



Security Council

Distr.: General
25 October 2019

Original: English

Letter dated 24 October 2019 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing further to Security Council resolution [2463 \(2019\)](#), by which the Council requested an independent strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) assessing the continued challenges to peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and articulating a phased, progressive and comprehensive exit strategy.

I am pleased to transmit the independent strategic review report of MONUSCO conducted by Youssef Mahmoud. The five sections of the report encompass an evaluation of the current political challenges and opportunities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, an assessment of the current mandated tasks of MONUSCO, suggested new tasks, and conditions for a responsible drawdown. The report also provides a number of recommendations to adjust the mandate, configuration and priorities of the Mission, as conceived by the independent expert. As requested by the Council, I should like to point out that the present report is independent, and therefore its content and recommendations do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations.

The author of the report recognizes the positive impact that two decades of peacekeeping have had in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the opportunities created that, if leveraged, could pave the way to sustainable peace and development. The first-ever peaceful transfer of power has fuelled hopes for an improvement in the fortunes of the country, even though it continues to face significant security, human rights, humanitarian and development challenges, including the second-worst Ebola outbreak ever recorded. While the majority of the 26 provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are now stable, with opportunities to advance sustainable development, the persistence of national and foreign armed groups and the resurgence of intercommunal violence in a dozen territories of the eastern provinces of the country (particularly North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri) have generated a worrying protection situation for civilians.

The strategic review contains a useful re-examination of key assumptions underlying the Mission's military mandate and its mandate to protect civilians. It is vital that efforts to enhance the impact and effectiveness of the Mission's military component be guided by a whole-of-force and whole-of-mission approach with the protection of civilians at its core. I would also emphasize that the use of military force is only one part of a multidimensional effort aimed at promoting peace, which requires national ownership. In the medium to long term, only an appropriate political and security response, including with countries of the Great Lakes region, can provide



the necessary framework for resolving the current situation in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ultimately, the only way to achieve a durable peace is through a sustained effort to build strong democratic and governance institutions. The international community, including the United Nations, must fully support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to that end. As the United Nations reconfigures its presence in response to the evolving needs on the ground, the ability of the United Nations country team to support the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in reforming and strengthening key institutions must also be carefully assessed and, where necessary, strategies must be implemented to ensure that the necessary resources and operational capabilities are in place before drawing down the presence of the Mission.

The development of effective partnerships with regional organizations, international financial institutions and key actors will be critical to avoid the financing and engagement challenges associated with transitions. The proposed compact for sustained peace, if managed properly, could help in that regard.

Going forward, it will be crucial to conduct consultations with the recently formed Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with a view to ensuring that the future role and priorities of the Mission and the United Nations country team align with the vision and priorities of the Government for the future of the country. Based on such consultations, I may revert to the Security Council, including ahead of the renewal of the Mission's mandate, with additional comments and recommendations on how the Mission could best respond to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and could best support that country's Government and people in their efforts to achieve peace and stability.

(Signed) António **Guterres**

Annex

Transitioning from stabilization to peace: An independent strategic review of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

A. Background

1. After 20 years, the United Nations peacekeeping presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been credited with having contributed to significant peace gains, including the reunification of the country, the official departure of foreign armies from Congolese soil, the prevention of greater instability during intermittent moments of crisis and the creation of an environment conducive to the holding of three presidential elections, in 2006, 2011 and 2018. Today, it is commonly acknowledged by both Congolese sources and the international community that more than two thirds of the country is stable.

2. As the peace and conflict dynamics within the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region have evolved and pressures to consolidate peacekeeping efforts and reduce costs have increased, there have been repeated calls for reviews and adjustments throughout the life cycle of the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The most recent strategic review, conducted by the United Nations Secretariat in 2017 ([S/2017/826](#)), contained a recommendation to reorient the activities of MONUSCO towards supporting the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016 between political actors that paved the way for the most recent elections.

3. Despite the controversy surrounding the real winner, these most recent elections, entirely organized and financed by Congolese actors, marked the first peaceful transfer of power to an opposition party in the country's history. Most opposition political figures declared their intention to support the new President, Félix Tshisekedi, who has announced an ambitious reform agenda to bring about immediate positive change in the areas of accountable governance, security and socioeconomic development.

4. Notwithstanding this promising outlook, the political and security situation remains fragile and the future is not risk-free, as outlined below. The locus of power remains uncertain in the context of a potentially unstable government coalition, and there is an ongoing security and protection crisis in the six provinces affected by conflict, Tanganyika, Kasai Central, Kasai Oriental, North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. To date, the activity of armed groups, the continued involvement of State actors in human rights abuses and the potential further spread of Ebola are major impediments to a responsible and sustainable MONUSCO exit. The international community should continue to lend a hand in the coming years so that the Democratic Republic of the Congo can move purposefully from stabilization to sustainable peace.

B. The mandate, methodology, and guiding framework of the strategic review team

1. Mandate

5. In its resolution [2463 \(2019\)](#), the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to conduct an independent strategic review of MONUSCO assessing the continued challenges to peace and security in the DRC and articulating a phased, progressive and comprehensive exit strategy. To define and frame this exit, the Council underscored the need to progressively transfer MONUSCO's tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations country team and other relevant stakeholders in order to enable the responsible and sustainable exit for MONUSCO, based on the positive evolution of the situation on the ground and in a way that contributes to sustainable progress towards the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, consolidation of State authority and reduction of the threat posed by armed groups.

2. Interpreting the mandate

6. The strategic review team was led by an independent expert and included an independent penholder and 11 senior team members nominated by various United Nations departments, agencies, funds and programmes who provided advice political, military, police, rule of law, human rights, humanitarian, regional, development, gender, and support and logistical issues. Rather than reflecting the views of the United Nations, the present report offers an independent analysis of the challenges and opportunities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the continued relevance of the mandated tasks of MONUSCO. Specific parameters are recommended for an effective and responsible transition, independently from financial considerations, institutional preferences and dependency paths, or geopolitical interests.

7. It should be noted at the outset that the onus for creating the conditions for a responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO is first and foremost on the Government and the Congolese people as a whole, and, secondarily, on key neighbouring countries, with international partners lending hand to empower and assist them. In articulating what should be put in place to facilitate such an exit, the strategic review team was mindful of avoiding two pitfalls. The first would be to argue that MONUSCO was an indispensable guarantor of stabilization and peace consolidation and thus that it should remain longer than warranted. Such an argument could unwittingly stymie the implementation of key peace and security reforms by national stakeholders while the Mission would continue to subsidize, at great cost, the consequences of inaction. The second pitfall would be to precipitate the Mission's exit, with cost-cutting pressures and other extraneous considerations defining the strategy. Doing so would entail declaring the Government and the United Nations country team ready to take over key peacebuilding tasks with only a modicum of support from MONUSCO as it prepares to leave, which would carry the risk of creating a vacuum.

8. For a MONUSCO exit strategy to be sustainable, it must help to create conditions for the new leadership of the country to live up to its commitment to positive change and leverage the evolving opportunities for peace and prosperity.

9. This explains in part why the strategic review has anchored its recommendations in a mid- to long-term time frame and puts forward a phased, progressive and comprehensive exit strategy for the three coming years, based on clearly defined benchmarks.

3. Lessons from peacekeeping transitions and exits

10. The articulation of an exit strategy for MONUSCO should be informed by the many lessons learned from past peacekeeping transitions, including the most recent ones in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Haiti.¹ One of those lessons is that transitions are highly political. To succeed, it is of the essence that the Security Council, the Secretariat, and national stakeholders articulate a common political strategy and narrative for the transition. National engagement and ownership are also fundamental factors when shifting responsibilities for security and peacebuilding back from the United Nations to national actors. Broad engagement with the Government, but also with various civil society organizations, communities and marginalized groups, is critical to ensure an effective transition. Leveraging partners, including regional actors, international financial institutions and donors can also support the transition process. In studies on transitions it has been found that exit strategies have a greater chance of succeeding if the right balance is struck between what the realities on the ground dictate and what the internal dynamics of the Security Council allow.

4. Methodology

11. The strategic review team has based its analysis on a desk review that included an independent conflict analysis, a peace trend analysis in which the existing autochthonous capacities for peace and resilience were identified, a mapping of achievements and lessons learned, a military capability study and a police capability study. The team travelled extensively through the country, visiting Kinshasa, Goma, Kananga, Tshikapa, Beni, Bunia and Bukavu) and visited relevant countries in the region. While in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the team met with a wide range of actors including government officials, civil society organizations including women's networks, journalists and independent experts. The diplomatic corps, MONUSCO and the United Nations country team were also consulted.

12. Following this first round of consultations, which took place from 24 June to 18 July 2019, the independent team leader returned to Kinshasa with a reduced team on 9 September to seek the views of the newly appointed Government. For the reasons explained below, the objectives of this return visit were not fully achieved.

II. Challenges and opportunities for peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

A. Challenges to peace and security

1. Political and governance limitations

13. Mr. Tshisekedi's limited control of the levers of power and the political tightrope he has to walk are judged to be the first political challenges. Both houses of Parliament, most provincial governorships and most provincial legislatures are controlled by the coalition of former President Joseph Kabila, the Front commun pour le Congo (FCC). This imposes an unequal governance arrangement, with Cap pour le changement (CACH) of the new President as the junior partner, which is illustrated by the painstaking negotiations between CACH and FCC during the eight months that led to the establishment of a new coalition Government. The new President is also limited by the reportedly uncertain loyalty of the State defence and security forces

¹ Daniel Forti and Lesley Connolly, "Pivoting from crisis to development: preparing for the next wave of United Nations peace operations transitions", July 2019.

and the influence FCC has on many State officials in various ministries, agencies, courts and State-owned companies.

14. In that context of cohabitation dominated by the political coalition of Mr. Kabila, there is significant potential for political impasse. It is likely that Mr. Tshisekedi will constantly have to negotiate his decisions, “fight” for their implementation, and compromise. Whether he will be able to influence the system and, if so, to what extent remains unknown.

15. The lack of State authority and responsible State institutions fulfilling their protection responsibilities, the limited decentralization, weak governance and rampant impunity feed a vicious circle of instability. The State has been captured for decades by powerful patronage networks. Corruption has allowed those at the top of the governance structures to get rich, while those on the bottom struggle to survive. The country’s legal framework for countering corruption is not being implemented.²

16. Decentralization has stalled since the restructuring of the territory that led to the creation of 26 provinces, including provisions for the retention of 40 per cent of revenue generated within each province and the equal distribution of resources from the State to the provinces. Local elections, which would enable the conclusion of the electoral cycle as stipulated by the Constitution, are expected to be held in 2019, but risk being further delayed.

17. Land issues remain prevalent among communities in a context of competition between statutory and customary systems of land management, and are often manipulated by political actors. Land disputes are also exacerbated by conflict-related displacements leading to de facto changes of ownership of abandoned lands. This causes tensions when displaced populations return and creates incentives for new owners to sustain a certain level of instability to prevent such returns. The lack of durable solutions for internally displaced persons and refugees is directly related to this.

18. The continued lack of governance structures for the mining industry (both industrial and artisanal) and for the extraction of other resources has been a major driver of violence. It is well documented that territories’ natural resource wealth is correlated with both armed group and militia activity, and human rights violations and abuses. The Government has yet to bring the exploitation of and trade in such resources under its control, so they can generate domestic revenue and foster regional development, instead of financing armed groups.

19. The democratic space, notwithstanding notable advances, remains limited, with journalists, human rights defenders, community leaders, women leaders and ordinary citizens being constrained in their activities when they seek to hold their Government accountable, to ensure the transparency of public action and to voice community concerns. Notably, the participation of women in political leadership and governance has historically remained quite low in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, despite women’s vibrant and active leadership roles at the community and local levels. For example, there is currently no female governor in any of the 26 provinces, while only two women were elected vice-governor in the recent elections.

2. Continued security and protection crisis

20. The protection of civilians is one of the most significant challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, given the frequency and brutality of attacks on the country’s populations. They include mass killings, systematic sexual violence

² Mathias Bak, “Overview of corruption and anti-corruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo”, 8 July 2019.

against women and girls and other forms of gender-based violence, mutilations, targeted political violence and forced recruitment. Many have been displaced following the destruction of their villages and the threat of recurrent attacks.³ While the risk of mass atrocities and other crimes against humanity is particularly high in eastern provinces, the situation remains unpredictable in other provinces as well, as violence can quickly escalate anywhere, depending on local tensions, power games and possible manipulations by powerful actors in Kinshasa, as previously seen in the Kasai region, or in the town of Yumbi.⁴ In addition to the human and material devastation they cause, these atrocities fuel distrust and hatred between communities, as well as between the latter and the State, consistently victimize women, create incentives for revenge and promote narratives that grievously affect the social fabric and societal cohesion.

(a) Armed group proliferation and dynamics

21. The nearly 130 foreign and local armed groups remain significant factors of insecurity and threats to civilians, most notably in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika, some parts of Maniema, Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces, resulting in population displacement and continued human rights violations. Many of these groups fragment, reconstitute themselves and at times strike new alliances, undergoing various iterations to suit local and foreign economic and political interests.

22. Of the foreign armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), active in Beni territory in North Kivu province, stand out as the most serious security threat in the eastern part of the country. ADF is responsible for the majority of summary executions (30 per cent), all in Beni territory, through particularly deadly attacks on civilian populations.⁵ South Kivu also hosts Rwandan armed opposition groups such as the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD), which split from the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in 2016, and Burundian rebel groups including the Front national de libération (FNL), the Forces populaires du Burundi and the Résistance pour un État de droit (RED)-Tabara. The presence of these groups has the potential to fuel a proxy conflict, with devastating consequences for the local population.

23. Among the armed groups, Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R), led by “general” Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, is often cited as particularly predatory and influential.⁶ Having taken advantage of the security vacuum left after MONUSCO had closed several bases in Walikale and Masisi, NDC-R now has an area of influence of 12,000 square kilometres in North Kivu covering Masisi, Walikale and Lubero territories. Other home-grown groups have influence over important areas (such as the Mai-Mai Yakutumba and affiliated groups) and are major perpetrators of human

³ Civil society has emphatically called for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to stay in the Kasai region to protect civilians. Women, in particular, have insisted that they would be put at risk of violence if the Mission left. In Beni, civil society representatives voiced their frustration and discontent about the passivity of MONUSCO while villages were systematically being attacked by ADF. Much criticism was expressed about MONUSCO projects, such as the building of schools that were useless in situations where children were being massacred. As one community member pointed out, the United Nations seems to “care more about trees and animals [in Virunga National Park] than about Congolese being slaughtered every day”. Civil society representatives stressed that if MONUSCO was not there for the protection of civilians, they wanted it to leave.

⁴ According to the Early Warning Project, in 2018–2019, the Democratic Republic of the Congo topped the list of countries with the highest risk of mass killings.

⁵ There were 245 victims in 2018, including 55 women and 7 children.

⁶ NDC-R and ADF are responsible, respectively, for 10 per cent and 7 per cent of the human rights violations reported in conflict-affected provinces in July 2019.

rights abuses (such as the Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki, which are responsible for most cases of sexual violence, or the Nyatura, Mai-Mai Mazembe and Kamuina Nsapu, which are responsible for most of cases of child recruitment). Beside these major groups, most other armed groups can be described as militias and criminal gangs exploiting natural resources and exerting considerable pressure on local people through taxation and intimidation, largely as a result of the absence of legitimate State authority.

24. The absence of a functional national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, after the failure of multiple programmes, is a significant driver of continued insecurity. There is no real incentive for armed groups to demobilize, given that the current (third) iteration of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme for Congolese combatants is still stalled after it lost the trust and interest of donors.

