



# Security Council

Distr.: General  
2 August 2023

Original: English

---

## **Options for adapting the configuration of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the future United Nations configuration in the country beyond the current mandate of the Mission**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### **I. Introduction**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#), in which the Security Council requested the Secretary-General, once the joint review of the transition plan for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) was concluded and no later than July 2023, to provide options for adapting the configuration of the Mission's civilian, police and military components and on the future United Nations configuration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo beyond the current mandate of MONUSCO, taking into consideration the Mission's role with respect to the East African Community regional force and other existing international, regional and bilateral initiatives in support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

2. The options set out in the present report reflect the outcome of wide-ranging consultations with MONUSCO, the United Nations country team and relevant United Nations actors working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, including the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). In addition, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 3 to 7 June to engage with the President, the Prime Minister, key government officials, relevant national and provincial stakeholders, including civil society organizations and members of the diplomatic community, on the Mission's configuration.

#### **II. Overview of the current situation**

3. Despite the progress achieved in numerous areas of the MONUSCO mandate, the challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people remain daunting. In the past year, the political and security environment has deteriorated sharply, creating a severe humanitarian and protection crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.



4. Upon taking office in 2018, the President, Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, prioritized the pacification of the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the normalization of relations with some of the country's neighbours. His attempts to forge collective regional responses to the common security and economic challenges and advances towards regional integration were, however, quickly challenged by mistrust and tensions in the region. The resurgence of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) in November 2021 has frayed relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Regional tensions were further heightened following the M23 occupation in June 2022 of Bunangana, a key trading town on the border with Uganda, leading the Democratic Republic of the Congo to suspend all bilateral agreements with Rwanda.

5. Since then, tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda have remained high, as illustrated by security incidents at the border and the continued confrontational rhetoric between senior government officials from both countries.

### **Political context**

6. Against the backdrop of a highly contested electoral reform phase in 2022, the Independent National Electoral Commission and the Government remain committed to holding elections on 20 December 2023, in accordance with the constitutional timeline. Opposition leaders have expressed concern about the perceived lack of transparency of the voter registration process, denouncing it as tainted by irregularities and allegedly favouring the ruling majority. Mounting political tensions and concomitant restrictions of civic space have been accompanied by increased levels of hate speech, targeting initially the M23 insurgency, and the perceived inability of the security forces present in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to effectively respond to this threat. However, in a pre-electoral context, civil society activists and women political leaders have also found themselves increasingly targeted.

7. In the current, highly charged political context, which is fuelled by the security and humanitarian crisis in areas affected by the M23 insurgency, MONUSCO continues to be a focus of popular discontent and frustration over its perceived inaction. Widespread mis- and disinformation, as well as the purposeful manipulation of segments of the Congolese population, has been a major factor in exacerbating this trend. In July 2022, anti-MONUSCO rhetoric erupted into a wave of orchestrated, violent demonstrations targeting MONUSCO personnel, premises and assets in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, prompting the Head of State to request the re-evaluation of the joint transition plan, agreed upon in September 2021 by the Government and the United Nations system in consultation with civil society organizations, with the aim of advancing the Mission's withdrawal from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### **Security situation**

8. Security has deteriorated most sharply in Ituri and North Kivu. The redeployment of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) from Ituri to Rutshuru and Masisi territories (North Kivu) to counter the M23 insurgency created a security vacuum now filled by a plethora of armed militias and groups, both Congolese and foreign, that control more than 70 per cent of the territories of Irumu and Djugu, 10 per cent of Mahagi and 5 per cent of Mambasa.

9. In Ituri, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), Zaire, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which claims affiliation to the Islamic State

Central Africa Province, the Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC) and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) continue to prey on civilians, notably in Djugu and Mahagi territories, in a confrontation motivated primarily by control over the significant concentration of gold mining sites. The violence between CODECO and Zaire, which stems from long-standing power and land conflicts between the Hema and Lendu communities, has triggered a spiral of retaliatory attacks against civilians, including internally displaced persons sites, as militias attempt to seize control of lucrative mining sites. The Government's attempts to engage CODECO and Zaire in a peace process and the stated readiness of CODECO to join the Nairobi process have failed to prevent this surge in violence.

