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United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 51 of Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#), covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 17 March 2020 to 16 June 2020. It covers progress made in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) since my report of 18 March 2020 ([S/2020/214](#)); provides an overview of political developments, including progress towards the strengthening of State institutions and key governance and security reforms; and outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence, as well as the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians. The report also provides information on progress made towards the progressive transfer of tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations country team and other relevant stakeholders, and on the implementation of the measures taken to improve the Mission's performance. In addition, the report covers the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the delivery of the tasks mandated in Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#).

II. Political developments

2. The reporting period was marked by the dynamics of the coalition between the Cap pour le changement and the Front commun pour le Congo, against the backdrop of efforts to contain the impact of COVID-19 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the detention of the Chief of Staff of the President on embezzlement charges. Diplomatic activities were also affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with major regional meetings, such as the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, postponed.

3. On 24 March, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the President, Félix Tshisekedi, declared a public health state of emergency, which was subsequently validated by the Constitutional Court and repeatedly renewed by the National Assembly and the Senate. This was preceded by the announcement, on 18 March, of other preventive measures and the creation of a national solidarity fund to mobilize



funds to address the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19. The fund is overseen by a management committee made up of 12 members, including 2 women. On 21 April, President Tshisekedi received the former President, Joseph Kabila, to discuss ongoing efforts to address the pandemic, and called for national cohesion and unity. The First Lady, Denise Nyakeru Tshisekedi, voiced concerns about an increase in domestic violence due to confinement measures related to COVID-19.

4. Tensions within the coalition between the *Cap pour le changement* and the *Front commun pour le Congo* persisted. On 25 May, a majority of National Assembly deputies voted to remove the First Vice-President, Jean-Marc Kabund of the *Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social*, drawing public criticism from the Union's leadership.

5. The Prime Minister, Sylvestre Ilunga Ilukamba, held several meetings to discuss macroeconomic stability in the context of COVID-19, with export earnings having dropped significantly and the price of basic commodities and food supplies fluctuating in major cities. In addition, on the initiative of the President, on 18 April, an emergency food programme was set up in Kinshasa to facilitate the access of the population to affordable food. On 29 April, the central bank was instructed to take measures to stabilize the national currency. The Prime Minister also asked that measures be taken to keep public expenditure within the limits of the revenues generated by the Government.

6. The Chief of Staff, Vital Kamerhe, leader of the *Union pour la nation congolaise*, was detained on 8 April following investigations into alleged financial impropriety in the management of the President's 100-day programme. He was subsequently charged with the embezzlement of about \$51.2 million, which he denies. A majority of the 16 National Assembly deputies from the *Union pour la nation congolaise* released a statement in which they deplored what they called the arbitrary arrest and detention of their party leader. Some civil society organizations welcomed his arrest as a milestone in the fight against corruption. On 26 May, the President of the *Tribunal de Grande Instance* of Kinshasa, who was presiding over the trial passed away. The authorities launched an investigation to clarify the causes of death.

7. In Haut-Katanga and Lualaba Provinces, following the latest escape of Gédéon Kyungu Mutanga from his house arrest in Lubumbashi on 28 March, security forces killed 43 members of his *Mai-Mai Kata Katanga* militia. While the situation calmed down in the following days, Gédéon Kyungu Mutanga, who has been previously sentenced for crimes against humanity, remains at large.

8. Since mid-March, a long-standing border dispute between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia has flared up, with reports of a build-up of troops from both nations around Moba territory, Tanganyika Province, and the killing of several Congolese soldiers in sporadic clashes with Zambian soldiers. The two States have reiterated their willingness to find a solution to the tensions, through diplomacy. Mr. Tshisekedi and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, Joseph Malanji, met on 25 March in Kinshasa. Both Governments later called on the Southern African Development Community to help to mediate the issue, with the latter agreeing to dispatch a technical team. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Congo, Jean-Claude Gakosso, visited Kinshasa, Lusaka and Harare, where he encouraged the Presidents of the two countries to resolve border disputes peacefully.

9. My Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo participated in several meetings with the presidential task force and the Minister of Health to discuss ways to support the national COVID-19 response. She also participated, together with key members of the diplomatic and donor communities, in a meeting convened by President Tshisekedi to discuss the domestic socioeconomic impact of the virus. With a view to finding sustainable solutions to the security

situation in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu and support a peaceful political process, she pursued her good offices with national and provincial authorities, noting the importance of heeding the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. So far, no armed group in the Democratic Republic of Congo has adhered to that call.

III. Security situation

North Kivu Province

10. The level of violence in Beni territory and adjacent areas in Ituri Province remained of grave concern. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) continued to pose a significant security threat, having moved to the west of Beni territory and into southern Ituri, where the presence of State security forces is limited. During the reporting period, suspected ADF combatants carried out nearly 30 attacks, in which at least 89 civilians were killed, including 18 women, 1 girl and 14 persons whose age and gender could not be confirmed. New patterns of attacks, including looting, abductions and ambushes on patrols of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) indicated that ADF were regrouping, potentially with the intention of regaining control of positions lost to FARDC. ADF attacks resulted in at least 45 FARDC casualties, with MONUSCO evacuating 37 wounded soldiers. The continued attacks prompted renewed calls for self-defence initiatives, revitalizing support for local Mai-Mai groups fighting ADF in north-western Beni territory.

11. Attacks attributed to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) increased in Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories, with at least 21 civilians killed. In response, on 13 April, FARDC launched operations against the group, resulting in a number of civilian casualties and displacement, as well as retaliatory attacks by the group, with MONUSCO documenting at least seven casualties and the destruction of over 100 houses. On 24 April, suspected elements of the FDLR-Forces combattantes abacunguzi ambushed and killed 13 rangers of the Institut congolais pour la conservation de la nature and four civilians in the Virunga National Park.

