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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 43 of Security Council resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#), covers developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 21 September 2023 to 30 November 2023. It describes the progress and challenges in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

II. Political developments

2. The reporting period was marked by the publication of the final lists of candidates for the general elections to be held on 20 December 2023 and the heightened polarization of the political sphere with the start of the electoral campaign, amid continued regional tensions.

3. On 8 October, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that the applications of 24 candidates had been declared admissible, and on 30 October, the Constitutional Court validated 26 candidatures for the presidential election, including two additional candidatures.

4. In total, 25,832 candidates were validated for the national legislative elections; 44,110 for the provincial legislative elections; and 31,234 for the partial communal elections. Female candidates in those elections represented around 17, 25 and 43 per cent, respectively, illustrating the strategic importance of local elections for women to gain access to political posts.

5. Members of the political opposition and civil society continued to denounce the perceived lack of transparency and inclusivity of the electoral process, including concerns about the alleged violation of the electoral law by the Independent National Electoral Commission for its failure to post the electoral lists and to publish the map of polling stations by 20 October. On 28 October, the Commission announced the publication of the electoral roll for consultation in its 179 satellite offices and on its website, but opposition and civil society stakeholders deemed the read-only format to be ineffective to ensure the evaluation of the roll. On 13 November, the Electoral Observation Mission of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo and the



Church of Christ in the Congo denounced the duplication of 3,706 polling stations, while others reported difficulties for voters in obtaining duplicates of illegible or lost voter cards because their names did not appear on the electoral register, or because the electoral officers appointed to produce the duplicates had asked for bribes. The Commission promised to address the situation. On 16 November, Mr. Tshisekedi confirmed in an interview to international media that elections would not take place in most of the Masisi and Rutshuru territories of North Kivu owing to persistent insecurity.

6. Meanwhile, the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the East African Community, the Carter Center and the European Union announced plans to deploy electoral observation missions to the country, in November or December. On 6 November, the European Union deployed an election observation mission for the 20 December elections.

7. Tensions mounted in Katanga between youth wings of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, the Ensemble pour la République and the Union nationale des fédéralistes du Congo, leading to clashes on 8 October in Fungurume, Lualaba Province, and on 7 November in Kasumbalesa, Haut-Katanga Province. From 11 to 13 November, violent confrontations ensued between Kasaïans and Katangese communities in Malemba-Nkulu territory, Haut-Lomami Province, following the murder of a motorcyclist by alleged Kasaïans.

8. On 19 November, the electoral campaign was officially launched. The same day, presidential candidate Augustin Matata Ponyo announced his withdrawal from the elections in favour of Mr. Katumbi, followed on 20 November by presidential candidates Seth Kikuni and Frank Diongo.

9. On 12 October, Mr. Tshisekedi announced a transitional system to allow for the gradual lifting of the state of siege measures in effect in Ituri and North Kivu. To that end, on 10 November, the Council of Ministers adopted a draft ordinance amending and supplementing that of 3 May 2021 on measures to implement the state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu, while the sixty-first extension of the state of siege, previously adopted by the Council on 22 November, came into effect on 28 November for a 15-day period.

10. Tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda remained high, marked by increasingly hostile rhetoric, mutual accusations on the use of armed groups as proxies, increased cross-border incidents, while the implementation of the Nairobi and Luanda processes stalled, despite ongoing diplomatic efforts.

11. On 19 and 20 November, the United States of America Director of National Intelligence visited Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in an effort to de-escalate tensions between both countries. According to an official statement by the United States published on 21 November, the two Heads of State committed to take specific steps towards de-escalation, building on regional efforts under the Luanda and Nairobi processes. On 20 November and 21 November, respectively, the French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs spoke with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'Apala, and his Rwandan counterpart, Vincent Biruta, and encouraged continued dialogue between both countries, particularly within the framework of the Luanda and Nairobi processes.

12. On 6 October, following the quadripartite summit of 27 June, the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the East African Community, ECCAS, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC met in Addis Ababa under the aegis of the African Union and with the participation of the United Nations to coordinate and harmonize peace initiatives in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Participants agreed to ensure the alignment of the timetable for the withdrawal of existing missions on the ground and planned force deployments, to maintain dialogue on the political track of the Nairobi and Luanda processes, to speed up efforts to establish humanitarian corridors, and to reconvene before the end of the year.

13. On 8 October, at an extraordinary meeting of the East African Community Sectoral Council on Cooperation in Defence Affairs held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, the Congolese Government announced that it would not seek the renewal of the East African Community regional force mandate that will expire on 8 December 2023. The Council recommended that a summit of East African Community Heads of State be convened to authorize the use of force by the regional force against the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23), urged the facilitator of the Nairobi process to accelerate the political track of the process by committing M23 and other armed groups to an immediate cessation of hostilities and called for the resolution of the financial problems facing the regional force.

