to fulfilling that mandate regarding this complex conflict. We sincerely hope that the Council will soon be able to pronounce itself on the issue with a decisive and unequivocal message for lasting peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

To begin with, I would like to thank Special Representative Keita and Special Envoy Huang Xia for their briefings and to welcome the presence of Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at today's meeting.

Having captured Goma, the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) recently launched a fresh offensive and entered Bukavu, the second largest city in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The drastic developments in the situation there have rattled the nerves of the international community. Secretary-General Guterres recently warned that the M23's continuing offensive is threatening to push the entire region over a precipice. My colleagues' statements today have further highlighted the gravity and danger of the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The M23's offensive is a serious violation of the decision of the joint East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit, which called for an immediate ceasefire by all parties, and it represents a complete failure on the part of the M23 to honour its commitment to a unilateral ceasefire, causing the situation to escalate further. China strongly condemns the M23's military operations and reiterates that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be respected and the Charter of the United Nations and international law observed. I want to stress the following points.

First, the international community should urge the M23 to immediately and unconditionally cease its offensive and withdraw from the occupied areas. China reiterates its hope that Rwanda will heed the call of the international community, end its military support for the M23 and immediately withdraw all its military forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, the international community must spare no effort in preventing the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo from spiralling into a larger-scale regional conflict. The war in the Congo more than 20 years ago resulted in millions of casualties, and a similar tragedy must not be repeated. China calls on

the relevant countries of the region to remain calm, exercise restraint and refrain from action that could escalate tensions and aggravate antagonism among the parties.

Thirdly, the international community should urge all the parties to the conflict to abide by international humanitarian law, protect the safety of civilians and humanitarian workers, open up more humanitarian corridors as a matter of urgency, reopen the airports in Goma and Bukavu and fully restore essential services such as water and electricity. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo is carrying out its task of protecting civilians in accordance with its Security Council mandate, and all parties must refrain from interference or obstruction. The safety and security of foreign missions, nationals and businesses should also be fully guaranteed.

Fourthly, the international community should continue to support the mediation efforts of the African Union and subregional organizations. China welcomes the commitment shown at the African Union Peace and Security Council summit to promoting a political settlement of the issue of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and expects the outcome of the joint EAC–SADC summit to be implemented without delay. All parties should urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to promptly return to a path of diplomacy and address their security concerns, including dealing with the threat posed by the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, within the framework of the merged Luanda and Nairobi processes.

Fifthly, the major stakeholders should bring their full influence to bear on the countries concerned with a view to promoting de-escalation of the situation. China supports the Security Council in actively fulfilling its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace by taking responsible action and creating synergies with regional mediation efforts. China will continue to call on all parties to achieve a ceasefire and resume dialogue and will work tirelessly to de-escalate the situation.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Her Excellency Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this third emergency meeting on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia, for their briefings. I also welcome the presence here today of the Permanent Representatives of various countries of the Great Lakes region.

“Rwanda is preparing to orchestrate open-air carnage with a brutality reminiscent of the darkest hours of our history.” Those were my words of warning on 26 January (see S/PV.9849), and that has now come to pass. In just 48 hours, more than 4,000 people perished in Goma. Men and women were gunned down. Children witnessed summary executions. Indiscriminate killings and executions with chilling precision claimed, among others, the customary Chief of Kiziba, who was shot dead with his wife and three children on 11 February, and the artist Delcat Idengo, who was murdered and silenced on 13 February. What we do know is merely a tiny snapshot of the horror that is happening to us.

But the horror is not limited to executions. In Goma, life is on hold, hostage to the war. More than 4,500 wounded are crowded into overwhelmed hospitals. Following mass executions, 500 bodies were found burned in Munzenze prison. Every day the Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross collect corpses

from the streets, while the morgues are overflowing. In makeshift camps, cases of mpox, cholera and measles are spreading, threatening thousands of displaced people who have no access to drinking water. Those who survive risk dying in other ways, without aid, medical treatment or evacuation. Humanitarian workers are being targeted and access to the victims is barred. That is what happens when a terrorist group takes control of a city and imposes its criminal rule as the Council looks on. The Council is watching and condemning, but it is not acting.

And now, in Bukavu, the picture is the same — looting, hospitals destroyed, roads blocked, a war that also kills through hunger and denial of medical care. But that is not enough for those waging this campaign of terror. The privations are compounded by executions, and the humanitarian collapse is compounded by barbarity. Yesterday, on 18 February, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that children had been executed by the Movement du 23 mars (M23). Children were shot down like targets. What remains of humanity when even the youngest, the most innocent, are executed?