12. The conflict between the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and the Nyatura coalition with FDLR and the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) continued to create insecurity in Masisi and Rutshuru territories and resulted in the further expansion of the area controlled by NDC-R. There were nearly 200 separate incidents of clashes and exactions by these groups, during which over 160 civilians were killed. Among the armed groups active in the area, NDC-R fighters committed the greatest number of human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. In response, the Military Prosecutor of North Kivu issued an arrest warrant for the NDC-R leader, Guidon Shimiray Mwissa, which has not been executed to date.

South Kivu and Maniema Provinces

13. In South Kivu, renewed violence along ethnic lines broke out in the wider Minembwe area, with over 30 civilians killed since the beginning of the year. In Bijombo, clashes between local Twigwaneho militias and Mai-Mai fighters have occurred on a weekly basis, triggering several MONUSCO interventions. In late April, FARDC clashed with Mai-Mai groups for several consecutive days in the Minembwe area, resulting in multiple casualties. An estimated 130,000 people remain internally displaced, with few prospects of returning in the near future owing to the unstable security situation.

14. In Kalehe territory, there was renewed activity of combatants of the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie, who had previously been scattered during FARDC operations in December 2019. A group of nearly 100 Conseil combatants was also reported in the Ruzizi Plain area in Uvira territory. The protracted insecurity affecting Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira territories has required FARDC to concentrate their forces there, leaving a vacuum that has enabled Raia Mutomboki groups to move more freely in Kalehe, Mwenga, Shabunda and Walungu territories.

15. The security situation also deteriorated in the border area of South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces owing to activity of Twa militias and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale. Following a reported surge in sexual violence committed by these groups, MONUSCO deployed a temporary base as a deterrent. Mai-Mai Malaika activity in Kabambare territory, Maniema Province, also continued to cause forced displacement.

Ituri Province

16. The security situation deteriorated markedly in Djugu and Mahagi territories, as groups of assailants associated with the Walendu community, including the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, intensified attacks against civilians and security forces. From March to May, at least 333 civilians, including 70 women and 61 children, were killed, and an estimated 300,000 people have been displaced since the beginning of the year. There are indications that the assailants specifically targeted the Wahema and other communities with a view to permanently displacing them from their homes. State security forces and MONUSCO were also attacked. On 17 May, the MONUSCO temporary base in Roe, which is protecting over 20,000 internally displaced persons, came under attack, but successfully repelled the assailants. In March, FARDC launched targeted operations in eastern Djugu territory, resulting in the deaths or arrest of some of the leaders of the assailants. FARDC suffered about 40 casualties. The groups of assailants have splintered and become less cohesive since the loss of several of their leading figures, but the intensity of the attacks has not decreased.

17. In southern Irumu territory, the security situation has continued to improve since the signing of the peace agreement with the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) in February. Despite delays in the implementation of the demobilization process, due mainly to COVID-19, the FRPI leadership has reaffirmed its commitment to the process. A degree of insecurity has nevertheless persisted, with fringe elements of the group continuing to carry out sporadic exactions against the local population.

Tanganyika Province

18. Intercommunal conflict in Nyunzu territory remained a source of concern, with clashes between Twa and Bantu militias resulting in over 100 civilian deaths since the beginning of the year. Reconciliation efforts have been hampered by disputes over control of resources, including land and artisanal mining sites. From 1 to 22 April, FARDC launched a series of operations against Twa militias and succeeded in dislodging them from more populated areas. The continued presence of Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale fighters in the area also contributed to insecurity, given the limited presence of security forces in the province.

Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces

19. The security situation in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces remained largely stable despite the persistence of local political rivalries and intercommunity tensions.

IV. Human rights situation

20. In the first quarter of 2020, MONUSCO documented and verified 1,973 human rights violations and abuses across the country. While violations committed by State agents decreased, those attributed to armed groups and militias increased markedly. Of greatest concern was the spike in extrajudicial or summary killings, with at least 730 civilians, including 148 women, killed during the first quarter of 2020, of whom 657 were killed by armed groups. At least 254 women and 67 children were victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including 250 by armed groups, in particular FDLR, and 71 by State agents, in particular FARDC. The vast majority of these incidents were documented in North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces.

21. Several human rights violations by State agents were documented in the context of COVID-19 preventive measures, including those put in place under the state of emergency. These included the extrajudicial killing of four individuals, violations of the right to physical integrity of 79 people, including 3 women, the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of 64 people, including 12 women, and 20 violations of the right to property.

22. In Kongo Central Province, on 24 April, during an operation to detain Zacharie Badiengila alias Ne Muanda Nsemi, the separatist leader of the Bundu Dia Kongo movement, who had previously used inflammatory language against non-native residents of the province, 31 of his followers were killed and 40 injured. There were concerns regarding the disproportionate use of force by State agents during these operations.

V. Humanitarian situation

23. The humanitarian situation remained concerning, with an estimated 25.6 million people in need of assistance and 5.5 million individuals being internally displaced. Significant recent developments affecting the humanitarian situation included a surge in displacement in Ituri, severe flooding across several eastern provinces, the re-emergence of the Ebola virus disease and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

24. Insecurity and armed group violence caused significant protection concerns and humanitarian challenges in the country's eastern provinces. In Ituri, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) received more than 100 allegations of serious child rights violations, such as rape, killing and maiming, attacks on schools as well as on health centres, during which large stocks of vaccines and parts of the cold chain were destroyed. On 20 May, the Governor of Ituri, Jean Bamanisa Saïdi, called for national and international solidarity with his province in view of the looming humanitarian crisis. In the Minembwe and Mikenge areas of South Kivu Province, an estimated 131,500 people are still internally displaced, with no prospects of return owing to the unstable security situation. Despite access and resource challenges, humanitarian actors continued to provide a multisectoral response to the affected population.