25. Regional dynamics also underlie armed group dynamics. The tensions, in particular, between Rwanda and Uganda, and between Burundi and Rwanda, have fuelled the activity of armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. FDLR, while not a major threat to civilians, represents a threat multiplier as other armed groups ally with or mobilize against it. It is feared that CNRD, a splinter group that has split off from FDLR, is joining forces with armed groups in Uvira territory opposed to the Government of Rwanda and that it is being supported by Burundi and Uganda. If that is indeed the case, such a situation could contribute to a renewed cross-border conflagration. NDC-R, used against FDLR, CNRD and Rwandan rebel groups, have been reported to receive support from the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC). Foreign armed groups have patronage relations with local armed groups, which have patronage relations with local defence groups, meaning that a very small local incident has the potential to escalate to the strategic or regional level.

(b) The role of State actors

26. In the country as a whole, State security agents were responsible for 61 per cent of human rights violations documented in 2018. In conflict-affected areas, they were responsible for 52 per cent of the violations documented in 2018. Of all the parties to the conflict, the FARDC committed the largest number of human rights violations in conflict-affected provinces. In conflict-affected areas in the east, State security agents are often a key partner in the illicit activities that fuel insecurity and participate in the illegal mining of gold and other natural resources. Some units have also been reported to “subcontract warfare” and use local armed groups in their military operations against foreign armed groups. The abuses regularly perpetrated by FARDC units and high-ranking officers have undermined the confidence between local populations and State security actors, causing self-defence movements to thrive.

27. The limited progress on security sector reform is a factor behind the continued poor performance of State security forces, which can largely be attributed to lack of equipment and training, a dysfunctional salary system and poor social conditions, command-and-control issues, and inefficient planning and operations. However, many interlocutors described FARDC, with its reportedly 150,000 troops, as having the capacity to fulfil security responsibilities in the country, but lacking the willingness to play its protective role. Neither soldiers nor police officers are paid enough, nor are they paid with sufficient regularity, to incentivize them to take the personal risk required to defend and protect the population, which drives many to turn to extortion and to prey on local populations.

28. Beyond the national police and FARDC, State institutions and mechanisms mandated to protect civilians and the human rights of the population lack capacity, resources and political support. The national human rights protection system remains weak. In particular, the National Human Rights Commission is not sufficiently independent and its staff lack expertise, capacity and financial resources, relying heavily on technical and material support from the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office of MONUSCO. Civilian institutions meant to protect the rights of the population – notably the judiciary, which is needed to ensure accountability in criminal matters – are also absent outside urban centres. While international assistance to the military justice sector has improved accountability, the ordinary justice sector faces serious shortcomings. No transitional justice has been pursued and a culture of impunity dominates in the country.

3. Regional relations on the mend, but fragile

29. While the uneasy relations between Uganda and Rwanda have recently shown signs of improvement (see section B below), the relations between Rwanda and Burundi remain tense. The deterioration of the political and economic crisis in Burundi and the most recent report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (A/HRC/42/49)⁷ detailing grave human rights violations on the eve of the 2020 elections constitute additional sources of concern for the region.

30. In addition, the fragmented and stalled architecture for regional cooperation, including the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, signed in 2006, the detailed protocols of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (S/2013/131, annex), has had limited influence on the evolution of peace and the security dynamics in the country. Some regional stakeholders have questioned whether the Framework continues to be relevant, and commitments made under the agreements have yet to be properly implemented through a coherent strategy.⁸ The continued illegal exploitation of natural resources by regional stakeholders has demonstrated that there is a lack of proactive commitments from the Governments in the region. In addition, the incentives for Rwanda and Uganda to address the threat of FDLR and ADF operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo appear to be limited, given that these groups no longer seem to constitute a major, direct threat to their respective countries of origin, although their presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to threaten peace and security in the east of the country.

⁷ See also <http://webtv.un.org/media/watch/commission-of-inquiry-on-burundi-press-conference-report-to-42nd-session-of-hrc-geneva-4th-september-2019/6083360834001/?term=>.

⁸ The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region remains one of the important frameworks for peace and stability in that country and the region, and can guide the Congolese transition. However, after having been agreed on several years ago, in a different national and regional political context, some of the assumptions underpinning it have changed and its relevance, including the relevance of the national commitments, has been questioned by the previous Government and by several countries in the region, most notably Rwanda. Despite some actions taken, the lack of a coherent strategy on and a coherent follow-up to the implementation of the commitments by the Government have weakened the Framework. The Framework has also been perceived as placing a disproportionate burden on the Democratic Republic of the Congo in comparison with other countries.

4. Development and humanitarian challenges

31. Development needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are daunting⁹ and extreme poverty has increased from 71.7 per cent of the population in 2015 to 73 per cent in 2018. The country's population is among the poorest in the world, with 77.1% per cent living under the \$1.25-a-day poverty line.

32. The size of the country is a challenge in itself. Infrastructure needs are enormous and basic services (health care, education, sanitation, electricity) are out of reach for much of the population,¹⁰ which increases the role that social and economic grievances play in fuelling armed conflicts. Peace consolidation, social cohesion and sustainable development will remain elusive without economic development.

33. The humanitarian situation remains worrisome, especially in terms of health epidemics, food insecurity and displacement. The Democratic Republic of the Congo hosts the largest population of internally displaced persons of any African country.¹¹ Some areas are seeing an increase in return movements of internally displaced persons, but with an estimated 2.31 million newly displaced in 2018 and the deterioration of the situation in some pockets of insecurity in 2019, displacement remains a major humanitarian challenge. In addition, more than 815,000 Congolese refugees are being hosted in neighbouring countries, while half a million refugees from neighbouring countries are being hosted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Humanitarian access is hampered by insecurity and bureaucratic impediments, which also affect the work of national non-governmental organizations and local civil society actors. In North and South Kivu provinces, more than 60 per cent of the population faces food insecurity, with more than 20 per cent of those at an emergency level. In addition, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is exposed to major recurring hazards including earthquakes, floods, droughts and volcanic eruptions.

34. All 26 provinces are affected by epidemics, including epidemics of cholera and measles (187,509 suspected cases and 3,736 deaths reported from 1 January to 24 September 2019), as well as continued outbreaks of yellow fever and polio across the country. The date of 1 August 2019 marked one year since the Government had declared an Ebola outbreak. The outbreak poses important challenges in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri provinces and, as at 2 September, had taken 2,045 lives. In July 2019, the Ebola outbreak was declared a public health emergency of international concern. With cases declared near the borders with South Sudan and Uganda, in the North Kivu provincial capital Goma, which lies next to the border with Rwanda, and in Mwenga (South Kivu), situated not far from Burundi, the virus is far from contained and could become a regional and international challenge. The persistent mistrust of communities, exacerbated by political manipulation and threats against Ebola responders, have hindered containment.

⁹ The Democratic Republic of the Congo ranks 47 out of 54 countries on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. It remains among the least developed countries and has a structurally low Human Development Index, ranking 176 out of the 189 countries assessed. The absorptive capacity of the economy is not sufficient for the population growth and the low economic diversification makes the economy vulnerable and susceptible to shocks. The informal sector dominates the economy (60 per cent) and the ratio of public spending to the gross domestic product (GDP) is 11 per cent.

¹⁰ Spending on infrastructure is around 2 per cent, spending on social protection 1 per cent. The Democratic Republic of the Congo attracts little official development assistance (about 6 per cent of GDP). Access to electricity is available to 35 per cent of people living in urban areas, against only 1 per cent in rural areas; access to drinking water is available to 38 per cent of those living in urban areas, compared with 14 per cent in rural areas. In 2015, the deprivation rates in educational attainment stood at 28.7 per cent and in enrolment at 26.9 per cent.

¹¹ At the time of writing the present report, the estimate for the number of internally displaced persons in the country was being updated and was yet to be validated by the National Framework for Humanitarian Dialogue.

B. Opportunities for peace and security

35. Notwithstanding these challenges to peace and security, there are a number of positive national and regional developments as well as peace and resilience trends that are worth highlighting to complete the picture.

1. National opportunities

36. The peaceful elections and transfer of power were highlighted by most interlocutors as a positive opportunity for change in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The fact that elections did not lead to violent contestations and that power was effectively transferred from Mr. Kabila to Mr. Tshisekedi has been welcomed by many stakeholders in the country's civil society and the diplomatic community. Opposition figures, including Jean-Pierre Bemba, Moïse Katumbi and Mbusa Nyamwisi, have returned to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and expressed their willingness to collaborate with the new Government, which is likely to have a positive influence on local dynamics and usher in a new political era of constructive cooperation and democratic dialogue.

37. Shortly after being elected, the new President unveiled a 100-day programme containing important promises of reform. These have largely been translated into a programme the new Prime Minister presented to Parliament in early September.

38. In addition, the President has sent a positive signal with his words and actions relating to human rights, including the release of over 700 political prisoners, his announced support for accountability in the context of ongoing human rights abuses and armed violence, and his intent to improve governance and end corruption. Mr. Tshisekedi has vowed to reform the salary payment system of the security forces, to provide better health care and social protection to the national police and armed forces, and to sideline spoilers; initial action has been taken to these ends. The rotation of FARDC personnel out of certain areas has started, as has the payment of long-overdue pensions to members of the armed forces who should have retired years ago. Remarkably, the change of regime has created an unprecedented wave of spontaneous demobilization of armed groups, including Kamuina Nsapu in the Kasai region and other groups in the eastern provinces, even without a formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in place. FDLR is no longer a significant threat and the recently reported neutralization of its chief military leader by FARDC is likely to weaken it further. The Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) agreed to enter into a dialogue. The main priority will be to support the finalization and consolidation of the agreement between the Government and FRPI, as well as having a subsequent disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

39. Some observers both inside and outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo have lamented that it took CACH and FCC months to agree on a coalition Government. However, the fact that the arduous negotiations were conducted methodically and peacefully, without violent street protests, and that the institutions continued to function in the interim, is to the credit of Congolese society and its leaders. The eight-month hiatus between the accession of Mr. Tshisekedi to power and the designation of the new Government has enabled civil society, in particular women's organizations, to weigh in and call for a regionally balanced and inclusive Government. That call was heeded, as attested to by the composition of the new Government. Although the Government can be faulted for being too large (with 65 ministers and vice ministers), 12 posts are now occupied by women. While that number is comparatively low, it constitutes 18 per cent, the highest in the country's history. The newly elected provincial administrations and provincial legislative assemblies also offer an opportunity to accelerate reform, including reform aimed at

enhancing accountability for results, which the President has made one of his priorities.

40. The increased competence of the State security apparatus in certain areas is also noteworthy. Even if some elements of the State security forces continue to prey on civilians, it is important to note that they are also perceived as a trusted source of security by about half the population, as demonstrated by a poll conducted by Harvard Humanitarian Initiative.¹² In a study conducted by the Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute in South Kivu in September 2019, researchers found that non-State armed groups enjoy little popular legitimacy.

41. The national police recently achieved some success by developing the so-called operational strategies to counter insecurity.¹³ Top police officials have stated, on several occasions, that their force can handle law and order and security, even though it still lacks equipment and resources. The national police was also reported to have become more accountable and less violent in crowd control situations since 2018.¹⁴

42. Notably, FARDC was removed from the Secretary-General's list of parties that engage in the recruitment and use of children, and was reported to be making significant efforts in the fight against sexual and gender-based violence.¹⁵ FARDC also indicated a change in its approach, such as through strategies that are more centred on the protection of civilians in its fight against ADF.¹⁶ Significant progress was made with regard to, in particular, military justice. High-level prosecutions, including the trial of the warlord Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka (Nduma défense du Congo) and the issue of a warrant for the arrest of Guidon Shimiray Mwiswa (NDC-R) signal some political will to fight impunity. The adoption of a justice reform policy and priority action plan in 2017 presents an opportunity to adopt further reforms and encourage their implementation.

¹² As at December 2018, 50 per cent of the participants expressed trust that the police ensured security, compared with 48 per cent for the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) and 15 per cent for MONUSCO. In December 2015, those figures were higher: 54 per cent, 50 per cent and 24 per cent, respectively. Most respondents rated the presence of these actors as insufficient: 67 per cent, 61 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively. See P. Vinck and others, "Voices from Congo: peacebuilding and reconstruction polls", March 2019.

¹³ The operational strategies to counter insecurity rely on the establishment of toll-free numbers that the public can use to alert the police. The related call centres are to be established in urban areas and to be managed by national police. MONUSCO supports the establishment of such call centres and the fact that national police is to respond to the calls.

¹⁴ One person died after having been injured by national police during a demonstration in Goma on 30 June, but the Government reportedly instructed police officials to ensure accountability. The provincial commissioner was reportedly called to Kinshasa to account for the incident and a general was dispatched from Kinshasa to Goma to speak to all the local members of the force about their responsibility to protect civilians.

¹⁵ FARDC has adopted an action plan to improve the protection of children from rape and sexual violence, but was still included in the Secretary-General's annual list of parties that commit rape and other forms of sexual violence against children (see [A/73/907-S/2019/509](#), annex I, sect. B). FARDC does appear on the list as a party that has put in place measures to improve the protection of children. The Government has put in place a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence perpetrated by army and police personnel. In 2018, 66 FARDC commanders signed deeds of commitment by which they undertook to counter conflict-related sexual violence.

¹⁶ Officers in Beni acknowledged that their pursuit of ADF had led to retaliatory attacks against the local population. They explained that they had since shifted their approach to prioritizing the protection of civilians rather than the neutralization of the enemy.

2. An increased appetite for peace

43. The vibrant, active and resilient civil society sector in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a significant strength for peacebuilding efforts. While women, young people and historically marginalized ethnic groups remain underrepresented in political and decision-making positions, many of them continue to be vocal and committed peacebuilding actors, including in the most remote areas of the Kasai region, Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. Their ability to access power and institutions, to hold government structures accountable, to demand that rights be respected and to push for reforms is a key factor in assuring the country's long-term stability. The critical role played by the Catholic Church (Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo) in the period leading up to the most recent elections and the management of their aftermath attests to this positive influence. Civil society movements such as *Lutte pour le changement* have demonstrated the ability of citizen-led movements to act as vigilant checks on those in power. The recent opening of democratic space, if maintained, will provide additional opportunities for such groups to become accountability holders in relation to State institutions. Local elections, if they take place, could also provide a good opportunity for participatory democracy to take root in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

44. Since the beginning of 2019, there has also been greater political will to address gender inequalities and women, peace and security challenges, and the still limited representation and participation of women in political and decision-making. The President has included youth and women's empowerment among his core priorities for the country. The representation of women has qualitatively increased at the national level, although there has been no significant increase within local governance structures. It is of note that a woman who was presidential adviser on sexual and gender-based violence under the previous regime has been elected Speaker of the National Assembly, while another was appointed presidential adviser on youth and sexual and gender-based violence. In all the regions visited, the strategic review team was impressed by the dynamic leadership, commitment and competence of Congolese women despite their hardships. This serves to underscore that there is no shortage of competence among women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and that the call of the ministers for gender in the Great Lakes region for a minimum quota of 30 per cent women in all public institutions, is not beyond reach.

45. There are also endogenous structures conducive to peace, reconciliation and community-based protection, such as traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution, religious mechanisms, influential actors and community leaders.¹⁷ Exogenous initiatives for peace and mediation, such as the dialogue cycle held in Djugu, have

¹⁷ For example, so-called *baraza* are organized around traditional leaders to manage negotiated solutions and reconciliation between individuals or groups at the community, territory and provincial levels. In North Kivu Province, leaders of ethnic communities, gathered in one such *baraza*, the *Baraza Lawaze*, have sought to sensitize militias to disarmament. Nonetheless, in recent years, the authority of such mechanisms has eroded because they are not considered inclusive enough (they rarely include minorities, women or young people). Another reason is that they are in competition with the administrative authority of the State. Religious mechanisms, such as the Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Church, also contribute to conflict resolution through mediation and dialogue, and churches often take on important roles as political actors. Finally, influential individuals can have informal, spontaneous and unstructured authority that can be leveraged in conflict management. In 2018, in Bijombo, Uvira, in South Kivu Province, local community leaders demonstrated their positive influence as part of efforts to end massive violence between local communities supported by national and foreign armed groups.

also contributed to the strengthening of local capacities.¹⁸ In the framework of the MONUSCO Stabilization and Reconstruction Plan for Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, permanent local conciliation committees (such as the Consultative Commission for the Resolution of Customary Conflicts in Kasai) have been put in place at the local level to provide mediation and arbitration services in land dispute cases and to de-escalate intercommunal tensions.