We have heard the phrase, which has become a convenient refrain: “African solutions for African problems”. But who dares to use it today as a pretext for inaction?

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of Central African States have unanimously condemned the Rwandan presence on our soil. That fact is no longer in dispute. Two subregions, SADC and the East African Community, have held joint meetings to adopt urgent measures, including a ceasefire. As for the African Union, its Peace and Security Council, meeting at the Head of State level on 14 February, called for the immediate withdrawal of all uninvited foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo — in other words, those of Rwanda. Rwanda and the M23 continue to respond with violence and terror.

Faced with a rapidly worsening situation, many actors have reacted by doing what they do best: documenting human rights violations, laying the groundwork for criminal prosecutions, taking strong but essentially reactive actions.

We welcome the recent decision by the Human Rights Council to open an investigation into abuses in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the International Criminal Court’s call to gather evidence on these crimes in order to bring those responsible to justice. We also support the European Parliament’s resolution calling for the suspension of the raw materials agreement between the European Union and Rwanda, signed in February 2024, while Kigali was arming the M23.

But the Council, still inactive, is the only one capable of preventing further massacres and the expansion of the occupation. It is up to the Council to adopt robust measures that not only halt the violence perpetrated by Rwandan troops and their M23 proxies, but also put a stop to a Member State’s support for a terrorist group seeking to overthrow a legitimate, democratically elected Government. This conflict is not limited to military violence, the plundering of our resources or the depopulation of our territories. It is a political project, driven by Rwanda through the M23 and the Alliance Fleuve Congo, aimed at overthrowing our regime by force.

But the Democratic Republic of the Congo has chosen democracy — a democracy under construction, to be sure, but ours. We have chosen freedom under civilian rule, not submission to arms. No one can take this choice away from us, especially not a regime which, for three decades, has been hiding behind a man that confuses the State with his own personal power.

The contrast is striking: on the one hand, there is a people who build their future on the will of the people; on the other, a regime that survives only by force,

intimidation and repression. Today, this model of governance by fear is trying to impose itself here. This is not just a war for territory, but a war against our sovereign choice of a different future. The M23 and its Rwandan backers are seeking to impose by force of arms what the ballot box has rejected.

But the Congolese people say no. We are a people whose average age is under 25, a people scarred by war and postponed promises, but who refuse the law of arms. They want to choose their leaders at the ballot box, not under the threat of guns. They refuse to be the sacrificial generation of violence imposed from without.

(spoke in English)

The Council must act. It can no longer remain a silent witness to an unfolding tragedy, nor hide behind declarations of intent. The time for theoretical debates is over. It is now time to uphold the very principles that define this institution: peace, security and respect for international law, which is universal and applies to all — even while seeking African solutions. Standing by silently while civilians are killed is not a solution — and certainly not an African one. We reiterate the urgency of these measures and demand immediate action.

First, the Security Council must order an end to Rwanda's hostilities and demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its troops from Congolese territory. These forces have trampled on international law, brought death and devastation and violated our sovereignty. Their withdrawal is not negotiable — it is an imperative.

Secondly, the Security Council must impose targeted sanctions, including asset freezes and travel bans, on the command structure of the Rwanda Defence Force and the political decision-makers responsible for this aggression — including those who feign ignorance of their own troops' whereabouts. Thousands of Rwandan soldiers are leading M23 operations in our country, while their President, in a calculated display of plausible deniability, says: "I do not know." But the members of the Council know. We all know. The survivors who had to bury 4,000 bodies know. And in Goma, those graves bear witness.

Thirdly, the Security Council must impose a total ban on the export of all minerals from Rwanda, particularly coltan and gold, in order to end the looting of our resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken its own measures by designating several mining sites as red zones, including Rubaya, from where Rwanda fraudulently exports over 150 tons of coltan each month. But national measures alone are not enough. As long as Rwanda is allowed to launder our resources with impunity, this war will continue.

Fourthly, the Security Council must immediately revoke Rwanda's status as a troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping missions. As a country that besieges the bases of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, targets its aircraft and launches deadly attacks on United Nations peacekeepers, and then goes further, using the repatriation of fallen peacekeepers as a political bargaining chip, Rwanda has defiled the very principles of peacekeeping. This contradiction erodes the credibility of the United Nations. Rwanda's status must be revoked without delay.

Fifthly, the Security Council must impose a strict notification and monitoring mechanism for any sale or transfer of arms to Rwanda. Every shipment of weapons destined for Kigali must be declared, traced and closely monitored. It is unacceptable that arms continue to reach groups responsible for massacres and regional destabilization, while under United Nations sanctions.