10. Concurrently, in Irumu and Mambasa territories, ADF has increased its activities in a bid to counter military pressure from the joint military operations initiated against them by the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and FARDC since 2021 under Operation Shujaa. While these operations have resulted in the destruction of some ADF positions and the neutralization of several commanders, the group has splintered into smaller groups and continues to conduct deadly retaliatory attacks on the civilian population, which are marked by a sophistication of its modus operandi. A concerning trend for the past two years has been the increase in ADF recruits, coupled with the increased use of improvised explosive devices, in urban settings, with such devices being more sophisticated in design and more lethal than before. ADF continues to expand its area of influence to the north and the west towards Ituri and to the south into Lubero territory (North Kivu) while strengthening its regional ties with Da'esh and other terrorist groups.

11. In North Kivu, M23 has seized large swathes of the territories of Rutshuru, Masisi and Nyiragongo and established parallel, illegal administrations, levying taxes and tariffs and carrying out arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial executions. A multiplicity of vigilante armed citizens groups known as Wazalendo, which claim to fight M23 to defend the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, raise further security concerns and may contribute to a new cycle of violence, including ethnically motivated and retaliatory attacks. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) have also launched operations against M23, thereby heightening tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. Despite limitations on the Mission's ability to monitor human rights abuses in territories under M23 control, there have been numerous reports of summary executions, sexual violence and extortion by the group. As a result, the humanitarian situation has deteriorated dramatically, with hundreds of thousands of civilians being forcibly displaced and humanitarian actors being overstretched to deliver assistance to all those in need, in addition to facing access issues. The displacement of civilians towards Goma and its surroundings has put local communities under strain and contributes to a climate of tension affecting the Mission's presence in the city and region.

12. The deployment of the East African Community regional force has helped to maintain a fragile ceasefire, although it has been criticized by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Congolese population for not adopting a more offensive posture towards M23. In recent months, coordination and information-sharing between MONUSCO, FARDC and the East African Community regional force have improved considerably despite the absence of a formal liaison and operational coordination mechanism. In addition to sharing information and supporting the movements of the East African Community regional force leadership on an exceptional basis, MONUSCO has worked closely with the East African Community regional force to ensure operational and tactical deconfliction of the battle space. However, the current MONUSCO mandate does not allow the Mission to leverage the full range of its capabilities in support of ongoing regional peace

efforts. The East African Community regional force remains an essential component of ongoing regional efforts to contain and ultimately resolve the current crisis.

13. In South Kivu, communal and inter-ethnic tensions around land remain high, particularly in the south of the province (Uvira and Fizi territories), fuelling hate speech and incitement to violence based on ethnic identity. Foreign armed groups such as the Forces nationales de libération (FNL), Resistance pour un État de droit (RED Tabara) and Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie continue to pose a threat to civilians. The Burundian army, which deployed in August 2022 under a bilateral agreement with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, has been tracking RED Tabara and FNL elements together with FARDC. Coordination with the Burundian forces engaged in operations against these armed groups has proved challenging for MONUSCO, since there was no formal agreement defining the Mission's role in this bilateral arrangement.

14. Increased contacts between M23 and the Twigwaneho group in Minembwe have heightened the risk that a resumption of hostilities in North Kivu could create the conditions for the opening of a second front in South Kivu. This could, in turn, contribute to a mobilization of previously inactive local armed groups in opposition to what is perceived as a foreign aggression. So far, however, South Kivu, which in contrast to North Kivu and Ituri remains under civilian administration, has not been affected by some of the dynamics present in North Kivu, including violent expressions of anti-MONUSCO sentiment. In addition, the level of community violence in South Kivu is significantly lower compared with the two other conflict-affected eastern provinces.

15. Insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to fuel a long-standing humanitarian crisis. Currently, 28 per cent of the population in North Kivu and 39 per cent in Ituri is displaced. Between 2021 and 2022, gender-based violence increased by 23 per cent nationwide and by 73 per cent in North Kivu Province alone, with the trend being maintained in 2023. These violations and abuses are linked to the proliferation of armed actors in areas where displaced people are hosted and to frequent breaches of the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps for refugees and internally displaced persons. Sexual violence against children more than doubled from 2021 to 2022. The United Nations Children's Fund and partners assisted 8,100 survivors of gender-based violence nationwide in 2022, compared with 3,500 survivors in 2021.

### **III. Mission reconfiguration: towards a streamlined, tailored approach to mandate delivery**

#### **A. Challenges and opportunities in the implementation of the revised transition plan**

16. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has expressed its desire to accelerate the pace of the Mission's transition, and the United Nations has consistently expressed its unwavering commitment to working with the Congolese authorities towards an accelerated and responsible withdrawal of MONUSCO. While the Government has signalled that the Mission's transition should begin in earnest after the holding of elections scheduled for December 2023, it has also underscored the need for the process to be conducted in a phased and responsible manner that reflects the specific context in each of the provinces where the Mission is still present.

17. Following Mr. Tshisekedi's call for a re-evaluation of the joint transition plan, an agreement was reached with the Government on the need to refocus the joint

transition plan on a limited set of benchmarks directly related to the creation of the minimum security conditions for the Mission's responsible withdrawal, namely: (a) the protection of civilians; (b) disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and stabilization; (c) security sector reform; and (d) the holding of elections. These benchmarks are broadly aligned with the Mission's current priority tasks as outlined in Security Council resolution 2666 (2022) and reflect the areas on which the Government wishes to see the Mission focus its support as it enters the final phase of its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

18. The Congolese authorities recognize that the transition will hinge on the transfer of the Mission's core responsibilities to the Congolese State, and the authorities have underscored their commitment to assuming these responsibilities as quickly as possible. Representatives of local communities and civil society leaders have also clearly articulated their expectations in this regard. During discussions with the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, the Government signalled that additional support from MONUSCO and international partners would be required to ensure that the Mission's withdrawal went hand in hand with the strengthening of the presence of FARDC and the Congolese National Police.

19. In the current political and security context, a premature withdrawal of MONUSCO would have consequences for the civilians relying on the Mission for their protection and safety. In Djugu territory in Ituri, MONUSCO currently provides physical protection to more than 100,000 internally displaced persons through its four temporary operating bases in Bayoo, Fataki, Rhoo and Jina and standing combat deployments in Drodro and Amee.

20. In North Kivu, joint FARDC-MONUSCO offensive operations against ADF have helped to disrupt some of the group's activities. In the Petit Nord, the Mission has played a critical role in supporting the defence of Goma. The Mission's force, deployed alongside FARDC, has established blocking positions along the main access routes to Goma to deter M23 attacks while providing support to FARDC in its military operations against M23. Furthermore, the MONUSCO bases located in key population centres, such as Kiwanja and Kitshanga, have sheltered thousands of civilians seeking immediate protection during heightened conflict, and its permanent operating base in Sake still provides physical protection to more than 25,000 internally displaced persons in Bulengo and Lushagala.

21. Over the years, MONUSCO has invested in the creation of early warning systems that rely on an extensive network of community liaison assistants and community alert networks that enable a timely response from the Mission and Congolese security forces to protection threats. The Integrated Operational Strategy for the Fight against Insecurity, jointly developed by the United Nations police and the national police, have contributed to improving the trust of communities in the national police through the establishment of free hotlines for the population and through support to police interventions in response to distress calls received, which in 2022 numbered more than a quarter million, resulting in 22,823 police interventions and 5,492 persons arrested.

22. The logistical capabilities of MONUSCO, particularly its aviation assets, have proved instrumental in overcoming the challenge of protecting civilians and enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance to remote areas in a vast country, with only 2,000 km of road infrastructure. As the Mission reduces its presence, the Government and key partners will need to find alternatives to the current reliance on the Mission's logistical capabilities.