25. Heavy rains in March and April led to deadly flooding in several eastern provinces, destroying homes, farmlands and crucial infrastructure. Transport networks throughout the affected provinces were severely impacted, further limiting humanitarian access to people in need, including internally displaced persons and refugees. MONUSCO supported an assistance mission by a Congolese ministerial delegation that was conducted at the request of President Tshisekedi. In Uvira, South Kivu, a MONUSCO rescue team extracted approximately 1,500 people from flooded areas and provided them with emergency rations.

COVID-19

26. The Democratic Republic of the Congo registered its first confirmed case of COVID-19 on 10 March. The caseload has since progressively increased to more than 4,500 cases. Kinshasa has been the epicentre and has accounted for the majority of cases. In response, and building on capacities acquired in the management of Ebola outbreaks, the Ministry of Health and its partners have focused on improving surveillance systems, contact tracing, diagnostic capacities and the management of cases in intensive care. However, there is still a need to further improve capabilities for the rapid and decentralized detection, diagnosis, isolation and treatment of COVID-19 cases. A \$135-million national multisectoral humanitarian response plan for COVID-19 was published on 18 April as an addendum to the 2020 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The plan includes health and water, sanitation and hygiene activities and livelihood and protection support to reduce the impact of COVID-19.

27. COVID-19 preventive measures resulted in additional challenges to humanitarian access. Engagement with relevant authorities has been ongoing at the national and provincial levels to facilitate critical humanitarian action, including through the partial opening of airspace for humanitarian flights, with appropriate preventive measures. The increased allocation of limited resources and expertise to the pandemic response has also increased vulnerability to other public health issues. For example, the reported reduction in vaccination rates throughout the country in the context of the pandemic, coupled with limited cold chain systems and low coverage and stock supply, could leave children at an increased risk of diseases such as polio, measles and yellow fever.

28. MONUSCO supported the Congolese authorities in developing procedures and policies to manage the implementation of COVID-19 response measures, as well as security and air transport for the movement of materials. A distance learning programme was launched by the Mission's Radio Okapi as a joint initiative with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to allow 22 million primary school pupils to continue their education with a daily two-hour programme, which is rebroadcast by over 40 radio stations across the country.

29. MONUSCO also shared expertise on contact tracing and geolocation identification with the Government's COVID-19 response command centre, helping to trace over 4,000 COVID-19 contacts in Kinshasa. The Mission took measures to support the national police in safe and effective law enforcement in the context of COVID-19. The Mission also helped prison and judicial institutions to limit the spread of COVID-19, resulting in the authorities releasing 2,667 prisoners and the development of contingency plans. In a joint project with the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Mission provided preventive equipment and sanitary supplies, prefabricated containers to serve as isolation and quarantine units, a vehicle for ambulance services and food supplies for inmates.

30. As part of community engagement activities, MONUSCO helped local authorities and other partners to sensitize hundreds of individuals, including over 200 women, on COVID-19 facts. In Beni, North Kivu, a network of women began to produce protective masks with the technical support of MONUSCO, producing from 1,000 to 2,000 masks per day. Similar initiatives also took place in Goma, where a MONUSCO quick impact project supported a women's network in producing face masks and hand sanitizer.

Ebola virus disease

31. On 10 April, a new case of the Ebola virus disease was reported in Beni, North Kivu, after a period of nearly two months without new infections. This triggered a renewed wave of community mistrust, as well as some protests by members of the public who doubted the veracity of the new case. Subsequently, six more cases were reported in the same area. Following successful containment measures, the 42-day count for declaring the end of the outbreak was restarted on 14 May. On 1 June, a new Ebola outbreak was detected in the west of the country, in Mbandaka, Équateur Province. The World Health Organization has staff in the area to support the response. In addition, while the current Ebola response plan was extended until the end of September 2020, approximately 1,170 Ebola survivors are still in need of health care, biomedical surveillance, psychosocial care and assistance in order to be reintegrated into their communities.

VI. Protection of civilians

A. Mission strategies and political processes

32. MONUSCO initiated a review and update of its comprehensive, targeted strategies for the protection of civilians in order to incorporate recent lessons learned and to reflect changes in the situation on the ground. In line with Action for Peacekeeping priorities, the strategies are centred on the primacy of advancing lasting political solutions to conflict.

33. The strategy for Ituri focuses on ending violence and creating conditions for the durable return of internally displaced persons by reducing the flow of weapons, restoring State authority and the rule of law, and addressing the most critical root causes of persisting conflicts. The strategy for the Beni area in North Kivu aims to address the ADF threat through a combination of military pressure, community isolation and disruption of recruitment, trafficking and logistical support networks, while also seeking a sustainable solution for the demobilization of Mai-Mai groups operating in the area. Meanwhile, the strategy for Tanganyika focuses on establishing a safe and secure environment in all parts of the province to enable the safe return of internally displaced persons, with a view to creating the conditions necessary for the Mission's eventual withdrawal from the province. MONUSCO engaged with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region to strengthen the regional element of the strategies, including the persistent illegal trafficking of natural resources. Similar comprehensive tailored strategies are being developed for other conflict-affected regions where MONUSCO is present.

