



Security Council

Seventy-fifth year

8778th meeting

Monday, 7 December 2020, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Matjila (South Africa)

Members:

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| Belgium | Mr. Kridelka |
| China | Mr. Dai Bing |
| Dominican Republic | Mr. Blanco Conde |
| Estonia | Mr. Jürgenson |
| France | Mr. De Rivière |
| Germany | Mr. Sautter |
| Indonesia | Ms. Handaruningrum |
| Niger | Mr. A Barry |
| Russian Federation | Mr. Nebenzia |
| Saint Vincent and the Grenadines | Mr. Gonsalves |
| Tunisia | Mr. Ben Lagha |
| United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . . | Mr. Allen |
| United States of America | Mr. Mills |
| Viet Nam | Mr. Pham |

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization
Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2020/1150)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the outgoing President

The President: Before we proceed, may I pay tribute to the sterling work done by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in presiding over the Security Council for the month of November. All Council members credited the sterling work that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines did, and we will try to emulate it. I therefore very much thank Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2020/1150)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to participate in this meeting.

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

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2020/1150, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for this further opportunity to provide the Security Council with an update on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1150) before members today and prior to the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations

Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

We are unfortunately going through a period of heightened political tensions, marked by ongoing differences among the members of the ruling coalition. Six weeks after suspending the Council of Ministers and announcing the launch of consultations with a broad range of representatives of the political forces and civil society, President Tshilombo Tshisekedi addressed the nation yesterday afternoon. In that speech, the President announced the end of the coalition between the *Cap pour le changement* and the *Front commun pour le Congo* (FCC) and maintained that, in view of the loss of the current parliamentary majority, he had decided to appoint an adviser tasked with identifying a new majority ready to support his reform programme. He also stressed that, if that adviser were unable to identify a new parliamentary majority, he would proceed to dissolve the National Assembly and ask the Congolese people to give him a majority at the ballot box.

As we speak, while noting the end of the coalition, as decided by the President, the FCC has rejected the analysis of a crisis between the Government and Parliament and described the decisions of the Head of State as unconstitutional. Meanwhile, several civil society and opposition representatives welcomed the assessment of the country's political situation by the Head of State and expressed their support for his approach. Unfortunately, today we must deplore the clashes between militants of the two political forces surrounding and within Parliament.

In the light of those tensions, over the past month MONUSCO met with numerous representatives of the political forces and civil society to encourage them to resolve their differences through dialogue and avoid any actions that could incite violence. The Mission also stressed the need to focus their efforts on reaching agreement on stabilization policies and institutional reforms, which are essential to improving the security and daily lives of the Congolese people. We will continue to use our good offices to facilitate a peaceful, early resolution of this sensitive political situation, which, if it persists, could have serious repercussions on the economic and security situation in the country in the context of the coronavirus disease pandemic.

(spoke in English)

As far as the security situation is concerned, I remain concerned about the continuing protection

crisis in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where insecurity, grave violations of human rights and displacement continue to affect civilians, notably women and children. Indeed, while armed group activities persist in the Djugu and Irumu territories of Ituri, albeit recently at a reduced level, very serious incidents of intercommunal violence and attacks against civilians were once again recorded in the past month in the Beni, Masisi and Rutshuru territories of North Kivu, as well as in the Uvira, Mwenga and Fizi territories of South Kivu. The deadly activities of national and foreign armed groups in those territories serve to highlight the crucial role that the MONUSCO force, including the Force Intervention Brigade, needs to continue to play to support national security forces in expanding State authority and deterring violence against civilians.

The protection of civilians remains a central priority for MONUSCO, which it pursues through a whole-of-mission approach involving the civilian, military and police components. Given the deteriorating humanitarian situation in provinces affected by conflict, protecting civilians is also heavily dependent upon unimpeded access to those in need. I therefore strongly condemn recent unacceptable attacks against humanitarian workers who, despite numerous operational and security challenges, continue to assist vulnerable civilian populations. The ability of humanitarian workers to support the Congolese authorities is absolutely essential to relieve the suffering of victims of conflict and was key to ending the eleventh Ebola outbreak in Equateur province.

Protecting civilians also requires closing the space for actors perpetrating atrocities, by ensuring accountability for their crimes. The recent trial and conviction of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka for war crimes, including rape, sexual slavery and the recruitment of children, therefore represents an important step forward for Congolese military justice in combating impunity.

Some of the most serious challenges affecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo — from the presence of foreign armed groups to the illegal exploitation of, and trafficking in, mineral resources — require regional and international efforts to achieve sustainable solutions. In that context, I salute the efforts undertaken by the Congolese authorities to engage constructively with the country's neighbours to resolve their differences, foster regional economic cooperation and consolidate regional peace and stability. As President

Tshilombo Tshisekedi approaches the beginning of his chairmanship of the African Union, those efforts will most likely be sustained in 2021.

MONUSCO will continue to work closely with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region of Africa to support the Government in that respect, as one of the constituents of the United Nations Great Lakes regional stabilization strategy. The Mission also remains committed to working closely with the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community to ensure synergies and make certain that our joint investment in supporting regional stability brings about maximum results.

The drawdown and ultimate withdrawal of MONUSCO from the Democratic Republic of the Congo figured prominently in our discussions with the Government in recent months. The result of those discussions is the joint strategy on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO, which was shared with the Council by the Secretary-General on 26 October. The joint strategy represents a common vision for the gradual, responsible and sustainable drawdown and exit of the Mission.

That transition is not a process that started recently, but is, rather, a continuation of steps taken following the 2018 presidential elections and the subsequent peaceful transfer of power. Since then, MONUSCO has closed nine field offices and is currently present in only six provinces, in addition to the mission headquarters in Kinshasa. The joint strategy recognizes that the realities on the ground and security needs are different in each province where MONUSCO is still present. Therefore, it envisions a tailored approach through province-specific strategies that aim to progressively consolidate the Mission's footprint in the three provinces most affected by active conflict, namely, North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. By June 2021, MONUSCO will withdraw completely from the Kasais, and by June 2022, should gains in stabilizations persist, it will also be in a position to withdraw from Tanganyika.

Ultimately, the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians lies with State authorities. The sustainability and tempo of MONUSCO's transition is therefore dependent upon the Government's capacity to assume security responsibilities and strengthen its institutional presence across the country. To that

end, the Mission is already actively supporting the implementation of the Government's national police reform plan and the joint justice reform plan recently signed between the Government and the United Nations Development Programme. MONUSCO has also stepped up its engagement with relevant stakeholders to advocate for the establishment of the new framework to foster and supervise the disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration of ex-combatants and stands ready to increase its efforts to coordinate international support for security sector reform.

My Deputy Special Representative and Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator is leading our transition task force and has been charged with ensuring that the comparative advantages of all United Nations actors and partners are utilized to enhance complementarities, create positive synergies and avert possible gaps in programming and support for the Government.

The global coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has affected MONUSCO's regular activities, as has been the case in other peacekeeping contexts. As of today, a total of 173 MONUSCO personnel have tested positive for COVID-19, 153 have recovered and six have died after contracting the virus. In this difficult context, the Mission has made the utmost efforts to fulfil its mandate while continuing to ensure the safety and security of civilian staff and uniformed components. To make this possible, I have instructed the Mission to comply strictly with World Health Organization guidelines and put in place all possible measures to minimize the risk of contagion and to ensure that suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 are managed adequately.

