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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 is submitted pursuant to paragraph 59 of Security Council resolution [2409 \(2018\)](#). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 2 October to 31 December 2018. The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political and electoral developments since my last update on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 ([S/2018/1068](#)); 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; and provides information on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission met key milestones in the preparations for presidential, national and provincial legislative elections. The electoral campaign took place from 22 November to 21 December in a relatively calm atmosphere, although instances of political intolerance and violence were noted in some cities. The ruling majority, opposition parties, the Independent National Electoral Commission and civil society held divergent views regarding the use of voting machines and the review of the voter register but remained engaged in the electoral process nevertheless.

3. Opposition parties and platforms faced challenges in mounting a unified electoral campaign and mobilizing supporters nationwide. The main challenges were linked to divergent views on the issues of voting machines and the voter register, as well as coalitions that competed with each other to present a single opposition presidential candidate. Following a series of meetings and consultations to designate a single presidential candidate, the opposition eventually coalesced into two main coalitions, Lamuka and Cap pour le changement, who designated Martin Fayulu and



Félix Tshisekedi as their respective flagbearers. Both coalitions managed to rally support from a few other parties and candidates, but several other candidates, including the only female presidential candidate, Marie-Josée Ifoku, continued to run their own campaigns.

4. The presidential candidate of the Front commun pour le Congo, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, commenced his electoral campaign tour in Lubumbashi in Haut-Katanga on 26 November. Félix Tshisekedi launched his campaign on 2 December with a rally in the Camp Luka neighbourhood of Kinshasa, followed by another meeting in Goma in North Kivu on 4 December. Martin Fayulu launched his campaign in Beni, North Kivu, on 5 December. Other candidates launched their campaigns in Kinshasa and several cities around the country.

5. Instances of political intolerance and violence occurred from 6 to 18 December, mainly in Kalemie, Tanganyika; Kisangani, Tshopo; the area of Kitchanga, North Kivu; Lubumbashi, Haut-Katanga; and Tshikapa, Kasai, resulting in the reported deaths of at least nine civilians and one police officer as well as injuries to several others. The incidents were mainly clashes between supporters of opposing political parties that involved the use of lethal and non-lethal weapons by the police to disperse the crowds, clashes between supporters of political parties and the Congolese National Police and attacks by armed elements on campaign convoys. On 19 December, the Governor of Kinshasa Province, André Kimbuta, issued a communiqué suspending campaign activities in Kinshasa, citing security concerns, as political parties geared up to hold large rallies in the city for the last days of the campaign. Cap pour le changement and Lamuka criticized the decision, arguing that it infringed on the right of candidates to campaign freely.

6. Civil society organizations and faith-based groups, notably the Episcopal Conference of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Comité laïc de coordination, called on the Independent National Electoral Commission and political actors to find consensus-based solutions to the contentious issue of the use of voting machines. The Commission carried out sensitization campaigns on the use of voting machines and implemented most of the recommendations of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy with a view to instilling confidence in the use of the machines.

7. The Independent National Electoral Commission carried out the necessary technical and logistical preparations, leading to the holding of elections on 23 December. The training of 600,000 temporary staff members of the Commission; the accreditation of party witnesses, observers and journalists; the publication of provisional and final voters' lists in polling stations; and the distribution of electoral materials proceeded without any major incidents or delays. In Kinshasa on 28 November, at a meeting of the Conseil supérieur de la défense chaired by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, the leadership of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and the Congolese National Police were urged to assume their responsibilities in terms of securing the electoral process and providing protection to candidates. The Government took measures to ensure the security of the presidential candidates, as required by law, including by assigning police officers to the protection of the 21 presidential candidates and deploying 12,000 Congolese National Police officers to secure the electoral process.