14. On 1 and 4 November, the Heads of State and Government of SADC held a summit on the deployment of a SADC mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They commended member States for making additional commitments to the deployment of the mission, reiterated the need for SADC to lead efforts to mobilize resources for peace and security in the SADC region and mandated the Chairperson of SADC, the President of Angola, João Lourenço, to intensify diplomatic efforts to diffuse tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

15. On 9 November 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo led a MONUSCO delegation to Gaborone, where she met with the Executive Secretary of SADC, Elias Magosi; the Chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Affairs; the Chiefs of Defence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, South Africa and the United Republic of Tanzania; and the new SADC mission Force Commander. Discussions centred on the deployment of the mission, potential MONUSCO support and cooperation on the ground. On 17 November, Mr. Tshisekedi presided over the ceremony at which the Democratic Republic of the Congo officially signed the status of forces agreement of the mission.

16. On 24 November, at their twenty-third ordinary summit, East African Community Heads of State noted that the Democratic Republic of the Congo would not extend the mandate of the East African Community regional force beyond 8 December 2023 and requested the Chiefs of Defence Staff of the East African Community and SADC to meet before 8 December and submit their recommendations on the way forward to the Defence Ministers.

III. Security situation

17. The security situation in Ituri and North Kivu remained volatile, marked by ongoing violence against civilians perpetrated mostly by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO). In North Kivu, fighting erupted between M23, coalitions of other armed groups and the Congolese armed forces, exacerbating the dire humanitarian situation. In South Kivu, pockets of insecurity persisted.

18. Between 21 September and 24 November, MONUSCO recorded 716 security incidents in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. In total, 137 civilians were reportedly killed, including at least 60 women and 50 children, and a further 229 civilians were injured, including at least 13 women and 21 children.

Ituri Province

19. In Ituri, MONUSCO recorded 189 security incidents between 21 September and 24 November, involving violence against civilians and the Congolese armed forces perpetrated by at least eight armed groups. CODECO was responsible for the majority of the incidents (99), followed by ADF (39). In total, 116 civilians were killed, including at least 24 women. ADF were the most lethal armed group operating in Ituri (67 civilians killed), followed by CODECO (42 civilians killed). A further 33 civilians were injured, including at least 5 women.

20. In Djugu and Mahagi territories, CODECO combatants continued to attack civilians and the Congolese armed forces, albeit at lower intensity than in previous reporting periods. Between 21 September and 24 November, CODECO combatants were reportedly responsible for killing 42 civilians, including at least 8 women and 11 children, and injuring a further 19 civilians, including at least 3 women and 1 child.

21. ADF continued to target civilians in Irumu and Mambasa territories, despite pressure by the Uganda People's Defence Force and the Congolese armed forces joint Operation Shujaa. Between 21 September and 24 November, ADF reportedly killed 72 civilians, including at least 15 women and 2 children, and injured 10 civilians.

North Kivu Province

22. In North Kivu, MONUSCO recorded 329 security incidents between 21 September and 24 November. In total, 187 civilians were reportedly killed, including at least 31 women and 36 children, compared with 131 in the previous reporting period. A further 168 civilians were injured, including at least 22 women and 29 children.

23. In the Grand Nord, ADF combatants continued to perpetrate violence against civilians and clash with Congolese armed forces, while the intensification, including with airstrikes, and expansion of Operation Shujaa towards the west and north of Ituri increased pressure on the group. Threats posed by improvised explosive devices persisted. Congolese and Ugandan forces reportedly found and dismantled five such devices on 12 and 14 October.

24. In September, in Petit Nord, fighting erupted between M23 and armed groups acting in support of the Congolese armed forces under the banner of *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*. In October, following coordinated offensives by the Congolese armed forces and *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie*, which temporarily pushed M23 out of Masisi territory, M23 regained control of their former positions in Kitchanga and the Sake-Kitchanga-Mweso axis. This series of offensives and counteroffensives alone provoked the displacement of over 150,000 civilians. M23 also increased pressure along the Goma-Rutshuru axis from Kibumba southwards towards Kibati. The use of heavy mortars by M23 and heavy artillery, as well as bomber aircraft by the Congolese armed forces, increased the risk of inflicting indiscriminate harm, while heavy fighting, including between rival Congolese armed groups in the area close to the border with Rwanda, increased the risk of a further escalation of the conflict.

25. The Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region confirmed two violations of the ceasefire between the Congolese armed forces and M23, on 26 September and 6 October, during which M23 combatants attempted to seek control of Kanyamahoro hill, in Nyiragongo territory. On 24 October, M23 and the Congolese armed forces clashed in Kanyamahoro near Kibumba, resulting in the death of a Kenyan soldier of the East African Community regional force. On 25 October, the regional force issued a communiqué reporting the ceasefire violation and calling for a return to the ceasefire agreement and the cessation

of hostilities between the Congolese armed forces and M23. On 8 November, the Burundian contingent of the regional force withdrew from their positions in Mweso, Kitchanga and Kilolirwe, amid accusations by M23 that Burundian soldiers had taken part in the combat alongside the Congolese armed forces.

South Kivu Province

26. Between 21 September and 24 November, MONUSCO recorded 198 security incidents; 31 civilians were reportedly killed, including 5 women and 1 child, and 29 civilians were injured, including 7 women and 3 children.

27. In the Minembwe highlands, skirmishes occurred between Twirwaneho and the Congolese armed forces, in a climate of accentuated intercommunal tension. Low-level violence persisted in parts of Uvira and Fizi territories, involving extortion perpetrated by various Mai-Mai groups.

28. In Kalehe territory, Raia Mutomboki groups identifying as Wazalendo continued to collect illegal taxes and inflict bodily harm for failure to pay.