3. Regional opportunities

46. The diplomacy initiatives of Mr. Tshisekedi and other regional leaders appear to be bearing fruit, judging from the various communiqués, memorandums of understanding and other agreements that crowned a series of high-level and technical meetings that took place over the past three months.

47. Discussions on strengthening economic integration are ongoing within the new axis between Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, as are discussions on partnerships for peace in the subregion. The request made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo to join the East African Community, a common market composed of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania, also presents an opportunity for regional economic integration and the orderly exploitation of natural resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda have already launched a conversation about ways to transform natural resources into a driver of shared prosperity through greater economic integration.

48. The recent bilateral, trilateral and quadrilateral meetings held between Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda show that countries in the region are ready to de-escalate tensions, resolve the issues divides them and focus on what unites them.¹⁹ The quadrilateral meeting held in Luanda in July 2019 on the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the meeting between intelligence services of the region held in Kinshasa several weeks earlier constitute equally important steps in the right direction. The Southern African Development Community (SADC), of which the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a member, also remains a relevant forum for promoting peace and security in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and overall regional economic development among its members, as reflected in the communiqué adopted following the thirty-ninth summit meeting, held in Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, in August 2019. The fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be in the chair the Regional Oversight Mechanism when it convenes can also help to revive the implementation of commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework made by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other signatories. Mr. Tshisekedi's decision to revitalize the National Oversight Mechanism denotes his determination to implement his country's commitments under the Framework.

4. International opportunities

49. International partners beyond the region are renewing or increasing their engagement with, investment in and support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Even some Member States that did not initially support the election of Mr. Tshisekedi are now starting to rally behind him. There is also a potential for

¹⁸ In Djugu, Ituri Province, MONUSCO has conducted sensitization campaigns with local authorities and organized a cycle of dialogues in which communities discuss their mutual grievances. Thanks to this approach, many issues besetting the territory have been identified and parties have started to address them.

¹⁹ Agência Angola Press, "Rwanda and Uganda sign memorandum of understanding in Luanda", 21 August 2019.

renewed interest among bilateral donors, international financial institutions and regional organizations. In 2018, some economic indicators improved, with economic growth reaching 4.1 per cent and inflation rates drastically declining from 54 per cent to 7.7 per cent. The country has massive economic potential, including but not limited to the exploitation of and trade in natural resources and hydroelectric energy, and the use of agricultural capacities, as demonstrated by the resurgence of the Congolese coffee sector. The Virunga Alliance is an example of a public-private partnership between civil society, public institutions and the private sector that has fostered peace and prosperity by promoting tourism, clean energy, and sustainable agriculture and fisheries.²⁰ In June 2019, the International Monetary Fund conducted its first article IV consultation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2015. If the new authorities are able to pursue the necessary reforms, they could secure the re-engagement of the Fund and, in turn, of major multilateral development banks and direct foreign investors.

III. Scenarios

50. The above analysis of challenges to and opportunities for peace points to plausible futures, including a positive change scenario and a worst-case scenario.

A. Best-case scenario: a transition anchored in positive change

51. The best-case scenario would see Mr. Tshisekedi managing to assert himself in the political arena and pursue a progressive reform agenda. The four-pillar programme of the new Prime Minister, presented to and approved by Parliament in early September 2019, would be pursued in good faith. The code of conduct, solemnly signed by every minister on 18 September 2019, would be scrupulously followed and those who deviate from its prescriptions would be held accountable.²¹ The coalition would survive until the next presidential elections. The political opposition would remain constructive, playing a critical role while refraining from violent action.

52. Civil society would continue to enjoy the fruits of an increased democratic space that enables it to keep a watchful eye on the performance of the Government and hold it accountable to ensure that it achieves the positive results expected, especially in the realms of human rights, media coverage and governance reform to improve socioeconomic conditions.

53. Reassured by the political stability, the international financial institutions and bilateral donors would re-invest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, expanding the budget and capacities of the Government, while pushing for governance reform, accountability and transparency. The Government would pursue a collaborative relationship with MONUSCO and create the conditions for the Mission's responsible and sustainable exit. International actors would not interfere to protect their own influence and interests in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the detriment of the country's political and economic stability.

54. The situation in Burundi might improve, predictions to the contrary notwithstanding, as might relations between Uganda and Rwanda pursuant to the

²⁰ The Virunga Alliance is working to tackle energy poverty and curb the production of illegal charcoal by harnessing the hydrological resources of Virunga National Park and thereby create sustainable sources of electricity. The hydroelectric power plant that has been built has provided power to 5,000 homes and has enabled a number of businesses in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to expand, especially in the field of agribusiness processing.

²¹ Radio Okapi, "Le Phare: Signature de l'acte d'engagement – gouvernement, les ministres la corde au cou !", 19 September 2019.

memorandum of understanding they signed in Luanda in August 2019 and the follow-up meeting held one month later in Kigali.²² The use of proxies to settle internal or external grievances would be reduced in a regional context of increased trust and improved prospects for economic integration and cooperation. Political and economic rapprochement in the region would lead to a renewed national and regional will to neutralize armed groups through coordinated regional approaches and arrangements, leading to substantial gains against the ADF, NDC-R, CNRD, FDLR and others.

55. At the national level, the Government would continue to prioritize the pacification of the eastern part of the country and develop its own plans of action to improve the protection of civilians. A newly restructured, appropriately paid and well-equipped FARDC would gradually be deployed in key unstable areas in the eastern part of the country. Long-serving military officers and troops with vested interests in their areas of operations would be rotated out without incidents. Armed groups would be contained and eventually reduced. Waves of disarmament and demobilization would continue thanks to military pressure and viable reinsertion programmes put in place following the adoption of a new disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework. Human rights violations would start decreasing in number, especially those perpetrated by State actors. The democratic space would grow thanks to legislative and structural reforms and the active involvement of civil society and international partners as accountability holders. Key legal, political and economic impediments to women's empowerment and participation at all levels of decision-making would be reduced and women would start enjoying a more protective environment and access to justice for sexual violence atrocities. The Ebola crisis would be contained.

B. Worst-case scenario: the resumption of major conflicts

56. In the worst-case scenario, the reforms announced by the President would remain rhetorical, because of either a lack of commitment or a lack of capacity, in a difficult cohabitation between the two political forces in the new Government. Deprived of the loyalty of key ministers, governors and generals, he would not have sufficient leeway to advance his political agenda. FCC would frustrate key reform attempts, and tensions could grow between it and CACH, in addition to tensions within the coalition Government. There would be significant risks of increased legal and political pressure to push the current President out of office. The presence of all key political actors from the opposition in the country could also become a destabilizing factor. The opposition Lamuka coalition could lose patience after a year of ineffective policies and contribute to political instability and popular unrest. Also, a constitutional crisis could erupt after the new administration has completed its first year in office, either with the dissolution of the National Assembly, which is one of the President's prerogatives, or with the National Assembly impeaching the President, which would aggravate tensions and instability. There would also be a risk of constitutional violations, related to the President's possible attempts to pursue political autonomy without having a majority in Parliament or in the provinces, resulting in challenges to his authority.

57. Even if the President proactively pursues his reform agenda, there are risks associated with his announced reforms that have the potential to polarize different stakeholders and threaten entrenched powerful interests. Pushing for a reform of FARDC, for example and for the rotation of troops out of conflict-affected areas, where some units and high-ranking officers are colluding with armed groups or

²² "Rwanda, Uganda agree to stop media 'propaganda' against each other", *The Chronicles* (Rwanda), 16 September 2019.

exploiting natural resources, could trigger discontent among security forces and possibly, as seen in the past, defections and rebellion.

58. The diplomatic agenda of Mr. Tshisekedi, which is based on regional cooperation and alliances, could also be perceived as facilitating the influence of Rwanda in the east of the country and lead to popular discontent. The President could be seen as prioritizing regional actors over national actors to ensure his legitimacy and as conceding too much to his neighbours.

59. The aggravation of tensions between Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda would be another component of a worst-case scenario. The promise of regional cooperation would not be realized, with increased mistrust and further tensions between Burundi and Rwanda in particular. The increased capacity of Rwandan opposition groups to threaten Kigali from the Democratic Republic of the Congo could prompt the deployment of Rwandan troops. This could trigger a ripple effect with Burundi or Uganda, which in turn might also be tempted to deploy troops to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A major Congolese insurgent group, such as NDC-R, currently reported to be receiving support from elements of FARDC, would add to the instability. Such a group could gain control in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the context of a gradual withdrawal of MONUSCO, threaten the State and be strengthened by FARDC defectors disgruntled by reform agendas and rotation plans.

60. In such a scenario, the country would face increased violence in some regions, with large-scale atrocities and major displacements in and outside the country. The Kasai crisis could resume due to the frustration of demobilized combatants who were not given options for reintegration. Overdue local elections could further polarize politics and be manipulated to stir violence in numerous parts of the country. Efforts to contain the Ebola crisis would fail, and the disease would spread into several provinces and regional countries in the region, adding to the general instability.

C. The most likely scenario: status quo and risks

61. In all likelihood, the future of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will see some elements of the best-case and worst-case scenarios, with both positive and negative trends. The most likely scenario would be the maintenance of the status quo, with incremental evolutions in the political, security and governance spheres. Despite the political will, members of the Government advocating change will face significant limitations in their capacity to act and the Government is expected to face major obstacles in implementing reforms. State security forces are likely to remain mostly predatory and armed group activity in the east is likely to continue. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts are expected to remain largely underfunded in a context of rampant corruption and limited investment in development. Tensions and disagreements within and between coalitions could lead to paralysis in Parliament and the impeachment of the President or the dissolution of the National Assembly could disrupt the fragile political stability in Kinshasa.

IV. The continued relevance of the MONUSCO mandate

A. The continued relevance of MONUSCO

62. Among the multiple tasks entrusted to MONUSCO, many have been essential to maintaining political dialogue between major stakeholders, de-escalating tensions between communities, incentivizing armed groups to disarm and demobilize,

promoting human rights, mitigating risks of mass violence and protecting civilians, all in the context of constrained political space in which the Mission had to operate.

63. In particular, the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in close collaboration with other partners such as the African Union, have contributed to an environment conducive to the peaceful transfer of power. Many interlocutors have reported that the balanced, impartial position of the MONUSCO leadership has had a positive impact. At the national and provincial levels, the political engagement and good offices pursued by the MONUSCO leadership are also reported to have helped in preventing violence from escalating, mobilizing State actors for the protection of civilians and advancing the fight against impunity and corruption.

64. There is evidence that political advocacy by MONUSCO has contributed to a progressively broadening space for women's participation in conflict prevention and political processes. Despite all the structural challenges anchored in gender norms, there is room for the Mission to continue its good offices and political advocacy to ensure that women's full and meaningful participation is embedded in an overall political strategy, rather than implemented ad hoc or opportunistically.

65. Protection of civilians was a mandated task of the United Nations Observer Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and has been for MONUSCO since it began. Over the years, MONUSCO became a laboratory in which the United Nations system could refine the protection of civilians as a multidimensional concept, develop more effective tools and mechanisms for the protection of civilians and explore the wide range of contributing military postures, police initiatives and civilian activities. Through its presence and proactive activities, MONUSCO has contributed to preventing attacks on civilian populations and thus saved lives. The ability of MONUSCO to adapt its integrated protection-of-civilians approach to a context of limited means and budget cuts, including through a shift from protection by presence to protection by projection, can also be seen as a positive lesson for the transition.²³ Despite undeniable constraints, the mix of presence and projection enabled the Mission to cover a greater area and to respond to major protection crises successfully.

66. The shift to community-based approaches has been an important achievement of the Mission. The Mission has set up a robust system for the protection of civilians that strengthens resilience and places communities and local State actors at the core of local protection plans. The development of a community-based approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to provide support to both ex-combatants and the communities that host them is a valuable initiative in that regard. The operational strategies to counter insecurity that have been developed jointly by United Nations police and national police have also improved the trust of communities in the national police through the establishment of free hotlines for the population and United Nations police support to police interventions in response to calls received on those hotlines.

67. The work of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office has also contributed to substantial gains in the fight against impunity and remains highly relevant in a context of increased human rights violations. As a result of technical support provided to national judicial authorities for the organization of joint investigations and trials, including mobile court hearings supported by the prosecution support cells, there has

²³ Because of the reduction in troops and resources, MONUSCO has shifted away from its traditionally static deployment towards a more mobile and flexible posture to address protection threats across a larger geographical area in close cooperation with the Mission's civilian component. While a more agile military deployment could enable the Mission to address increased militia violence, such an approach would require increased mobility and flexibility and greater logistical capacity.

been a steady increase in the number of convictions for serious human rights violations and international crimes, including crimes against humanity and war crimes. The National Human Rights Commission was given an “A” accreditation by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions after many years of support from UNJHRO. The Office’s engagement also led to the establishment of a human rights commission within the National Assembly and to building the capacity of civil society to promote and protect human rights. Continuous advocacy and support have led to many positive developments, including the increased competence of military prosecutors and the Government’s commitment to a zero-tolerance policy for sexual violence by army and police personnel. Training for FARDC in human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces to encourage the deployment of FARDC units and officers with respectable human rights backgrounds, has increased awareness of human rights principles within the national army and incentivized undertaking remedial actions in response to violations. Armed groups have also demonstrated efforts to liberate children from their ranks, thanks to the work of the Mission’s child protection section.

68. In view of the above scenarios and the challenges that remain, the priority tasks of MONUSCO will remain political engagement and good offices, the protection of civilians, community engagement and the promotion of human rights, with strategic communication playing a critical role.

B. Questioning assumptions underlying mandated tasks

69. To ensure the continued relevance of these priority tasks, it is critical to question some of the assumptions that have traditionally informed the mandates that have prescribed those tasks and challenge the way in which they are implemented. Without such a critical look, the Mission will continue to be burdened by unrealistic expectations and short-term remedies that unwittingly allow Congolese stakeholders to shirk their own responsibility to address the causes of conflict, many of which are the result of home-grown governance deficits.

1. Neutralization of armed groups

70. The first concept that needs to be revisited is the neutralization of armed groups. Already in 2009, the Mission was conducting robust joint operations with FARDC against FDLR. In 2013, MONUSCO was mandated to conduct joint or unilateral offensive operations to neutralize armed groups. Its successful campaign, alongside FARDC, against the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) rebels was the fruit of a remarkable alignment of factors. Among those were the political will of the Government; the professionalism, proactive stance and leadership of FARDC; the support of regional actors; effective diplomatic efforts leading to the cessation of regional support to M23; the motivation of new United Nations troops to embrace their robust posture; and the conventional structure and tactics of M23, which operated as a regular army. Since that time, the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade has embarked on operations against ADF and FDLR but was not able to defeat either of these groups decisively. The factors that had facilitated the victory against the M23 had vanished. Whatever action was attempted was hampered by the limited will of the Government to tackle armed groups, disagreements between the Government and MONUSCO about which armed groups to prioritize, the reduced interest of Rwanda and Uganda to address ADF and FDLR and the asymmetric methods used by ADF, for which United Nations troops (particularly the Intervention Brigade) was ill prepared.