(spoke in French)

As was mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, the current political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is highly volatile. The Council can play a significant role in fostering a negotiated settlement to this political crisis so as to prioritize lasting solutions that place the interests of the Congolese people above short-term political goals that are liable to further heighten tensions.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot afford a grave institutional crisis. It needs stable and functional institutions that can get back to work as soon as possible, focusing on national economic recovery and stabilization in the eastern part of the country ahead of the general elections scheduled for 2023.

To conclude, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all members of the Security Council as well as the troop- and police-contributing countries for their steadfast commitment and their support for stabilization in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO. MONUSCO is at a critical juncture in the provision of support to the national authorities in shoring up stability, so as to usher in a lasting peace and development.

I wish to pre-emptively thank the Council for its guidance in the upcoming steps of this vital work for the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I thank Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing.

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

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, for her briefing.

I wish to touch on three points.

First, I wish to focus on the ongoing security challenges in the eastern part of the country. We condemn the recurrent attacks targeting civilians and armed forces in the Kivus and in Ituri. The incidents in Ituri have resulted in some dozen casualties just last week. There is an overriding need to put an end to the illegal exploitation of natural resources and to ease intercommunal tensions by strengthening the presence of the State so as to break the cycle of violence.

In those provinces, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) must focus its efforts not only on the protection of civilians but also on the stabilization of and support for Congolese institutions. In that regard, efforts towards disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, specifically as concerns the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri, must be duly carried out.

Because the violence is perpetrated by both domestic and foreign armed groups, regional cooperation must be scaled up. In that regard, I welcome the initiatives adopted by President Tshisekedi. The Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework should generate tangible results for political stability and for peace.

I turn now to my second point. At the humanitarian level, the end of the eleventh Ebola epidemic in

the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a success to the credit of both the Congolese Government and the partners that contributed thereto, specifically the World Health Organization.

However, violations of international humanitarian law remain of great concern. Food insecurity is worsening. There is a vital need to guarantee humanitarian access to all people in need and to protect civilians, specifically women and children. Attacks targeting humanitarian personnel must end. It is essential that human rights be respected. Measures taken to combat the coronavirus disease pandemic must not be used to justify violations of those rights. Moreover, we must also support the country in seeking to surmount the economic and social fallout from the pandemic. Stepping up the fight against impunity and achieving transitional justice and intercommunal reconciliation are all prerequisites for a lasting peace.

Turning to my third and final point, it is incumbent on the Security Council to support MONUSCO's transition. The joint strategy presented by MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo charts a clear course: namely, to focus the Mission on areas where the situation is most volatile and to pursue the consolidation of both the State and its institutions. That strategy lays the foundation for the transfer of tasks from MONUSCO to the Congolese authorities and to the country team. Of course, this transition should be both gradual and sequenced.

The lasting stabilization of the country will also require further efforts and commitment on the part of all stakeholders. I would note in particular justice and security-sector reform, but I would mention also development programmes. In all of those areas, the full participation of women will be of vital importance. The Democratic Republic of the Congo knows that it can count on the full support of France in that respect.

As the Council prepares to renew MONUSCO's mandate, I should like to pay tribute to its personnel, who are operating in a volatile environment conditions in which they are frequently targeted. In that context, MONUSCO must be able to reach full operational capacity, which hinges on the reconfiguration of the Force Intervention Brigade. Discussions are currently under way among contributing countries and the Secretariat, which should facilitate the prompt enactment of the decisions taken by the Security Council.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations are laying the foundation for a renewed partnership. It is now our duty to support it on the path to a lasting peace.

Mr. Pham Hai Anh (Viet Nam): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui for her insightful briefing.

I would like to highlight the following points.

First, regarding the political and security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my delegation takes note of the continued efforts of the Government in reducing tensions and ensuring a favourable political climate for the sake of peace and stability. We also take note of the Government's endeavours to engage all the relevant stakeholders, especially women, in political life.

On the security front, while more than two thirds of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is stable, the persistence of insecurity and violence in the eastern part of the country — especially in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri — remains a source of grave concern. It is deeply troubling to see that the increased intensity of attacks by armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces, claimed numerous civilian lives during the recent reporting period. Viet Nam strongly condemns all attacks against civilians, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, personnel of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and humanitarian workers on the ground. This must stop. MONUSCO and the national protection capacity needs to be supported and strengthened.

We fully share the view that the protracted conflicts in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo require a sustainable solution. The root causes of conflict need to be addressed by focusing on restoring State authority in various regions, strengthening the capacity of national security forces, enhancing political dialogue and advancing socioeconomic efforts. Special attention should also be given to furthering progress in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, as well as security sector reform. We note that a tailored approach has been adopted to meet local needs.

Secondly, the continued deterioration of the humanitarian situation, aggravated by insecurity, an economic downturn and the coronavirus disease

(COVID-19) pandemic, is alarming. According to recently released statistics, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the largest number of internally displaced persons in Africa — 5.2 million people. Between July and December, 21.8 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity, including 5.7 million in phase 4 of the Integrated Phase Classification — emergency. People in conflict-affected regions, such as North and South Kivu, Ituri and Kasai Central, suffer the most.

On a more positive note, we commend the swift actions taken by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to end the eleventh Ebola outbreak in the west of the country and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, there are still enormous challenges that cannot be overcome without the valuable assistance of international partners. We therefore call for strengthened international efforts to support the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thirdly, we would like to reiterate the importance of intensifying regional cooperation to achieve sustained peace, security and development. In that regard, we welcome the continued engagement of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and countries of the region, notably the summit held among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Rwanda and Uganda to discuss the troubling security situation in the Great Lakes subregion, the improvement of economic cooperation and the fight against COVID-19, as well as bilateral engagement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi.

We would also like to highlight the critical contributions of the African Union, the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and other subregional and international partners to the pursuit of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

Last but not least, the support of MONUSCO remains crucial given the dire security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially with regard to protecting civilians and strengthening State institutions. We warmly welcome the constructive engagement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities and the Mission in order to elaborate a joint strategy on the progressive and the phased drawdown of MONUSCO. We take note of the careful deliberation of the situation in the six provinces, as stated in the Secretary-General's

letter (S/2020/1041). We would like to reiterate the particular significance of a prudent approach in its implementation, which should consider the evolving situation on the ground and an assessment of the capacity of the Government authorities. It is vital to ensure that we can preserve our hard-won achievements.

Ms. Handaruningrum (Indonesia): At the outset, allow me to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui for her briefing. Two years ago, in the first month of our membership in the Security Council, we heard her briefing after the 2018 Democratic Republic of the Congo election (see S/PV.8443). Today, in the last month of our membership, we reflect on how far we have come.

While we welcome the positive momentum, we are also committed to tackling the remaining challenges. To that end, we thank the Special Representative and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) for their untiring efforts for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also commend the Government for its excellent cooperation in joint efforts to secure a peaceful future for the country and the region. On that note, allow me to convey the following points.

First, the United Nations and the region should continue to work together to maintain peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We carefully considered two recently published United Nations strategic documents — the joint strategy on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO and the United Nations strategy for the Great Lakes region. We should continue to hear from the Congolese people on what they need and proceed carefully on the future configuration of the Organization's engagement in order to avoid a relapse. To that end, peacebuilding efforts must continue.

The multi-spectrum challenges that the country is facing requires close cooperation from all stakeholders. An individualistic and silo mindset will no longer work. We continue to call for more robust consultation with neighbours and regional organizations, as well as with the MONUSCO's troop- and police-contributing countries.

Secondly, we need to increase humanitarian assistance in the country. That is an essential element for sustaining peace. We join the Secretary-General in commending the Government for taking swift and decisive action in ending the eleventh Ebola outbreak

in the west of the country and limiting the spread of the coronavirus disease.