Other provinces

29. The Teke-Yaka inter-community conflict, which is rooted in a dispute over customary taxes and access to land, continued to spread from Mai-Ndombe Province to rural areas of Kinshasa, including the Maluku municipality and the provinces of Kwilu, Kwango and Kongo Central. The conflict escalated with the creation of the Mobondo militia associated with the Yaka community, which continued to carry out attacks in Grand Bandundu and parts of Kongo Central. In Mai-Ndombe, more than two thirds of all villages in the Kwamouth territory were controlled by the Mobondo militia.

30. In Kisangani, Tshopo Province, inter-community conflict over land issues between the Lengola and the Mbole escalated after the provincial governor signed leasing contracts with a foreign company in February. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in Kisangani confirmed the killing of 32 children and 2 adults following the attack by alleged Lengola assailants on a primary school on 29 October; it also confirmed that an additional 16 people were killed and 29 injured, as well as population displacements and at least 25 houses burned down, in subsequent clashes between both communities on 5 and 8 November. According to the military judicial authorities, 260 people were arrested in connection with these clashes. In an 8 November communiqué, the Congolese national police reportedly banned gatherings of more than five people in and around Kisangani for security reasons.

IV. Human rights situation

31. From September to October, MONUSCO documented 924 human rights violations and abuses, 86 per cent of which were committed in conflict-affected provinces. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for 61 per cent of those abuses. In conflict-affected provinces, Mai-Mai factions continued to be responsible for most of the abuses (132) followed by CODECO (92), Nyatura (76), ADF (75), M23 (68) and Twa militias (45), among others. During the reporting period, at least 307 persons (including 208 men, 70 women and 29 children) were victims of summary killings by armed groups, notably ADF, CODECO and M23, a decrease from the 348 victims recorded between June and August.

32. In the run-up to the elections, intimidations, arbitrary arrests and detentions continued, often targeting members of the opposition, human rights activists and

journalists. In September and October, MONUSCO documented 24 incidents in relation to restrictions of civic space, with 30 victims.

33. On 9 October, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office received two different requests for individual protection from two political party members following death threats. On 13 October, the trial of journalist Stanis Bujakera Tshimanga, charged with forgery, falsification of State seals, propagation of false rumours and transmission of erroneous messages, started in Makala prison, Kinshasa. Two instances of hate speech in the context of the forthcoming electoral campaign were documented in the Kasai provinces, including one by the Governor of Central Kasai, warning any presidential candidate other than the Head of State against campaigning in the Province.

34. On 3 October, in the trial concerning the repression of the demonstration of the political-religious group *Foi naturelle judaïque et messianique vers les nations* (FNJMN), which had taken place on 30 August in Goma, the military court of North Kivu convicted and sentenced the commander of the Republican Guard to death for murder and attempted murder and to life imprisonment for destruction of military equipment. Three soldiers were sentenced to 10 years in prison for murder and attempted murder. On 2 October, one officer and one soldier were acquitted.

35. On 9 October, the Goma garrison military court tried 115 members of FNJMN. The group's founder and three other defendants were convicted and sentenced to death, four members of the group were sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and 55 other members were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment, for murder, attempted murder and participation in an insurrectionary movement. Among the defendants, 52 members of the movement were acquitted.

V. Humanitarian situation

36. Violent conflicts, natural disasters and epidemics, combined with high levels of poverty, weak public infrastructure and lack of essential services, continued to exacerbate humanitarian challenges.

37. In October, more than 450,000 individuals fled their homes in Masisi, Rutshuru, Beni and neighbouring territories owing to the intensification of conflict-related violence in North Kivu. In Ituri, the number of internally displaced persons increased by 4.2 per cent in October, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons to 1.65 million, while pockets of insecurity continued to cause displacement in parts of South Kivu. Of the 6.3 million internally displaced persons in the country, 5.5 million were located in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu.

38. Outbreaks of cholera and measles continued to exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation, in particular in North and South Kivu, where transmission rates were four times higher than the previous year. As at 31 October, 79 per cent of a total of 42,672 cholera cases were recorded in those two Provinces.

39. As of 31 October, more than 90,000 cases of gender-based violence had been documented since the start of the year, with 39,000 of those cases reported in North Kivu alone, with reports of attacks by armed and displaced men around the camps.

40. The emergency system-wide scale-up facilitated the expansion of operational capacities, enabling humanitarian organizations to reach nearly 3 million people, i.e., 58 per cent of the targeted 5.1 million people in need. Nevertheless, armed conflict, restrictions on movement linked to demonstrations and illegal barriers, and acts of violence against humanitarian goods and personnel continued to seriously hamper humanitarian access. On 13 November, members of an armed group attacked a convoy

of a national humanitarian organizations in the Fizi territory of South Kivu. Three vehicles were torched and two humanitarian workers were temporarily kidnapped. As at 27 November, the country's humanitarian response plan for 2023 remained chronically underfunded at a rate of 37.5 per cent, amounting to \$843.6 million out of the required \$2.25 billion.