## **B. Proposed adjustments to the Mission's military, police and civilian footprint**

23. The proposals for the MONUSCO reconfiguration set out in the present report are premised on the assumption that, during the upcoming phase of the Mission's transition, its activities, structure and staffing will be focused on the delivery of a limited set of priority tasks directly related to the implementation of the revised joint transition plan, currently under discussion with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This will be complemented by the Mission's ongoing support to the political and operational tracks of regional peace initiatives, including the efforts of the East African Community regional force and other related mechanisms.

24. Proposed adjustments to the Mission's uniformed presence are based on the understanding reached with the Congolese authorities that the Mission's withdrawal should be accompanied by a simultaneous strengthening of the presence of State defence and security forces to minimize the risk of exposing civilians under imminent threat of physical violence. In the proposals for the reconfiguration of the Mission's civilian component, a distinction is made between activities that directly contribute to the delivery of the Mission's core mandated responsibilities and those related to the longer-term consolidation of gains achieved during its presence. Existing joint programmes would need to be strengthened. This would maximize the coherence and impact of the United Nations contribution to the implementation of the revised transition plan and enable relevant agencies, funds and programmes to mobilize the resources and expertise required to support Congolese institutions and partners in assuming their responsibilities and thus preserve and consolidate the Mission's achievements.

### **Protection of civilians**

25. The Mission's comprehensive, mission-wide approach to the protection of civilians is centred around the three tiers of its current strategy, namely: (a) dialogue and engagement; (b) physical protection; and (c) the establishment of a protective environment. The Mission's good offices at the national, provincial and local levels to support dialogue and the progressive restoration of State authority, including the deployment of national security forces where the Mission would have withdrawn, as well as to facilitate the implementation of current regional peace initiatives, in coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, would remain an essential component of its overall protection of civilians efforts. MONUSCO would continue to strengthen early warning networks and create space for confidence-building and for transitional justice initiatives. The development of integrated provincial protection plans, jointly elaborated with communities, local authorities and security services, would also be central to the Mission's responsible drawdown.

26. The efforts of the MONUSCO force would remain focused on working with FARDC to ensure dynamic, proactive physical protection of civilians in priority hotspots in Ituri and North Kivu. The deployment of the East African Community regional force and bilaterally deployed forces, as well as the announced deployment of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Standby Force, offer opportunities to further optimize the MONUSCO force's laydown with a view to maximizing its ability to respond to threats to civilians in priority hotspots in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces, while consolidating the defence of Goma, together with FARDC. The Security Council should give MONUSCO a clear mandate to leverage its operational and logistical capabilities in support of the East African Community regional force. This would optimize the chances of achieving a division of labour that enables both forces to maximize their combined contribution to the creation of a secure environment for civilians and humanitarian actors. The Council could provide

similar flexibility in the future mandate in the event of a deployment of the SADC Standby Force in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

27. To maintain a protective environment for civilians throughout the transition phases, the Mission would focus its efforts on working closely with national authorities to sustain community-driven policing aimed at addressing insecurity, fighting impunity through support for priority investigations and the enhancement of prison security, strengthening early warning systems, creating space for intercommunity dialogue, facilitating the implementation of transitional justice initiatives and supporting the separation of children from armed groups and their reintegration into communities.

### **Support to the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme**

28. Throughout its lifespan, MONUSCO has supported the Government in making significant progress regarding the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process of ex-combatants. With the Mission's technical, logistical and operational support, 221,805 ex-combatants, including 35,401 children, have been demobilized through the various national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes since 2003.

29. MONUSCO has played a central role in the development of the national strategy of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, including through inclusive consultations with all stakeholders. Established in July 2021, the Programme seeks to address the shortcomings of previous disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, which often involved the wholesale integration of armed groups into the national security forces and the granting of amnesty to their members. In the short to medium term, MONUSCO would put its good offices and technical expertise at the disposal of the Congolese authorities to complete the legal and policy framework that underpins the Programme, including the finalization of its operational plan in North Kivu.