(spoke in French)

The Security Council has held three meetings in less than a month. Today everyone — except the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Somalia and Sierra Leone — condemned Rwanda in their statements, but no resolution has been reached. The time for endless compromises is over. It is time for action.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo demands a public vote as soon as possible on a resolution that denounces clearly Rwanda's occupation and demands the withdrawal of its troops, a resolution that champions the United Nations Charter. Enough with the pretexts, enough with cultural relativism, behind which lies a wait-and-see attitude, with tragic consequences. Let everyone assume their position for others to see. It is time to vote.

The President *(spoke in Chinese)*: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Rwamucyo (Rwanda): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency and leadership of the Council. I thank Ambassador Huang Xie and Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for their briefings. I also recognize the participation of Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the representatives of Kenya, Angola, Burundi, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Rwanda commends the regional efforts led by the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), particularly during the summit held in Dar es Salaam on 8 February 2025. The meeting of the Joint Summit of the Heads of State and Government resulted in positive outcomes, including first, a call for a ceasefire; secondly, urgent humanitarian support; and thirdly, the merger of the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes, to be led by a panel of facilitators from various regions, under President Lourenço.

The Joint Summit also directed that direct negotiations and dialogue be resumed with all State and non-State parties and military and non-military groups, including the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). Those outcomes were endorsed by an extraordinary meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) at the Head of State level, held on 14 February, and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU, held on 15 and 16 February.

Rwanda appreciates the support of the Council members who value African-led solutions. We remain fully engaged in those efforts and continue to support them with good faith and our full commitment. However, we must condemn the actions of those, including in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who undermine those efforts by lobbying Western capitals instead of engaging with African leadership and regional mechanisms. Despite the critical nature of the recent regional discussions, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has consistently opted for a virtual presence or outright disengagement in those key meetings. While regional leaders gathered at the AU summit to address the security situation in his country, President Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was instead seen at the Munich Security Conference, continuing to lobby for sanctions against Rwanda rather than engaging in direct dialogue. Considering that other Heads of State were sitting in Addis Ababa trying to find solutions to those problems, the biggest beneficiary of those discussions could have benefited by being in that room. I cannot emphasize this enough — African leadership must drive the resolution of this conflict. Failure to support regional solutions has exacerbated instability in the past. That is why Rwanda calls for the full endorsement of the AU-backed outcomes of the joint EAC–SADC summit.

Furthermore, at the heart of this crisis is a dangerous alliance between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and external actors — mainly the genocidal militia of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), who have fuelled cynical rhetoric and enabled extremism to thrive for decades — but also the Burundian forces, the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (SAMIDRC) and European mercenaries. Instead of committing to inclusive dialogue, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has consistently undermined regional mechanisms, pitted regional blocs against one another, disregarded ceasefires, refused dialogue with its own people and escalated ethnically based violence.

Since the fall of Goma, regional leaders have worked tirelessly to broker peace. Yet the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has responded by reinforcing its front lines with more troops and Burundian forces. That reckless militarization, coupled with State-sponsored incitement to violence, has created a lawless environment. The uncontrolled distribution of weapons has even led militia formerly aligned with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to turn against Kinshasa. As we have already said, when a State actor proliferates and distributes weapons to negative armed groups, such as the various Wazalendo groups, what we reap is chaos, as well as what we have seen in terms of the magnitude of the loss of life caused by Wazalendo and all those young people who have been given thousands of weapons and mobilized and turned against each other.

The situation has been worsened by inflammatory statements from officials of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, such as that of its Foreign Minister in the previous Council meeting on this topic, on 28 January, who said that “the street will take over” (see S/PV.9853). Indeed, soon after the Minister’s foretelling in the Council, we observed cases of youth being mobilized into armed militias in South Kivu led by officers who were not part of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC). Arming young civilians in an already unstable context is not only reckless but an outright incitement to hatred and violence. There is also a lot of misinformation here. When FARDC forces were giving out weapons, including by arming children, no one spoke out, and now we are seeing misinformation about the execution of children. I repeat that the distribution of arms by a State actor to negative armed groups — with more than 250 such groups documented in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — is a recipe for disaster, and that is the disaster that we continue to see. Arms should be distributed only to designated, trained military officers.

The situation has deteriorated to a point where we are seeing a lot of humanitarian challenges. But Rwanda cannot take the blame for the endemic problems confronting the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As President Kagame stated in Addis Ababa, “We have our own problems to deal with. Congo is too big for Rwanda to carry on its back”. Rwanda has no interest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s internal struggles. Allegations of “land grabbing” or occupation ignore the fundamental power imbalances at play in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our sole priority has always been, and will always remain, the security of our borders and the stability of our nation. We have pointed out over and over again the existential security threats that Rwanda faces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which we take very seriously.