Nevertheless, we also realize that other humanitarian challenges persist. Nearly 22 million people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are now acutely food insecure, the world's highest. At the same time, 5.2 million people remain internally displaced because of the conflict. We call for all partners to increase their humanitarian support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Access to humanitarian assistance is also crucial.

Thirdly, Indonesia will continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo through our contribution to MONUSCO, which still plays a vital role in maintaining peace in the country, and we join the call of the Secretary-General to extend MONUSCO's mandate for another year in order to protect civilians and strengthen State institutions.

To that end, we need to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers, including from attacks by armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces. Indonesia is contributing more than 1,000 personnel to MONUSCO, including 49 women peacekeepers. We will continue our efforts to save lives and protect civilians through community engagement by winning their hearts and minds and building trust. We also recognize the indispensable role of women in peacekeeping and continue to promote their participation and increased role in peacekeeping operations, as envisioned in resolution 2538 (2020).

As the host of the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference, Indonesia is bound by the Bandung Principles to remain committed to peace and promote cooperation with African nations. We renew our strong commitment as a true partner to our brothers and sisters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, even beyond our time on the Security Council.

Mr. Mills (United States of America): I thank Special Representative Zerrougui for her briefing today.

As the Security Council takes stock of the past year and prepares to renew the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the United States is impressed by the progress that the Congolese Government has made, including the end of two Ebola outbreaks, the conviction of a former Nduma *défense du Congo* warlord and judicial reform, with

the appointment of more women to senior positions in the Congolese judiciary. Looking forward, the United States is focused on three key areas of the Council's work in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: first, the need for more progress on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR); secondly, the full implementation of reforms to improve peacekeeping performance; and, thirdly, strategic planning for MONUSCO's responsible drawdown and transition.

As we just heard from our Vietnamese counterpart, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform are essential for lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We support President Tshilombo Tshisekedi's commitment to community reintegration for former combatants, but we have not yet seen a national DDR framework. Those responsible for abuses and violations of human rights must be held accountable, including at the commander level. The consequences of these delays are felt, for example, in South Kivu, when stalled DDR efforts resulted in armed group leaders returning to fighting, and in Ituri, where the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri poses an increasing risk. We also hope to see progress in the development of a national security sector reform strategy and a significant decrease in human rights violations committed by Congolese security services. This is especially important as the United Nations reports a worrisome deterioration of the security situation in North and South Kivu.

The United Nations is deeply concerned by the recent increase in attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). Thirty ADF attacks killed more than 170 civilians in the last three months alone. We urge the United Nations to move forward with a nearly year-long delay in implementing the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) enhancements that were mandated in last year's MONUSCO resolution (resolution 2502 (2019)). Congolese civilians have suffered the most from these delays. We expect FIB enhancements to be implemented immediately, and we welcome the United Nations commitment to the United Nations Peacekeeping Capabilities Readiness System for strategic force generation, including the prioritization of units at the rapid-deployment levels of readiness. Progress on these two priorities, we believe, is essential to achieve lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as for MONUSCO's responsible drawdown and transition. With that in mind, the United

States welcomes the joint strategy between the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its timeline for MONUSCO's exit from the Kasais and Tanganyika. We are encouraged to see the integrated transition task force for the Kasais and the joint United Nations justice reform support programme.

But at the same time, we were disappointed not to see more progress towards the objectives detailed in last year's MONUSCO resolution, or more specific benchmarks in this year's recommendations. We hope to see the future development of more specific and measurable indicators and timelines for lasting peace and security in the Kivus and Ituri. We also urge MONUSCO to begin transitioning programmatic tasks to the United Nations country team and the Congolese Government, which would allow the Mission to focus on the difficult tasks of stabilization, DDR and SSR that will pave the way to sustainable peace.

Finally, given the important role the region has to play in reaching sustainable peace in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we welcome last week's sharing of the United Nations strategy for the Great Lakes subregion. Although my delegation is still digesting the content, we welcome the focus on the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the high-level shuttle diplomacy by the United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa to engage in the search for political solutions to resolve the conflict. We also encourage giving more attention to responsible and conflict-free mineral supply chains as part of a holistic approach to addressing and preventing violence.

Mr. Sautter (Germany): First of all, we warmly thank Special Representative Leila Zerrougui for her briefing. Germany confirms its support for the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in particular for the Mission's leadership, and for all police- and troop-contributing countries. We believe that the work that the Special Representative is contributing to is important and indispensable under very difficult circumstances.

I have two remarks to make. One is on the political and security situation and the human rights situation, the other is on the future of the Mission. I can certainly echo many of the remarks made by colleagues so far today.

On the political situation, we are concerned about the ongoing political tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would call on all political actors to continue to resolve their differences by means of dialogue and in the spirit of compromise. In this critical time of transition, it is important to focus on necessary political reforms and security sector reform, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), accountability and economic opportunities. None of the challenges can be met without strong and unified Congolese ownership. We remain concerned about the violence in the eastern parts of the country, especially in the Kivus and in Ituri, and about the activities of such armed groups as the Allied Democratic Forces. This violence is always accompanied by high numbers of human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. It is clear that the protection of civilians has to remain a top priority.

The humanitarian situation remains deeply troubling, with more than 21 million Congolese facing food insecurity. We therefore urgently call upon the international community to support the humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Germany has so far contributed approximately €72 million for humanitarian assistance measures in 2020, including measures in response to Ebola and the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

It is also important to acknowledge helpful developments. Let me mention three: first of all, the improved security situation in Tanganyika province and the Kasais. It is worth recalling that we can now zoom our focus in on three to six provinces in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is a hopeful sign, and it should be a reminder that now is also the time to support peacebuilding, stabilization and development efforts in post-conflict areas of the country. Secondly, the recent conviction of militia leader Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka for serious war crimes, to which the Special Representative referred, is an important step that shows that the fight against impunity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is ongoing. Thirdly, let me commend the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities, MONUSCO and all humanitarian and health workers in successfully fighting off another Ebola outbreak, as well as successfully mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

My second set of remarks is on MONUSCO. On the upcoming mandate renewal, we believe that the Mission's main tasks — the protection of civilians

and support for the Democratic Republic of the Congo in State- and institution-building — remain key, especially in the eastern part of the country, given the challenging situation there. At the same time, it is time to take the next steps on the path towards a reconfiguration and transition of the Mission. Germany welcomes the joint strategy and the idea of a phased and realistic regional approach that is based on conditions on the ground. We reiterate the importance of clear and binding benchmarks that guide the Mission and the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the process. At the same time, we underline the importance of remaining flexible. Progress and conflict and post-conflict settings rarely follow a linear, or predictable, trend. However, it is crucial that the benchmarks now be developed rapidly and that the failure to meet them actually has consequences.

The sustainable progress and success of the transition will depend heavily on strong national ownership and responsibility. We therefore call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to strongly engage in the next steps of the transition, especially with regard to the regional and provincial joint transition strategies. Inclusivity is crucial. Civil society, especially women and local peacebuilders, must be part of the conversation. The same is true for the much-needed progress on community-based DDR efforts, the creation of trusted institutions and the fight against impunity. That includes accountability for post-conflict and conflict-related sexual violence.

We encourage the Mission to continue its internal reform process. More mobile and flexible troops will strengthen protection through projection. We call on the Mission to make further progress on the optimization of the force set-up, and we encourage MONUSCO and the Secretariat to draw as many lessons as possible from recent and ongoing transitions, such as that of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. In particular, we believe that cooperation with a country team will be important.