71. Despite this change of circumstances, there continued to be a relentless push for militarized responses, particularly against ADF, often on the basis of a simplified

narrative reducing it to a single, homogeneous enemy and labelling it as a “terrorist” or an “extremist” group with connections to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS). Although ADF is known to espouse an extremist ideology and use terrorist tactics with devastating consequences, many analysts, including the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1533 (2004) (see S/2019/469), have found no evidence of a direct connection between it and ISIS and have cautioned against such a simplification. Experts further point out that the name ADF covers many factions and armed actors with various interests and motives.²⁴ Because of calls to neutralize ADF by force, many national and regional stakeholders have regularly pressed MONUSCO and its Intervention Brigade to get better at conducting counter-insurgency operations in jungle environments so as to be effective against ADF. Recently, a mobile training team was even deployed from Brazil to strengthen their skills, raising expectations of more robust and possibly unilateral offensive operations.

72. Five years into its military campaign, MONUSCO had failed to neutralize ADF and had been the object of the deadliest attacks in its history. The impact of offensive operations on, in particular, the protection of civilians remains controversial, as these operations seem to have escalated the violence in the country to its highest levels in a decade, caused collateral damage and triggered retaliatory attacks against communities.

73. The political manipulation of armed groups and of intercommunal conflict is a major factor underlying the dynamics connected with armed groups. Most of the so-called armed groups are self-defence and Mai-Mai groups anchored in local communities that are nevertheless often controlled and manipulated by influential politicians or businessmen, territorial administrators or high-ranking FARDC officers at the provincial or national levels.²⁵ The bigger, more structured armed groups also have close links with national and regional players and sometimes benefit from the complicity of State security actors.²⁶

74. United Nations peacekeeping has never been the right tool for waging war and has historically been more successful in supporting political processes rather than military operations. In the absence of an overarching political strategy for engaging with key armed groups and addressing the causes that gave rise to them, there is no military solution to many of the security crises plaguing the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While this has been affirmed in the 2017 strategic review, the Security Council does not seem to have paid heed, as evidenced by the militarized language in paragraph 29 (i) (d) of its resolution 2463 (2019).

75. The focus on neutralizing armed groups seems to have largely overshadowed the activities of the civilian component of the Mission. Most Congolese people identify MONUSCO with its military component. This underscores the strategic importance of public information and communication going forward, not only to

²⁴ Jason Stearns, “Inside the ADF rebellion: a glimpse into the life and operations of a secretive jihadi armed group”, November 2018.

²⁵ Local tensions and armed groups are often manipulated by territorial administrators, political actors and influent leaders based in Kinshasa, as demonstrated in the Kasai region, for example.

²⁶ Jason Stearns and others, “Congo’s inescapable state: the trouble with the local”, *Foreign Affairs*, 16 March 2017. As noted in the article, “it is hard to find a local dispute in Congo that is divorced from elite politics. Most of the protracted communal conflicts in eastern Congo and elsewhere in the country have been provoked, instrumentalized, or sustained by regional, national, or provincial political actors who exploit popular grievances, using inflammatory rhetoric to rally public opinion against their opponents and armed groups to target them. It is primarily violence by armed groups that sustains conflicts between communities, rather than community divisions that produce violence. Even disputes that may seem purely local are often deeply intertwined with national politics.”

dispel the above assumptions, but also to enhance the population's understanding of the Mission's mandate when it comes to the use of force.

2. Protection of civilians

76. While the protection of civilians remains a priority concern in the eastern part of the country and the Kasai region, the protection of civilians by MONUSCO has been fraught with several pitfalls and will need to be revisited in the context of the transition.

77. MONUSCO has pursued an output-focused, mission-driven protection strategy. So far MONUSCO has worked to perfect its own system, strategies and tools for the protection of civilians. This was essential to improve the response of peacekeepers to violence against local populations and save lives, but has tended to diminish the primary role of State authorities in assuming their protection responsibilities and to reduce the Government's accountability as regards the protection of civilians. The innovative tools developed, such as the joint protection teams, community liaison assistants and community alert networks, were useful to serve and strengthen the internal functions of the Mission, but have shown little success in terms of national ownership and buy-in.

78. Moreover, the Mission's approach to the protection of civilians is generally disconnected from the overarching political strategy needed to sustain local gains. The Mission is working hard to prevent and respond to violence against civilians all over the country in what has become a daily, military-focused, never-ending task that often distracts it from the political work that is needed to address the root causes of violence against civilians. Multiple failures to protect civilians led to increasing calls for a more robust use of force, eventually leading to the current mandate in which offensive operations are an integral part of the workstream for the protection of civilians. If the exit strategy is to be responsible and sustainable, MONUSCO should stop operating as a firefighter and instead invest political capital in incubating a robust political strategy aimed at ensuring that State actors fulfil their primary responsibility to protect. The multi-pronged, politically driven strategy that brought about the demobilization of FRPI is an example worth emulating.

3. Stabilization and the "projectization" of peace

79. The assumptions behind the MONUSCO stabilization approach also need to be revisited. The focus on stabilization led to short-term, project-driven peace efforts without a clear overarching, mission-wide political strategy driving multidimensional efforts by all components. The various MONUSCO sections have tended to conduct activities and projects in a siloed way, sometimes duplicating efforts or missing analysis already produced by another section. The community violence reduction activities, quick impact projects and activities of the Civil Affairs Section and the Stabilization Support Unit have undoubtedly helped to reduce local tensions, build communities' resilience and de-escalate conflicts, but these initiatives have not always connected to higher-level political efforts to address spoilers, enablers and structural causes of crises. The Mission has become an enormous machine undertaking programmatic activities that could be conducted more effectively and sustainably by the United Nations country team, by partners or sometimes by local actors. There was a consensus among the review team that it was necessary to stop multiplying the number of short-term projects aimed at filling the numerous gaps that can only be filled through systemic policy changes.²⁷

²⁷ Stearns and others, "Congo's inescapable state".

80. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security sector reform, have been particularly affected by this gap-filling approach due to fundamental political deadlock and the absence of national strategies. In the absence of an appropriate and functional national framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and of a clear policy on integration within the national army, the Mission has started to develop plans to provide armed groups willing to disarm with short-term alternatives. Those include small initiatives and projects to reduce community violence and support short-term reinsertion within communities, while solutions based on reintegration are still lacking.

4. Capacity-building

81. Capacity-building activities and support to State capacities are also widely recognized as important multipliers for strengthening good governance and ensuring that government institutions fulfil their role and provide the services expected by the community. However, the long-term added value of a peacekeeping mission for such activities, in comparison with the United Nations country team or other partners, needs to be reconsidered to ensure an effective transition. Prolonged capacity-building and assistance can diminish State ownership and leadership, and become a never-ending enterprise perpetuating the status quo and the inertia of local stakeholders.

V. Conditions for a responsible exit of MONUSCO

82. As noted earlier in the present report, the onus to create the conditions for a responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO lies first and foremost on the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Going forward, the mandate of MONUSCO should be designed to support the actions that national stakeholders commit themselves to taking in order to meaningfully address the drivers of instability and violence that the Security Council has thus far considered to be threats to international peace and security. The new President and his team have already launched some of those actions, and those now need to be integrated into a whole-of-government transformative strategy that leverages existing national and regional opportunities, consolidates gains and lays the foundations for durable peace and inclusive development. In his inaugural speech before the National Assembly held in early September 2019 on the occasion of the investiture of his new Government, the Prime Minister articulated key elements of such a strategy.

83. Given that the Government had only just been installed, the strategic review team was unable to secure the official views of relevant cabinet ministers on the best way to ensure a responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO. Nonetheless, the strategic review team did meet with some senior government officials and other key national stakeholders, including civil society representatives, to discuss what the authorities need to do to address the enduring challenges to peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and create the conditions for a responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO. On the basis of those interactions, a summary is offered below of the key political and institutional reform commitments that could serve as a basis for a transition compact aimed at sustaining peace that will guide the upcoming transition, as suggested in paragraphs 145 to 154 below.

A. Political conditions

84. Tangible regional cooperation initiatives will be critical if peace gains are to be anchored in the long term and the drivers of violence in the eastern part of the country are to be addressed. As indicated earlier, the outcome of the quadrilateral summit

between Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda held in July and the SADC summit held in August 2019, which was focused on security stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, are steps in the right direction.²⁸ The memorandum of understanding signed in August 2019 between Rwanda and Uganda, which was aimed at easing tensions between the two countries, is considered an equally promising development towards greater regional security and economic cooperation. The Coordinator of the National Oversight Mechanism expressed the determination of Mr. Tshisekedi to implement the country's commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. This includes deepening security sector reform, reforming the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration effort, consolidating State authority through decentralization, delivering basic socioeconomic services, and advancing reconciliation, tolerance and democratization.

85. The pacification of the eastern part of the country, where most foreign and local armed groups operate, is a declared priority of Mr. Tshisekedi.²⁹ A multi-pronged strategy favouring dialogue and negotiations along with military pressure such as that brought to bear on FRPI was cited as an example to be replicated in dealing with other armed groups, including ADF. The President's decision to appoint a personal envoy to pursue discussions with the group is a first step in the right direction.

86. In that regard, the Government should demonstrate its commitment to deploy professional FARDC troops able and willing to neutralize armed groups in areas where they threaten peace and security. The recent rotation of troops at certain locations and the planned dispatch of two FARDC brigades to conflict zones are equally promising steps.

87. In addition, the Government must demonstrate its firm commitment to neutralizing spoilers fuelling violence, as stressed by a number of key interlocutors within and outside the Government. In particular, there is a need to investigate and prosecute military and political actors who sponsor armed violence against civilians, violate the arms embargo by assisting armed groups militarily or financially,³⁰ and participate in the illegal exploitation of and trade in natural resources.

88. The Government should adopt a well-funded new national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework in the near future, as it recently committed to doing. In that regard, the President has expressed opposition to the indiscriminate integration of armed groups into FARDC. Those reintegrated should be properly vetted, selected on the basis of FARDC recruitment needs and established standards, trained and ready to serve anywhere in the country. The Government should further commit to devising concrete strategies for the reinsertion and reintegration of ex-combatants, with specific attention paid to the resilience of communities where ex-combatants are reintegrated and with the provision of sustainable economic opportunities to prevent demobilized combatants from returning to the armed groups.

²⁸ Southern African Development Community (SADC), Communiqué of the thirty-ninth SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government, August 2019.

²⁹ The Government has already issued a warrant for the arrest of the leader of Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R), Guidon Shimiray Mwissa. His actual arrest and trial would send a meaningful signal that the Government is indeed determined to fight impunity and no longer tolerates control by armed groups.

³⁰ In its resolution [1493 \(2003\)](#), the Security Council demanded that all States, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, ensure that no direct or indirect assistance, especially military or financial assistance, is given to the movements and armed groups present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

89. The Government's commitment to improving the protection of civilians by means of a dedicated, robust and multidimensional national protection strategy is also of key importance. Some officials indicated that the Government should fulfil its responsibility to protect civilians in areas where MONUSCO is not present. Ultimately, institutional and governance reforms will enable civilians to enjoy minimal standards of protection. However, in the meantime, and until protection is treated as a part of good governance, there is an urgent need for initiatives relating specifically to the protection of civilians and for activities and tools owned and led by Congolese actors at the national, provincial and local levels. The Government, with the support of MONUSCO, should therefore commit to developing and implementing such a protection strategy for conflict-affected areas. Such a strategy should be politically led, should include concrete comprehensive measures to prevent or respond to protection concerns and should involve the various government entities.

90. In addition to providing physical protection there should be concrete action to decentralize, to allocate the necessary resources to all provinces for the proper functioning of State security, law enforcement and the judiciary, and to support provincial development plans.

91. A constructive national approach to local conflict resolution, including through the formalization of dedicated structures linking the local and the national levels, is critical. The announcement of an action plan for the resolution of land issues is an important commitment in that regard.

92. Women in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have proved to be important peace brokers and, with their initiatives, have contributed to trust and confidence-building within their communities. In that connection there is a need for targeted and dedicated investments to translate the current momentum into a political constituency favouring sustainable peace. Efforts to increase women's representation in traditional peacemaking structures should continue.

B. Institutional reform

93. Adopting and implementing the necessary security and rule of law reforms should be a priority commitment by the Government to ensure that the State actors deployed provide the services expected by the population.

94. There should be a firm commitment to pursue the much-needed security sector reform. The reported intention of the Government to relaunch a dialogue with its major international partners on security sector reform is a welcome development. The Government has already begun to rotate FARDC personnel out of certain areas, is considering the systematization of the payment of salaries using an electronic system and has started to pay pensions for members of FARDC who should have retired years ago. The professionalization of defence and security forces, the improvement of their working conditions by providing, among other things, proper encampments, health care for force members and their families, and pensions for force members who should have already retired, will go a long way towards enhancing morale and stemming predatory practices. The Government should further demonstrate its commitment to the professionalization of the army by establishing clear recruitment, vetting and training processes and standards based on the programmatic law it will adopt and by analysing the army's needs. It should put in place its own systems and policies ensuring human rights due diligence among national armed forces. To further restore State authority, efforts should be made to validate the new five-year action plan of the national police for the period 2018–2022 and to implement the long-term strategic framework for the period 2010–2025. Moreover, to contribute to building trust between State actors and the wider population, dedicated efforts must be made to

ensure that the security sector is gender responsive by enhancing women's representation and investing in systems through which women can inform and influence security priorities, such as oversight mechanisms or social contracts with security actors. Efforts must also be made to systemize the inclusion of female ex-combatants and women associated with armed groups, and to address political, structural and social barriers to women's participation in the security sector.

95. The Government should commit to strengthening, funding and supporting the National Human Rights Commission and ensuring its presence at the provincial level alongside provincial human rights committees. The establishment of national mobile teams tasked with providing training and mentoring, supporting prosecutions in the military and civilian justice systems, and conducting special investigations, should also be considered.

96. The democratization process should continue. Women's increased participation in public institutions and decision-making, including in local governance mechanisms, and the upholding of political rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of expression and of peaceful assembly and association, must be promoted and safeguarded.

97. By releasing about 700 political prisoners, Mr. Tshisekedi has committed to opening up democratic space and improving human rights. During his inaugural address, on 24 January, he committed to turning the media into a real fourth estate. On World Press Freedom Day, he pledged to turn the media into one of the key motors of the rule of law. The closure of an opposition television channel in June, however, was a concern. The Government should guarantee that no one is arrested, detained or prosecuted simply for expressing their opinions or for peacefully exercising their human rights and that the media have the space to act as an actual check on those in power.

98. To guarantee the preservation and extension of the democratic space in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is necessary that the Government commit to adopting the legislative frameworks needed for that, such as by reforming the justice sector and adopting legal frameworks protecting civil society organizations, human rights defenders, journalists and the media, and implementing the 30 per cent gender quota enshrined in the Constitution, the national law on sexual and gender-based violence, and the law on gender parity. Furthermore, it would be important to advocate for and support the adoption of a code of conduct for political parties that reinforces the participation of women in politics and ensures an environment protecting against political violence and other gendered norms that lead to the exclusion of women.

99. Concrete steps to fight corruption with the help of an independent anti-corruption body and specific legislation, and to increase the transparency of public affairs will also be crucial. Initial steps taken by the new Government towards enhancing accountability of those in government are welcome. A specific commitment to a transitional justice process for victims of mass atrocities and to the strengthening of national accountability mechanisms to ensure that the documentation of human rights violations and abuses is followed up on, is crucial to the Congolese population.³¹

³¹ Many civil society interlocutors have made reference to the OHCHR mapping report on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in which human rights abuses committed between 1993 and 2003 were documented (OHCHR, *République démocratique du Congo 1993–2003, rapport du projet mapping concernant les violations les plus graves des droits de l'homme et du droit international humanitaire commises entre mars 1993 et juin 2003 sur le territoire de la République démocratique du Congo*, August 2010). They have praised the report, but at the same time asked for measures that go beyond reports and investigations, in particular more visible accountability measures against perpetrators.