Rwanda continues to welcome refugees fleeing the violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo despite the persistent calls from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its allies for the imposition of sanctions on Rwanda. Ironically, among those crossing into Rwanda are representatives of the same security threats whom we have repeatedly warned the Council about. On 29 January, more than 280 foreign mercenaries and more than 100 Congolese soldiers crossed into Rwandan territory,

exposing the FARDC's long-standing use of foreign fighters, with no reaction whatsoever from the international community. Yet as we have repeatedly said, the use of mercenaries by State actors contravenes the 1989 International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries and the 1977 Organization of African Unity Convention for the Elimination of Mercenaryism in Africa, which prohibits the use of mercenaries by States.

What is more concerning is the international community's reluctance to address the existential threat that Rwanda faces, the ethnic cleansing of Congolese Tutsi and the misinterpretation of the conflict. Instead of acknowledging the Democratic Republic of the Congo's responsibility, blame has been conveniently shifted, first to Rwanda and now even to former President Joseph Kabila. When will that blame game end? I think someone here must take responsibility. The reality has always been clear. The M23's resurgence is rooted in the decades-long persecution of Congolese communities based on ethnicity, predating Rwanda's current Government. Rwanda has consistently warned that the FDLR is central to the crisis. More than 20 incursions into Rwanda have been launched since 2018, particularly in our Southern Province and north-western region. Despite claims that the FDLR is a weakened force, the fact that it is actively collaborating with the FARDC and being financed by it proves otherwise. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must recognize that its coalition with the FDLR is destabilizing Rwanda and perpetuating suffering among Congolese civilians. Ignoring the FDLR's role represents a failure to hold accountable those responsible for exporting extremist ideologies beyond Rwanda's borders.

However, beyond the FDLR, Rwanda is also concerned about the myriad foreign forces deployed along its borders, particularly the Burundian forces, who share the same ethnic ideology as the FDLR, the SAMIDRC and the remaining mercenaries. We are also concerned about the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's push for more foreign troops, which he is currently requesting from other African countries. All of those foreign forces must withdraw from the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, because they constitute a direct threat to Rwandan security. In fact, when Goma fell, the FARDC, the Burundian forces and the FDLR turned their weapons on Rwanda, killing 16 innocent civilians, wounding 177 and destroying their properties and livelihoods. Yet, no country condemned that blatant violation of Rwanda's sovereignty. Rwanda has no choice but to strengthen its defence and will continue to do so.

On the question of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), we have been very clear, and Rwanda's position remains that peacekeepers must be safe and must be protected. That is a canon that we respect, and we have said it over and over again. However, transparency is also very important. The provision of accurate information to the Council is critical. There is critical information that we believe Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita should have shared with the Council on MONUSCO's collaboration with the M23, specifically the outcome of a meeting that was held yesterday between the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Protection and Operations of MONUSCO, Ms. Vivian Van de Perre, and the leader of the Alliance Fleuve Congo/M23, Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo. We believe that that information was critical to share so that the Council would at least know about it.

Regarding mineral exploitation, the responsible parties who exploit the Democratic Republic of the Congo are well known. Rwanda holds no mining concession in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, yet it continues to be falsely accused. The claim that mineral resources fuel the conflict is false and inciting. The M23 issue is about people fighting for their rights and survival, fighting for their

inherent citizenship rights and access to their own ancestral property. Rwanda cannot be scapegoated for the Democratic Republic of the Congo's economic dysfunction. It is Congolese officials who benefit most from instability and the corrupt mining sector, whereas Rwanda has always promoted responsible sourcing and formalized trade to cap smuggling and illicit activities in mining.

Rwanda remains committed to regional mechanisms to neutralize the FDLR and ensure the withdrawal of all foreign forces that threaten its security. Those steps are essential for Rwanda's stability and lasting regional peace. Once those conditions are met, Rwanda will adjust its defensive measures accordingly. We urge the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage genuinely in the EAC-SADC peace process, and we call on the international community to support those African-led initiatives, rather than imposing counterproductive measures. If sanctions or punitive measures were the solution to the region's problems, Rwanda would be the first to support them. However, history has shown otherwise. They only deepen division and undermine regional peace efforts.

In conclusion, Rwanda remains guided by the firm belief that its region's future depends on unity, shared prosperity and inclusive peace. The historical and cultural ties between our communities hold untapped potential, and we hope that, through dialogue and cooperation, we can bring about the lasting peace and development the region desperately needs.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Angola.

Mr. Da Cruz (Angola): We acknowledge the presence of Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and His Excellency Ambassador Ernest Raymucyo, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Rwanda to the United Nations. We thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa, for their comprehensive briefings.