8. On 13 December, a fire ravaged the Independent National Electoral Commission's central warehouse in Kinshasa. Nearly 8,000 voting machines and a large amount of other electoral equipment were destroyed by the fire. The Congolese National Police opened an investigation into the incident, while the ruling majority and the opposition traded accusations as to the possible causes and perpetrators of the

fire. On 20 December, at a press conference in Kinshasa, the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Corneille Nangaa, announced the postponement of the elections, initially scheduled for 23 December, to 30 December, citing logistical constraints generated by the destruction of the warehouse. He stated that the decision had been made following extensive consultations with the Government, the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process and all Congolese stakeholders, including the presidential candidates. On 26 December, he issued a communiqué postponing the holding of elections in Beni town, Beni territory and Butembo in North Kivu and in Yumbi territory in Mai-Ndombe to March 2019, citing sanitary risks related to the Ebola outbreak and security reasons. On 27 and 28 December, at the initiative of civil society organizations and the Lamuka opposition coalition, demonstrations took place in Beni, Butembo and Goma in protest at the decision of the Commission. One demonstrator was reportedly killed when national security forces dispersed protests in Beni. Several civilians and at least two police officers were injured.

9. Elections took place in a generally peaceful atmosphere in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 30 December. The delays and technical problems that occurred at some polling stations were addressed by the Independent National Electoral Commission as voting activities proceeded throughout the day. A technician of the Commission and a police officer were killed by a mob when violence broke out at a polling centre in Lurhala, in Walungu territory in South Kivu, amid accusations of fraud levelled against the technician. Another person died in the same incident when the police officer opened fire to disperse the mob, which had destroyed the electoral materials and ransacked the polling centre.

10. The Mission continued to stand ready to respond to any potential last-minute logistical support requests from the Independent National Electoral Commission throughout the period under review. In line with its decision to assume all financial and logistical responsibilities for organizing the elections, the Government did not request any logistical support from MONUSCO.

11. Relations between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and some external partners remained tense during the electoral period. On 30 November, at a meeting with the diplomatic corps in Kinshasa, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Léonard She Okitundu, condemned the “arbitrary” sanctions of the European Union against some senior Congolese officials, including Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, and warned that the Government would take retaliatory measures if the sanctions were not lifted before the holding of elections. He argued that the sanctions placed one presidential candidate, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, at a disadvantage, as they restricted his movements and could be capitalized upon by his political opponents. On 1 December, in a press interview, President Kabila described the sanctions of the European Union as illegal, unjust, arbitrary and politically motivated and reiterated his confidence in the officials under sanctions. He also warned against what he termed the “neo-colonial tendencies” of Belgium with regard to interfering in the domestic affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 10 December, the European Union renewed restrictive measures, notably an asset freeze and a travel ban, against senior Congolese officials, including Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, for their alleged role in the obstruction of the electoral process and related human rights violations. The Spokesperson of the ruling Majorité présidentielle, André-Alain Atundu, indicated, in remarks to the press, that the sanctions were motivated by an intent to undermine the electoral process as well as the sovereignty and dignity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He added that the Government would take retaliatory measures, and noted that the decision not to accept an electoral observer mission from the European Union was the first of such measures. The Secretary-General of the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social,

Jean-Marc Kabund-a-Kabund, welcomed the sanctions and encouraged the European Union to extend them to other Government officials who continued to enjoy impunity for alleged human rights violations. On 27 December, at a meeting with the diplomatic corps in Kinshasa, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs gave the European Union 48 hours to recall the head of its mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The head of the diplomatic mission of the European Union left the country on 29 December.

12. The African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as well as civil society and faith-based organizations, deployed electoral observer missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

13. During the reporting period, my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui, pursued her good offices aimed at encouraging Congolese stakeholders to create an environment conducive to the holding of peaceful, credible and transparent elections. In that regard she met on a regular basis with representatives of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, political parties, civil society groups and presidential candidates, as well as with the Presidents of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process and the Conseil supérieur de l'audiovisuel et de la communication. She engaged with leaders across the political spectrum and urged them to refrain from violence and use dialogue and legal means to address electoral disputes.

14. In other developments, the Government, in line with its national commitments under the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, took action towards the holding of elections, including through the promotion of the participation of women in the elections, and towards the mainstreaming of Framework priorities into the Government's strategic national development plan, which was pending finalization.

B. Economic developments

15. The macroeconomic framework of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to stabilize, and the exchange rate of the Congolese franc remained stable, although inflation rose slightly. On 30 October, the Banque centrale du Congo announced that its foreign exchange reserves had decreased to \$1 billion dollars at the end of September, from \$1.2 billion in the first half of 2018. On 2 November, the National Assembly adopted the bill on the budget for 2019, estimated at around \$6 billion.