100. The strategic review team recognizes that it may be unrealistic to expect that the above political and institutional reforms will take place during the recommended three-year transition preceding the exit of MONUSCO. He is, however, of the view that initiating their implementation will sustain the momentum for positive change and create a propitious environment for responsible and sustainable contributions by MONUSCO during the transition period.

VI. Adjustment of the tasks entrusted to MONUSCO going forward

101. The overarching exit goal of MONUSCO is that national stakeholders are enabled to create and maintain the minimum conditions that would make it possible for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consolidate gains and start moving from stabilization to positive peace and inclusive development.

102. The priorities of MONUSCO going forward will be planned and carried out in support of that goal. They will be guided by the principles of national ownership and leadership, the primacy of politics, and self-sustainability that leverage the existing infrastructure for peace.³² In support of these priorities, the Mission will, once the appropriate resources have been secured, gradually transfer the responsibility for its previously mandated tasks to national authorities, the United Nations country team and other international partners who play a supportive role. It will also put in place the necessary processes to manage the transition (see paras. 145–154 below.)

A. Priority tasks of MONUSCO

1. Political engagement and good offices

(a) Support for key national reforms and policies

103. The top priority task that should be entrusted to MONUSCO during the forthcoming transition period is a sustained and proactive political role to support the adoption and implementation of the various governance, institutional and legislative reforms, some of which have been indicated above. Priority attention should be given to reforms and policies that would create, in the short to medium term, conditions conducive to the responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO. Among those are security sector reform, a new national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework, a robust human rights and rule of law agenda, a protective environment for the active participation of citizens in shaping decisions that affect their lives and durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and people in need of humanitarian assistance. Both security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration should be framed within frameworks for and approaches to gender equality and women, peace and security. An effective national civilian structure that manages key mining activities could also benefit from political advocacy by MONUSCO.

104. With respect to security sector reform, MONUSCO should encourage bilateral actors and donors to provide the necessary technical and financial support to

³² [S/PRST/2017/27](#) (“The Security Council reaffirms the primary responsibility of national Governments and authorities in identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities for sustaining peace”. “The Security Council reaffirms the importance of national ownership and leadership in peacebuilding, whereby the responsibility for sustaining peace is broadly shared by the Government and all other national stakeholders”. “The Security Council stresses that the primacy of politics should be the hallmark of the approach of the United Nations to the resolution of conflict”).

consolidate the gains achieved thus far and to support the implementation of the key components of that reform agenda. The Mission should strengthen its good offices to support the adoption of a programmatic law on the armed forces and the implementation of existing legislation on the military, the police and the judiciary that has not always been respected or translated into policies, plans and actions.

105. Through its good offices, the Mission should also continue to help the Government to develop a revitalized national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework based on a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy that can serve as a reference for tailored, local-level disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives. Such a strategy should include realistic and implementable provisions concerning armed groups and, particularly, their reintegration, without which disarmament and demobilization would be unsustainable. The Mission should also seek to enhance coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and with neighbouring countries to promote regional programmes that build on disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement and to refine the current “FDLR-centric” framework for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement to adequately address ADF and other, more recent Burundian and Rwandan armed groups.

106. The Mission should also invest in good offices and political engagement and advocacy to support the first and third tiers relating to the protection of civilians (i.e., protection through dialogue and engagement, and the establishment of a protective environment, respectively), by supporting national, provincial and local authorities in adopting and implementing relevant governance reforms, policies and actions, taking into account sexual and gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence and child protection. The approach of MONUSCO to the protection of civilians should be based on comprehensive and politically led prevention and response plans to shift away from the militarization of protection. The Mission should therefore pursue political strategies to support the Government in neutralizing spoilers that foment instability at the national, provincial and local levels. Such a strategy should be based on a careful assessment of the local dynamics and an analysis of the way in which incentives and interests are shaped in order to identify entry points to influence actors at all levels. An analysis of gendered drivers should also be an integral part of such an exercise.

107. As the protection approach of MONUSCO would be reoriented to support nationally led protection strategies and activities, the Mission’s good offices would also be intended to support the Government in building its own system to protect civilians. The Mission should further provide strategic advice to promote human rights and the rule of law, and advocate for the reform of the justice system and the adoption of a revised legal framework enhancing the protection of civil society organizations, female peace builders, human rights defenders and journalists, and the long-pending prison reform. Encouraging specific legislation and policies, and reducing bureaucratic hurdles to protect the activities and access of humanitarian actors will also be of key importance.

108. Good offices should also be aimed at helping the Government to design durable solutions for refugees, internally displaced persons and those in need of humanitarian aid, in close coordination with the humanitarian country team and development partners. At the local level, supporting provincial authorities in encouraging peaceful coexistence and trust between host communities and displaced populations, and to create the conditions for the voluntary return and re-integration of internally displaced persons, will require the Mission’s attention.

109. For sustainable peace to be established in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in each of the conflict-affected provinces, long-standing

issues of identity and inclusion, land ownership and access, displacement and resettlement, and customary power succession need to be addressed. MONUSCO should address conflict drivers at the local level and facilitate peace enablers with the help of political tools, such as supporting community engagement and structured dialogue at the local level; engaging with key government actors and ministries at the national level and advocating with them in coordination with the United Nations country team or other relevant partners; and engaging with regional and multilateral organizations such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC and the African Union, in coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region.

(b) Facilitating dialogue

110. At the national level, the Mission's leadership should also monitor, safeguard and, where appropriate, discretely nurture the political consensus that has made it possible for a new Government to emerge after nearly eight months of peaceful but arduous negotiations. Given the unique composition of the Government and the uneven distribution of the various centres of executive and legislative power among political elites, such a consensus is critical for the effective functioning of the Government and for the achievement of the above-mentioned reforms during the forthcoming transition preceding the exit of MONUSCO.

111. Engaging with State and non-State actors with influence on conflict dynamics at the regional, national and local levels, including the armed groups themselves, should also be part of that priority task. Support to dialogue processes, local peace agreements, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration negotiations between the Government and armed groups should be intensified in the framework of a nationally led political and multisectoral strategy for pacifying the eastern part of the country. Dialogue should be pursued to support State and non-State actors in preventing and de-escalating intercommunal violence and in deterring armed groups from threatening civilians.

112. The Mission should also dedicate itself to the promotion of a legal, political and socioeconomic environment conducive to the active and effective participation of Congolese women in the regional, national and local dialogues, and across all spheres of decision-making at the national, provincial and local levels. As is clear from multiple studies on post-conflict transitions, unleashing the leadership potential of women at this critical juncture will be of key significance to the sustainability of the peace dividends that will accrue from the implementation of reforms.

113. At the regional level, MONUSCO should, in close collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, also support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in implementing the various regional agreements, including the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework, particularly those of its provisions on reducing the threats of armed groups operating in the country.

(c) Strategic communication and analysis

114. For reasons outlined above, strategic public information and communication will be a key component of the transition strategy that will enable the Mission to advocate for and support the reform agenda, encourage accountability, promote dialogue and manage expectations as it moves towards its exit.

115. To signal its new transition-oriented mindset, MONUSCO needs to shift its mission-driven public information strategy away from highlighting its own success stories to disseminating narratives on national and local achievements. That effort could include celebrating the early dividends arising from the implementation of the Government's governance, security and development reform agenda, both at the

national and the provincial levels. Publicizing the success of FARDC, the national police and other State actors will incentivize them to improve their performance and help to restore trust among the population.

116. The Mission should also support calls for the protection of a democratic space enabling civil society to hold State institutions accountable and for providing civil society with the space and the means to support its messaging, such as by developing independent, professional and protected media. Such an effort would also entail championing community-based resilience and vigilance in the face of adversity and amplifying the voice of civil society actors, including women's and youth groups. All these steps should be taken with a view to encouraging their emulation among all national stakeholders and promoting a sense of national responsibility and accountability. Given that radio continues to be the primary source of information in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and an adequate legal framework for press freedom and protection is lacking, the Mission's Radio Okapi will play a central role in that communication strategy. Radio Okapi remains an indispensable political tool for MONUSCO and the United Nations system as a whole, particularly in a period of transition, and will need to be retained as a priority. The combination of its unparalleled nationwide coverage and impartial reputation will provide the Mission with a dynamic and widely accessible platform from which to communicate and amplify its good offices work.

117. To effectively provide good offices at both the national and the regional levels, the Mission will also have to have a strong analysis, monitoring and investigation capacity. The Mission should strengthen its analysis of political actors and dynamics, comprehensively map spoilers and enablers, and support national actors in engaging with them or neutralizing them to address drivers of instability. The Mission should draw on all its specialist expertise to inform its political strategy and strategies towards armed groups, and avoid ad hoc and unsustainable engagement.

2. Human rights and the protection of civilians

(a) Human rights monitoring, investigations and advocacy

118. Human rights will be the main barometer for judging the progress of various peace, security and rule of law efforts. Human rights should, therefore, systematically help to inform the Mission's good offices and political engagement and thereby support the host State in prioritizing reforms, policies and actions that will create a protective environment for the civilian population. MONUSCO would support the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in investigating and prosecuting human rights abuses, and taking accountability and mitigation measures. Human rights monitoring, investigation and sensitization of all parties to the conflict should inform the political strategy of the Mission at all levels.

119. Therefore, even as the Mission focuses on conflict-affected areas, UNJHRO should keep a national scope for its monitoring, advocacy and investigative activities. For true reconciliation and lasting peace, the Mission needs to work to ensure that those who have committed serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law do not go unpunished. In particular, it should use its good offices to ensure that security sector reform, governance reform, and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration do not accommodate those who have perpetrated abuses. The Mission should also support the State in considering transitional justice processes.

(b) Independent capacity to protect civilians

120. In view of the transition, the Mission's approach to the protection of civilians should shift from a mission-driven system to supporting a nationally led strategy. In that regard it should intensify its work to transfer tasks and encourage the national

leadership in relation to the protection of civilians. However, while shifting to a nationally led protection strategy and system, MONUSCO should maintain an independent capacity to protect civilians in an effective, timely and responsible way from threats of physical violence in its area of operations.

121. While national ownership and leadership are key principles that should guide the transition process, there are inherent challenges to operationalizing national ownership in a context in which the commitment of national actors to peace and their willingness to put citizens at the centre of sustainable development cannot be guaranteed. Keeping an independent capacity to protect will ensure a responsible and people-centred approach to the transition in a context in which a possible deterioration to a worst-case scenario cannot be ruled out.

122. To do so, MONUSCO should keep a flexible, modular and dynamic approach to protecting civilians and retain the authority to use all means necessary to protect civilians. Its brigades will continue to ensure the right balance between presence and projection throughout the transition process. Through its presence, the Mission's military force should continue to protect civilians in the six conflict-affected provinces and gradually withdraw as FARDC takes over strategic positions. United Nations police should strengthen its presence and community policing in urban areas and deal with non-military threats, including militias and intercommunal violence, until the national police is able to manage functional police stations and operational strategies to counter insecurity in those areas. In parallel, MONUSCO should strengthen its capacity to protect through projection, while including Government officials in projection initiatives to prevent and respond to crises erupting in the six conflict-affected provinces. If its mandate is extended, the Intervention Brigade should focus on supporting FARDC in conducting offensive operations against priority armed groups representing a major threat to civilians and serve as an additional robust capacity to prevent and respond to major threats to civilians.

123. The Mission should retain the analytic capacity to prevent and respond to major concerns relating to the protection of civilians, including through its system of community liaison and early warning. The Joint Mission Analysis Centre, the Political Affairs Section, the Civil Affairs Section and all other relevant sections should be co-located and consolidated to help to ensure they work closely together to identify potential levers and points of pressure relating to the protection of civilians and pursue effective interventions at various levels. The establishment of mobile monitoring and reporting teams would help to maintain the capacity to conduct multidisciplinary analyses of threats and vulnerabilities relating to the protection of civilians as the Mission draws down. Human rights monitoring, reporting and analysis, including on conflict-related sexual violence, will continue to produce early warnings and inform the development of nationally led strategies for the protection of civilians.

124. The current approach to the protection of women is based on the perception that women are always victims. While it is imperative to take that approach as part of the Mission's mandate, the focus on prevention and response will have to be set in a political framework in which women's networks are recognized as able and equal partners in protection.

3. Strengthened civil society as a priority exit goal

125. Investing in the peace ecosystem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be crucial to the transition. The proposed conceptual shift towards national ownership and leadership concerns not only the State, but all national actors. The United Nations and its partners should identify and empower those individuals, groups, institutions

and mechanisms that can drive positive change at all levels and build an infrastructure for peace.

126. In addition to providing its good offices to support State institutions, MONUSCO should help to ensure that civil society, including human rights defenders, women's organizations and the media, has the capacity, space, structures and mechanisms to serve as the primary actor holding the new Government accountable.

127. Civil society actors should also be encouraged to actively engage in reconciliation and mediation efforts at the local and national levels. Where doing so can have a positive impact, they should be integrated into dialogues and other engagement efforts with non-State armed groups and with spoilers and enablers influencing conflict dynamics. A key task during the transition will be the training and supporting of journalists, mediators, human rights advocates, reconciliation mechanisms and commissions, and local protection committees, in a gender-balanced manner, and in gradual partnership with the United Nations country team.

B. Tasks to be transferred with support from MONUSCO

128. In parallel to those priority tasks, MONUSCO should initiate the responsible transfer of the tasks listed below, which would be informed by the transition compact for sustaining peace discussed in paragraphs 145 to 154 below, where guidelines and modalities are suggested for such a transfer with a view to ensuring that it is self-sustainable.

1. Programmatic tasks

129. Programmatic tasks should gradually be transferred to the Government, the United Nations country team and other partners, as a means to support national stakeholders in gradually assuming their responsibility for peace and security. Nonetheless, the Mission should retain advisory capacities, as those will be crucial in supporting the implementation of the Government's reforms and in supporting State actors as they perform their duties relating to administration, defence, security and the rule of law at both the national and provincial levels. Those advisory capacities can be provided through joint activities, mentoring, training, the dispatch of mobile teams and co-location arrangements, and by providing specialist advice where needed.

130. All stabilization activities should be transferred to the Government and the United Nations country team in the first year of the transition, with MONUSCO retaining only a senior stabilization adviser at the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to ensure coherence between its good offices work and the stabilization activities of the United Nations country team.

131. The Mission should work towards transferring justice-related programmatic activities to the Ministry of Justice and the national justice system while continuing to support the rule of law through its good offices and strategic advice. During the first year of the transition, MONUSCO prosecution support cells should focus on building a national prosecution support team that can take over its activities in the second year, including mobile support to prosecutors in various parts of the country. Co-located government-provided personnel (i.e., personnel provided to the Mission by Member States) will provide on-the-job mentoring to build that team, while prosecution support cells could continue to assist in prosecuting serious crimes attributed to security services and priority armed groups, thus supporting the military justice system in conforming to international standards and improving the coordination among partners in the fight against impunity. A year into the transition, the Mission should stop its programmatic activities related to justice while continuing to support reforms with the help of its good offices and strategic communication.

132. In addition to supporting the reform agenda relating to the prison system, the corrections unit would continue to support national actors in ensuring that high-profile detainees are secure by providing mentoring and training in priority prisons that house former members of the security services or armed groups who have been charged with serious crimes fuelling the conflict. The priority objective during the transition period should be the establishment of a functional national mobile training cell to ensure that national corrections personnel build their own internal capacities in that area. That would enable MONUSCO to transfer programmatic tasks to the Government and the United Nations country team at the end of the first year.

133. FARDC should be trained in developing its own capacity to clear mines, dispose of explosive ordnance, and register and safely manage weapons and ammunition. As MONUSCO draws down and sustainable donor support is secured, the United Nations Mine Action Service can shift from reliance on the Mission budget to reliance on voluntary funds and can become a member of the United Nations country team to continue long-term, national initiatives related to weapons and ammunition management and disposal of explosive ordnance, until specialized teams of FARDC are functional.