34. MONUSCO continued to support regional efforts towards enhanced security cooperation under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. Consultations between the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Offices in Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda and MONUSCO regarding resource mobilization to support non-military measures against foreign armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have been ongoing.

35. Integrated approaches to the protection of civilians have been key. For example, joint mobile teams for the protection of civilians composed of military, police and civilian components visited each field office in order to strengthen and standardize the implementation of mission-wide protection mechanisms and tools. MONUSCO also continued to focus on delivering its protection of civilians mandate in a gender-responsive manner. To this end, the Mission conducted a mapping of high-risk areas for women and girls in connection with armed conflict, sexual and gender-based

violence and other human rights violations in South Kivu and North Kivu as an analytical tool for adapting protective measures. In response to the challenges presented by COVID-19, the Mission adapted its working methods in order to maintain most of its operational capacity for the protection of civilians, while implementing mitigation measures such as social distancing when engaging with local communities.

B. Field-level responses

36. MONUSCO reinforced its troop presence in Ituri Province in response to the severe deterioration of the security situation. Four temporary bases, three in Djugu territory and one at the border between Djugu and Mahagi territories, helped to protect civilians, including internally displaced persons, by allowing more frequent and robust patrolling. Additional peacekeepers and armoured personnel carriers were deployed from the force reserve in Goma and the special forces in Beni. During the reporting period, five attacks against the MONUSCO force were carried out by armed assailants, resulting in the injury of one peacekeeper. On 17 May, MONUSCO was successful in interrupting a major attack by combatants of the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* in Ndjala, 20 km south-east of Djugu.

37. MONUSCO supported FARDC operations in Djugu and Mahagi territories with logistical assistance, the provision of intelligence, reconnaissance flights and the evacuation of wounded soldiers. In addition, daily joint aerial patrols have been conducted with FARDC, and fuel and rations have been provided to help to keep the vital national highway to Uganda open, which is of crucial importance given the restrictions on flights owing to COVID-19. Through outreach and advocacy, including on Radio Okapi, MONUSCO called on the local population to distance itself from the assailants, while discouraging the communities targeted by the violence from creating their own self-defence groups in order to maintain the necessary space for future dialogue efforts.

38. As ADF attacks moved northwards towards Ituri, the Mission increased its presence and visibility through the deployment of a temporary base in Mamove, which enabled increased patrolling and more effective community-based early warning systems. In addition, to enhance the operational capacity of the Intervention Brigade of the force, in line with one of the key recommendations of the report of Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz on challenges relating to the protection of civilians in the Beni area, the Mission worked on improving coordination with FARDC. This led to a tangible improvement in intelligence-sharing and more effective activation of the Mission's quick reaction forces, which successfully repelled suspected ADF elements on several occasions. MONUSCO has also shared intelligence derived from its aerial surveillance system for monitoring armed group movements, enabling more targeted FARDC operations with a reduced impact on the civilian population and a lower risk of collateral damage.

39. Community engagement has remained a cornerstone of the Mission's response to suspected ADF attacks and to violence committed by Mai-Mai groups in the Beni area. MONUSCO has encouraged young people to dissociate themselves from armed groups, advocated the release of children, undertaken community engagement regarding attacks on Ebola treatment teams and facilitated meetings of civil society, religious leaders, business representatives and local authorities to raise awareness of the re-emergence of Ebola.

40. In the Masisi and Rutshuru territories of North Kivu, as armed group activity intensified, MONUSCO increased day and night patrols by nearly 30 per cent compared with the preceding three months. The Mission also worked with local

authorities and civil society actors to enhance community-based early warning systems. Following the resumption of FARDC operations against FDLR, the Mission supported FARDC by sharing intelligence, including to reduce the impact of military operations on civilians. Joint patrols with the national police were also increased as part of the strategy to reduce insecurity in Goma and its outskirts.

41. In South Kivu, MONUSCO continued to provide protection and assistance to the local population, as well as to more than 3,000 internally displaced persons gathered in informal settlements around its bases in Bijombo and Mikenge. In this context, eight exchanges of fire between MONUSCO troops and armed elements were recorded. On 28 May, the MONUSCO temporary base in Mikenge, which protects hundreds of internally displaced persons, was attacked by about 100 Mai-Mai elements before being repelled, injuring two peacekeepers and five internally displaced persons. MONUSCO also supported the deployment of 100 FARDC special forces soldiers to reinforce the brigade operating in the area and provided it with additional ammunition and equipment. MONUSCO further strengthened early warning systems, including through the provision of logistical support to re-establish cellular networks, where necessary. Lastly, the Mission facilitated dialogue among the five major ethnic groups in the area, with a view to creating momentum for the implementation of a ceasefire agreement signed by representatives of the different armed groups in March.

42. In Tanganyika Province, MONUSCO supported the deployment of a mediation team by the provincial authorities to reduce tensions between the Twa and Bantu communities, resulting in the identification of trust-building measures. MONUSCO also increased patrols to mining areas where there had been an increase in armed group incursions. In addition, MONUSCO provided protection for 2,250 recently returned internally displaced persons in Kalemie territory. In Maniema Province, MONUSCO deployed a temporary base to Lubichako in March, which contributed to a decline in the activity of armed groups and a significant reduction in reports of rape and other forms of sexual violence perpetrated by armed elements in the area. The base also provided escorts for humanitarian actors.