C. Security situation

16. The security situation remained fragile in some parts of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where armed groups continued to carry out destabilizing activities, in particular in Beni and Lubero territories in North Kivu; in certain areas of Uvira and Shabunda territories in South Kivu; and in the border areas between South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces where FARDC regained some initiative. In Ituri Province, southern Irumu territory remained affected by persistent looting and violence by the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI), while in Djugu territory, conflict between the Hema and Lendu communities and between Lendu militias and FARDC flared up again before subsiding. Farther west, some areas of the Kasai region continued to grapple with the activities of the Kamuina Nsapu and

Bana Mura militias. There were reports of human rights violations by members of the Congolese security forces, particularly in relation to the large enforced return of Congolese nationals from Angola, into Kamonia territory in Kasai Province.

North Kivu

17. In Beni territory, on 12 November, FARDC and MONUSCO launched joint military operations against suspected Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) elements in the Mayangose area to prevent a potential attack on Beni town and to protect civilians. Seven peacekeepers were killed, 10 others were injured and another 4 went missing during the operations. Thirteen FARDC soldiers were also reportedly killed and several others injured. Two of the four missing peacekeepers were found on 24 November and 2 December, respectively. Search operations are under way to find the other two.

18. The joint operations followed recurrent attacks by suspected ADF and Mai-Mai groups against civilians, FARDC positions and MONUSCO patrols. On 29 September, the FARDC camps of Mukoko and Mukoko I, near Oicha, were attacked by suspected ADF elements. On 4 October, a MONUSCO quick reaction force responded to a firefight at the FARDC Sukola I headquarters north of Beni town. Eight FARDC soldiers and two civilians were killed during the attack. On 9 November, six FARDC soldiers were killed in an attack by suspected ADF elements on their camp in Silimbamba (40 km north-east of Beni).

19. Suspected ADF elements launched several attacks against MONUSCO troops. On 24 October, ADF elements attacked a MONUSCO base at Semliki bridge but were repelled. On 16 November, suspected ADF elements fired at the MONUSCO positions outside Beni town in Boikene. On 23 November, suspected ADF elements attacked a MONUSCO patrol, injuring one peacekeeper.

20. Civilians were also targeted during attacks on population centres and military installations. Between 9 and 28 October, 30 civilians were killed in suspected ADF attacks on the Mayangose market, north-east of Beni town, and in three other locations around Beni town. On 3 November, suspected ADF elements launched twin attacks on Mangoko (16 km north-east of Beni) and Oicha, killing 8 civilians and abducting 14 civilians, mostly children. On 10 November suspected ADF elements attacked Mayi Moya (11 km north-east of Oicha), killing six civilians, including one woman. On 10 December, suspected ADF elements killed at least nine civilians, including two women, in Oicha. On 6 December, FARDC discovered 12 bodies of farmers allegedly killed by ADF at Nyaleke, near Beni. Two more civilians were killed during an attack south-east of Beni city on 7 December. Also on 7 December, suspected ADF elements reportedly killed five female civilians in Paidia.

21. Mai-Mai groups were also active in the area and increased their attacks mainly against FARDC positions. A coalition of the Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo (UPLC) and Mai-Mai Kiandeng moved towards areas situated north-east of Beni town. On 3 November, UPLC elements attacked the prison of the Auditorat militaire of Beni town, freeing 2 high-ranking Mai-Mai elements and up to 20 prisoners. On 5 November, Mai-Mai elements attacked the FARDC camp in Paidia, north of Beni town. On 7 November, Mai-Mai groups carried out attacks and ambushes against FARDC in Chani-Chani and Baoba, in the Mayi Moya area, Beni territory. FARDC positions in Chani-Chani were again attacked on 27 November, prompting FARDC to launch an attack against Mai-Mai elements positioned in Mount Ndombi, 12 km north-west of Mayi Moya, the next day. On 7 December, UPLC elements attacked FARDC in the Rwangoma area of Beni, killing at least one FARDC soldier.

22. The local population staged several demonstrations in October in Beni town to denounce violence against civilians and call on the national security forces and MONUSCO to step up efforts to protect civilians.

23. Elsewhere in the Grand Nord region of North Kivu, in Lubero territory and near Butembo town, Mai-Mai Mazembe factions continued to pose a security threat, with attacks against national security forces. On 18 October and 21 October, Mai-Mai elements attacked FARDC in Isale (16 km north-east of Butembo) and a Congolese National Police post in Butembo, respectively, killing one police officer. In response to those attacks, on 2 November FARDC launched operations against a UPLC splinter group positioned in Kasyiro (86 km north-west of Lubero town).