134. While supporting the Government in establishing the political and legal frameworks for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, MONUSCO should progressively transfer the implementation of programmatic activities related to that field and to the field of community violence reduction to the Government, with support from the United Nations country team. The aim should be to create synergies with the development activities of other partners, including the World Bank. Reinsertion and reintegration programmes, in particular, should be the first component to be transferred, while MONUSCO continues to support disarmament and demobilization activities, for which, as it has demonstrated, it adds value as a guarantor of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process that is fair in the eyes of ex-combatants. MONUSCO could also begin to explore the gradual transfer of operations in the field of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement to the Government with support from regional actors such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. However, as indicated above, the Mission would continue to provide strategic advice to national structures for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration to facilitate this transfer, and logistical support to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement processes to return foreign combatants to their country of origin, for which MONUSCO logistics are an asset.

135. The management of law and order and community policing, including the operational strategies to counter insecurity, should gradually be transferred to the national police. To do so, the MONUSCO police component would continue to support police development plans and strengthen the capacity of the national police through training-of-trainers and leadership training, curriculum development, community policing mentoring and capacity-building in crowd control, investigation techniques, ethics and deontology, resource management, prison security, trafficking in arms and ammunition, and protection of mining sites. Through co-location, mentoring should henceforth be focused on mid- and senior-rank officers, with particular support provided to the general inspectorate of the national police to ensure oversight and accountability. National police reform and accountability will be the key priorities of United Nations police in its capacity-building efforts.

136. UNJHRO should seek to facilitate the establishment of national human rights capacities to monitor abuse and hold perpetrators accountable. Human rights and child protection monitoring, reporting and analysis would continue to reinforce the progress made by State actors so as to instil a culture of accountability and to ensure

that State institutions uphold international principles and standards related to human rights, including the rights of women and children. Supporting the establishment of senior human rights advisers in State institutions, including through the co-location and subsequent transfer of personnel, will be crucial to sustaining progress. Continued support to the National Human Rights Commission through co-location, mentoring and logistical support will also be needed to prepare for the transition. To ensure the sustainability of that support, the leadership of MONUSCO, as indicated in the previous section, would need to continue to invest political capital to help to ensure that the legal, budgetary and logistical requirements for the effective functioning of the Commission in the medium to long term are fulfilled.

137. During the first year of transition, the United Nations country team should prepare to take on the fulfilment of some of the capacity-building needs described above. Progressively, the country team should prepare to acquire justice and corrections expertise so that it can continue its support as the Mission draws down and donors should consider providing longer-term financial support. The Mission can help to mobilize resources for the United Nations Development Programme to engage justice and corrections reform advisers and experts, and encourage partners to embed advisory capacity within the Government and build the capacity of the United Nations Development Programme to manage funds for peace, security and governance reform, and capacity-building. The child protection section should start working closely with the United Nations Children's Fund and UNJHRO to consolidate, mainstream and transfer child protection functions. UNJHRO should start preparing its upcoming transition to a stand-alone office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

2. Capacities and tools relating to the protection of civilians

138. The Mission should build the capacities of State actors to design multidimensional, community-based protection strategies. Transferring of good practices in community liaison, early warning, analysis of threats and vulnerabilities, and civilian-driven operations would enable national stakeholders to build on the many gains and achievements made by MONUSCO in developing a system to protect civilians in conflict-affected areas. The Mission would provide strategic advice on embedding community liaison capacities within FARDC, to build FARDC capacities to positively interact with the communities they have to protect and to rebuild the confidence of local populations. Encouraging the national ownership of local protection committees and local security committees would ensure the sustainability of gains and guarantees relating to the protection of civilians.³³ Women have borne the brunt of sexual violence perpetrated by armed actors and measures need to be put in place to promote survivor-centric approaches at all levels.

139. The Mission should support State security actors in designing protection plans that meet local protection needs and community alert networks that fit the structures of FARDC and the national police. Existing community alert networks and early warning systems should ultimately entirely be managed by State authorities. FARDC and the national police are already the main actors responding to alerts received through community alert networks established by MONUSCO. Transferring the

³³ Local protection committees, established in 2014 and 2015, enable communities to enhance their own protection by encouraging them to develop their own risk analysis and local protection plans in monthly meetings. Similarly, support provided by MONUSCO to local security committees has made it possible to instil a culture of shared and inclusive security governance and to connect State actors to their communities. By pushing territorial authorities to hold weekly security meetings and to broaden participation to civil society actors, MONUSCO has created a space for the population to influence the security agenda pursued by State security actors, which has enabled the emergence of a local accountability culture.

management of these networks to national actors will be an important task to ensure the sustainability of this effective protection tool. However, in all likelihood, State security forces will not be fully able to ensure the effective protection of civilians when the Mission departs, even in the medium term. Other factors outside military considerations should inform the transition to nationally owned strategies for the protection of civilians. Those could include the strengthening of community resilience, the use of unarmed protection strategies and political commitments from national and provincial authorities.

140. The Mission should gradually share best practices in the analysis of threats and vulnerabilities, which should guide national responses and operations. To do so, it should support national, provincial and territorial administrations in setting up multidisciplinary teams to assess protection needs and devise protection strategies. As the Mission keeps its capacity to conduct multidisciplinary assessments of threats and vulnerabilities relating to the protection of civilians, it should increasingly conduct joint analyses of needs relating to the protection of civilians with the Government and its defence and security forces to ensure a common understanding of threats to civilians and coordinated planning.

141. In parallel, the Mission should support civil society actors in devising and pursuing unarmed and inclusive civilian protection strategies in coordination with relevant non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and United Nations country team actors.

3. Support to State security forces in providing security

142. While pursuing key reforms and transferring some of its tools and capacities relating to the protection of civilians, MONUSCO should continue to support FARDC and the national police in providing physical protection to civilians. That effort should continue to include support to military operations against armed groups threatening civilian populations and to community policing through the implementation of the operational strategies to counter insecurity.

143. State security forces will need to take the lead in offensive operations against armed groups to ensure that MONUSCO supports operations that are underpinned by a solid national political will and the serious commitment of the FARDC leadership and units. The Mission should stop its unilateral offensive operations against armed groups, so that it can focus on joint operations that benefit from the political buy-in and operational commitment of Congolese stakeholders. However, as stated above, MONUSCO should keep its capacity to intervene unilaterally and use all means necessary to protect civilians when and where Government forces are unable or unwilling to address threats to civilians.

144. The Mission's participation in joint offensive operations against priority armed groups that are considered major threats to the civilian population should continue to be carried out in strict compliance with the human rights due diligence policy. The Mission should maintain its independence of action and the integrity of its assessment through strengthened intelligence capacities and multidimensional analysis, and participate in operations that serve the protection of civilians and advance the Mission's broad political strategy. A careful analysis of the protective impact of offensive operations, in the short and long terms, should be an integral part of planning and implementation to ensure that military action does not cause more harm to the population. During joint operations, MONUSCO should support the protective posture of security forces and encourage a shift in their approach so that they prioritize the protection of civilians in the planning of their military operations and deploy as the need to protect civilians demands. As MONUSCO continues to facilitate humanitarian access and response, including in relation to the Ebola outbreak, it

should provide advice, training and mentoring to State security actors, which will eventually take over those security tasks. From their side, humanitarian actors should gradually shift from military escorts to acceptance strategies.

C. Managing the transition responsibly and durably

1. Transition strategy and mechanisms

145. As indicated above, the strategic review team was not able to secure the views of the new Government authorities as to the commitments they are ready to make to facilitate a responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO. Another key task for the Mission would therefore be to develop, in close consultation with the new Government and other national and international stakeholders, an integrated transition strategy. In the light of the promising evolution of the situation on the ground, such a strategy could take the form of a transition compact for sustaining peace.

146. The development of such a strategy is not a technical or programmatic exercise, but an eminently political one. The strategy would specify the primary reforms needed to address enduring threats to peace and security and leverage key sources of resilience in the country, including the positive contributions of civil society as outlined above. It would also specify the Mission's support for the sustained implementation of those reforms. The transition strategy or compact would include the above-mentioned political priorities and tasks that the Mission should transfer to national authorities, as well as those residual tasks that should remain with the Mission until its exit. The configuration of MONUSCO, as outlined in paragraphs 218 to 226 of the present report, will also form an integral part of the transition strategy or the transition compact. In addition, the strategy or the compact should contain suggested guidelines for MONUSCO to provide support in a sustainable way. Clear performance benchmarks, timelines and monitoring mechanisms are essential for ensuring mutual accountability. The preceding sections of the present report should facilitate the development of such a compact, which should be finalized in the first half of 2020.

147. As part of the compact, MONUSCO should encourage the establishment of joint Government-United Nations mechanisms to monitor progress towards the implementation of reforms, to sustain the continued engagement of the Government in pursuing those reforms and to ensure the continued relevance of Mission support during the transition period. Such mechanisms could ensure accountability and facilitate monitoring, reporting and mandate renewal.

148. It is strongly recommended in that regard that the Mission leadership transform its ad hoc consultations with civil society into standing advisory and monitoring groups of credible civil society representatives at both the national and the provincial levels. The primary purpose of such groups would be to monitor progress and provide advice or feedback about the planning and execution of the Mission's various transition phases.

149. Given that the review team was not able to formally meet with the new authorities, the development of a compact would provide them with an opportunity to share their views on the contents and objectives of the Mission's exit strategy, as outlined in the present report.

2. Integrating a sustainability component into internal processes and mandated tasks

150. In all its activities, the Mission will have to adopt a transition mindset. Each task undertaken by MONUSCO should integrate a self-sustainability component. This

is necessary not only to ensure the durability of the Mission's investments and contributions long after its departure, but also to ensure that the Mission's activities catalyse the start or acceleration of reform. With such an approach, the operations and activities of the Mission could be seen as reinforcing its political engagement outlined above.

151. For example, while setting up mobile teams to support prosecutors, train police units or advise corrections personnel, it will be essential to integrate national stakeholders and to support them in establishing their own training capacity through the preparation of a pool of trainers, mentors and experts.

152. All tools and systems should be envisioned with the prospect of a possible transfer. Operational strategies to counter insecurity should eventually be managed entirely by the national police, and the prosecution support cells should ultimately become a State capacity. Protection advisors could be co-located with State actors, community alert networks could progressively be administered and managed by State authorities, and local protection committees could be sustained by national actors. Similarly, with regard to mandated projects carried out by MONUSCO and other international partners as part of the stabilization workstream, initiatives and quick-impact projects in the field of community violence reduction, every effort should be made to gradually transfer the design and execution to local actors, including provincial authorities and civil society organizations, in particular women's associations. Those projects and initiatives should also be designed in a way that fits provincial development strategies and objectives developed by provincial administrations.

153. Bases and offices of MONUSCO should be closed with a self-sustainability mindset. Such an exercise will require careful planning that includes consultations with the humanitarian community and civil society as well as the integration of lessons learned from previous base closures to ensure that their achievements are not reversible.

154. Another way of ensuring sustainability as the Mission exits is to link the Mission's transition compact for sustaining peace and the implementation of its future tasks to long-term development efforts and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It would be a good starting point to focus on what is known as the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. In March 2018, the Secretary-General designated the Democratic Republic of the Congo one of the priority countries for the implementation of a nexus-based approach and elements of the so-called New way of working.³⁴ Where necessary, MONUSCO should maintain some police and civilian capacities at the provincial level and below, integrated where possible with United Nations country team sub-offices, even after the military withdraws.

³⁴ The principles relating to the triple nexus will make it possible to follow a complimentary approach, which helps the humanitarian community to provide principled assistance within the broader framework of a common exit strategy.

VII. Options for the future configuration of the Mission

A. General considerations and risks

155. MONUSCO has undergone a number of transitions and adaptations and been the subject of various reviews in the past decade. However, the transition processes have not resulted in a fundamental refocusing of the Mission's mandate towards ensuring that national authorities assume their responsibility to enact the reforms necessary for securing peace and delivering development solutions. The establishment of a new Government that has declared itself ready to pursue such reforms is an important opportunity to meaningfully reconfigure the presence of MONUSCO in support of that declaration.

156. Successful reforms strengthen the hand of reformers and lay an institutional foundation to sustain gains and contribute to ensuring the political will and legitimacy for more sensitive reforms. If not properly planned and executed, however, reforms can contribute to triggering the worst-case scenario outlined above. For example, structural reforms can threaten the fortunes of actors who have benefited from the status quo and long-term instability, who would thus be tempted to act as spoilers to avoid losing the levers of power. A peace and conflict analysis of the impact of reforms will therefore need to be carried out to determine their correct sequence and timing in order to prevent potential spoilers from derailing them.

157. In order for the exit strategy of MONUSCO to be responsible, the Security Council needs to be fully aware that the Mission's withdrawal and eventual exit, although gradual, will have a tremendous impact on the political, security, human rights and humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As seen in the past, a drawdown will create security vacuums and opportunities for spoilers to feel emboldened and will limit the outreach capacity of partners, including the humanitarian actors responding to the Ebola outbreak. It is therefore important to adopt a "do no harm" approach throughout the remaining life cycle of the Mission.

158. The economic impact of the closure of the Mission should not be ignored. The market of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be affected by the departure of international staff, the ending of procurement contracts and the indirect effects of the absence of MONUSCO. In 2018, it was estimated that, in the Mission's budget, approximately \$92 million was allocated to national staff and about \$136 million to international staff. In an internal MONUSCO document, it was estimated that at least 30 per cent of a staff member's salary was spent locally, on housing and living expenses, which would correspond to approximately \$45 million in direct economic impact. According to the August 2018 statistics, nearly 2,700 dependants were declared by national staff. In addition, MONUSCO avails itself of the services of approximately 1,200 local security agents, for an average of \$5.6 million per year. While economic impact should not be the determining factor in establishing the ultimate duration of the Mission's transition, it would behove MONUSCO to develop mitigation strategies in consultation with national and international partners.

B. Overview of a three-year transition period

1. Timeline

159. In the light of the considerations covered above, as well as the continuing peace, security and humanitarian challenges outlined in the present report, the strategic review team recommends that the timeline for the Mission's exit be an absolute minimum of three years. With a departure at the end of 2022, the United Nations would be in a better position to ensure a responsible transition if the reforms

announced by the new authorities remain on track and the conditions for the best-case scenario materialize. However, there is a concern that a three-year transition period may be too short even to begin to address the key structural drivers of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, considering, in particular, the risk of resurgence of conflict and instability towards the end of the transition's final year, as the country prepares for general elections in 2023. In an environment of decreasing development aid, it is also feared that the international community's interest will shift to elsewhere once MONUSCO departs. Concern about a security vacuum, should MONUSCO leave abruptly, should be accompanied by equal concern about an economic vacuum, if the Mission's economic footprint is not managed properly during the transition.

160. It could be argued that the Mission's exit before the next elections should not be considered a risk, given that the Congolese people have demonstrated their ability to take full ownership of the electoral process and peacefully manage its outcome, as they did during the 2018 general elections.

161. The transition plan outlined below follows a three-year time frame, but contains operational flexibility and contingencies to enable the Mission to adapt to predictable and unpredictable events that might positively or negatively affect its exit goals. Benchmarks would be used to guide the various steps of the process. In the absence of formal commitments from the newly installed Government, the benchmarks are the expression of what the strategic review team believes are the minimum and realistic requirements that would need to be achieved to facilitate the responsible and sustainable transition towards a post-MONUSCO Democratic Republic of the Congo. If fulfilled, the requirements would enable the Congolese people, with the support of regional and international partners, to address the key drivers of threats to peace and security and to create a protective environment in which citizens can actively participate in improving their security and social and economic well-being.