We are holding the third Security Council emergency meeting in less than a month to address the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) continues widening its offensive and making a significant military advance in North Kivu and South Kivu provinces, despite calls by the Security Council, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and other actors in the international community to halt its operations.

Angola firmly and unequivocally condemns and repudiates those actions, which can have unforeseen consequences for regional peace and security if not stopped now. We are very concerned about those latest developments and reiterate our call for the immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities, the withdrawal of the M23 from the occupied areas, as well as an end to the establishment of a parallel administration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo territory. In line with the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the principle of the sovereign equality of all Member States, the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected and upheld.

Angola calls on the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and international human rights; protect civilians, internally displaced persons camps and medical camps; and safeguard the integrity and safety of peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel. Attacks against civilians and peacekeepers constitute war crimes, and the perpetrators must be held accountable.

As do the people of any other country, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have the right to live in peace and security and to achieve sustainable development. The Security Council has the responsibility to assist the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve those aspirations by acting swiftly and decisively to prevent further escalation of the conflict and promote its peaceful resolution through the Luanda and Nairobi processes. We call on the members of the Security Council to work expeditiously to adopt a resolution, namely, urging an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and the peaceful resolution of the conflict through the Luanda and Nairobi processes, in line with the communiqués of the Joint Summit of Heads of State and Government of the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community, convened on 8 February, and the meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held at the level of Heads of State and Government, on 14 February.

On 14 February, His Excellency João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of the Republic of Angola, who was mandated by the African Union, as Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, to ensure mediation of the crisis between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, presented a report to the Peace and Security Council of the African Union outlining his efforts to achieve peace in that protracted conflict. He stressed that the progress made under the Luanda process must be preserved and upheld, which includes the declaration of a ceasefire on 4 August 2024, the adoption of the harmonized plan for the neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the disengagement of forces/lifting of defensive security measures by Rwanda, the adoption of the concept of operations and the operationalization of the reinforced ad hoc verification mechanism.

Please note that the only pending matter to finalize and consolidate the draft peace agreement proposed by the mediator is the divergence regarding the resolution of the M23 issue, which falls within the scope of the Nairobi process. It is important to emphasize that the M23 issue is not objectively and directly part of the Luanda process mandate, since it has always been understood that matters relating to the different armed groups forces operating within the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be dealt with within the framework of the Nairobi process.

His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço has reiterated time and time again that the conflict and security challenges in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have no military solution and urged the parties to return to the negotiating table immediately. He is continuing to make diplomatic efforts in favour of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, now in a new and additional role as the Chair of the African Union since 15 February 2025. On 14 February, on the sidelines of the Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa, he met President Kagame of Rwanda, and yesterday, in Luanda, he hosted President Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to discuss the way forward. We call on the international community and the Security Council to continue to support the ongoing regional initiatives to enhance coordination, harmonization and complementarity between the Luanda and Nairobi processes in order to promote African solutions to African problems.

A speedy and unconditional de-escalation of the conflict and a genuine and renewed engagement of the parties to explore ways of overcoming this pending issue are vital to creating a political environment conducive to a peaceful solution under the Luanda and Nairobi processes. We encourage all parties to avoid any action or rhetoric that could further escalate tensions, including provocative language and inflammatory public statements, which are counterproductive to the diplomatic efforts to achieve a lasting solution to this prolonged conflict. As President Lourenço stated at the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council,

“It will make sense to continue the peace efforts in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo only if there is serious engagement from the parties and coherence regarding the commitments made, so that time and energy are not wasted in the actions that have been undertaken to restore peace to this attacked sister country”.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Mr. Lokaale (Kenya): Kenya congratulates the People’s Republic of China on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February and commends Algeria for its stewardship of the Council in January. We also thank today’s briefers, as well as Minister Kayikwamba Wagner of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and our fellow Permanent Representatives from the region.

Kenya is deeply concerned about the escalating unrest in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is imperilling the stability of the entire Great Lakes region. The deaths of civilians and peacekeepers and the displacement of persons that have characterized the conflict are compounding an already dire humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate the call of the Joint Summit of the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities by all the conflicting parties and the withdrawal of foreign actors from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The attendant effects of the unrest — the widespread displacement of persons, an influx of refugees, the spread of infectious diseases and the increasing proliferation of arms — remain dire for the entire Great Lakes region. In addition, the threat of terrorism posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Sham–Democratic Republic of the Congo risks burgeoning as the group leverages the unrest to advance its nefarious activities.