24. While the situation in the rest of North Kivu was relatively calm, there were isolated clashes between the two opposing Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) factions under “General” Janvier and “General” Mapenzi in Masisi territory. In addition, on 29 October, clashes took place between Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R) and APCLS under the command of “General” Janvier at Bwenderu (32 km west of Kitchanga), resulting in the displacement of the local population, who later returned after the fighting had ended. Furthermore, a long-standing conflict over mining, within a context of inter-ethnic tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi communities in the Rubaya area, in Masisi territory, escalated into violence on 6 October, resulting in the killing of 13 civilians, including one woman and one child. Elsewhere, fighting between the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie and Nyatura elements in early December increased insecurity in parts of Rutshuru territory.

25. On 10 December, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda-Forces combattantes abacunguzi (FDLR-FOCA) made an incursion into neighbouring Rwanda. The Rwanda Defence Force repulsed the incursion, resulting in the reported deaths of at least five FDLR-FOCA elements and up to three Rwanda Defence Force soldiers. On 15 December, in Bunangana, Rutshuru territory, FARDC arrested Ignace Nkaka and Jean-Pierre Nsekanabo, the Spokesperson and the Head of Intelligence, respectively, of FDLR-FOCA. On 16 and 17 December, seven FARDC soldiers were reportedly killed, and nine injured, in two separate attacks by suspected FDLR-FOCA elements at Kasizi village and in the Mount Mikenno area.

South Kivu and Maniema

26. The security situation remained volatile in Uvira territory, and large groups of armed Burundian combatants were reportedly seen entering Congolese territory and moving, allegedly with the support of Mai-Mai proxies (such as Nyerere and Kijangala), towards the middle and high plateaus of Uvira. The Forces nationales de libération (FNL) faction, led by “Major-General” Aloys Nzabampema, was active throughout October and was involved in many clashes with FARDC in the Ruzizi plain. FARDC soldiers and FNL elements clashed near the Rukoko forest and in Nyakabere (36 km north of Uvira) on 4 October and were involved in fighting in Kiliba (13 km north-east of Uvira) on 5 October. Towards the end of October, further clashes between FARDC and FNL occurred in the Ruzizi plain, in the midlands of Butole (near Lemera) and in the highlands of Muramvya, triggering population displacements. In mid-November, intercommunal tensions spiked between Banyamulenge militia and Bafuliro Mai-Mai groups in the highlands of Bijombo.

27. In Fizi territory in South Kivu and in Kabambare territory in Maniema, the military pressure exerted by FARDC continued to weaken Mai-Mai Yakutumba and its allies, resulting in the surrender of over 1,300 Mai-Mai Malaika, Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale and Mai-Mai Shetani elements. Due to a lack of logistics and financial means, only 298 combatants eventually agreed to move to Kindu for demobilization or

integration into the national security forces. In late October, FARDC conducted operations against allied groups of the Musumbu faction of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki, Mai-Mai Malaika and Mai-Mai Makindo in the border areas of Shabunda and Fizi territories, resulting in a high number of casualties on both sides.

Ituri, Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé Provinces

28. The security situation in southern Irumu territory, in Ituri Province, was marred by activities of suspected FRPI elements. Despite the progress made in dialogue initiatives with FRPI, the group continued to undertake acts of violence and to commit human rights violations, including lootings and rapes. From 1 to 7 October, FRPI elements looted at least 16 villages in the general areas of Gety and Aveba. From 3 to 12 October, five women were raped near Aveba. FARDC and FRPI clashed on several occasions, notably on 11 October near Gety, on 29 October in Burasi, on 30 October in Gety and Kigo (27 km east of Aveba) and on 31 October in Kamasuka (5 km north of Gety).

29. On 6 November, at a meeting of the Board of the Stabilization Coherence Fund, the Programme national de reconstruction et de stabilisation announced the Government's decision to allocate \$500,000 to the disarmament and demobilization process of FRPI. An additional \$3.7 million from the Stabilization Coherence Fund was allocated to the reintegration phase. MONUSCO will support the disarmament and demobilization phases.