Mr. Blanco Conde (Dominican Republic) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, we thank Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing on the report of the Secretary-General (S/2020/1150).

We would like to begin our statement by acknowledging the readiness expressed at the virtual summit among the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Rwanda and Uganda to root out

negative forces, establish a plan for a cross-border response to the pandemic and explore new economic opportunities. We also recognize the rapprochement of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. Such integration efforts are clearly essential to conflict resolution and socioeconomic growth.

However, we are concerned about the impact that the break-up of the governing coalition may have on the political stability of the country. We therefore call on the political actors to avoid confrontation and to seek stability and progress, since the message of peace that the population so badly needs largely depends on that.

The deteriorating security in the eastern part of the country remains a concern, where civilians, including women and children, continue to suffer due to internal clashes between armed groups, land use, ongoing inter-ethnic conflicts and attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces.

We would like to express our support for the deployment of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in conflict areas and for the redeployment of United Nations operations in the context of the three-track approach in post-conflict areas.

Similarly, we reiterate the importance of implementing Lieutenant General Dos Santos Cruz's recommendations and providing MONUSCO with the appropriate logistical and intelligence equipment on the ground to neutralize the armed groups and safeguard the lives of the members of the Mission.

We also call for the strengthening and robust deployment of the Congolese armed forces in the areas vacated by armed groups and in the provinces included in the joint transition strategy, and we consider it essential that the revised national framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration be adopted and that the fight against impunity be further strengthened.

We condemn human rights abuses and violations, including rape and gender-based violence. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of the resolution on technical assistance and capacity-building in the field of human rights by the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/45/34).

We would like to commend the participation of civil society in the political and electoral life of the country. We stress that, despite the efforts of MONUSCO,

greater participation by women and young people in decision-making and conflict resolution is vital for sustainable peace.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires a united region to look after common interests by implementing regional treaties and agreements, particularly with regard to the trade in natural resources and arms control. A fragile humanitarian situation persists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We therefore urge the international community to redouble its efforts to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by contributing to the humanitarian response plan to assist the most vulnerable.

We are pleased that the Ebola outbreak in Equateur province has been contained and that the coronavirus disease pandemic is having a moderate effect on the population as compared to other countries. We hope that allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by members of the Ebola response teams will be properly investigated and those responsible brought to justice. We support the ongoing work of MONUSCO, even in such difficult circumstances, and we welcome the agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Mission regarding a joint strategy for the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO.

In conclusion, we would like to urge that the exit strategy and the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate be based on realistic parameters and in accordance with the capacity of the country's authorities to assume the responsibilities successfully transferred by MONUSCO without jeopardizing the achievements to date with regard to peace and stability.

Mr. Kridelka (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I thank Special Representative Zerrougui for her very comprehensive and relevant briefing at a time when we are preparing to renew the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also thank Ms. Zerrougui for her tireless efforts to implement the important mandate entrusted to her in the service of the Congolese people. I would also like to welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations, our friend and colleague Paul Empole, here among us at the Security Council today.

Since Belgium is a multicultural country, like South Africa moreover, I will deliver my statement in English today.

(*spoke in English*)

I will make three points.

First of all, Belgium welcomes the joint strategy of the Secretary-General and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the progressive and phased drawdown. Its vision needs to be adequately integrated into MONUSCO's new mandate. We strongly support the proposal for the protection of civilians to remain at the core of the Mission. That requires a comprehensive approach, well beyond military operations, including civil society engagement, community reconciliation and continued monitoring and reporting on human rights issues. Such an approach also includes the further stabilization of State institutions through an increased focus on security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

As such, MONUSCO's new mandate should fully reflect President Tshilombo Tshisekedi's new priorities in that regard, and the gradual reconfiguration is beginning to unfold in the Kasais and in Tanganyika. We cannot stress the importance of the benchmarks enough. The desired end state, not an end date, should determine the drawdown.

My second point, which is related, is that I want to emphasize the intrinsic link among peace, security, development and human rights, as the joint strategy does. A sustainable transition is viable only if the root causes of conflict and humanitarian challenges are addressed within the framework of the so-called triple humanitarian-development-peace nexus. That requires true partnership between the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities and the international community. The success of our joint efforts to ensure the capacity of the country's authorities to ensure that end state is key. The European Union's backing of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its determination to continue the security, defence and justice reforms is but one example. Belgium and its European partners welcome even greater involvement by the international financial institutions, not only in the context of peacebuilding but also in terms of their sharing of expertise in terms of governance and transparency.

Belgium will also play its role bilaterally. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained, since

1960, the largest bilateral beneficiary of Belgium's public development assistance. If the conditions are right, a new bilateral governmental development cooperation programme could be negotiated with our Congolese partners starting in 2021.

The nexus requires also a shared vision, reflected in clear benchmarks. Belgium therefore welcomes the Democratic Republic of the Congo's leadership in the transition process and encourages further progress. The quicker joint benchmarks are elaborated, the sooner new partnerships in terms of capacity-building might be concluded. Moreover, adequate Democratic Republic of the Congo absorption capacity and governance remain absolutely key.

The nexus will also require full commitment to the One United Nations approach. A clear delineation between the future roles and competencies of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team in the transition process should therefore be sought. That is a process that we could already initiate now. In that regard, I also want to underline the autonomy of the United Nations country team when it benefits from core funding.

Belgium is proud to support the United Nations development agencies, funds and programmes mostly through multi-year core funding, as commended in a recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development peer review of Belgium's development policy by the Development Assistance Committee. We are particularly interested in the potential synergy of the United Nations Development Programme with the MONUSCO drawdown strategy.

Finally, I would like to underscore once more the importance of the regional context. Many of the problems that MONUSCO is dealing with are regional in nature. Those include the presence of foreign proxies on Democratic Republic of the Congo soil, the illegal exploitation of, and trafficking in, natural resources and several humanitarian problems. It is encouraging that the new United Nations Great Lakes region strategy prioritizes preventive diplomacy initiatives, including, when necessary, joint action between the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The action plan for the implementation of the strategy will need to consider relevant aspects of the MONUSCO review processes to

ensure unity of purpose and alignment of action by the United Nations in the region.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Zerrougi, for her comprehensive briefing. We closely read the recent report of the Secretary General (S/2020/1150) on the efforts of peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We concur that the security situation in the eastern provinces remains fraught. We are particularly troubled by the Kivus and Ituri, where inter-ethnic violence and attacks against civilians continue unabated. The Allied Democratic Forces continue to pose a significant threat, as clashes with the Congolese army have significantly increased in recent months. Against that backdrop, we are deeply concerned about the growing number of civilian casualties, which has led to renewed grievances against peacekeepers in Beni and other cities. Attacks by illegal armed groups and inter-ethnic conflicts persist even in the relatively calm Tanganyika.

The situation in the country is compounded by the political crisis, which has already led to the President's decision to disband a coalition with supporters of former President Kabila Kabange. We count on a reduction in political tensions in Kinshasa through a resolution of problems at the constitutional level.

At the same time, there are glimmers of hope. The Congolese authorities have managed to defeat the most recent Ebola outbreak. Despite the generally complicated humanitarian situation, effective measures are being undertaken to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease pandemic. We express our support for President Tshilombo Tshisekedi's efforts to involve the neighbouring States in resolving the problems in the east of the country. We believe that regional organizations, in particular the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, play an important mediation role in the peace process. We trust that the new regional strategy prepared by the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region of Africa will give additional impetus to those processes.