30. Working in close coordination with the United Nations country team and key partners, such as the World Bank, MONUSCO would lend its expertise to help craft attractive, community-driven reinsertion and stabilization opportunities for demobilized ex-combatants and other at-risk young people and community members, including returnees, taking into account the socioeconomic realities in each province, as well as the expectations of communities with regard to security and justice, and serve as a catalyst for the engagement of the United Nations country team and other partners. The Mission would continue to play a critical role in supporting the implementation of confidence-building measures under the Nairobi process. The Congolese authorities have also expressed a need for United Nations assistance in developing complementary prosecutorial approaches for high-risk, high-profile and/or high-ranking ex-combatants, including those linked to ADF and associated terrorist groups, with particular attention to women and children.

31. Since April 2022, MONUSCO, together with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, has provided political, technical and logistical support to the political track of the Nairobi process and facilitated the participation of over 200 participants from armed groups, civil society, young people and women in the last round of consultations between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congolese armed groups and local communities. In parallel, the Mission leveraged its presence to facilitate the work of the ad hoc verification mechanism established under the Luanda road map of 23 November 2022 and has been actively involved in preparations for the pre-cantonment of M23 within its means and capabilities.

32. Should current regional peace efforts foster the emergence of a more favourable political and security environment for the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, MONUSCO could shift the focus of its efforts to working with communities to ensure their preparedness to receive ex-combatants, in close collaboration with the United Nations country team, the World Bank and other key partners and in line with transitional justice initiatives, and scale up income-generating activities as viable alternatives to armed group participation, while targeting key actors involved in maintaining the war economy across the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the meantime, the Mission would continue to leverage its technical expertise and operational and logistical capabilities to help national and provincial actors to take advantage of disarmament, demobilization, community recovery and stabilization opportunities, as and when they arise.

33. MONUSCO has successfully implemented a disarmament, demobilization, resettlement, repatriation and reintegration programme for foreign armed groups, including the repatriation and resettlement of some 27,700 foreign ex-combatants and their dependants, mostly from FDLR. Since 2019, these efforts have been buttressed by the creation, with the support of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, of a multilateral Contact and Coordination Group comprising experts from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania to develop non-military measures aimed at convincing foreign armed group members to voluntarily disarm, repatriate without political conditions and resettle in their countries of origin.

34. In close coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, MONUSCO would continue to support the development of effective engagement strategies with foreign armed groups, including political and security guarantees underpinned by effective and rights-based repatriation mechanisms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and reception, reinsertion and reintegration capacities in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. To this end, MONUSCO would, for the remainder of its presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provide technical assistance to subregional mechanisms focused on the repatriation and resettlement of foreign ex-combatants, particularly the Contact and Coordination Group. In addition, MONUSCO would maintain operational and logistical capacities for the safe and secure transit and repatriation of foreign ex-combatants in all three eastern provinces of the country, in support of the Contact and Coordination Group operational cell, while working with relevant United Nations actors, including the Office for Disarmament Affairs, the Mine Action Service, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund, on arrangements to continue such assistance through voluntary contributions after the Mission's departure.

### **Security sector reform**

35. Progress on security sector reform has proved elusive in the past but remains a key condition for the Mission's responsible withdrawal. Recognizing this fact, the Congolese authorities have shown continued appreciation for the Mission's support in articulating a national security strategy. Within this context, the Mission's support to security sector reform would focus on three priorities, namely security sector governance, institutional reforms and inclusivity, with a view to developing a strategic partnership framework aimed at strengthening coordination with international partners, in line with national security sector reform priorities.

36. MONUSCO and the United Nations country team would continue to support the implementation of existing security sector reform plans geared towards enhancing the professionalism and efficiency of the national armed forces and the national police, and the deployment of national security forces to fully assume the responsibility to



protect civilians, which will enable a responsible drawdown. To this end, the Mission would continue to engage with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to sustain policing gains, promote the reform of security institutions and enhance synergies, notably with the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, the International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office.