30. The security situation in parts of Djugu territory was tense, and there was an increase in attacks by alleged Lendu youth militias on FARDC positions and civilians. Suspected Lendu youth militias attacked the FARDC position in Linga on 1 and 4 October and carried out attacks against FARDC in Bule, Jiro and Muvaramu along Lake Albert between 9 October and 5 November. In addition, on 3 November, unidentified assailants attacked a position held by FARDC in Muganga, resulting in the killing of 16 soldiers and 20 civilians. On 9 November, suspected Lendu youth militias attacked Landjo (25 km north-east of Djugu town), resulting in the killing of 9 soldiers and the wounding of 14 others. The violence spread from Djugu towards Lake Albert with assailants attacking FARDC positions 60 km north-east of Tchomia on 28 November, killing five FARDC elements and three civilians. Assailants also ambushed FARDC patrols on 4 December in Landjo and again in Jiro on 9 December, killing at least three more FARDC soldiers.

31. In Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé provinces, small groups of armed elements suspected of being members of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) carried out isolated ambushes, lootings and abductions in the Dungu, Niangara, Duru Triangle, and in the area of Banda, in Ango territory. On 19 and 20 October, FARDC and suspected LRA elements clashed in the Banda area.

Tanganyika Province

32. The security situation in the triangle area of Bendera, Kalemie and Kioko was fragile, with Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale, Mai-Mai Yakutumba, Twa militias and Bafuliro militias committing repeated exactions on civilians and continuing to be involved in the illegal exploitation of mines. The situation further deteriorated following FARDC operations against those elements from 19 to 24 October. Some 750 people fled towards the site for internally displaced people in Kikumbe (about 17 km north of Kalemie) and up to 2,000 people fled towards Kioko village. Thirteen cases of rape were documented. Twa militia elements under the leadership of Byamungu and Kadogo, as well as Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale, were identified as the perpetrators of those rapes.

Kasai region and Mai-Ndombe

33. In the Kasai area, the security and humanitarian situation was compounded by the massive influx of Congolese citizens expelled by Angola, as well as the continuing activity of Kamuina Nsapu militias and the military operations of FARDC in the north of Tshikapa and in the eastern part of Kasai Central Province. On 10 and 11 October, FARDC killed 10 alleged Kamuina Nsapu elements during a search operation in the Kamonia area (70 km north-east of Tshikapa). On 17 October, Kamuina Nsapu militias attacked the FARDC position in Katenga (50 km north-east of Kananga). In response, FARDC carried out operations reportedly resulting in the arrest of 20 Kamuina Nsapu elements and the deaths of an undetermined number of civilians.

34. On 16 December, in Mai-Ndombe Province, inter-ethnic violence broke out between the Banunu and the Batende in Yumbi territory following a dispute over the location of the burial of the Banunu customary chief. The violence resulted in several deaths, the displacement of the local population, including into the neighbouring Republic of the Congo, and the destruction of electoral materials.

D. Humanitarian situation

35. The humanitarian situation remained a concern in some parts of the country. The displacement of people due to armed conflict, the abrupt closure of sites for internally displaced persons and the resurgence of cholera and measles outbreaks increased the vulnerability of people in some areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Fighting in Djugu territory, Ituri Province, in early November displaced thousands of people towards Irumu and Mahagi and exacerbated pre-existing needs for protection, food, health and shelter. The abrupt closure in August of three sites for displaced persons continued to have a negative impact on the humanitarian situation in areas close to Kalemie, in Tanganyika Province. The closure of those sites increased the vulnerability of an estimated 24,000 displaced persons. My Deputy Special Representative (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator) advocated for an adequate humanitarian response to the situation and allocated \$3.8 million from the humanitarian fund to assist the safe return of people.

36. Although almost 1 million people returned to their homes in 2018 as a result of security improvements in parts of the country, 2.1 million people were displaced due to conflict. The number of Congolese refugees in the region stood at 800,330 as at 30 November, while some 527,000 refugees were present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

37. The massive return of at least 347,100 Congolese nationals from Angola, beginning in October, including at least 2,000 people with refugee status, as confirmed by the Direction générale des migrations, compounded humanitarian challenges in some parts of the provinces bordering Angola, resulting in a heightened risk of further straining basic services and exacerbating lingering inter-ethnic tensions. Following a visit to the affected areas on 24 October, my Deputy Special Representative (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator) requested the humanitarian country team to prepare a response strategy to provide life-saving assistance, relieve the pressure on border communities and facilitate sustainable returns.