VII. Stabilization and the strengthening of State institutions

A. Stabilization and root causes of conflict

43. Efforts to address the root causes of conflict focused on facilitating intercommunal dialogue and conflict resolution mechanisms. Three projects, financed by the Stabilization Coherence Fund administered by MONUSCO, were launched in Ituri to support former FRPI combatants, while a project on democratic dialogue was launched in Djugu territory. In Kasai Province, MONUSCO supported authorities and communities in producing a community mapping ahead of a planned dialogue process to address the root causes of intercommunal violence in the province. Most activities related to stabilization projects in North Kivu were paused until the lifting of restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

44. The illegal exploitation of natural resources remained a major source of conflict and instability in the eastern provinces. In response, MONUSCO continued to take actions to reduce rent-seeking by armed actors and to support civilian control over supply chains. For example, in the Beni area, North Kivu, an extensive mapping of 34 mining sites was completed, which included an analysis of supply chains, upstream actors and site legality. The Mission provided technical support for the development of a monitoring system aimed at strengthening civilian control over the extraction and trade of gold in order to increase legitimate economic activity while reducing illicit

income for armed actors. MONUSCO also supported the development of a four-year project to improve security and human rights in conflict-affected mining areas in Ituri and South Kivu.

B. Security sector and justice system reform

45. Contributing to Action for Peacekeeping commitments to support lasting and nationally owned solutions to insecurity, MONUSCO continued to pursue a cross-pillar approach to security sector reform, leveraging its good offices and technical expertise to help national authorities to tackle conflict drivers and pursue long-term institutional transformation. Several meetings on security sector reform were held with the Chief of the General Command of the Military Schools in early March, after a visit to the Military Academy and other military schools in Kananga, followed by visits to military schools in Kitona and Banana.

46. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, and at the request of the Congolese authorities, subsequent capacity-building and engagement activities were temporarily put on hold until the situation allowed for their resumption. Among the activities paused owing to COVID-19 were the weekly meetings with the General Defence Staff of FARDC and monthly security sector reform coordination meetings with defence attachés and other representatives of international and bilateral partners.

47. MONUSCO continued to provide technical and logistical assistance for the investigation and prosecution of grave human rights violations, including support for military court appeal hearings in Beni and Butembo in March that had been pending since 2016. As a result, 52 convictions of members of FARDC and the national police were upheld, which included 22 charges of rape of minors. The Mission also provided technical support to the prosecution in the preparation of cases against the 29 individuals accused of attacking Ebola treatment centres in Biakato, Ituri Province.

48. Regarding the corrections system, the current prison population in the area covered by MONUSCO totalled 22,000, more than three times the official capacity. Despite efforts to help coordinate the provision of food and essential services, at least 62 individuals died in detention during the first quarter of the year, mainly owing to a lack of access to appropriate medical care but also as a result of ill-treatment. In addition, over 190 inmates escaped from detention centres across the country. An unconfirmed number of COVID-19 cases have been recorded at the Ndolo military prison in Kinshasa and the Makala prison, which are both operating significantly beyond capacity, despite prevention efforts supported by MONUSCO.

49. MONUSCO continued to support the Congolese authorities in the implementation and monitoring of the national mine action strategy and the national action plan for the control and management of small arms and light weapons. Through the programme implemented by the Mine Action Service, MONUSCO further increased the capacity of the national security forces in conflict-affected areas to manage their weapons and ammunition, notably through the installation of infrastructure upgrades and weapons storage for 956 weapons, as well as the continued provision of training.

C. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

50. At the national level, MONUSCO continued to support the Government in streamlining disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. The Mission also provided technical and logistical support to provincial initiatives, in response to increasing demand from armed groups looking to surrender. In North Kivu, 12 armed

groups in Lubero territory announced their desire to surrender and disarm. In South Kivu, MONUSCO supported authorities and FARDC with the disarmament of 120 Mai-Mai Maheshe combatants.

51. In the context of the FRPI peace process, MONUSCO supported the development of an operational plan for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and completed the construction of disarmament and demobilization camps. Despite some delays caused by COVID-19, an important milestone was reached with the handover of the disarmament site in Karatsi and the demobilization site in Kazana to the Ituri provincial authorities on 11 May. The Mission continued to support the sustainability of the peace process through community violence reduction initiatives that support road rehabilitation and help to provide temporary employment opportunities and psychosocial support to both former combatants and community members.

52. A total of 28 Congolese ex-combatants were demobilized by MONUSCO and a total of 33 children formerly associated with armed groups were received and handed over to child protection partners for reunification with their families. A total of 21 Rwandan ex-combatants and 19 dependants were also processed, but they could not be repatriated owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

VIII. Women and peace and security

53. MONUSCO continued to advance the implementation of tasks under the women and peace and security agenda through targeted engagement with national, provincial and local authorities, advocating for increased space for the representation and participation of women, including in decision-making processes related to COVID-19. The Mission also enhanced efforts to support community-based conflict prevention and reconciliation structures led by women, which contributed to ensuring a gender-inclusive response to protection challenges, including new risk patterns in the context of COVID-19. Over 80 women benefited from these initiatives.

54. Public advocacy also continued to be an important tool for promoting an active role for women in conflict resolution, including the monitoring of the implementation of peace agreements. In Ituri Province, following persistent attacks by assailants, the network of women's organizations in Ituri issued a joint declaration calling on all stakeholders to take concrete action to end the violence, address insecurity in the province and promote a protective environment for women and girls.

IX. Child protection and sexual violence in conflict

55. MONUSCO verified 836 grave violations against children. A total of 83 children (34 girls and 49 boys) were reportedly killed or maimed, including 55 children killed by armed assailants in Djugu territory. In addition, 62 girls were raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence; 16 of the rapes were committed by FARDC soldiers. At least 525 children (175 girls and 350 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups. This includes 354 children associated with Kamuina Nsapu, who had self-demobilized in 2019 and whose status was retroactively verified during the reporting period.