162. Three types of benchmarks and indicators should be used to guide the transition: core benchmarks, which are relatively within the Mission's control; contextual indicators, which reveal trends in the evolution of the peace and security situation in the country that can be influenced by local stakeholders; and redlines, which should lead to the United Nations pausing the transition process.

2. Geographic scope

163. A strong political presence will continue to be required in Kinshasa in order to support the Mission's political engagement and help it to foster an enabling environment for the implementation of key governance and security reforms announced by the new authorities in a number of policy documents and statements. In parallel, MONUSCO should maintain its presence in the six conflict-affected provinces and gradually withdraw therefrom as the peace and security situation improves. The priority geographic areas would be: North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces (priority one), Ituri (priority two) and the Kasai region and Tanganyika (priority three). Military operations would be recalibrated accordingly, with a gradual withdrawal from the Kasai region and Tanganyika (year one), Ituri (year two) and, finally, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces (year three). As the Mission draws down and reduces its geographic scope, it should readjust its deployment of United Nations police as needed while retaining a quick-reaction capability throughout the transition period, in case of a major protection crisis in one of the provinces.

3. Structural shift

164. As the Mission transfers tasks and consolidates its presence, it should increase joint programming and co-locate staff within national or provincial administrations to enhance their capacity to take over tasks previously mandated to MONUSCO.

4. Redlines

165. Throughout the proposed three-year transition period, the following should be considered redlines, justifying a pause in the transition:

- The coalition Government ceases to function, leading to political instability and a stalled political agenda
- The security situation worsens to the extent that a large proportion of civilians is at risk of experiencing, among others things, widespread abuse, a resumption of mass intercommunal violence and mass displacement and an increase in the activity of foreign and local armed groups
- The capacity and will of FARDC to assume responsibility for security and to protect civilians are not guaranteed in the provinces that are planned to be vacated by the Mission's force, resulting in serious concerns about predation and abuse
- A significant wave of defections occurs within FARDC as a result of a robust pursuit of the reform agenda, affecting their entrenched interests
- Neighbouring countries are reported to be actively supporting armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ebola is not contained or its incidence increases, resulting in increased requirements for the security of responders

C. Year one

1. Civilian component

166. In addition to shifting to a self-sustainability mindset, the civilian component should ensure that its structure and mandated activities are driven by a clear, Mission-wide political strategy that is closely aligned with national political priorities.

167. The Political Affairs Division should expand its current focus on political analysis and reporting in Kinshasa. It should devise strategies aimed at facilitating the Mission's political engagement and good offices in support of the Government's reform plans as it devises political solutions to stem the sources of instability in the eastern parts of the country.

168. In times of both hope and uncertainty, the transition should be managed using an anticipatory approach, which may require the consolidation of the Mission's analytic capacities. Thought should thus be given to how best to ensure synergy among the Political Affairs Division, the Civil Affairs Section, the Joint Mission Analysis Cell and the arms embargo unit, including by co-locating or merging them. That would enable the Mission to develop a political strategy on the basis of a cohesive analysis, better identify political initiatives that may strengthen the positive features of the best-case scenario and help to keep at bay developments that may augur a drift to the worst-case scenario.

169. As the Mission aims at gradually reducing its involvement in programmatic activities, the Stabilization Support Unit should transfer its tasks to the United Nations country team starting at the beginning of 2020. However, in support of a reinvigorated political strategy, MONUSCO should retain a senior stabilization adviser at the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to ensure the proper transfer of the tasks. In addition, other programmatic tasks related to justice, corrections, arms registration and community violence reduction should be transferred to the country team within one year following the adoption of the

Mission's mandate in December 2019, with the Mission retaining the capacity to provide good offices and strategic advice on the adoption and implementation of reforms.

170. The Mission should retain a gender-balanced group of staff and expertise until its exit.

171. As indicated above, the dissemination of public information and strategic communications must become integral parts of the planning and implementation of the Mission's political engagement and protection activities and guide the gradual and responsible transfer of its responsibilities to the national authorities. In this regard, Radio Okapi has a key role to play and should be maintained until the closure of the Mission. The strategic communications aspect of any MONUSCO transition needs to be prioritized and mainstreamed into all transition programme lines so that key audiences – local (including internal and external), regional and international – are informed in a way that dispels misconceptions, counters misinformation and minimizes reputational risk at such a critical political juncture.

172. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, the Justice Support Section and the Corrections Section should prioritize the co-location of staff within national institutions and the establishment of mobile teams to provide mentoring and strategic advice to State and provincial administrations. The Prosecution Support Cell in particular should shift from static teams in field offices to a mobile approach. The arms embargo unit should instruct a pool of trainers in arms registration techniques for the national police.

173. Because human rights will be a key element in informing tasks related to political engagement and protection, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office should maintain a strong presence in Kinshasa and the provinces. OHCHR would also work to mobilize resources and flesh out options for a continued human rights-related presence in the country following the closure of the Mission. During the transition phase, the Joint Human Rights Office would gradually undertake certain tasks jointly with the National Human Rights Commission as it endeavours to secure the legal, logistical and financial means to ensure its effective presence and operations throughout the 26 provinces, in particular in the troubled provinces in the east.

174. In order to ensure that the transfer of the tasks outlined above is performed responsibly and sustainably, and to support the transition from peacekeeping to peace consolidation effectively, one of the Mission's priorities in the first year of the transition should be to devote its resources to facilitating the transfer, including through joint programming and staff co-location, as has been done in Liberia. It should also develop a joint resource mobilization strategy with the Government, the United Nations country team and other partners to facilitate a seamless transition.

175. The nationalization of international positions would also need to be pursued actively. As MONUSCO gradually makes the transition towards its exit, it would be inconsistent with the spirit of self-sustainability if it filled the positions with international staff who are not familiar with the context and who are not necessarily more qualified than long-serving national staff whom the Mission has groomed, trained and mentored for many years. Nationalization would facilitate the transfer of competences to local stakeholders. Discussions on the co-location of the Mission's national staff within national institutions, as well as possible options for their eventual integration into public and private institutions, should start during the first year of the transition. Such discussions would also help to mitigate the negative economic impact that would result from the Mission's closure, as noted above. Gender parity principles, special measures and targets should also be applied where relevant.

176. The Mission's support structures could also benefit from dedicated attention during the first year of the transition with a view to enhancing their effectiveness and potentially contributing to the self-sustainability of the two-decade investment in MONUSCO. To that end, the Mission should analyse the environmental and economic impact of its massive footprint to ensure that its withdrawal processes, including the disposal and transfer of assets, do no harm.

177. Most of the aforementioned elements should be included in the transition compact for sustaining peace, described above, as a mechanism for managing the transition.

178. In order for the civilian component to achieve the expected results, the Government, with the support of the Mission, should strive to attain the following indicative performance benchmarks and indicators by the end of 2020:

Core benchmarks

- An integrated Government-United Nations compact for sustaining peace is developed, preferably during the first quarter, or at the latest the first half, of 2020
- The United Nations country team has mobilized resources and acquired expertise to take over programmatic activities
- National mobile teams are set up to provide prosecution and corrections support
- A civil society strategy for engaging women that is focused on promoting women's leadership and participation at the local and national levels is developed

Contextual indicators

- A national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme is in place, and legislation to consolidate democratic space and protect civil society organizations, human rights defenders and the media, is adopted
- The national budget provides for security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the justice system, the administration of prisons and increased capacity for the National Human Rights Commission
- A national protection of civilians strategy is established
- Ebola is in the process of being contained, with humanitarian actors and responders relying increasingly on community-based acceptance strategies for their security
- Gender-related legislation and policies, including on sexual and gender-based violence, are adopted

2. Military component

(a) Reduced area of responsibility and withdrawal from the Kasai region and Tanganyika

179. During the first year of the transition, the ceiling for troops should be maintained, with some adjustments. To manage expectations, it should be established clearly in the mandate that the area of responsibility of the Mission's military force will be restricted to the six conflict-affected provinces in which it is currently deployed and it should be indicated explicitly that Congolese authorities will fulfil their security-related responsibilities in the rest of the country. The battalion currently present in Kinshasa could be redeployed to conflict-affected provinces. Rapidly

deployable battalions should cover the Kasai region and Tanganyika, and after 12 months, security conditions should enable the withdrawal of United Nations troops from Tanganyika and the Kasai region while United Nations police and the Mission's civilian component stay behind to sustain gains in stabilization.

(b) Projection and presence

180. The Mission's military force should continue to use a mix of projection and presence for the protection of civilians, with a view to gradually transferring protection by presence to State security forces in Tanganyika and the Kasai region. However, throughout the three-year period, MONUSCO should maintain an independent quick-reaction capability to respond to major threats to civilians in the six provinces in its area of operation.

181. The current number of 5 rapidly deployable battalions is lower than the 12 that assessments have determined are needed. Many logistical and bureaucratic constraints have made the deployment of such battalions a lengthy and complicated process. If such hurdles cannot be overcome, the transition time frame will not enable framework battalions to be transformed into rapidly deployable battalions, nor will it enable additional such battalions to be deployed. However, rapidly deployable battalions should be enhanced to have more effective mobile capacity, with troop-contributing countries respecting the standard unit requirements and providing adequate air assets. The capability of selected framework battalions and the reserve unit should also be enhanced to improve performance, outreach capacity and self-sustainment.

182. Military observers can gradually be repatriated during the first year of the transition as the Mission consolidates its analytical, early warning and reporting capacities within the civilian component and retains military liaison officers to engage with national security actors.

(c) Options for the Intervention Brigade of the force

183. As outlined above, the Intervention Brigade of the force has shown limited success since it helped to defeat M23 more than five years ago and has not seen major changes to its mandate, notwithstanding the many challenges presented by an evolving context. Owing to the radical and asymmetric tactics used by ADF, the difficulty of operating in a jungle environment and major issues related to unified command and control, intelligence and analysis and planning and coordination, the Intervention Brigade has not measured up to the expectations of its current mandate.

184. In the light of the above, the strategic review team invites the Security Council to consider two options regarding the future of the Intervention Brigade.

185. The first option would be to withdraw the Intervention Brigade. In this option, it would be recognized that, in a peacekeeping context, there are limits to a dedicated peace enforcement component aimed at conducting offensive operations against nebulous armed groups serving as proxies for local, national and regional spoilers. Choosing the first option would also send the signal that neutralization is a sovereign duty of the national army and that the MONUSCO military component plays only an enabling, supporting role thereto.

186. If the ongoing discussions among the General Chiefs of the Defence Staff of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda result in the establishment of a regional security mechanism for joint or bilateral offensive operations against foreign armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it would obviate the need for the Intervention Brigade as currently mandated. However, the presence of non-United Nations forces in the same area of operation but with

different rules of engagement and under a different chain of command would create a confusing situation with possibly negative implications for the protection of civilians.

187. The first option would likely create a security vacuum, embolden armed groups and put civilians at risk. Civil society groups consulted in Beni strongly recommended that MONUSCO adopt a more robust posture and neutralize the groups responsible for daily attacks on the population, prioritizing those actions over development or humanitarian projects. As one interlocutor noted, “Building schools is useless if children are massacred”. The civil society groups insisted that, if MONUSCO were not present to truly protect civilians, it could leave, because such protection was the only thing that they were expecting from the Mission.

188. The option would also be at odds with what key political leaders and other national stakeholders, including civil society actors, advocated during consultations. All of the actors insisted, for differing reasons, that the Intervention Brigade, notwithstanding its weaknesses, served as a deterrent and should therefore be the last component to depart.

189. The second option would be to maintain the Intervention Brigade and endow it with the capabilities that would enable it to support the conduct of FARDC-led offensive operations effectively. SADC troop-contributing countries have noted the need to enhance the capacities of the Intervention Brigade in order to enable its proper functioning. This option would require capable troops and staff officers to plan and prioritize operations effectively and would entail enhancing the awareness and intelligence capabilities, as well as the command and control, of the Intervention Brigade. In addition, medical support, logistics and air assets would need to be provided. Under the option, expanding the group of countries contributing to the Intervention Brigade to include other SADC countries could be considered. In parallel, the Government would be expected to create the political, financial and operational conditions to enable FARDC to assume the primary responsibility for neutralizing negative forces and protecting civilians. Joint MONUSCO-FARDC operations would continue to be conducted in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces.

190. There is a major risk, however, associated with the second option because a strengthened Intervention Brigade might be expected to unilaterally engage in or support counter-terrorism operations now that Congolese leaders, rallying some regional and international support, have declared ADF a terrorist organization with links to outside terrorist groups, notwithstanding the dearth of evidence substantiating such links. The declaration will reinforce incorrect assumptions about security threats in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as outlined above. While ADF does use insurgency tactics against civilians to induce terror and fear, declaring it a terrorist organization perpetuates the erroneous proposition that ADF, which has, over the years, undergone multiple framings to suit diverse local and regional political and economic interests, can be neutralized by military means.

191. Should MONUSCO be pressured to choose the second option, it would be further pushed to legitimize the use of violence in the pursuit of an elusive peace. In addition, the second option could have counterproductive effects, including causing retaliatory attacks on civilians, as seen in the past. It would also distract the Mission from dedicating the time and energy necessary for developing political solutions to the threat posed by armed groups. It would further distract it from focusing on supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo in tackling the institutional, economic and governance deficits at the root of the endemic insecurity in the eastern part of the country. Worse, if MONUSCO were dragged into counter-terrorism operations, its overall performance during the transition period would be judged

largely by how well it performs a single, thankless task that is inimical to the foundational, doctrinal principles of peacekeeping.

192. In the light of the above, and should the Security Council be inclined to favour the second option, it is recommended that the mandate of the Intervention Brigade be renewed for one year only, with the stipulation that it would no longer be mandated to conduct unilateral offensive operations, except when faced with a major protection crisis in the Mission's area of operation that government forces were unable or unwilling to address.

193. The evolution of conflict dynamics, as well as progress towards achieving the following performance benchmarks and indicators by the end of the one-year period, should enable the Security Council, in consultation with SADC troop-contributing countries, to determine the future of the Intervention Brigade as MONUSCO continues the progressive transition towards its exit:

Core benchmarks

- The Intervention Brigade has overcome the deficits related to capacity and to command and control that have stymied its proper functioning and is in a position to effectively support nationally led and politically anchored strategies for engaging with armed groups
- Military operations conducted against priority armed groups, coupled with political engagement, have resulted in a wave of disarmament and a reduction in the activities and the number of the most predatory among the groups

Contextual indicators

- The Government has implemented the key provisions of a military programming law that would afford FARDC the minimum conditions necessary for the effective and responsible conduct of offensive operations
- The Government has taken initial steps to severely curtail the influence of the Congolese military, political and private sector actors who use armed groups as a cover to pursue their economic and political interests
- The Government has taken further concrete actions to implement its commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region
- The Government has recruited and trained a rapidly deployable brigade capable of neutralizing armed groups in support of a politically driven strategy in the Kasai region and Tanganyika
- Human rights violations, in particular those committed by FARDC, have decreased in number

3. Police component

194. The police component will be essential to an overall shift to prioritizing civilian-led strategies, reducing the Mission's military footprint, intensifying capacity-building and helping to create a relationship of trust between the Government and the population. It can contribute to de-escalating intercommunal tensions, be an important deterrent and provide an intervention capacity in urban areas for the protection of civilians in the provinces from which the force has withdrawn. It can also accelerate the improvement in the performance of the national police and the adoption of the necessary reforms, through mentoring and the provision of strategic advice.

195. The strategic review team therefore recommends that United Nations police maintain a presence in Kinshasa and the six conflict-affected areas during the first year of the transition. They should be reconfigured to increase their capacity to protect civilians in support of the national police and to reorient their capacity-building activities towards providing strategic mentoring and specialized skills, through more co-location arrangements.