We note the contribution to the stabilization of the eastern provinces made by MONUSCO through nimble responses to myriad security threats. There are also

non-military ways to address the problem of illegal armed groups, including a strategy for the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former fighters that is currently being developed and rooted in partnerships with local communities. We welcome measures to expand cooperation between MONUSCO and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and to improve the effectiveness of the efforts of the Blue Helmets, including the Force Intervention Brigade.

This month, the Security Council has the important task of extending the mandate of the peacekeepers for another year. We stand ready to work constructively on the relevant Security Council draft resolution. We trust that its authors will manage to craft a balanced document focused on the specific objectives of the mission. We continue to believe that any decisions regarding the configuration of MONUSCO, including the Force Intervention Brigade, should take into account the situation on the ground and thoroughly consider the priorities of Kinshasa and the troop-contributing countries. In that regard, we support a flexible approach to the issue, as reflected in the joint strategy for the phased and responsible withdrawal of peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, based on the criteria and targets proposed in that document.

In conclusion, let me assure you, Mr. President, of our country's readiness, including as a member of the Group of Friends of the Great Lakes Region, to continue to actively contribute to the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the stabilization in the Great Lakes region as a whole.

Mr. Allen (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Leila Zerrougui for her briefing today.

I would like to commend the continuation of the vital operations of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), despite the complex and difficult operating environment and the continued challenges posed by the unprecedented coronavirus disease pandemic. In particular, we welcome the Mission's success in Pinga. Its effective intervention in a volatile situation following the split of the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové armed group protected those displaced by violence and ensured that they could receive humanitarian assistance.

But I want to reiterate the need for vigilance in the Mission's delivery of its mandate. The Beni prison

break stands out. MONUSCO should consider if and how it could have been prevented with a more proactive approach and learn any lessons from it.

In that vein, we call for the prompt implementation of mandated reforms within MONUSCO and its Force Intervention Brigade. Civilian loss of life remains unacceptably high in the east, in particular around Beni, owing to attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces. The lack of progress on mandated reforms to the Force Intervention Brigade, such as the incorporation of additional quick-reaction forces, is hindering the Mission's efforts to tackle that threat. Those reforms are key to enhancing the performance of the Mission.

We welcome the joint transition strategy developed by MONUSCO in collaboration with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We would like to see that go further, however, in detailing how the transition will be taken forward, how it will be measured against clear benchmarks and how the Mission will work with the United Nations country team and other development actors on the handover of tasks with humanitarian actors and with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time, we call on the Government to participate actively in planning for MONUSCO's eventual exit. National ownership is crucial in ensuring that the exit allows for sustainable stability and development.

As the Democratic Republic of the Congo's second-largest bilateral aid donor, the United Kingdom remains committed to ensuring long-term stability and security in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Tackling armed groups remains a major challenge in this respect. We are therefore pleased to see progress on a new approach to community-focused disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and we call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support that momentum by developing a comprehensive national strategy.

We remain deeply troubled by the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we condemn the fact that the security forces continue to commit almost half of all reported human rights violations in the country. This remains a major impediment to significant progress on security-sector reform. I must call on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure accountability.

Finally, we would like to outline our concern over the ongoing political tensions in the Democratic

Republic of the Congo, it is vitally important that progress on stability and prosperity be protected and maintained and that all political actors enable the delivery of crucial democratic and governance reforms for the benefit of the Congolese people.

Mr. Dai Bing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zerrougui for her briefing.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is largely stable, but the eastern part of the country remains turbulent, the humanitarian situation is worrisome, and national governance is facing many challenges.

I should like to emphasize the following four points.

First and foremost, there is a need to maintain political stability. China has been following closely the recent developments in the internal relations of the governing coalition of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We call on all parties in the country to respect the constitutional spirit, prioritize the interests of the country and the people, properly address their differences through dialogue and consultation, and spare no effort to preserve the hard-won political stability and unity. The Democratic Republic of the Congo must not relapse into crisis.

The international community should respect the Democratic Republic of the Congo's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and make a positive contribution to its political stability.

Secondly, we need to improve the security situation. The past three months have witnessed an exacerbation of armed conflicts and intercommunal violence in North and South Kivu, causing heavy civilian casualties, which is very worrying. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and its Force Intervention Brigade are playing an indispensable role in stabilizing the situation. The contribution made by troop- and police-contributing countries is truly commendable. China supports the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate for one year. We welcome the engagement of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the elaboration of the joint strategy on the phased, progressive drawdown of MONUSCO and agree that the Mission's drawdown and exit should be predicated on the security situation in the country and the response capacity of the security institutions.

China supports the region-specific arrangements made, taking into account the evolving situation and the conflict dynamics in various provinces. It calls on MONUSCO to coordinate and cooperate with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations country team and international financial institutions to ensure an orderly, responsible and sustainable implementation of the drawdown strategy, thereby averting the creation of a security vacuum. Any plan for the reform of MONUSCO and its Force Intervention Brigade should be adequately communicated to the troop- and police-contributing countries and be carried out at a steady pace.

Thirdly, there is a need for an integrated approach that addresses the root causes of conflict. The years of instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been essentially due to the failure to turn its resource advantages into a development strength, resulting in violence and conflict. The legal exploitation and use of natural resources can provide people with more job opportunities and better livelihoods, which offers a key to breaking the vicious circle of conflict.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes being developed by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo envisage more job and training opportunities for ex-combatants in order to facilitate their integration into the community. Kasai and Tanganyika will largely transition into the peacebuilding phase, where the relevant development agencies should focus on improving the local generating capacity and consolidate the foundation for durable peace. The new Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework just unveiled by the Secretary-General provides an innovative approach to conflict resolution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. China appreciates this and looks forward to its implementation.

Fourthly, due regard should be given to the humanitarian crisis, which has been compounded by the coronavirus disease pandemic and the Ebola virus. The humanitarian situation in the country is becoming increasingly fragile, with more than 5 million people displaced and more than 20 million facing food insecurity. The international community should increase its humanitarian assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to help improve the situation for the Congolese people. China was among the first countries to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo fight the pandemic, donating dozens of batches of anti-pandemic supplies and pairing up

Chinese hospitals with their local counterparts. China has also donated remote-learning equipment to poorer and remote areas of the country to help more young people access education.

We are ready to work alongside the international community to help the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its quest for peace, stability, prosperity and development.

Mr. Jürgenson (Estonia): I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened today's meeting. I would also like to thank Special Representative Zerrougui for her valuable insights.

Over the past few weeks, the members of the Security Council have heard several briefings on developments in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Red Cross and others. Regrettably, similar to what we heard today, the message has been that the situation on the ground is not improving. Security in the eastern provinces is deteriorating along with the humanitarian situation. The number of human rights violations and abuses continues to increase. The number of internally displaced persons has surpassed 5 million, the number of people suffering from food insecurity has reached 10 million, and more than 1,300 civilians have been killed in the past six months alone.

I join the Secretary-General in condemning in the strongest terms the continued attacks by armed groups on civilians, including humanitarian workers. It is also regrettable that a large number of human rights violations continue to be perpetrated by State security forces. Accountability for such violations must be established in order to avoid the prevalence of a culture of impunity and build trust in the country's security forces. As I have mentioned before, strengthening rule-of-law and justice institutions is a critical component of efforts to address the root causes of conflict.

As we discuss the future of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) here, it is important to keep in mind the challenges facing the Mission and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the multitude of responsibilities that the Mission is currently shouldering: protecting civilians, advancing the women and peace and security agenda, addressing violations against children, supporting security-sector reform and community-based disarmament,

demobilization and reintegration, to name but a few. A refocusing of MONUSCO and a gradual transfer of its responsibilities must ensure that there are no setbacks in the progress made.