41. On 31 October, the Cadre national de concertation humanitaire approved the planning figures of the humanitarian needs overview and the humanitarian response plan for 2024. According to the newly approved figures, an estimated 25.4 million people will be affected by food insecurity in 2024, of whom 8.7 million will be targeted by a multisectoral response. The multisectoral response in 2024 aims at improving the quality of assistance and reducing dependency on the humanitarian aid.

VI. Protection of civilians

42. MONUSCO continued to implement its protection of civilians mandate through multidimensional approaches, including physical protection, dialogue, engagement and the establishment of a protective environment, in priority areas identified through an updated and comprehensive threat assessment developed during the reporting period in the context of the transition process. These approaches have been mainstreamed in all the Mission's efforts and activities.

43. In South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri, MONUSCO monitored conflict dynamics and political tensions in the run-up to the elections and organized seven political cafés with 127 local leaders, including 69 women and 20 young people, focusing on the prevention of electoral violence and the political participation of young people and women.

44. During the reporting period, MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces planned and conducted six joint protective and offensive operations in Ituri and North Kivu. This included Operation Dynamic Shield to secure population in specific hotspots in Djugu, Mahagi and Irumu territories through the deployment of mobile operational base operations, as well as Operations Spider's Web to protect civilians and deter CODECO in Djugu and Mahagi territories. During the latter operation, targeted CODECO combatants were successfully expelled from Masikini, Djugu territory. In North Kivu, MONUSCO, in coordination with the Congolese armed forces, conducted Operation Central Distribution to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to more than 20,000 newly displaced people around the MONUSCO base in Kitchanga fleeing the clashes between M23 and the coalition of Congolese armed groups. Operation Central Kulungu continued in response to the M23 movement along the RN2 axis, and Operation Springbok was launched to secure the towns of Goma and Sake to protect civilians. The MONUSCO force Intervention Brigade was also deployed along Rwindi-Nyanzale and Rwindi-Kirumba axis to conduct daily patrols to protect the population.

45. During the reporting period, formed United Nations Police units conducted 21 patrols around internally displaced persons camps outside Bunia, Ituri Province, and 609 joint patrols with the MONUSCO force, the Congolese National Police and Congolese armed forces. On 4 September United Nations Police launched a series of refresher sessions in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu for 3,089 Congolese National Police officers on public order management and respect for human rights, together with three-month-long training on electoral security processes for Congolese National Police intervention units in charge of crowd control and public order management. As at 20 October, 1,050 Congolese National Police officers had been trained. The Mission actively engaged with State authorities and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to support the creation of appropriate State-owned early warning

and response systems as protection tools. MONUSCO also worked with communities to strengthen protection tools, including community alert networks, local protection committees, community protection plans, human rights networks and local security councils.

46. The Mission continued to support the Congolese armed forces in compliance with the human rights due diligence policy. Between 21 September and 23 November, 77 risk assessments were carried out, including 59 on transport, 4 on training, 3 on logistics, 1 on joint operations and 10 on other activities. Challenges in the implementation of the policy persisted, including the timely receipt of information required for due diligence, the apparent use of certain foreign security actors by the Congolese defence and security forces and reports of collaboration between those forces and armed groups.

47. Between 20 September and 17 October, MONUSCO, through the Mine Action Service, deployed explosive ordnance disposal teams to address 87 spot tasks in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. The teams identified and destroyed 253 explosive remnants of war, cleared 7,745 m² of land and incinerated 3,969 rounds of small arms ammunition. The Mine Action Service also conducted 98 explosive ordnance risk education sessions, including materials delivered in different local languages, for 4,715 members of the local community (340 women, 435 men, 1,943 girls and 1,997 boys) in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu.

VII. Stabilization and the strengthening of State institutions

A. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and stabilization

48. On 16 October, a new coordinator for the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme was appointed via presidential decree. The new management team includes a deputy national coordinator in charge of technical and operational issues, and a deputy national coordinator in charge of administrative and financial issues, Sylvie Kayomo Bay. The new management team took over following a ceremony in Kinshasa on 27 October.

49. In line with the priorities of the revised transition plan, the Mission continued to work with national partners and the United Nations country team to support the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. A joint United Nations programme in support of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is being developed to ensure coordinated support to the Programme.

50. MONUSCO launched a joint planning and coordination mechanism for eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in Goma on 12 October, bringing together the United Nations country team and the World Bank to exchange information and identify gaps, priority target areas and risk management in support of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and to coordinate current and future programming.

51. In North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, MONUSCO continued to support the operationalization of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, in line with ongoing transitional justice initiatives, through pilot projects facilitating the community-based reintegration of armed groups, implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and local partners. Following the launch of the pilot projects designed to facilitate the rapid employment of ex-combatants, including young people and women, promote women's empowerment, strengthen community dialogue and help reduce violence,

an increasing number of members of armed groups have expressed interest in joining the Programme. Since 1 September 2023, the North Kivu Beni office of the Programme alone received requests from almost 2,000 members of armed groups to join. In response to those requests, MONUSCO continued its cooperation with the Programme and IOM to implement demobilization and community reintegration activities for ex-combatants in the Lubero area.

52. The Mission continued implementing 13 community violence reduction projects to the direct benefit of 1,780 people (1,172 men and 608 women), including ex-combatants, vulnerable women and at-risk young people. The projects aimed to mitigate community-level drivers of conflict through the support of high-intensity labour, income generation and vocational training activities. In the current transition context, efforts are under way to reorient the Mission's community violence reduction projects to provide direct support in areas where the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme intends to launch its activities.