196. In the light of the above, the strategic review team offers two options for consideration.

197. The first option would be to increase the authorized police strength from 1,050 formed police unit personnel and 391 individual police officers to 1,760 formed police unit personnel and 591 individual police officers.

198. The increase would allow United Nations police to provide additional training to mid- and senior-level national police officers and support the general inspectorate of the national police in providing effective oversight and increased accountability. The national police would require specific dedicated skills in the areas of curriculum development, investigation techniques, crowd control, community policing, ethics and deontology, resource management, prison security, border policing, trafficking in arms and ammunition and protection of mining sites and natural resources. The reinforcement of the strength of United Nations police would enable further co-location, increased mentoring and capacity-building and robust monitoring of violations alongside the Mission's substantive sections in the area of operations. It would also enable United Nations police to sustain and replicate the operational strategies to counter insecurity, contributing to the rebuilding of confidence between the national police and the local population. At the same time, it would guarantee that United Nations police receive additional support to secure Ebola response operations without undermining their capacity to support the national police.

199. As the Mission's military force gradually vacates the Kasai region and Tanganyika, the first option would also enable United Nations police to maintain a presence in those provinces, where the threat of widespread intercommunal violence remains a concern. United Nations police would work with the Congolese authorities in those areas to protect civilians and support community-oriented policing and strategic dialogue, including through engagement with local communities and government authorities.

200. The second option would be to increase the authorized police strength from 391 individual police officers to 591.

201. Individual police officers would focus on operational co-location, capacity- and confidence-building, supporting the active operational strategies to counter insecurity and involvement in community policing programmes and protection of civilian activities, in coordination with the available formed police units. The second option would not enable the extension of the integrated operational strategies to additional urban areas. Owing to a lack of resources, one of two formed police units in Kinshasa would be relocated to the east. These are the minimal police assets necessary to continue to facilitate the path towards transition by enabling basic support to the national police, the main actor in public security and the protection of civilians.

202. The first option should be considered only at the end of 2020, following an assessment of the security situation on the ground and the progress achieved by the Government in meeting the following benchmarks and indicators:

Core benchmarks

- Six of the eight operational strategies to counter insecurity have been transferred and continue to function under the authority of the national police

Contextual indicators

- The five-year reform action plan of the national police is in place, and the related budget is adopted and its implementation initiated
- Crowd control management has been demilitarized, with the duties of the national police, FARDC and the Republican Guard separated
- Human rights violations, in particular those committed by the national police, have decreased in number
- Human rights abuses, including cases of sexual violence, are successfully investigated, prosecuted and convicted

D. Year two

203. At the end of 2020, an assessment should be performed to measure progress against the benchmarks and national commitments; the evolution of peace and security challenges within the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region; and the overall performance of the Mission, which was recently the subject of a thorough assessment.³⁵ Political engagement and protection of civilians activities would remain the Mission's priorities in Ituri and in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces. The military component would have gradually withdrawn from Tanganyika and the Kasai region, while the civilian and police components would continue to cover all six provinces, with the objective of leaving Tanganyika and the Kasai region by the end of 2021.

1. Civilian component

204. The continued presence of civilians in the Kasai region and Tanganyika during the second year of the transition would enable the Mission to consolidate and sustain gains in stabilization; support dialogue and political engagement to prevent intercommunal violence and strengthen social cohesion; and support the State in completing the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process. As MONUSCO gradually hands over most of its programmatic activities to the United Nations country team and other partners, the Mission's civilian component would intensify its high-level mentoring and provision of strategic advice to national stakeholders, with a growing focus on providing political support to oversight and accountability mechanisms. Co-location would increase, and the nationalization of posts would continue. Most protection of civilians tools would be managed jointly with national stakeholders in the lead-up to the establishment of a solid national protection strategy led by the Government.

205. The streamlining of activities would enable the consolidation of the civilian component into three main centres of activity: dialogue and political engagement, including political affairs, civil affairs, security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; human rights, including child protection and conflict-related sexual violence work streams; and the rule of law, including justice and corrections.

206. Mobile teams would expand the Mission's capacity to provide mentoring and engage politically in the six provinces and to support the force's projection for the protection of civilians. The Mission would need increased capabilities in terms of air assets, engineering and logistical support to enable mobility.

³⁵ Alexandra Novosseloff and others, *Assessing the Effectiveness of the United Nations Mission in the DRC/MONUC – MONUSCO* (Oslo, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2019).

Core benchmarks and contextual indicators

- Former combatants continue, through the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, to be registered, and sustainable solutions to reintegrate them continue to be conceived
- Security sector reform and reform of the justice system and the prison administration are pursued
- Legislation to consolidate democratic space and protect civil society organizations, human rights defenders and the media is adopted and its implementation is initiated, with an accompanying decrease in the number of human rights violations
- The national response to sexual violence cases has increased
- Civil society actors are increasingly able to hold those in power accountable. Community reconciliation mechanisms are in place in most territories of the six conflict-affected areas
- The engagement of female leaders and women's networks and organizations with local, provincial and national mechanisms has increased
- Justice officials are present in the main urban areas of the Kasai region and Tanganyika
- The National Human Rights Commission has expanded its presence to include the Kasai region and Tanganyika
- Unhindered humanitarian access is provided by national authorities
- Ebola has been contained, with humanitarian actors and responders relying increasingly on community-based acceptance strategies for their security

2. Military component

(a) Gradual withdrawal from Ituri

207. The force would have drawn down from the Kasai region and Tanganyika by December 2020 and would focus on North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces and Ituri in 2021.

208. A rapidly deployable battalion and an infantry battalion would cover Ituri throughout 2021 to provide a security umbrella and create an enabling environment for the deployment of the State apparatus and the conduct of peacebuilding and protection activities. At the end of 2021, security conditions should be met to enable the withdrawal of United Nations troops from Ituri, while the Mission's civilian component and United Nations police would stay behind to sustain gains in stabilization.

209. Should the Security Council decide to maintain the Intervention Brigade of the force for one year, it would have to assess, in close consultation with SADC, whether the conditions and performance criteria justified a renewal of the Intervention Brigade thereafter. If the Brigade is maintained, it would continue to support FARDC-led offensive operations against priority armed groups and offer independent quick-reaction capability to the Mission in case of urgent threats to civilians.

210. Should the Security Council decide to terminate the mandate of the Intervention Brigade of the force, joint operations against armed groups would cease. Remaining rapidly deployable battalions and framework brigades would continue to protect civilians and strengthen their projection capacities in order to reduce the security

vacuum resulting from the withdrawal. Enabling capabilities such as air assets and engineering capabilities would have to be further strengthened.

Core benchmarks and contextual indicators

- The Intervention Brigade is in a position to support nationally led and politically anchored strategies for engaging with armed groups
- Military operations against priority armed groups, coupled with political engagement, have resulted in a wave of disarmament and a reduction in the number and activity of the most predatory armed groups
- In Ituri, the Government has recruited and trained a rapidly deployable brigade capable of neutralizing armed groups in support of a politically driven strategy
- The Government has pursued steps to severely curtail the influence of Congolese military, political and private sector actors who use armed groups as a cover to pursue their economic and political interests
- The Government has undertaken further concrete actions to implement its commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework
- Human rights violations, in particular those committed by FARDC, have decreased in number

3. Police component

(a) Gradual withdrawal from the Kasai region and Tanganyika

211. A gradual withdrawal of United Nations police from the Kasai region and Tanganyika should be carried out by the end of 2021, with formed police units being relocated to Ituri and North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces. Such a withdrawal should be assessed against the following benchmarks and indicators:

Benchmarks and contextual indicators

- The national police has been deployed to the main urban centres of the Kasai region and Tanganyika
- The national police assumes responsibility for public security and law and order in the urban areas of the Kasai region and Tanganyika
- The recruitment, training and retirement plans of the national police are in place, with the effective re-establishment of police administrations
- All eight operational strategies to counter insecurity have been transferred and remain operational under the national police
- The provincial authorities have established clear provincial plans to improve security and protect civilians in the Kasai region and Tanganyika. Human rights violations, in particular those committed by the national police, have decreased in number

E. Year three

212. The third and final year of the transition, 2022, would be dedicated to preparing for the exit of MONUSCO, as established in Security Council resolution [1925 \(2010\)](#), with a possible follow-on United Nations presence (see sect. F below). The transition and closure would require dedicated capacities and all of the Mission's attention. Closing a multidimensional peacekeeping mission that, by that point, will have been

in the country for 23 years would require a tremendous amount of resources and logistical support, such as air assets.

1. Substantive civilian components

213. In 2022, MONUSCO would maintain a strong civilian presence in Kinshasa, focusing on political engagement, governance reform and human rights, and a civilian presence in Ituri and North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces to continue to address remaining threats to peace and security, in support of the peace and security agenda of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. All programmatic activities would have been transferred to the Government, the United Nations country team or other partners. The civilian component would focus on only good offices, high-level mentoring, human rights and analysis in order to contribute to governance reform and support Government-led initiatives aimed at creating an enabling environment for the protection of civilians and sustaining peace. A gender-balanced group of staff and expertise would be maintained in a ratio commensurate with the Mission's footprint. UNJHRO would make the transition to becoming a stand-alone OHCHR office, and the United Nations Mine Action Service would become a member of the country team.³⁶ An in-depth scoping study should be commissioned early in 2022 to explore modalities for sustaining the legacy of Radio Okapi beyond the Mission's departure.

Core benchmarks and contextual indicators

- Former combatants have continued to be registered through the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, and sustainable solutions to reintegrate them have been found
- Reforms are pursued for the security sector, the justice system and the prison administration. A reliable payment system is functioning for FARDC and the national police
- Legislation to consolidate democratic space and protect civil society organizations, human rights defenders and the media is implemented, resulting in a decrease in the number of human rights violations
- Gender-related legislation and policies, including on sexual and gender-based violence and on the representation and participation of women in all governance and decision-making structures, are enacted and implemented
- The engagement of female leaders, networks and organizations with local, provincial and national mechanisms is systematized. Political actors have agreed on an approach to elections without resorting to violence and have adopted a code of conduct supporting a protective environment for women and gender quotas for women's representation
- Human rights abuses, including sexual violence cases, are systematically investigated, prosecuted and convicted
- Justice officials are present in the main urban areas of the six conflict-affected provinces
- The National Human Rights Commission has expanded its presence to include the six conflict-affected provinces
- Unhindered humanitarian access is provided by the national authorities

³⁶ The Mine Action Service estimates that, once the conflict ends, three teams clearing residue for 10 years would suffice.

- The main humanitarian crises have been contained, with humanitarian actors and responders relying increasingly on community-based acceptance strategies for their security

2. Uniformed components

214. The force would have a presence in only North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces. If the Intervention Brigade of the force is maintained, and depending on the evolution of the security situation and the improved performance of FARDC, the Security Council could consider reducing the Brigade to two battalions while still maintaining robust air assets. The police component would have withdrawn from the Kasai region and Tanganyika by the end of 2021. Throughout 2022, United Nations police would remain in Ituri and North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces while continuing to provide high-level mentoring and strategic advice in Kinshasa.

Core benchmarks and contextual indicators

- The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to pursue nationally led and politically anchored strategies with regard to armed groups
- The Government will have deployed a brigade capable of neutralizing armed groups in support of a politically driven strategy in the east
- The Government has severely curtailed the influence of Congolese military, political and private sector actors who use armed groups as a cover for pursuing their economic and political interests
- The Government has undertaken further concrete actions to implement its commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework
- Human rights violations, in particular those committed by FARDC and the national police, have decreased, and the population has expressed increased trust towards State security actors
- The national police manages all the operational strategies to counter insecurity and have demonstrated good performance in areas in which the strategies have been established
- Provincial authorities have established clear provincial plans to improve security and protect civilians in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo

3. Support component

215. Managing the transition in terms of human resources would be crucial in order to retain motivated staff and ensure that the transition is carried out responsibly. The matter of national staff in particular would need to be handled with care, as indicated above. National professionals at MONUSCO have gained significant expertise and represent a precious resource for helping the country to sustain gains in peace and stabilization, as well as for transferring knowledge, best practices and lessons learned and building on the Mission's legacy. Throughout the transition, and in particular in the third year thereof, the Mission would have explored further sustainable and responsible options for ensuring the retention of national staff, as well as employment opportunities to build national capacities and consolidate and leverage peacebuilding gains once the Mission leaves.

216. As MONUSCO ends the third year of the transition, a thorough evaluation of residual risks and opportunities would need to be conducted in order to determine the level of readiness of national and regional stakeholders to fully address challenges to peace and security in the country. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, and drawing on lessons learned from other peacekeeping transitions, the Security Council,

in close consultation with the national authorities, would determine whether a follow-on United Nations presence were warranted.

F. Possible follow-on United Nations presence

217. Should it be determined through the assessment described above that the establishment of a follow-on United Nations presence were warranted, the Security Council could consider that a special political mission with robust political, peacebuilding and human rights components could help the Democratic Republic of the Congo to sustain the gains achieved and prevent a resurgence of conflict. The follow-on mission could include a small group of military, police and civilian advisers to support national stakeholders in pursuing the governance and security reforms that they would have embarked on as the country moves resolutely towards sustainable peace and development.

VIII. Observations

218. The Democratic Republic of the Congo may have reached a promising turning point in the wake of the unprecedented peaceful handover of power following the most recent presidential elections. The hope generated by the early actions of Mr. Tshisekedi is palpable, and there is a keen sense among the Congolese people that promises of reform are not enough and that the time has come to start delivering peace and development dividends to citizens. In addition to the positive trends, recent decisions taken by regional leaders bode well for the peace and stability of the Great Lakes region and beyond. Notwithstanding the risks and persisting threats, a window of opportunity has opened. The Mission's three-year transition proposed in the present report should be seen as a small part of a larger trajectory.

219. The independent strategic review team wishes to convey the additional messages included below.

220. Violent conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not inevitable. It results from conscious decisions made by political elites and from deep socioeconomic and governance-related deficits that were left to fester for decades. Rather than continuing to address the enduring symptoms spawned by such deficits, MONUSCO should put politics at the centre of its action to help to sustain a national agenda that would cause the country to move from stabilization to positive peace and development.

221. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is not a blank page, and its people are not "projects". It is a country that has tremendous capacities, not just needs. The new set of tools and approaches proposed in the present report is designed to build on what the Congolese people have and what they know and to integrate a self-sustainability component into every activity that MONUSCO undertakes henceforth.

222. The Security Council has asked that the Mission's exit strategy be responsible and sustainable. Congolese leaders bear the primary responsibility for creating the conditions for such a strategy. The proposed benchmarks and priority tasks are designed to help them to shoulder that responsibility. There is no military solution to the plethora of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Military pressure may indeed be required in support of FARDC, but only as part of a national and regional political strategy. Putting an end to unilateral offensive operations by the Intervention Brigade of the force, except in the event of major threats to civilians, should be seen in that light.

223. The United Nations is not abandoning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After 20 years of operating with a peacekeeping mindset, it is embarking on a resolute shift towards ending mission-driven strategies and activities that look inward. The ultimate aim of the proposed transition is to proactively promote nationally led policies that will create an enabling and secure environment for the Congolese people in order to meet their basic needs and enable them to exercise their human rights.

224. The strategic review team invites the Security Council to contemplate, on the basis of what has been proposed, the best configuration through which to achieve such aspirational goals, with its eyes open to the many risks and the deeply entrenched patterns of predation and violence that have caused untold suffering for decades. Left unattended, the risks could trigger serious reversals.

225. A budget-driven, rapid exit would be a disastrous choice and would likely ruin two decades of investment in peacekeeping. It is thus imperative for the Security Council, as it deliberates on the future mandate of MONUSCO, to strike the right balance between what realities on the ground dictate and what the differing interests of its individual members allow.

226. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has the potential to be an exporter of peace and a promoter of shared prosperity. At the current critical juncture, the international community should stand by its side to help it to unleash that potential.