The drawdown of Mission activities in various regions should be phased and should follow related benchmarks. Its timelines should be flexible and be adjusted to developments on the ground. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the United Nations country team must be ready and able to fill the gaps created by the refocusing of MONUSCO. This would be further improved by including the main humanitarian partners and other international and national civil-society organizations in the development and implementation of the joint strategy.

I would like to end my statement by commending MONUSCO, the Congolese authorities and all partners for their continued commitment to establishing peace in the country.

The President: I will now make a statement in my capacity as representative of South Africa and on behalf of the African members of the Security Council — the Niger, South Africa and Tunisia — and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (A3+1).

Let me begin by joining other delegations in thanking Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for her briefing on the activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). Furthermore, we recognize and commend MONUSCO's fundamental role in the protection of civilians and in addressing the perennial instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Our delegations commend the role and leadership displayed by Special Representative Zerrougui with regard to critical issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to MONUSCO discharging its mandate effectively. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report of 30 November (S/2020/1150), prepared in accordance with paragraph 51 of resolution 2502 (2019).

The A3+1 statement is structured around the following issues: the political situation, neighbourhood relations, the security and humanitarian situations, the phased and responsible drawdown of MONUSCO,

and cooperation between the United Nations and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

On the political situation, our delegations note with concern the political tensions observed during the period under review. The A3+1 welcomes the meeting organized in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission, His Excellency Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, between the coalitions led by President Félix Tshilombo Tshisekedi and former President Joseph Kabila, held on the margins of Mr. Mahamat's working visit on 2 and 3 December. It is our hope that this initiative will contribute positively to finding a lasting solution in order to preserve peace and security in the country. Furthermore, we strongly support the Secretary-General's call on all stakeholders to resolve their differences through dialogue, in the greater interest of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On neighbourhood relations, the Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are satisfied with the implementation of the strategic approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. The virtual summit among the Presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Rwanda and Uganda is indicative of the resolve of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region as a whole to address the threat posed by armed groups in the Great Lakes subregion.

The trust- and confidence-building initiatives with neighbouring countries demonstrate a continued commitment towards the full implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as observed in the recent bilateral cooperation talks held between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi. It is our view that the improving security situation in certain parts of the country is also due to those regional meetings.

On the security situation, we are pleased to see an improvement in various regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the A3+1 wishes to reiterate its concern over the ongoing indiscriminate attacks against civilians, security personnel and MONUSCO, as well as the harassment and kidnapping of humanitarian aid workers by armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We condemn those attacks in the strongest terms and call

on the country's authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The A3+1 welcomes MONUSCO's increased engagement with, and outreach to, local communities. We also commend the community-based disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) approach and framework, which ensure that local communities play an integral role in resolving conflict and in creating measures to promote long-term peace, stability and development. Such interventions by MONUSCO contribute to countering disinformation and reducing anti-MONUSCO sentiment.

The military operations conducted by the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) against the Allied Democratic Forces, as detailed in paragraph 12 of the Secretary General's report, are also a welcome development. It is in that context that our delegations commend MONUSCO, the FIB and all troop-contributing countries (TCCs) for their efforts to stabilize the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and protect civilians from the ongoing threat posed by armed militias and groups in the region.

The Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines emphasize the importance of protecting civilians and urge the coordination of deployment so as to avoid creating security gaps. It is our hope that the Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue with efforts to finalize and implement a strategy aimed at addressing the peace and security challenges, including through building the capacities of the defence and security services.

Against that backdrop, our delegations underscore the importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and encourage efforts to support its Government in the DDR process. We also call for international support for broader peacebuilding in the relevant regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Furthermore, our delegations underscore the importance of developing and implementing a comprehensive and coordinated security sector governance and reform programme in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that, among other things, ensures women's representation at all levels and recognizes the role of young people in peacebuilding and recovery, as articulated in resolution 2553 (2020). The A3+1 also calls for further efforts by regional and international partners to tackle the illicit extraction of and trade

in mineral resources, which remain a key driver of conflict and a major source of revenue that sustains armed group activities in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

On the humanitarian and health situations, our delegations reiterate our concern about the volatile situation. In addition to the challenges related to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, a worsening economic situation and the hazards of climate change have intensified harsh living conditions for many in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today, an estimated 21.8 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity and 5.2 million remain internally displaced. We express our concern at the increase in COVID-19 and call for sustained international support of the country's authorities so as to mitigate the pandemic's negative impact on the Congolese people and the economy. On a positive note, we commend MONUSCO for its support in helping the Government address the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease.

Turning to the Mission's effectiveness, it is commendable that MONUSCO is increasing its operations in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and in creating spaces for women and girls in the context of the women and peace and security agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The A3+1 is therefore satisfied with the integration of female engagement teams in major units, which has contributed to improving the force's performance.

Our delegations continue to be concerned about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall Mission and its personnel. In that regard, we call for the safety and security of all personnel to be ensured as the Mission continues to discharge its mandate. We regret the loss of six MONUSCO personnel from Malawi, Ukraine and Bangladesh, who died after contracting the virus, and convey our condolences to their families.

On the phased and responsible drawdown of MONUSCO, the Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines continue to emphasize the utmost necessity of the Council's unwavering commitment to providing MONUSCO with all the necessary means to execute its mandate in close collaboration with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The A3+1 reiterates its considered view that a budget-driven, rushed exit of MONUSCO would be disastrous and undermine decades of investment in peacekeeping. We underscore

that MONUSCO and its FIB should be adequately capacitated in accordance with the recommendation of the report prepared by Lieutenant General (Retired) Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz, entitled "Improving Security of United Nations Peacekeepers", to address the challenges with regard to the effectiveness of the entire United Nations Mission without compromising existing capacity, including key force enablers.

With regard to the cooperation between the United Nations and SADC, the A3 +1 support SADC's long-standing commitment to assisting the Democratic Republic of the Congo to achieve sustainable peace, security and stability and are encouraged by the AU-United Nations cooperation and their undertaking to continue engagement in support of the consolidation of stability and democratic governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this context, our delegations underscore the SADC Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit's appreciation and support for the United Nations, as well as its pledged regional support to the development and implementation of a joint strategy on the progressive and phased drawdown of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We commend the completion of all negotiations undertaken to reconfigure the FIB, including the strengthening of FIB headquarters by staff officers from non-FIB TCCs, as this will ensure the FIB's operational effectiveness in conducting targeted operations against negative forces in the eastern the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in protecting civilians.

The SADC continues to request the accelerated approval of all planned operational orders directed at conducting targeted operations against negative forces jointly with the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo — or single-handedly — as the continued delays embolden armed groups' attacks against the defenceless population in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and they greatly undermine and erode the confidence the population has in MONUSCO to protect civilians.

In conclusion, the A3+1 reaffirms its commitment to promoting and achieving an African continent that is peaceful and prosperous and that contributes to a world that is just and equitable through effective multilateralism at subregional, regional and global levels. It is for this reason that our delegations support the Secretary-General's recommendation for the extension of MONUSCO's mandate for one year, with

its current authorized troop and police strength and strategic objectives, namely, the protection of civilians, indeed, all the people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now resume my functions as the President of the Council.