### **Maximizing the contribution of the Mission's uniformed components to mandate delivery**

37. As a first step towards the Mission's full withdrawal, the force would consolidate its presence in the 13 high-risk territories of Ituri, as well as North and South Kivu. This would be accompanied by a rationalization of permanent and temporary bases that would allow the force to reduce its reliance on framework battalions in favour of units that are more fit for purpose in the current context. All units from South Kivu (southern sector) would subsequently be repatriated together with one static framework battalion from North Kivu (central sector) and some specialist units, military observers and staff officers, resulting in a reduction of its current deployed strength from 12,500 to approximately 10,500 military personnel. As the Mission's focus shifts to North Kivu and Ituri, it would nonetheless retain projection capacity for South Kivu. The generation of heavy artillery and attack helicopters to enable MONUSCO to support FARDC and maintain a credible posture vis-à-vis armed groups, both foreign and Congolese, would remain a priority.

38. As the Congolese national security forces increase their presence in areas where the MONUSCO force is concentrated and as regional security deployments are reinforced with the support of the Mission, all remaining units from North Kivu (central sector) could be repatriated, leaving a deployed strength of approximately 8,500 military personnel. The ability of the force Intervention Brigade and the quick reaction forces to provide a robust and agile response to outstanding protection threats across the Mission's area of operations would remain essential, and elements of the Brigade would be repositioned to address protection threats in and around Goma.

39. Going forward, coordination, information-sharing and battle space deconfliction between MONUSCO and regional forces present in the Mission's area of operations would remain essential. Beyond this, the Mission's mandate should be expanded to include the direct provision to the East African Community regional force of heavy engineering equipment to enable its continued operations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, aviation and transport for both air and ground movement. Additional support could also entail the transfer of bases and infrastructure to regional forces in locations where the national security forces are not yet present. Such support would constitute significant capability enhancement, enabling regional forces to operate effectively in hotspot areas of North Kivu, such as Rutshuru and Masisi. This would, in turn, facilitate the responsible drawdown and withdrawal of the Mission's uniformed units from these territories.

40. The viability of these adjustments would depend on the availability of key mobility assets, especially air transport, as well as effective unmanned aerial vehicles and other intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities to enable targeted, intelligence-driven interventions that maximize the impact of the force's limited resources across the Mission's area of operations. Without these critical capabilities, there is a risk that the reductions in the Mission's force would expose civilians currently benefiting from the Mission's protection to major threats and risks. To mitigate the potential risks associated with greater reliance on protection through projection, MONUSCO would continue to work closely with the Congolese authorities to facilitate the deployment of additional and adequately equipped national

security forces to address threats to civilians. As requested by the Congolese authorities, the Security Council may wish to consider providing MONUSCO with an enhanced mandate to support the training and capacity-building of the national security forces, in compliance with obligations under the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces and in close cooperation with key bilateral and multilateral partners.

41. The capacities of the Mission's police component would also evolve in line with the expectations of the Congolese authorities regarding the Mission's role in supporting the professionalization of the national police, through training exercises and joint patrolling. The profiles and areas of deployment of the police component would reflect a more targeted concept of operations premised on the deployment of individual police officers with specific skill sets on community policing, sexual and gender-based violence, election security, forensics and investigation, transnational crimes and related fields.

42. On the basis of the model employed in the Bendera region of Tanganyika in 2022, the MONUSCO police component would deploy in tandem with the national police in areas vacated by the force to support the effective extension of State presence and authority. Working with the national police, the Mission's police component will assume an increased role in the protection of remaining United Nations personnel, assets and installations. To this effect, the Mission's police component would repatriate one formed police unit and reduce its strength by 148 individual police officers from the current ceiling. Formed police units based in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo would continue to work with the national police and local communities in the context of potential protests against the United Nations. Individual police officers would continue to perform community policing and support investigations related to serious, organized and transnational crimes, as well as sexual and gender-based violence, in cooperation with the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office. This would enable the further rationalization of the Mission's individual policing footprint, with a critical mass in Kinshasa, to enable continued engagement on police reform activities at the strategic level, as well as in the country's main urban centres in the east, so as to consolidate gains in the areas of community policing, the enhancement of investigation capacities and the fight against sexual and gender-based violence.