B. Security sector reform

53. MONUSCO continued its good offices to support institutional reforms and address governance challenges in the security sector. On 27 October, with MONUSCO support, the Congolese army reform coordination team, together with other technical and financial partners, met to discuss how to mitigate the security risks associated with the Mission's gradual withdrawal.

54. A police reform project run jointly by MONUSCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office was completed by 29 November. The project supported a 10-week training course for 49 inspectors of the Inspection générale de la police nationale congolaise (including nine women) on internal control measures to compel the strict application of laws.

55. From 27 October to 29 November, MONUSCO facilitated field visits to Goma and Bunia for senior reform coordinators of the Congolese security and defence forces. The visits helped strengthen coordination between national and provincial security institutions and build confidence between security sector actors and civil society, including the media in the eastern provinces.

56. On 21 November, to improve civilian oversight control over the security sector, MONUSCO assisted Parliament with the organization of a high-level national dialogue to advance national ownership and good governance of the security sector reform.

57. On 13 October, the Agence nationale de renseignements in Kinshasa, together with MONUSCO, organized a mentoring session for 52 female intelligence officers on career development, leadership and women's participation in decision-making processes in the sector.

58. Through the Mine Action Service, MONUSCO trained 30 armourers and 30 ammunition storekeepers (including 4 women) of the Congolese armed forces in North Kivu and provided a train-the-trainers course to 10 members of the Congolese armed forces in South Kivu on weapons and ammunition management. The Mine Action Service also installed, trained and handed over 17 weapons safes in North Kivu and 16 in South Kivu, including 7 weapons safes installed in a prison in Uvira to increase the security of prison personnel and minimize the risk of diversion of weapons. As at 18 October, the Mine Action Service had provided improvised explosive device awareness training sessions, including to 18 national police officers and 36 members of the Congolese armed forces.

59. On 5 October, with support from the Mine Action Service, the National Commission on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control developed and submitted a draft of the new national action plan to its Permanent Secretary for validation. The five-year plan (for the period 2024–2028), which was approved by the Congolese authorities on 7 October, will be the guiding strategy on all aspects of small arms and light weapons control in line with the country's international obligations.

VIII. Women and peace and security

60. MONUSCO continued to advocate for the participation of women as voters, candidates and observers in the 2023 elections and improved security for female candidates.

61. On 19 October, a follow-up meeting was held with around one hundred female candidates, civil servants and civil society experts, following a first discussion between the Special Representative and 20 political candidates on the challenges women faced in the electoral context in September. Key messages were developed to be broadcast on media platforms to promote women's participation in the elections.

62. On 11 October, in Bunia, Ituri, MONUSCO organized a capacity-building workshop on leadership and participation in peace processes (pursuant to Security Council resolution [2250 \(2015\)](#)) for 65 young girls, to mark the International Day of the Girl Child, as well as to create opportunities for intergenerational dialogue with women's groups in Ituri. A working group on youth, peace and security was also set up to facilitate the participation of young girls in peace initiatives.

IX. Integrated United Nations activities

A. 2023 electoral process

63. As elections drew closer, MONUSCO continued to employ its good offices to defuse the risk of violence and enhance confidence between stakeholders; promote the participation of women, young people and indigenous populations; promote the adoption of the draft law against tribalism, racism and xenophobia, as well as initiatives against hate speech, political intolerance and gender-based violence; and support the efforts of civil society and political parties to ensure the quality of election observation.

64. MONUSCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights organized two workshops on the prevention of electoral violence on 8 November in Fungurume, Lualaba Province, and on 16 November in Kasumbalesa, Haut-Katanga Province. Representatives of the Union sacrée de la nation, the political opposition and civil society signed a resolution to establish a consultative framework rejecting tribalist and racist hate speech and to organize joint awareness-raising forums for young people on the culture of non-violence.

65. In response to the request of the Independent National Electoral Commission, MONUSCO and UNDP began preparations to support the deployment of electoral material to North Kivu and Ituri, including to allow the participation of internally displaced persons.

66. From 21 to 29 October, in cooperation with the MONUSCO police component, UNDP implemented training activities to strengthen the Congolese National Police election security capacity, including the training of trainers in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. In Bunia, the MONUSCO police component provided support to the formation of a committee comprising female police officers and women from the

community to raise awareness about women's voting rights, including the rights of female Congolese national police officers. UNPOL also supported the organization of eight radio sessions to raise awareness about addressing sexual and gender-based violence, in Ituri and North Kivu.

67. On 24 November, in response to requests received, MONUSCO began operational arrangements to support the deployment of international and regional observation missions.

B. Support to the judicial system and fight against impunity

68. Through the Joint Justice Reform Support Programme, MONUSCO and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office continued to support justice sector reform, including the launch on 24 October of an exercise to identify priority cases of conflict-related sexual violence pending before the courts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO continued to contribute to strengthening the functioning of the criminal justice system by addressing issues related to prolonged pretrial detention, resulting in the release of more than 51 detainees awaiting trial, including 3 women. On 3 November, the new Goma Tribunal de paix, built with the Mission's support, was handed over to the judicial authorities.