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

Mr. Empole (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you as representative of a kindred country, the Republic of South Africa, for taking up the presidency of the Security Council for this month of December 2020. I also wish to welcome the initiative of holding today's meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Secretary-General António Guterres for his commitment and support for the cause of my country. I would like to include within these thanks all members of the Security Council, for the particular attention that they never fail to pay to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2020/1150), which was just presented by the Special Representative and Head of MONUSCO, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, whose presence by video-teleconference and sustained efforts in favour of peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are most welcome.

Allow me to add the voice of my delegation to this discussion to share the point of view of my Government on the concerns raised in the report and to make some comments, particularly on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the country and on human rights issues and the exit strategy of MONUSCO.

The political scene at the moment is currently being dominated by the address to the nation that His Excellency Mr. Félix Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, gave on Sunday, 6 December 2020, after the political consultations among all national stakeholders, which were held from 2 to 25 November. In his capacity as guarantor of the nation, and taking into account the broad convergence of views at the national level on

issues essential to the security, economic and social rehabilitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Head of State announced an end of the coalition between the Front commun pour le Congo and the Cap pour le changement after two years of tireless effort, patience and self-sacrifice aimed at preserving the essence of that coalition — in his words, two years of grace that unfortunately were not successful in preventing the infiltration of ongoing crises and the wasting of time. This decision was also motivated by the fact that, on the one hand, the coalition Government set up in the wake of the transfer of political power in January 2019 did not make it possible for the Head of State to implement the programme for which he had been elected to the highest office in the land, and, on the other hand, he, the President, was therefore unable to respond to the expectations and aspirations of the Congolese people. He therefore decided, in accordance with the provisions of article 78, paragraph 2 of the Constitution, to appoint a rapporteur who will be responsible for identifying a new coalition, bringing together the absolute majority of members of the National Assembly.

With this new coalition, the President of the Republic will put in place a Government that will conduct its action during the remainder of his five-year term and continue striving to implement his vision, with the aim of meeting the aspirations of the Congolese people. The objective is to build the future of democratic life in the country around and with the sacred union of the nation — in other words, a group of men and women of good will, no matter what their political, ideological or ethnic origins may be — adhering to the principles and values that will make it possible to establish a true rule of law and democracy and produce concrete results on the socioeconomic front.

The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained calm in general. However, in some well-identified areas in the east of the national territory, in the provinces of North and South Kivu and Ituri, there have been attacks by armed groups of both internal and external origin, as well as other remnants of still-active militias acting in flagrant violation of human rights while causing many casualties and massive destruction of property and infrastructure. These terrorist groups, some of which have sworn allegiance to the Islamic State, practice asymmetric warfare and continue to indiscriminately attack the civilian population, humanitarian workers, MONUSCO

peacekeepers and the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC).

In this context, let me inform the Council that since the military offensive was decided by the President of the Republic and carried out by contingents of the FARDC, with the logistical support of MONUSCO, starting in October 2019, many of these armed groups have been weakened. Many militias have laid down their arms and many strongholds of national territory formerly under the control of these negative forces have been recovered. Rest assured that the FARDC is determined, with the support of its partners, including MONUSCO, to continue its offensives against all these negative forces that have not complied with the Head of State's call to lay down their arms until they are completely eradicated, in order to impose peace and thereby secure the population.

Moreover, in keeping with his commitment to restoring peace and security in the eastern part of the country and in order to address those security concerns in the east on a lasting basis, the President of the Republic has also established and implemented a three-track strategy, namely, first, building the capacity of the defence and security forces through security sector reform in all its aspects; secondly, promoting national reconciliation, particularly between local communities in conflict, such as the Hima and the Lendu, the Twa Pygmies and the Bantu, the Bandundu and the Batende and Banyamulenge herders and the Babembe and Bafuliru farmers; and, thirdly, enabling regional diplomacy through an ongoing dialogue at the highest political level, which has significantly contributed to easing tensions in the region, strengthening relations among countries and restoring confidence among the respective Governments.

All those initiatives are aimed at peace, security, stability and economic development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region and a return to normal life. If such initiatives are sustained, they will bring about a lasting and definitive change in the narrative in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region by moving from conflict-driven rhetoric to discourse that focuses on the path to regional development.

My country counts on support for those initiatives, including through the political will and the resolve of all our partners and countries of the region in particular, to effectively combat mineral trafficking,

which empowers armed groups, as well as the Mafia-style trafficking in arms and smuggling, in order to give the Government the necessary support for the ongoing justice and security sector reforms; to provide funding and adequate support for disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation; to advocate for the effective implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the United Nations regional strategy for peace consolidation, conflict prevention and conflict resolution for the Great Lakes region; and to work towards the comprehensive implementation of MONUSCO's mandate and the strengthening of the offensive capabilities of the overall force, in particular its rapid reaction force.

For my Government, those tasks and prerequisites of MONUSCO's mandate must be followed to the letter so as to enable the United Nations force to succeed in its core role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, namely, the protection of civilians, as well as in its responsible and scheduled exit in accordance with the timetable jointly agreed with the Government.

The Council is preparing to renew MONUSCO's mandate, which expires on 20 December under the terms of resolution 2502 (2019), of 19 December 2019. The same resolution recommended that the Congolese Government and the United Nations conduct a strategic dialogue in order to reach agreement on the arrival of the United Nations Force Intervention Brigade and its gradual and responsible exit in order to safeguard the gains of the past. That work was carried out by means of direct talks between experts of the two stakeholders in October, resulting in a joint strategy for the gradual and phased withdrawal of MONUSCO from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was validated by the political authorities of my country and MONUSCO officials.

During those exchanges, we also discussed the effectiveness of existing initiatives, strategies and mechanisms with a view to strengthening them where necessary and better coordinating our joint action for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region in the light of the current reality on the ground. The ultimate objective is to strengthen collaboration within MONUSCO units and with the FARDC so that the force required to protect the civilian population and restore peace, security and State authority throughout the national territory is effective.

Given that the Force Intervention Brigade will once again have to play an important role in neutralizing terrorist movements and armed groups in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, my country supports the idea of increasing the Brigade's operational capabilities, in particular by equipping it with special units suited to the asymmetrical warfare waged on us by the armed groups in the eastern part of the country, reinforcing it with adequate equipment, such as Rooivalk combat helicopters, artillery, combat engineers and geolocation and operational devices appropriate for dealing with the situation on the ground.

In that context, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its partners, notably the Southern African Development Community (SADC), have accepted the United Nations proposal to realign the current strength of the Force Intervention Brigade to allow the rapid reaction units to have the necessary scope of action and to form two rapid reaction units with troops from six SADC member contributor countries and a third unit from a non-SADC member country.

My country's Government commends the support of MONUSCO, in particular the logistical facilities provided to the FARDC and the Congolese National Police in their work to restore order and security. However, in his address of 15 February 2019 to the diplomatic corps accredited in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the President of the Republic recalled the Government's decision to support MONUSCO's gradual withdrawal, based on the evolving security situation, by fully participating in the development of a joint exit strategy and its progressive transition in the context of a strategic dialogue.

To that end, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of the view that the reduction in MONUSCO's force, with the ultimate objective of complete disengagement, should start with troops deemed non-essential. After having jointly assessed the security situation in the country, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO therefore reached a common understanding on three kinds of areas, namely, first, post-conflict areas — Kasai, Central Kasai and Tanganyika provinces; secondly, areas affected by armed groups and intercommunal violence — northern Tanganyika and Ituri; and, thirdly, areas affected by the militancy of local and foreign armed groups and negative forces, as well as terrorist acts by the Allied Democratic Forces and the Madina

Al-Tawheed Waljihad in Ituri and North and South Kivu provinces.