38. The Ebola virus disease outbreak in Beni territory, North Kivu, and in adjacent areas in Ituri Province, continued, and now affects 14 health zones. According to official figures, the critical contact tracing rate stands at around 90 per cent. As at 22 December, more than 50,000 people had been vaccinated and more than 20 million travellers had been screened at the main international points of entry. Also as at

22 December, the World Health Organization (WHO) had reported a total of 563 Ebola cases (515 confirmed and 48 probable) and 326 deaths.

39. Humanitarian response plan needs for 2019 stand at \$1.65 billion, as validated by the Government on 13 November during a high-level consultation with the humanitarian community. Meanwhile, the humanitarian response plan for 2018 of \$1.68 billion remained funded at 45 per cent.

E. Human rights situation, justice and corrections

40. MONUSCO documented 1,157 human rights violations throughout the country during October and November 2018. That represents a decrease compared with the same period last year (1,405 violations), but is similar to the number of violations documented during July and August 2018 (1,135 violations). Nearly 80 per cent of the violations occurred in conflict-affected provinces, with North Kivu being the most affected, notably due to the activities of numerous armed groups.

41. As in the previous period, 61 per cent of the violations were perpetrated by State agents, while armed groups and militias were responsible for the other 39 per cent. In October and November, 219 persons, including at least 76 women, were victims of extrajudicial killings or summary executions (90 victims attributed to State agents and 129 to armed groups) and more than 1,063 victims, including 57 women and 105 children, were illegally deprived of their freedom by either State agents or armed groups.

42. Restrictions of democratic space continued. MONUSCO documented 145 violations of fundamental freedoms, including 34 arbitrary arrests affecting 174 persons, including 14 women and 2 children, during the period under review. The most affected provinces were Kinshasa and South Kivu, and civil society activists in particular were targeted.

43. Some demonstrations and political gatherings proceeded without incident, while others were banned or violently suppressed by national defence and security forces. At least 51 persons, including 3 women, were arbitrarily arrested by Congolese National Police officers in seven locations where protests were banned or repressed during the nationwide peaceful demonstrations called for by opposition parties on 26 October.

44. Violations of freedom of the press and of expression were recorded during the reporting period. For instance, between 9 October and 28 November, two private radio stations in Mongala Province reportedly affiliated with the opposition were closed by local authorities. On 19 October, in Kinshasa, Congolese National Police agents arbitrarily arrested five journalists after a newspaper article was published in which the journalists alleged irregularities during the training of Congolese National Police recruits. All five were released without charges 12 hours later.

45. MONUSCO continued to provide technical, financial and logistical support to military justice authorities with regard to investigating and prosecuting war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations. On 15 October, MONUSCO handed over the refurbished courtroom and newly built detention cells for the trial of Mai-Mai leader Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka to the military justice authorities in Goma. Subsequently, Sheka and his co-defendant, Jean Batechi, were transferred from Kinshasa to Goma on 13 November to face trial, together with their co-defendant Lionso, on charges of war crimes, including murder, rape, sexual slavery, pillage and the recruitment and use of child soldiers; crimes against humanity, including murder and rape; and other crimes, such as participation in an insurrectional movement.

MONUSCO and the Auditorat militaire supérieur opérationnel collaborated to identify victims and witnesses. The trial commenced on 27 November.

46. On 29 November, a military court in South Kivu found FARDC Major Mabiala Ngoma guilty of crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and torture, and sentenced him to life in prison in relation to the serious crimes perpetrated by FARDC battalions in Mirenzo, South Kivu, in June 2003.

47. From 23 to 27 October, MONUSCO supported military justice authorities in a joint investigation mission to Tshikapa, Kamonia territory, Kasai Province, to investigate serious crimes, including murder and sexual violence, reportedly committed by Bana Mura militia elements during April and May 2017. A total of 38 victims and witnesses, among them 22 women, 2 minor girls and 2 minor boys, were interviewed. The Joint Investigation Team reported the killing of eight people, including two women and two children, as well as instances of wounding, sexual violence, abductions and forced labour.