Kenya is the current Chair of the East African Community, and we reiterate the joint EAC–SADC position on advancing a political rather than military resolution in addressing the conflict. In that regard, we reaffirm our commitment to the Nairobi and Luanda processes as the most viable framework for dialogue and reconciliation. We also urge all parties to demonstrate political goodwill and engage genuinely in mediation. We call on our beloved neighbours — the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda — and all other countries to tone down the finger-pointing and give dialogue a chance. That is in our collective interest as a region. While Kenya remains committed to supporting diplomatic efforts to restore stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the international community must do more. We therefore urge the Security Council to act decisively to contain the prevailing unrest. We must put an end to the death and humanitarian suffering of local populations. United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations must be given unhindered access. For its part, Kenya remains committed to all efforts that will bring peace and stability not just to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo but to the entire Great Lakes region.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by thanking the People’s Republic of China, which holds the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February, for convening the third meeting in a month on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an initiative that is testament to China’s commitment to peace and security in the Great Lakes region and its leadership role within the Council. We would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Mr. Huang Xia, Special Envoy

of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, for their informative briefings on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In particular, I would like to welcome Her Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the colleagues who have joined us today.

Burundi would first like to remind everyone that it is present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo strictly as part of a bilateral agreement, as per the Burundi National Defence Force's press release of 20 May 2023.

Faithful to its principles of peace and solidarity, Burundi remains deeply concerned about the deteriorating situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The persistence of the conflicts, in particular in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the capture of Goma by the Rwandan-backed Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and the prolonged occupation of large areas by foreign forces pose a serious threat to regional stability. The situation highlights the limitations and weaknesses of our current peace mechanisms, and it is vital that the international community take immediate action to prevent a regional war. In that regard, Burundi would like to propose a five-point peace plan, based on the principles of dialogue, regional cooperation and respect for national sovereignty. We firmly believe that a lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires collective, urgent and coordinated action. The key elements of our peace plan are as follows.

First, international mobilization is needed to prevent an escalation of the conflict. It is imperative to ensure that the international community, including the United Nations and regional actors, commits urgently to preventing an escalation of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and exerts the necessary pressure on the actors involved in the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in violation of fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its political independence, with a view to achieving concrete results. If no immediate action is taken, the crisis could develop into a wider regional conflict, threatening not only the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also the entire Great Lakes region. We call for a rapid, coherent and determined response to avoid a regional conflagration, whose security and humanitarian consequences in the region, including possible ramifications for other parts of the continent, no one can accurately predict.

Secondly, there is a need for a withdrawal of uninvited foreign forces and the dismantling of armed groups. In order to achieve a lasting peace, uninvited foreign forces, including those from Rwanda, must withdraw immediately from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and respect its territorial integrity. At the same time, the international community must actively support the dismantling of all armed groups, both local and foreign, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, which continues to fuel instability in the region. It is crucial that those actions be carried out in a way that protects Congolese civilians, who are the main victims of that violence. The inertia and wait-and-see attitude of the international community is helping to perpetuate the fighting and the aggressor's appetite to continue occupying Congolese territory. That could set a negative precedent that could encourage other States to use force to encroach on the territories of other independent States without fear of action by the international community. One more day without concrete action to stop the war in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo would result in hundreds of deaths of innocent civilians, including women and children. No — let us act quickly to be on the right side of history. If we do nothing, history will show that at some point the international community allowed the situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deteriorate, with serious security and humanitarian consequences. The credibility of the Security Council, the organ responsible for international peace and security, depends on it.

Thirdly, with regard to the M23 and the path of inter-Congolese dialogue, it is imperative that the M23, if it claims to be Congolese, join the inter-Congolese peace process facilitated by former President Uhuru Kenyatta, the facilitator appointed by the East African Community. That process should enable the Congolese themselves to find solutions to their problems without outside interference. We believe that internal dialogue is the only way to achieve lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, respecting the country's sovereignty and integrity.

Fourthly, we also call for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance and to create an environment conducive to inter-Congolese dialogue. The ceasefire would be a first step towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict, reducing the suffering of civilians, in particular women and children, who are the main victims of the war. Once respected, a ceasefire would foster a climate conducive to inter-Congolese dialogue and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their homes and pupils to school.

Fifthly, there is a need to strengthen regional and international mechanisms. It is crucial to strengthen the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and to ensure sufficient funding for peace operations in Africa. Burundi also advocates accelerating the operationalization of the African Standby Force, to enable Africa to respond effectively to its own crises. Enhanced cooperation among the African Union, the United Nations and regional actors is essential to ensure a coherent and effective response to those challenges.

Burundi reaffirms its commitment to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. We firmly believe that only collective action and enhanced international cooperation will make it possible for the challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo to be overcome. We call on all members of the Security Council to support this peace plan, in a spirit of solidarity and shared responsibility, to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for all the peoples of the region.