In view of what I have just said, the two partners agreed the following draft timetable, namely, that the United Nations Mission would definitively leave Kasai province in June 2021 and Tanganyika province in 2022. That gradual withdrawal of the MONUSCO force will be accompanied by a temporary reinforcement of the police and civilian component, which will support the strengthening of the rule of law functions and the gradual transfer of the Mission's tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the assistance of the United Nations country team and other stakeholder partners. In areas affected by local armed groups and intercommunal violence, MONUSCO will maintain its presence to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in implementing a community-based approach to conflict resolution and stabilization. In areas affected by the militancy of local and foreign armed groups, MONUSCO will maintain its presence with a prevention and response capacity. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo must recommend that such a response capacity be adapted to the threat of asymmetrical warfare. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO have agreed to set up a joint working group to propose practical modalities for the transfer of tasks.

The Congolese Government has already experimented with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) in the framework of the Commission Nationale de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion and the implementation unit of the national DDR programme. It therefore reaffirms its determination to establish a comprehensive programme and, to that end, has launched consultations to draw lessons from the past in order to better master this issue. Knowing that a regional or provincial focus should be favoured for the reinsertion and reintegration of ex-combatants, the Government has opted this time to resort to community-based DDR. Ex-combatants will be reintegrated into their communities of origin in particular through agricultural work. To that end, a national structure is being established under the coordination of the presidency.

The vision of the Congolese Government is to prioritize community-based DDR in order to enable sustainable demobilization and reintegration of former combatants from local armed groups and also to consider the regional approach of disarmament,

demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation (DDRRR) in resolving the issues of foreign armed groups through dialogue with their countries of origin, thereby combining non-military options with military pressure. Moreover, in the current context dominated by many surrenders, the community-based DDR and DDRRR programmes, as well as the National Stabilization and Reconstruction Programme, need to operate at full capacity. To do so, they need fresh capital and support from partners.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo remains committed to the framework agreement, which we consider to be the best regional path and strategy to follow in order to definitively emerge from the instability, which has been affecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region for many years. For its part, the Government of my country will continue to implement all its national, regional and international commitments under that agreement and to assume its responsibility so that peace and harmony can be fully restored in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo takes this opportunity to call on the countries of the region and the guarantors of the agreement to seize the opportunity of the regional momentum in recent months to implement the commitments which they have all made. It should be noted that if the provisions of this framework agreement are translated into concrete action, they will enable the region to better manage issues of peace, security and especially cooperation and development through the logic of integration.

My delegation would like to renew the call made by our President on the international community, during the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly (see A/75/PV.5), to ensure that appropriate, targeted and effective sanctions are applied to all armed groups and criminal networks involved in the illicit trafficking in blood minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The illegal exploitation of natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has consequences for peace and security in the country and in the region, and the fight against the organized criminal traffic in these minerals is crucial, as it is a major source of funding for the belligerent and harmful activities of armed groups. Indeed, it will be hard for us to neutralize and defeat the armed groups if we do not succeed in eradicating their sources of support and financing.

In accordance with the constitutional requirement, the Government continues to implement its programme for the defence and promotion of all human rights, with particular emphasis on combating impunity and corruption, as well as strengthening the rule of law and reforming the justice sector. The actions taken to reform the justice system include capacity-building for legal personnel, in particular through training; strengthening the legal framework, especially the harmonization of national legislation with the Rome Statute; building and rehabilitating prison infrastructure to improve the conditions for detainees and prisoners; resolving intercommunal violence by creating and implementing transitional justice mechanisms through respective structures, including the National Council for the Prevention and Transformation of Conflict, and a fund for victims of severe human rights violations.

With regard to the fight against violations of human rights and international humanitarian law against children in territories affected by conflicts, a road map has been drawn up in order to put an end to the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and ensure their protection from sexual violence. This road map was signed by some 10 commanders of armed groups in December 2018 and January 2019, thereby making it possible to release 553 children in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, Ituri, Tanganyika and greater Kasai.

With respect to sexual violence in conflict, it should be noted that all crimes related to rape are severely punished by the Congolese State, and the Congolese Army applies a policy of zero tolerance for any such crimes. In that regard, I note that between 2019 and 2020, the military justice system tried and convicted at least 428 perpetrators of reported acts of sexual violence. These statistics amply demonstrate that the Congolese Government does not allow the perpetrators of these odious crimes to go unpunished.

Allegations against elements of national security forces are always investigated, since wearing the uniform of Democratic Republic of the Congo security forces in this conflict area is not always synonymous with actual membership in the FARDC or the Congolese National Police. It has been repeatedly demonstrated by the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo that military property, as well as natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, have often been stolen and trafficked by armed groups. However, after investigations and trials, the perpetrators

are and will always be punished in an exemplary manner in accordance with the law, regardless of their social status or rank in the security services of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In that regard, allow me to inform the Council that the President's programme to combat sexual violence has three components: awareness-raising and community mobilization through a change of mindsets; fighting against impunity for the perpetrators of these actions; and, thirdly, support for the victims with psychosocial support, free legal assistance and the operationalization of the zero-tolerance programme.

In the context of the fight against impunity, it is worth noting the conviction on Monday, 23 November, by the Operational Military Court of North Kivu of Mr. Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, leader of the Nduma Defense of Congo militia for war crimes, murder, rape, sexual slavery, child recruitment, looting, the destruction of property and physical harm. It should also be noted that one of its main co-defendants, Mr. Nzitonda Habimana Séraphin, known as Lionceau, of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, was also sentenced to life imprisonment by the same Military Court. During the same lengthy trial, which lasted more than two years, Jean Claude Lukambo, known as Kamutoto, was sentenced to 15 years in prison and Jean Batechi was acquitted. The verdict handed down by military justice in this trial shows the determination of the Congolese authorities to continue the legal fight against all war criminals, past and present, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is particularly concerning in the eastern part of the country following the multifaceted crisis caused by the consequences of the coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19), as well as the numerous displacements of populations fleeing atrocities in conflict zones.

Furthermore, in order to respond to the various complex challenges created by the pandemic in the health, economic and security sectors, the Government has established a multisectoral committee and a technical secretariat, which has drawn up a structured plan for a COVID-19 response as well as a multisectoral plan for the urgent mitigation of the impact of the pandemic, which was launched on 18 June by the President of the Republic. Thanks to those efforts, we have been able

to reduce the fatality rate of the pandemic from 10 per cent at its inception to approximately 2.6 per cent today.

We believe that the return of all displaced persons to their places of origin could make an effective contribution to a lasting peace and to renewed economic and agricultural activity in the region. Furthermore, with approximately 5.5 million displaced persons, of whom around 1 million 6,000 are living in very precarious conditions, humanitarian needs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for that category of the population remain tremendous and require increased support from partners.

Turning to the issue of refugees in Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, concerned by this issue, calls for the reactivation of the legal mechanisms created for that purpose: the tripartite agreements among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Rwanda; the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR and Uganda; and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNHCR and Burundi, in order to undertake the effective repatriation of all concerned refugees.

I would like to reiterate the determination of the President of the Republic and of the Government to break the vicious circle of armed conflict and insecurity in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a view to fostering a return to normal life on that part of the national territory after more than two decades of upheaval. To that end, we are counting on the support of all partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure the success of that undertaking.

I cannot conclude without expressing the gratitude of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the troop-contributing countries for their support, and I wish to pay tribute to the memory of all those who lost their lives for the sake of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the MONUSCO Blue Helmets, six of whom have fallen victim to COVID-19.

The President: I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at noon.