56. The commanders of the APCLS-Janvier and Mai-Mai Maheshe armed groups, operating in Masisi territory, North Kivu, and Walungu territory, South Kivu, respectively, signed unilateral declarations and road maps in which they committed themselves to ending and preventing child recruitment and other grave violations of child rights, bringing the number of armed groups that have formally made such declarations to 31. As a direct result of the dialogue with these commanders,

51 children were released. New recruitment of children by armed groups stood at 26 children to date in 2020.

57. Reporting on conflict-related sexual violence was significantly constrained by insecurity and restrictions owing to COVID-19. However, available data suggests that armed groups were responsible for around 80 per cent of reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence. North Kivu represented a hotspot due to clashes between NDC-R and the APCLS and Nyatura coalition resulting in serious human rights abuses. Intercommunity violence contributed to an increase of sexual violence in South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika, where Twa majority militias perpetrated gang rapes of women, often while they were working in their fields. Sexual violence perpetrated by FARDC also continued to be documented in North Kivu, particularly in the context of military operations against ADF in the Beni and Butembo areas.

X. Exit strategy

58. The articulation of a joint strategy with the Government, including a set of measurable benchmarks to facilitate the progressive transition of MONUSCO, remained a key priority for the Mission. A broad understanding of key aspects of the process has been reached with the Congolese authorities at the political level, including the need for a multi-pronged transition process tailored to situations in: (a) areas affected by structured armed conflict perpetrated by armed groups and intercommunal violence; (b) areas affected predominantly by local armed groups and intercommunity violence; and (c) areas moving to a state of post-conflict. However, the focus on the national COVID-19 response has made it more difficult to engage in a sustained dialogue on the transition. While progress on the development of the joint strategy has therefore been slower than anticipated, preparatory work has continued in order to ensure that detailed discussions with government counterparts can resume apace, once circumstances allow.

59. In Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces, opportunities for increased cooperation between MONUSCO and the United Nations country team have been further explored, with a focus on identifying interventions that are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, as well as national priorities for vulnerability reduction. Agriculture and human capital development received particular attention in terms of their potential for enhancing economic development and social cohesion, while reducing the risk of new conflicts. This will help to create a more favourable environment for the planned withdrawal of the MONUSCO force component from the area, once the current freeze on troop movements due to COVID-19 has been lifted.

XI. Mission effectiveness

A. Mission performance

Assessment of the force and police components

60. In line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments, MONUSCO strove to ensure a high level of performance by taking necessary measures in response to issues identified during previous structured assessments. In addition, 11 out of 42 force units were newly evaluated, with 5 units assessed as “excellent” and 6 as “satisfactory”. The main performance gaps identified were related to environmental action plans, perimeter defence, anti-riot capabilities, anti-ambush preparedness, medical evacuation and mortar drills. The Mission has taken measures to address these issues

and will also continue to make assessments during predeployment verification visits as part of the rotation processes.

61. The MONUSCO police component undertook evaluations of its six formed police units, all of which were rated as “satisfactory”. The Mission encouraged police-contributing countries to increase the proportion of female personnel in formed police units, which currently stands at 12.9 per cent, as well as to increase the proportion of women in command positions by at least 25 per cent by the end of 2020. Individual police officers (28.8 per cent of whom are women) were also evaluated to identify and address performance gaps. Remedial actions included the redeployment of individual police officers to positions better suited to their skill sets and expertise, and targeted training sessions on criminal intelligence gathering, sexual and gender-based violence, crowd control, forensics and investigations for 366 police officers.

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mandate implementation

62. To address the challenges faced in the context of COVID-19, a “One United Nations” task force bringing together the Mission and the United Nations country team was established to ensure a coherent response. The task force developed a COVID-19 contingency plan, with emphasis placed on the capacities of the United Nations system and its humanitarian partners to stay and deliver on their mandates to the extent possible. The continuation of essential and critical functions is based on the three broad principles of preventing United Nations activities from contributing to the transmission of the disease, protecting staff from becoming infected and ensuring business continuity.

63. Owing to restrictions of movement into and within the country in the context of COVID-19, only United Nations special flights in support of the protection of civilians, necessary cargo or other essential operations have taken place. The Mission also temporarily suspended all activities involving large groups of people. Following the suspension of rotations, repatriations and deployments of uniformed personnel through 30 June, MONUSCO deferred 14 planned rotations. This has had an impact on the new force and police generation processes mandated in resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#) and the implementation of some of the recommendations of General Dos Santos Cruz. The Mission had to suspend environmental, contingent-owned equipment and property control inspections, as well as aviation safety field assessments and field audit visits.

64. To ensure the safety of United Nations personnel, the medical capabilities of all duty stations were assessed and enhancements were made where possible, including the setting up or identification of 60 available isolation beds in nine locations by the Mission and the United Nations country team. The Mission, with the support of and in-kind contributions from UNICEF and the United Nations Office for Project Services, has also been setting up a “One United Nations” COVID-19 medical facility in Kinshasa, which is expected to accommodate United Nations personnel once all the equipment and qualified personnel are available. A total of 46 MONUSCO personnel have tested positive (23 international personnel from the civilian and police components and 23 national staff). One MONUSCO national staff in Bukavu died as the result of COVID-19.

B. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

65. Between 1 March and 31 May, two allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving members of military contingents were recorded. Both allegations were referred to the relevant troop-contributing countries. A total of 10 other allegations of serious misconduct were recorded and are under investigation.