69. To strengthen the capacities of military justice actors, MONUSCO supported two training sessions from 3 to 11 October for 13 military judicial police inspectors and information technology technicians in Kinshasa as part of the creation of a digital investigation cell within the military justice system. In November, MONUSCO supported the training of 30 former military prosecutors, including 2 women, who had recently been appointed as judges, on their new responsibilities, with a view to helping address the shortage of judges. In October, MONUSCO, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, supported Beni military justice authorities in the investigation of six priority cases that would benefit from international judicial cooperation under the 2022 Kinshasa Declaration on Enhancing Regional Judicial Cooperation in the Great Lakes Region.

70. MONUSCO and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office also provided technical and logistical support to military justice authorities in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations and abuses. As a result of the support provided to two fact-finding missions to Walungu and Kabamba, South Kivu, from 25 to 30 September and 16 to 24 October, respectively, 226 victims and witnesses, including 134 women, 54 of whom were survivors of sexual violence, were interviewed and received legal protection measures. In Ituri, on 27 September, eight ADF members, including 1 woman, were convicted on appeal for the war crime of the recruitment of children, and murder and other inhumane acts as crimes against humanity, while on 20 October, 11 CODECO members were convicted of murder as a crime against humanity. In addition, from 29 September to 24 October, five members of the Congolese armed forces, 1 armed group member and 63 civilians were convicted of serious human rights violations and abuses.

C. Child protection

71. MONUSCO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued to monitor and report on grave violations of children's rights. Between 21 September and 31 October, the Mission verified 156 grave violations perpetrated against 107 children (76 boys and 31 girls), including 72 children who were recruited and used

(66 boys and 6 girls). Raia Mutomboki elements were responsible for the largest number of verified violations (42), followed by CODECO (21).

72. Between 21 September and 31 October, at the invitation of the Congolese armed forces, MONUSCO and UNICEF conducted age-verification assessments of 133 candidates (including 6 women) for recruitment into the armed forces. Fourteen were confirmed to be children (including 1 girl) and were excluded from the recruitment process.

D. Gender and sexual violence in conflict

73. From September to November, the number of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence included at least 70 persons affected, including 56 women. However, it is likely that such cases continue to be severely underreported owing to access and security challenges for MONUSCO, as well as fear of reprisals and stigma among survivors of sexual violence, in particular given the high number of victims of gender-based violence who seek services from humanitarian actors. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for incidents affecting 62 survivors of sexual violence. Raia Mutomboki perpetrated most of the alleged abuses (8 women, 13 men), followed by Twa militias (19 women, 1 man), M23 (5 women), CODECO (5 women), Nyatura (5 women), Mai-Mai Malaika (3 women), Mai-Mai Apana Pale (2 women) and ADF (1 woman). The Congolese armed forces were allegedly responsible for incidents of sexual violence involving seven women, and the Congolese national police an incident involving one woman. The Provinces with the highest number of victims of sexual violence, committed by all parties, were South Kivu (13 women, 13 men), Tanganyika (23 women, 1 man), followed by North Kivu (15 women) and Ituri (5 women).

74. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office continued to engage with the Minister for Gender, Family and Children and the Coordinator of the Head of State's specialized service for youth, violence against women and human trafficking to identify joint activities in support of the Government's priorities to support women's rights and the fight against sexual violence and to improve the exchange of information on cases of sexual violence, including at the provincial level.

X. Exit strategy

75. In line with statement of the President of the Security Council ([S/PRST/2023/5](#)) of 16 October, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General engaged with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in October and November to discuss the development of a comprehensive disengagement plan and transfer of tasks in the context of the Mission's transition – in line with the four benchmarks of the revised joint transition plan related to: (a) reducing the threat of armed groups; (b) the protection of civilians; (c) the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme; and (d) the holding of elections – as well as the priority tasks entrusted to MONUSCO under Security Council resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#). On 21 November, the disengagement plan was signed by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

A. Implementation of priority actions

76. The Integrated Office of MONUSCO organized missions to Bukavu from 10 to 16 October, to Beni from 25 to 28 October and to Goma on 7 November, to engage

with the United Nations country team, provide technical support on transition planning and link the priorities of the revised transition plan to initiatives at the provincial level.

B. Update on integration and resource mobilization

77. From 16 to 19 October, MONUSCO and the United Nations country team held an internal strategic exercise on ways to continue supporting the Congolese authorities as MONUSCO transitions. The exercise will contribute to the development of the new United Nations Sustainable Development and Cooperation Framework by outlining priorities and modalities for the United Nations system to support the country's progress towards sustainable peace and development.

78. In November, as part of the common country assessment, three inclusive dialogues took place in the provinces of North Kivu, Kongo-Central and Haut-Katanga, and provided an opportunity for authorities, civil society, vulnerable groups and the private sector to exchange views on obstacles to development, conflict drivers and opportunities to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and transformational public policies.

XI. Mission effectiveness

A. Mission performance (military, police and civilian personnel; Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System)

Military component

79. As at 2 November, MONUSCO had deployed 12,564 troops, 6.38 per cent of whom were women, and 508 United Nations military experts on mission, 24.5 per cent of whom were women, of an authorized strength of 13,500 troops and 660 United Nations military experts on mission. From 21 September to 24 November, MONUSCO established 129 standing combat deployments and conducted 5,736 day patrols, 4,079 night patrols, 268 long-range patrols and missions, 622 joint patrols, 695 escorts and 18 aerial reconnaissance operations.