#### **Leveraging the Mission's field offices**

43. Building on lessons learned from the MONUSCO withdrawal from the Kasais and Tanganyika, the Mission's remaining field offices would play a key role in the development of integrated provincial transition strategies, together with provincial authorities, civil society and the United Nations country team. In this regard, the establishment and further strengthening of dedicated provincial integrated transition teams would be essential to enabling effective transition planning.

44. The MONUSCO field offices would also be at the forefront of consolidating efforts to create and maintain a protective environment through tailored protection plans, jointly elaborated with communities, local authorities and the security services. The same would be true for the operationalization of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which would require the concerted support and engagement of a broad array of stakeholders across the United Nations system and beyond and would need to be linked to the support provided by the United Nations to current regional peace efforts.

45. In South Kivu, where the development of an integrated provincial transition strategy is more advanced, and the security and humanitarian challenges less acute than in Ituri and North Kivu, there are greater opportunities to make progress towards

the consolidation of State authority and the effective roll-out of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. This will, however, require the leveraging of United Nations partnerships with key actors, including the European Union and the World Bank, which has identified South Kivu as a pilot province for its recently approved \$250 million Stability and Recovery in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo project.

#### **IV. Possible evolution of the future United Nations configuration beyond the Mission's current mandate**

46. The fluidity of the political and security landscape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the wider Great Lakes region could give rise to a number of scenarios ranging from opportunities for the consolidation of peace and stability to a relapse into widespread political instability and armed conflict. The development of the current political and security dynamics in the country will largely be determined by the impact of the December 2023 elections. The implications of these developments for ongoing regional peace initiatives, which have so far helped to contain a further escalation of tensions following the resurgence of M23, despite at times suffering from a lack of coherence and political support, also remain unclear. Critically, the ability of the Government to create the conditions for the Mission's sustainable withdrawal, including its collaboration with the United Nations to consolidate the gains reached with the Mission's support, will have a major bearing on the scope and objectives of any post-MONUSCO configuration.

47. Despite these unknowns, a number of indicative proposals for the future configuration of the United Nations presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo beyond the Mission's current mandate are set out below, bearing in mind that they will need to be revisited in the light of developments on the ground and in the region.

48. As MONUSCO progressively reduces its footprint in tandem with the extension of State authority, it would continue to leverage its good offices and technical expertise to create an enabling environment for the achievement of the key benchmarks set out in the revised joint transition plan. United Nations joint programmes would be harnessed to support the implementation of common priorities and enable relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to mobilize the additional funding and specialized expertise required to accompany the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the post-MONUSCO phase. Partnerships would be essential to sustaining the Mission's gains in support of the Government's peacebuilding efforts.

49. In this scenario, the Mission's final departure would coincide with the full assumption by the Congolese authorities of their primary responsibility to protect civilians and the deployment of sufficient national armed forces and national police to maintain a secure environment for civilians at risk. The United Nations country team would be able to draw on the good offices of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and UNOCA, whose analytical capacities may need to be strengthened, as and when required. Additional resources would be required to leverage the diverse knowledge and expertise at the disposal of the United Nations in support of the strengthening of State institutions and the achievement of the peacebuilding objectives identified in the next iteration of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2025–2029. This should also build on lessons from previous transitions of United Nations peacekeeping operations as well as non-mission settings, including in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

50. The Mission's departure will inevitably have an impact on the way in which the United Nations country team and relevant partners implement their activities. It will therefore be critical to identify creative solutions to these challenges to fill this gap as soon as possible. This could involve working with local and international partners to support the rehabilitation of infrastructure along key access routes and increase the availability of local air transportation options. At the same time, the Office of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator would need to establish a presence in some key provinces in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, to oversee the continued implementation of the integrated and provincial transition plans.

51. Pending further clarity on the scope, mandate and duration of existing and planned regional deployments, there are several potential avenues for United Nations support that the Security Council may wish to consider. As noted above, the current MONUSCO mandate should be adjusted to enable the Mission to leverage its operational and logistical capabilities in support of the East African Community regional force. The provision of such a mandate would need to go hand in hand with the resources necessary to ensure that the Mission is able to provide such support without prejudice to its core responsibilities and in full compliance with the human rights due diligence policy.