48. MONUSCO continued to collaborate with the Congolese authorities in an effort to enhance compliance with human rights standards in detention facilities. From 10 to 16 October, MONUSCO undertook a joint mission to Angenga military prison in Mongala Province to monitor and assess detention conditions. MONUSCO also engaged with provincial authorities on the issue of unlawful detentions, including those of children associated with armed groups. Furthermore, to mitigate the alarmingly high death rates stemming from the lack of medical care at some detention facilities, MONUSCO donated supplies to prisons in Bunia and Mambasa.

F. Sexual violence

49. Conflict-related sexual violence continued to be perpetrated, including an increase in sexual violence perpetrated by FRPI in southern Irumu and Djugu territories, Ituri Province, often in the form of gang-rape and in association with the looting of villages. Moreover, conflict-related sexual violence was perpetrated by FARDC in Djugu, Ituri Province.

50. In Tanganyika Province, an upsurge of ethnically motivated conflict-related sexual violence was documented in October, notably including the rape and gang-rape of at least 17 women along the Kalemie-Kabulo-Kioko axis by Twa-affiliated militia during clashes with FARDC, in which sexual violence was perpetrated during attacks on villages. In South Kivu, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki elements continued to perpetrate sexual violence, maintaining a worrying trend of mass rapes by certain factions in northern Shabunda.

G. Child protection

51. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 165 grave violations against children. At least 156 children (10 girls, 146 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups, most importantly from the Mai-Mai Mazembe, Nyatura and Kamuina Nsapu, mainly in North Kivu and Kasai Provinces. Five girls survived rape and other forms of sexual violence in North Kivu (four cases) and South Kivu (one case). The rapes, and other forms of sexual violence, were committed by FARDC (three girls), unidentified armed elements (one girl) and Mai-Mai Mazembe (one girl). In North Kivu, two boys were killed by FARDC and one boy was maimed by unidentified armed elements. Finally, one denial of humanitarian access committed by unidentified armed elements was reported in South Kivu.

52. MONUSCO continued to engage with armed groups in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, resulting in the release of more than 440 girls and boys. During October and November, six commanders of armed groups signed a declaration stating that they would no longer recruit children or commit other grave, child-related violations. That brought the total number of armed groups who have signed engagements with MONUSCO to eight, five of which are listed by the Secretary-General for child recruitment. The commanders also committed to implementing a road map, which, in addition to preventing grave child rights violations, also requires them to take measures to stop and prevent sexual violence.

III. Deployment of the Mission and implementation of its mandate

A. Strategic dialogue and exit strategy

53. There was no progress in the strategic dialogue between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO. The Mission will engage the Government, in line with recommendations of the strategic review of MONUSCO conducted in 2017, regarding the presence of the Mission in the post-electoral phase.

B. Preparations to address risks linked to the electoral process

54. MONUSCO took measures to address risks linked to the electoral process, including by conducting exercises with field offices and brigade headquarters to strengthen crisis management and business continuity. An exercise was carried out from 26 to 30 November with the Security Management Team to strengthen capacities for crisis management, mainly in Kinshasa, and to enhance communications facilities within the wider United Nations country team. A mobile response capacity has been put in place with the aim of swiftly deploying personnel to areas in the western part of the country where the Mission has a limited presence. That includes the provision of surge capacity, as necessary, for smaller field offices to address emerging political or security issues.

55. The Mission's police component continued to address electoral risks, with a focus on collaboration with the Congolese National Police, notably through the training and awareness-raising of the National Police's intervention units in order to enhance their crowd-control capacities and respect for human rights. The police component trained 8,079 Congolese National Police officers in intervention units on preventing excessive use of force during demonstrations or public gatherings in the electoral period. The training sessions included 840 female officers, and were held in Bunia, Dungu, Goma, Kalemie, Kananga, Mbuji-Mayi, Rutshuru and Uvira.

56. The concept of operations of the Mission's Force was further developed, and included the involvement of field offices and all sectors in potential hotspot areas during the electoral period. The concept of operations addresses specific threats to civilians in the electoral context and the security of United Nations personnel and premises through the possible deployment of quick reaction forces. The MONUSCO Force and police component also supported national security forces where appropriate, including with regard to the use of non-lethal measures for public order management and on early warning of electoral violence through monitoring and reporting.