80. In line with its Action for Peacekeeping Plus commitments, MONUSCO conducted evaluations of 15 military units: 4 infantry units, 2 Sector Headquarters units, 1 engineering unit, 2 aeromedical evacuation units, 1 medical level II unit, 1 special force unit and 1 military police unit. All units met the required standards.

81. The number of engagement teams remained at 16, representing 2.3 per cent of the total strength of the force. The operational effectiveness inspection for all the military units, except sector headquarters, medical and military police units, was based on the military unit evaluation tool developed by the Office of Military Affairs. The inspection for sector headquarters, medical and military police units remained under way during the reporting period. Engagement teams conducted 94 activities, including 53 targeted patrols and 41 activities, compared with 216 activities during the previous reporting period.

82. The percentage of women among the Mission's military staff officers and military observers decreased to 24.4 per cent, a slight reduction compared with the previous reporting period. Contingent female participation increased slightly compared with the previous reporting period, from 6.08 per cent to 6.37 per cent.

83. In line with the Force Commander's training directive, MONUSCO conducted an induction course for 46 military staff officers and 19 military observers, a senior

officer induction course for the Force Chief of Staff, three contingent training modules, and a sexual exploitation and abuse module by mission experts for 24 military units, reaching 900 male and 100 female officers. Other training sessions included a riot control session for five military units, a command post exercise in one sector, a sexual exploitation and abuse awareness module in four military sectors, and a jungle warfare training session to five military units.

Police component

84. As at 23 October 2023, MONUSCO had deployed 1,633 police personnel from 32 contributing countries: 1,222 formed police personnel, including 209 women, and 411 individual police personnel, including 124 women, out of an authorized strength of 1,410 formed police personnel and 591 individual police officers. Formed police units achieved 3,968 quick response interventions, 162 escorts, 1,124 patrols, 576 joint patrols with individual police officers, 42 joint patrols with the Congolese National Police and 68 patrols around camps for internally displaced persons.

85. Formed police units benefited from a total of 24 operational readiness inspections, 1,170 scenario-based training sessions and 160 scenario-based training inspections, and 8 contingent-owned equipment inspections. The performance of all the eight formed police units was satisfactory. To strengthen capacities, 34 joint training sessions on scenario analysis were delivered to 330 Congolese National Police officers (including 34 women); 22 training sessions were also given to 150 MONUSCO military personnel (including 24 women) on maintaining and restoring public order.

86. From 8 to 13 October, the MONUSCO police component Learning and Development Unit organized train-the-trainers sessions on skills training for 19 participants (15 members of the police, including 7 women, and 4 civilians, including 2 women) and on presentation skills for 19 induction facilitators, including 8 women. Between 21 September and 4 November, a total of 79 newly arrived individual police officers, including 29 women, received mandatory induction training.

Civilian component

87. As at 2 November 2023, 2,122 civilian personnel (21 per cent women), including 302 United Nations Volunteers (49.3 per cent women) and 48 government-provided personnel (40 per cent women), were serving with MONUSCO.

Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System

88. The Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System served as the foundation for the development of factsheets in support of briefings to the Security Council, depicting trends in the security and operational environment and the correlation between threats to civilians and measures taken by the Mission. In a two-day session, on 3 and 4 October, MONUSCO undertook its second annual impact assessment covering the period from April to September, inter alia, to inform ongoing preparations of the 2024–25 budget proposal. The impact assessment helped to identify trends in the Mission's impact on the protection of civilians, and recommended measures to enhance national capacity to protect civilians, resolve intercommunal conflicts, deliver justice and meet international human rights obligations, as well as inclusive political processes.

B. Strategic communications

89. MONUSCO continued to be a target of misinformation and disinformation campaigns. The Mission strengthened the response capacity of more than 150 online

media journalists and youth leaders to analyse and respond to disinformation and encouraged networks of influencers, who regularly share prebunks that help inoculate the public against fake news. MONUSCO also continued to promote the work of its military and civilian components through its social media platforms, which have more than half a million followers.

90. Radio Okapi, the Mission's radio station, strengthened its content on misinformation/disinformation and hate speech, and initiated a series of strategic partnerships with United Nations entities and agencies working on these issues as well as community radio stations.

C. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

91. From 1 September 2023 to 31 October 2023, MONUSCO recorded seven new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that had occurred between 2011 and 2023 and involved 11 military and 3 civilian personnel. All cases are pending completion of investigations by the relevant troop-contributing countries or by the United Nations. During the period under review, the Mission continued to ensure that victims receive medical and psychosocial support in a timely manner and in accordance with the victim assistance protocols established with service providers, including UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund.

92. In coordination with the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, two National Investigation Officers and one paternity and child support team from the South African National Defence Force carried out in situ investigations and collected DNA samples from mothers and children in Goma, Bukavu, Beni and Bunia. Their findings will serve to facilitate claims of paternity and child support involving South African contingent members.

