



## Security Council

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### Letter dated 16 December 2015 from the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and to Security Council resolution 2211 (2015), in which the Council encouraged the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to take effective steps to enter into a regular strategic dialogue with the United Nations, building on the assessment process initiated in 2010 to jointly develop a road map and exit strategy for MONUSCO.

Pursuant to the letter dated 5 October 2015 from the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council ([S/2015/760](#)), I dispatched a small team to visit the country from 23 to 28 November 2015 to take a fresh look at the situation on the ground and evaluate progress made by the Government with regard to the security situation and the development of national capacities to manage the threat posed by armed groups and prevent violence against civilians. In meetings with MONUSCO and the team, the Government, while recognizing that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained fragile, reiterated its position that the situation on the ground does not justify retaining the current number of United Nations peacekeepers in the country.

The team noted the efforts of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) to neutralize armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Forces de résistance patriotiques en Ituri and, most recently, Mai-Mai Yakutumba, in the conduct of which the army suffered heavy casualties. FARDC was found to have enhanced its capacity to deploy quickly and launch operations against armed groups, despite difficulties in sustaining those operations. The commitment of the Government to hold perpetrators of violence accountable, combat sexual violence and end the recruitment of children was also identified as a positive development. Moreover, the team found that the reorganization of the army, the appointment of new commanders in some areas, enhanced training efforts and the establishment of a salary payment system had yielded positive results.

Building on the findings of the assessments jointly conducted by the Government and MONUSCO earlier this year, the team confirmed that there had been some progress in the security situation in a number of areas, including in the Provinces of Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Ituri, South Kivu and Tshopo. The start of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme was also identified as an important development in addressing the threat posed by armed groups.



Notwithstanding the progress made thus far, it was assessed that more needs to be done to sustain these gains, in particular with regard to the extension of State authority and the finding of durable solutions for the reintegration of former combatants within the context of broader stabilization initiatives. The security situation in many territories in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains volatile, while the implications of the unfolding crisis in Burundi also need to be monitored carefully, particularly in South Kivu. In addition, political tensions and uncertainty centred around the elections persist, with a risk of civil unrest and violence, should the announced national dialogue fail to reach consensus on the way forward.

The evaluation included a review of the configuration of MONUSCO troops and identified a number of inefficiencies, taking into account the Mission's plans to transform the Force in order to enhance its effectiveness. Based on projected capability and efficiency gains from the transformation of the Force, including rapidly deployable battalions, enhanced mobility and increased information-gathering capacity, it was assessed that a further reduction of MONUSCO military personnel may be envisaged without compromising the Mission's ability to implement its mandate to protect civilians, including through the neutralization of armed groups.

Considering the increasing law-and-order challenges in the context of the electoral process, MONUSCO will review its configuration, in particular with regard to the police component, to ensure that it has adequate capacity to implement its mandate to protect civilians. The findings and recommendations will be included in my March 2016 report to the Security Council.

In light of the increasingly complex situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the need for more effective mandate implementation in the coming months, I believe that the time has come to take concrete steps towards facilitating the resumption of the strategic dialogue between the United Nations and the Government, with a view to achieving a common goal: the gradual and progressive exit of MONUSCO, while preserving the gains and investments made and averting a major relapse into instability or conflict. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo expressed its willingness to MONUSCO and the team to re-engage in discussions on the joint development of an exit strategy for MONUSCO, as outlined in resolution 2211 (2015), and to enhance cooperation with the Mission.

Considering the above factors, I recommend that when reviewing the mandate of MONUSCO, the Security Council consider a further reduction of 1,700 MONUSCO military personnel, in addition to the reduction of 2,000 military personnel as endorsed by the Council in its resolution 2211 (2015), taking into account progress in the development of a joint exit strategy and in addressing the threat posed by armed groups.

I should be grateful if you could bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

*(Signed)* **BAN** Ki-moon