## **V. Observations**

52. During its lifespan, MONUSCO has made significant contributions to the stabilization of large parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, enabling the Mission to withdraw from areas where the situation no longer represents a threat to international peace and security. I reiterate the unwavering determination of the United Nations to accelerate the pace of the Mission's transition in line with the wishes of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I welcome the Government's commitment to ensure the rapid extension of State authority throughout the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

53. I am encouraged that a common understanding has been reached with the Government on the Mission's priorities during the next phase of its transition, as well as the broad principles that should guide the process, including the need for a geographically tailored approach that reflects the specific dynamics in each of the provinces where the Mission is still present. I take note of the expressed commitment of the Congolese authorities to ensure the rapid deployment of sufficient numbers of well-trained and equipped national security forces to these areas so that the Mission's withdrawal does not result in security vacuums. I encourage the Security Council to adjust the MONUSCO mandate to enable the Mission to intensify its support in this critical area, in coordination with key bilateral and multilateral partners.

54. The revised joint transition plan is still under discussion with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Once adopted, it will serve as a basis for the work that must be immediately undertaken to achieve the objective of an accelerated and responsible transition of the Mission. Drawing on lessons learned from its transition in Kasai and Tanganyika, the Mission will work closely with the Government to support the establishment of the structures and mechanisms necessary to enable the integrated delivery of core priorities and provide an inclusive platform for transition planning at the provincial level. MONUSCO will enhance efforts to ensure coherence of action at the provincial level with good offices and strategic advice at the national level.

55. The Mission's transition is, first and foremost, a transfer of its core responsibilities towards the Congolese State. The Mission's withdrawal requires the concomitant establishment of an effective presence of State security and rule of law

entities. The reforms that the Government needs to undertake will require political will and strong leadership, as well as generous financial and technical assistance from international partners. I welcome the significant investments made by the international community to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and I encourage them to redouble their efforts to maintain this momentum.

56. The proposals for the reconfiguration of the Mission's uniformed and civilian components put forward in the present report are designed to ensure that the Mission is geared towards creating the conditions for its accelerated and sustainable exit. As a first step, the Mission's activities would be streamlined around a limited set of priorities directly linked to the achievement of the key benchmarks set out in the revised joint transition plan. The force would consolidate its footprint in the main hotspots in Ituri and North Kivu, where threats to civilians are most acute. The police component would increasingly focus on enhancing the capacity of the national police to contribute to the protection of civilians and the maintenance of public order. Further reductions of the Mission's uniformed and civilian footprint would take place as the State extends its authority to the remaining areas where the Mission is still present and regional initiatives advance. Throughout the remainder of the transition process, joint MONUSCO-United Nations country team programmes would play a critical role to enable the optimum alignment of the Mission's good offices and technical expertise with programmatic efforts of United Nations agencies in support of strengthening the rule of law and the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

57. MONUSCO stands ready to work closely with the United Nations country team and key partners to support the strengthening of key Congolese institutions and preserve the gains made during the Mission's presence. I urge donors to ensure that United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are provided with the resources and expertise required to make a significant contribution to the long-term stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as MONUSCO departs. The finalization of the revised joint transition plan will also help to provide further clarity on the role and configuration of the United Nations once the Mission has departed.

58. I welcome the outcome of the recent quadripartite summit in Luanda, which took place on 27 June. I look forward to further engagement with the African Union, the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC and other relevant stakeholders to determine how the United Nations can best support regional actors in their efforts to find lasting solutions to the drivers of instability and violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the meantime, I urge the Security Council to provide MONUSCO with a clear mandate to leverage its operational and logistical capabilities in support of the East African Community regional force, and I stand ready to further explore options for United Nations support to the envisaged SADC force.

59. The successful implementation of current regional peace initiatives remains essential to the creation of a conducive environment for the Mission's sustainable withdrawal. I once again stress the importance of a frank and sincere dialogue among the countries of the region to address the root causes of the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the recurring cycles of violence. Together with the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes and UNOCA, MONUSCO remains committed to supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo and regional stakeholders in their efforts towards peace and stability in the region.