66. MONUSCO continued to implement robust preventive measures against misconduct, albeit at a limited scale owing to COVID-19. These measures included training for personnel, risk assessments and deterrent patrols by military police to enforce existing curfews and out-of-bounds areas. Consistent with relevant COVID-19 protocols, outreach initiatives to promote the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse were conducted through local radio stations and text messages.

XII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

67. Ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities remained a priority, in line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments. A total of 87 incidents against United Nations personnel and facilities were recorded, including 9 incidents related to armed conflict, 27 to crime, 25 to civil unrest and 26 to hazards. Of the personnel affected, 10 were international staff (8 men and 2 women) and 33 national staff (28 men and 5 women). Also seven incidents affecting the Ebola response and three incidents related to COVID-19 mitigation measures were recorded. These figures represent a decrease of 49 per cent compared with the previous reporting period.

68. On 30 May, Trésor Mputu Kankonde, who has been accused of involvement in the murder of Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp in 2017, was arrested by Congolese authorities near Kananga. This development marks important progress in the investigation of this serious criminal act committed against United Nations personnel and serves to advance the Action for Peacekeeping commitment to bring the perpetrators of such crimes to justice.

XIII. Observations

69. The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained largely stable but is still fragile. The leaders of the country's governing coalition have demonstrated their continued commitment to resolving their differences constructively in order to preserve what has become the cornerstone of the country's stabilization over the past year. It is vital that dialogue remain the primary way to resolve differences and that all stakeholders continue to take advantage of this unique window of opportunity to forge ahead with the governance, security and socioeconomic reforms required for the achievement of lasting peace and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am encouraged that the vast majority of the numerous territories of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are free of armed conflict. This is a testament to the deep commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes that exists at all levels in Congolese society.

70. I am deeply concerned by the serious deterioration of the security situation in Ituri Province, where a surge in violence deliberately targeting certain communities has caused mass displacement and serious human rights violations that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has warned may amount to crimes against humanity. This violence has inflicted a particularly heavy toll on women and children. Parts of South Kivu Province have also seen an alarming resurgence in violence along ethnic lines. Eliminating the threat posed by armed militias in these contexts will require a comprehensive approach that goes beyond military intervention and seeks to address the root causes of recurring cycles of intercommunal violence, including access to land and competition for political power and economic resources. To this end, MONUSCO will continue to support the Congolese authorities in their efforts to protect civilians by neutralizing the threat

posed by armed groups and ensuring that perpetrators of serious crimes are brought to justice, while providing mediation support to help to address the underlying drivers of conflict.

71. ADF continues to pose a serious threat to civilians in the Beni area despite ongoing military pressure. Broadening the response to address the funding streams of the group and ensuring accountability for perpetrators of the violence will be vital in responding to this threat. I commend the shared commitment of the Congolese security forces and MONUSCO to strengthening their cooperation, in particular in the area of intelligence, where the Mission possesses specific assets. Further deepening this partnership, on the basis of mutual trust and a common will to protect the civilian population from harm, is key to tackling ADF.

72. Notwithstanding the ongoing violence in the eastern provinces, the participation by some armed groups in disarmament and demobilization processes in North and South Kivu is a positive sign. In this context, I commend the Congolese authorities for their proactive approach in favour of the community-based demobilization and reintegration of former combatants. Going forward, I call on the Government to take into account the importance of a national policy framework for a well-managed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process that draws on lessons learned from the past to ensure sustainable demobilization and community-based reintegration into society.

73. I remain fully committed to enhancing the ability of MONUSCO to deliver on its mandate to protect civilians. The timely implementation of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#) and the recommendations of Lieutenant General dos Santos Cruz continue to be of key importance in this regard. In the spirit of the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, I count on the full cooperation of all stakeholders, including troop- and police-contributing countries, to help to bring about the envisaged improvements to the MONUSCO force, including the Intervention Brigade, and urge Member States to ensure that the Mission has the resources necessary to carry out its mandated tasks.

74. Sustained reform efforts remain essential to enabling the Congolese security forces to discharge their responsibilities more effectively, in accordance with human rights obligations. Renewed commitment at the political level and the enactment of relevant legislation will be key in this regard. The strengthening of the military and police by ensuring that they are properly organized, resourced, trained and vetted are other important milestones. Further strengthening the logistical capacity of FARDC, including in terms of mobility and the availability of barracks, allowing the armed forces to maintain their presence in areas affected by conflict, also remains a critical challenge.

75. I remain concerned by recent reports of human rights violations, including cases of sexual and gender-based violence, perpetrated by Congolese security forces. I welcome the steps taken by the Congolese military justice authorities to prosecute perpetrators of serious crimes committed by members of FARDC and the national police, which is crucial to building trust and confidence in the country's security forces. Early and credible investigations by national authorities into these violations and the payment of reparations to victims of sexual violence are critical to ensure accountability. I also welcome the progress made in the arrests of those allegedly involved in the killing of Ms. Catalán and Mr. Sharp in 2017. The progressive strengthening of civilian justice institutions, in particular their independence and capacity to process serious crimes, is also a critical component of efforts to address the root causes of violence in the areas of the country still affected by armed conflict and to build the foundations for lasting peace and security in the provinces transitioning to a post-conflict phase.

76. Regional cooperation is key for the long-term stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My Special Representative and my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region are working hand-in-hand on non-military measures to promote the voluntary disarmament of foreign armed groups and disrupt their recruitment and supply lines. MONUSCO will continue to support the efforts of President Tshisekedi to improve the political climate in the Great Lakes region, in cooperation with my Special Envoy. I welcome the determination of the Southern African Development Community to support the peaceful settlement of the border dispute between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia and call on both States to resolve their differences through dialogue, with the support of the region.