93. In line with the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, MONUSCO continued to enhance its preventive efforts through outreach and training activities and engagement with troop contributing countries, local communities and humanitarian organizations. On 28 October, nine members of the South African contingent in Beni, North Kivu Province, as well as three commanding officers, were repatriated, following reports of serious misconduct. The matter was referred to South Africa, which appointed a team of seven National Investigation Officers to investigate jointly with the Office of Internal Oversight Services. Separately, during the period of 1 September to 31 October, the Mission also recorded three new allegations of other serious misconduct concerning fraud and/or theft, harassment, and misuse of office/position. The three cases are under investigation.

XII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

94. A number of attacks and threats against United Nations personnel and premises occurred during the reporting period. On 22 September, a staff member was harassed by police at Goma International Airport, and, on 28 September, a security contractor affiliated with MONUSCO was arrested by a visiting Congolese National Police general who had refused to comply with security regulations on the prohibition of weapons in United Nations compounds. The contractor was later released. On 5 October, a staff member was assaulted and their residence robbed in the town of Beni, among other burglaries and targeted robberies of United Nations personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 12 October, a staff member's dependant was shot and injured during a street robbery by a Congolese armed forces' element in Goma.

95. Security and safety incidents increased from 108 during the previous reporting period to 207 cases. They included 96 armed conflict cases, 56 crime-related incidents, 22 civil unrest cases and 33 cases of hazards. In North Kivu, MONUSCO continued to maintain the mitigation measures implemented following the violent anti-MONUSCO demonstrations in July 2022, including restrictions on movement and the use of unmarked vehicles.

XIII. Observations

96. I am encouraged by the strong presence of female candidates in the candidates' list for the upcoming elections and reiterate my call upon the Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission to ensure a peaceful, inclusive and credible electoral process, including the safe and meaningful participation of women.

97. The transparent management of the electoral process is indispensable to create trust among all stakeholders. I encourage the Electoral Commission to do everything in its power to build confidence in the process through constructive engagement and dialogue with all relevant actors.

98. Political intolerance, restrictions of civic and political space, hate speech and threats of violence against women in the electoral context must not be allowed to transform the upcoming elections into a source of division and insecurity. I deplore the rising political tensions, notably in Katanga and welcome the efforts of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team to ease those tensions. I encourage the adoption of legislation aimed at reinforcing national cohesion and deterring abuses, including the law against tribalism, racism and xenophobia.

99. I am deeply concerned by the violation of the ceasefire between M23 and the Congolese armed forces in North Kivu Province. The resumption of hostilities and violence by armed groups in North Kivu and Ituri continues to take an unacceptable toll on civilians, in particular women, children and internally displaced persons.

100. I am equally troubled by the dangerous escalation of tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. I welcome recent efforts to agree on steps to de-escalate tensions, in line with existing arrangements. I renew my call on the leaders of both countries to exercise restraint, fully implement their respective commitments under the Luanda process and make use of all available regional mechanisms to address issues of mutual concern.

101. I reiterate my call on all Congolese and foreign armed groups to lay down their arms immediately and unconditionally and engage, without delay, in the disarmament process. I also urge M23 to withdraw fully from all occupied areas and abide by the provisions of the Luanda communiqué of 23 November 2022.

102. The international community must continue to support ongoing regional peace efforts, which offer the best hope of a lasting solution to the recurring violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I call upon all relevant stakeholders to ensure coordination and complementarity among the various forces present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I look forward to further exploring options for United Nations support to existing and future regional deployments in a manner that is consistent with its human rights due diligence policy and the need to preserve the Mission's unity of command.

103. Persistent violence and insecurity have compounded what has become a protracted and largely neglected humanitarian crisis of epic proportions, including persistently high levels of sexual violence affecting mostly women and girls, as well as unprecedented levels of forced displacement. I call upon the donor community and

partners to increase the funding available to ensure that lifesaving humanitarian assistance reaches those who need it the most.

104. I firmly condemn any act of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel and reaffirm my commitment to zero tolerance for such incidents. The recent decision of the Secretariat to repatriate nine personnel from the South African contingent, including commanders deployed with MONUSCO, is a demonstration of our commitment to end serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. Further action may be taken against the troop-contributing country concerned and/or other troop contributing countries as more information is gathered. We will continue our efforts to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and uphold the rights and dignity of survivors. MONUSCO civilian, troop and police contingents and the United Nations country team will continue to enhance preventative and response measures and strengthen survivors' assistance.

105. I welcome the finalization of the joint disengagement plan for the accelerated and responsible drawdown of MONUSCO, which is consistent with the vision set out in my special report of 2 August ([S/2023/574](#)). I am encouraged by the commitment of the Congolese authorities to take the steps necessary to ensure the rapid extension of State authority and assume full responsibility for the protection of civilians in the eastern provinces from which MONUSCO will be withdrawing. The United Nations is committed to an accelerated yet responsible withdrawal of MONUSCO, while consolidating the gains achieved by the Mission and will continue to support the efforts of the Congolese Government and people towards peace, stability and inclusive sustainable development, following the Mission's departure through the United Nations country team.

106. I wish to express my gratitude to the Special Representative for her determined leadership and persistent efforts. I also wish to convey my deepest gratitude to all MONUSCO personnel, members of the United Nations system, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region for their continued efforts towards lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