In conclusion, Burundi, like many African countries, supports the current version of the draft resolution, the second revision, on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and calls on all members of the Security Council, in particular the three African members of the Security Council, namely, Algeria, Sierra Leone and Somalia, to support it in order to respect the wishes of the overwhelming majority of Africans who condemn the flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. No country and no people would want their territory and sovereignty to be violated in broad daylight in full view of everyone.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Africa.

Ms. Joyini (South Africa): We wish to once again congratulate the People's Republic of China on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for the month of February. We thank Special Representative Bintou Keita and Special Envoy Huang Xia for their important briefings. We acknowledge the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner.

We wish to thank the United Nations and its Member States for sharing our grief as we mourned the death of our peacekeepers in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We express gratitude to all who played a role in the successful repatriation of the remains of our fallen troops.

Since the emergency meetings of the Security Council on 26 and 28 January (see S/PV.9849 and S/PV.9853), the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated. Despite repeated calls for a ceasefire and restraint, the

Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and its allies continue to capture territories in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The capital city of North Kivu, Goma, as well as other cities such as Bukavu, are now under full control of the M23. The supply of electricity, water, humanitarian aid and communication networks have been disrupted, putting the lives of many injured and the displaced communities at high risk.

The recent African Union Summit reiterated the need for all of the parties to the conflict to engage in negotiations towards a sustainable political solution. That decision reinforces the outcomes of the seminal Joint Summit of the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community. We believe that the merger of the Luanda and Nairobi processes, as decided by the Joint Summit, is prudent for a harmonized and coherent approach to dealing with the prevailing situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Both processes must prioritize, as a matter of urgency, addressing the proliferation and activities of armed groups. All illegal armed groups and uninvited armed forces from neighbouring countries are an obstacle to peace and stability in the entire region. All key actors must demonstrate political will to put an end to the crisis.

For that reason, South Africa strongly urges all parties to the conflict to engage in de-escalation efforts and confidence-building measures, and to fulfil the already agreed terms of the Luanda process. That includes an immediate ceasefire, the implementation of the harmonization plan for the neutralization of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the disengagement of foreign forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the full participation of all parties in the ad hoc verification mission monitoring the ceasefire.

Alongside the ongoing political process, all parties must ensure that humanitarian efforts are unimpeded and that essential services are restored in Goma and other affected areas.

Should the parties fail to reach any meaningful progress, despite myriad efforts and decisions aimed at bringing about peace and stability, the Security Council must assume its role by taking measures, within its mandate, to prevent further carnage in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The situation there requires a set of immediate measures to mitigate further death and suffering and to end the capture and control of territory by the M23 and its allies. In that context, we look forward to the Council adopting the draft resolution before it and hope that it will help with the immediate cessation of hostilities and aid the political process.

In conclusion, for the African continent to prosper, we need to truly silence the guns and harness our collective efforts towards development-focused solutions to prolonged challenges. Together, let us choose a paradigm shift from the battlegrounds of war to the corridors of diplomacy and solutions through compromise over the rigid ideologies of war that often seek absolute victories. History has taught us that absolute victories in war are hollow and simply allow for the continuation of conflict in different forms, often for decades to come. The parties to the conflict must choose peace and negotiate in good faith, with lasting peace as the ultimate prize, for the sake of the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Great Lakes region and Africa as a whole.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Mushayavanhu (Zimbabwe): Zimbabwe appreciates today's briefings and welcomes the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner.

The security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a matter of grave concern. That is why our region has devoted significant time and resources to addressing this crisis, recognizing its far-reaching implications for peace, stability and development — not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but across the broader Great Lakes region. Indeed, some of our Southern African Development Community (SADC) citizens have made the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Recent high-level engagements underscore the urgency of the situation. The Extraordinary Summit of the Heads of State and Government of SADC, held on 31 January, followed by the Joint SADC-East African Community Summit of the Heads of State and Government, on 8 February, and the African Union Peace and Security Council summit, on 14 February, all reaffirmed the importance of African-led solutions. Those efforts reflect the principle of subsidiarity.

The primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security rests with the Security Council. We therefore urge the Council to align its actions with the decisions and recommendations of African-led initiatives. Strengthening those regional mechanisms will ensure a more coordinated, effective and contextually relevant response. Zimbabwe calls for support for ongoing regional efforts, particularly within the framework of the Luanda and Nairobi processes. Those initiatives are essential in addressing the escalating insecurity fuelled by the insurgency of the Movement du 23 mars (M23) and other armed groups.