77. The COVID-19 pandemic has presented the Democratic Republic of the Congo with yet another historic challenge. I commend the Congolese Government for taking swift and decisive action to limit the spread of the virus. As elsewhere, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant socioeconomic impact, further complicating efforts to address the political, developmental and humanitarian challenges facing the country. In this context, it is all the more important that the country's political forces unite around a common response to the virus, setting aside partisan interests and individual ambitions for the good of the Congolese people. The re-emergence of the Ebola virus disease in two separate locations presented the country with additional public health challenges, even as these challenges were rapidly addressed by response teams. Against this background, I renew my call on armed groups to lay down their weapons so that efforts to combat these public health challenges can continue unimpeded. I welcome the swift and concerted response of the international partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support the country at this critical time and call on them to further support the country's humanitarian response plan, which remains severely underfunded. MONUSCO and the United Nations country team will continue to support the response efforts of the Congolese authorities while ensuring the continued implementation of their core mandated tasks.

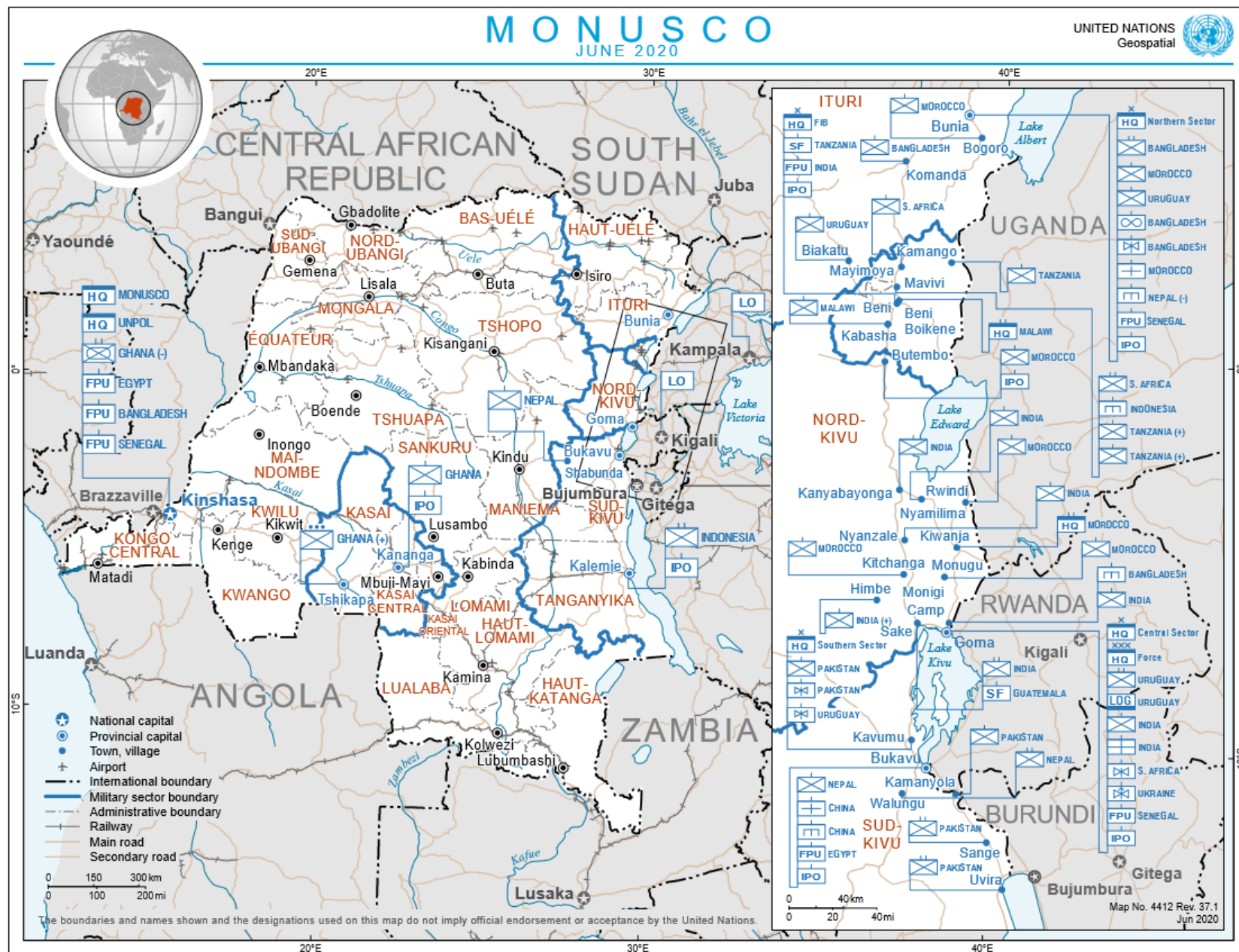
78. The elaboration of a joint strategy for the phased and responsible handover of responsibilities from MONUSCO to the Congolese Government, with support from the United Nations country team, remains essential to preserving the hard-won stability gains of the past two decades. MONUSCO will continue its strategic dialogue with the Government to ensure that the Mission's drawdown and exit are carefully sequenced, conditions-based and undertaken in accordance with agreed benchmarks. In this regard, I renew my call on the Government to approach this process as a matter of national priority and articulate clear positions informed by the overarching interests of the Congolese people.

79. Lastly, I wish to thank my Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her steadfast leadership and dedication, as well as all MONUSCO personnel, the United Nations country team, the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the troop- and police-contributing countries for their commitment to the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also commend regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and encourage them to remain engaged, especially during this difficult time.

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