In that regard, we welcome the ongoing negotiations on the Security Council's draft resolution. We hope that its adoption will complement regional efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the conflict, and we hope that will take place without any further delay.

My delegation wishes to highlight five priorities essential for restoring peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First, there must be an immediate cessation of hostilities and an unconditional ceasefire. Without an immediate and sustained ceasefire, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will remain under threat, with dire consequences for regional security.

Secondly, the M23 and its allies must withdraw from captured territories, including Goma and Bukavu.

Thirdly, all foreign forces present, without invitation, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must withdraw.

Fourthly, civilians must be protected and humanitarian assistance facilitated. The ongoing conflict has inflicted untold suffering, leading to widespread displacement and humanitarian distress. It is imperative that humanitarian assistance reach those most in need and that humanitarian actors be guaranteed a safe and secure environment to undertake their work.

Fifthly, the illicit exploitation and trafficking of natural resources must end. Addressing this root cause of conflict is critical to breaking the cycle of violence and fostering sustainable development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Furthermore, Zimbabwe strongly condemns attacks against United Nations peacekeepers and regional troops, which constitute violations of international law and could amount to war crimes. We also denounce assaults on the SADC Mission forces, whose deployment was endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council in March 2024. Ensuring their safety is paramount.

The Security Council must recognize that African-led peace process offer the most viable path to a lasting solution in the eastern Democratic Republic of the

Congo. Supporting the full implementation and harmonization of the Luanda and Nairobi processes is key to restoring stability. We therefore urge the Council to reinforce those mechanisms and ensure that its interventions align with and support those efforts.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I now give the floor to the representative of Malawi.

Mrs. Chimbiri Molande (Malawi): Allow me, at the outset, to congratulate China on assuming the presidency of the Security Council for this month. I would like to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and La Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As a committed member of the African Union (AU) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Republic of Malawi echoes the concerns voiced by the International Conference on the Great Lakes region (ICGLR), the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States and other regional and international bodies. We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The ongoing offensive in both North Kivu and South Kivu, particularly involving the Movement du 23 mars, supported by Rwanda, has resulted in significant civilian suffering and regional instability. The Republic of Malawi stands in solidarity with the regional and international bodies involved, and supports all efforts aimed at restoring peace, security and stability in the region.

Malawi recognizes the complex and multifaceted nature of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and emphasizes the importance of a collaborative and inclusive approach to resolving the crisis. We commend the efforts of the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the ICGLR and SADC to address the situation and work towards sustainable peace. Malawi fully supports resolution 2773 (2025), aimed at restoring peace in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and echoes the call for all parties to engage in dialogue, cease hostilities and prioritize the protection of civilians, because one life lost is one life too many.

As a party to various regional and international peace instruments, Malawi reaffirms its commitment to supporting initiatives that promote peace, security and development in the Great Lakes region. We urge all stakeholders to work together in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect to address the root causes of the conflict and ensure a peaceful environment for all. Malawi stands ready to contribute to those efforts and to support all of the parties' strong desire to pursue long-lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is why we have never hesitated to assist in such situations, as a moral obligation.

The Republic of Malawi is very concerned about reports of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights abuses by armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including claims of a high incidence of sexual and gender-based violence. We are equally concerned about the growing number of forcibly displaced persons in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as a result of the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation, and we reiterate the need for all parties to pursue dialogue and resolve the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo amicably. In the same vein, Malawi deplores any attacks on peacekeepers and humanitarian agents working to contribute to peacebuilding processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As a committed member of the AU and SADC and an advocate for the principles of other regional and international bodies, Malawi calls for an immediate end to such attacks and urges all stakeholders to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers and humanitarian personnel.

Finally, I would like to thank the United Nations, Member States and all partners that have supported Malawi in repatriating the remains of its fallen troops to Malawi, and those continuing to support peacekeeping operations and missions.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Her Excellency Ms. Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Kayikwamba Wagner (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): For months we have been listening to Rwanda trying to justify the unjustifiable — its repeated aggression, its war of occupation and its plundering of our resources. Just today we heard the Rwandan representative try to legitimize not only Rwanda's attacks on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people but its attacks on the legal architecture of this very Organization.

We listened as Rwanda sought to legitimize its war in the wake of the displacement of 1 million civilians, the plundering of hundreds of tons of our resources and even the murder of dozens of Blue Helmets and African peacekeepers. I want to remind the Council that yesterday the High Commissioner for Human Rights documented the summary executions of children in Bukavu by the Rwandan Defence Forces—Mouvement du 23 mars coalition. Attempts to justify the execution of children are so abject and despicable that they will not receive any response from me today. The Permanent Representative of Rwanda has already lost the battle for truth.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.