C. Comprehensive approach to protection of civilians

Mission-wide strategies

57. In response to the evolving security situation and threats to the civilian population, MONUSCO continued to adjust and adapt the implementation of its Mission-wide strategies in priority areas. Progress continued with the implementation of Mission-wide strategies to address armed group activity, particularly regarding FRPI in Ituri Province and ADF in North Kivu, where communities and customary chiefs supported protection strategies. Additional strategies to address threats to civilians in the Petit Nord and Lubero territories in North Kivu, the Shabunda and Uvira territories in South Kivu and the Kasai region were developed, taking into account stabilization efforts and an eventual handover of responsibilities to local authorities. MONUSCO finalized local protection contingency plans for all its locations.

58. In line with the concept of “protection through projection”, MONUSCO deployed 23 standing combat deployments. The deployment of the fourth rapidly deployable battalion in Tanganyika in November and the fifth rapidly deployable battalion in the Kasai region in December significantly increased the projection capacity of the Mission. MONUSCO continued to engage the Government on the need to expedite the clearance process for importing the necessary equipment for the remaining rapidly deployable battalions, which had not been cleared. Community Liaison Assistants accompanied all deployments as a critical interface among the Force, authorities and communities, and facilitated intercommunal dialogue and strengthened local protection committees and community alert networks. The community alert networks sent 540 alerts per month during the period under review, 85 per cent of which resulted in a response from the Government, MONUSCO or both.

Field-level responses

59. In North Kivu, in the Grand Nord area, 67 attacks, mainly by suspected ADF elements, were documented in October alone. The most urgent protection threats included targeted killings, abduction, the forced recruitment of both children and adults and large-scale and recurrent displacements. MONUSCO responded with the deployment of quick reaction forces in Oicha and Beni. In addition, offensive operations were undertaken against ADF and other armed groups. Between 25 and 29 October, MONUSCO and FARDC launched a coordinated offensive operation against armed groups located in the Mayangose forest that was followed up by another offensive operation in mid-November. Elsewhere in North Kivu, in response to violence in Rubaya, Masisi territory, on 6 October, MONUSCO deployed a standing combat deployment with a Joint Protection Team to strengthen the community alert network and to support FARDC and Congolese National Police units in preventing further incidents. A follow-up standing combat deployment was undertaken in late November, creating an environment conducive to an intercommunal dialogue to alleviate inter-ethnic tensions.

60. In the Djugu territory of Ituri Province, MONUSCO continued to promote dialogue and reconciliation among communities. In parallel, MONUSCO, together with the United Nations Development Programme, continued to support mobile court hearings to prosecute alleged perpetrators of violence. MONUSCO maintained troop deployments in three potential hotspots to protect the population and facilitate humanitarian access.

61. In South Kivu, MONUSCO provided protection to survivors of sexual violence and facilitated joint investigations into mass rapes in support of prosecution of the

perpetrators. In Uvira territory, MONUSCO continued to facilitate the implementation of the road map on the crisis in Bijombo, which was signed during the previous reporting period. That entailed, among other tasks, the provision of support to FARDC so it could deploy to Bijombo. In Fizi territory, MONUSCO supported FARDC in recovering Kilembwe and enabling access for humanitarian actors to support internally displaced persons in the area.

62. In response to the increased attacks on national security forces and civilians, including sexual violence, in the northern parts of Tanganyika Province, MONUSCO provided reinforcements to the Bendera area in the form of additional forces, increased patrols and aerial support to FARDC. The rapidly deployable battalion launched several standing combat deployments to create an environment conducive to civilian outreach activities and community dialogue. In Moba, in particular, the deployments assisted in securing an agreement from various self-defence groups to cease fighting. Displaced populations started to return to their villages in the Bendera area following the deployment of MONUSCO troops.

63. With regard to the return of Congolese from Angola, a reinforced standing combat deployment in the area played a critical role in calming tensions and securing the settlements of returnees and of roads close to the border crossing areas. MONUSCO collaborated with the provincial government and humanitarian actors in supporting the response to emergency needs and investigating human rights violations.

64. The Mine Action Service continued to contribute to the protection of civilians and the freedom of movement of MONUSCO and humanitarian personnel through explosive ordnance disposal activities. During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service destroyed 1,887 explosive remnants of war and 453 small arms ammunitions. The Service also provided support for the destruction of 1,626 obsolete, surplus and unserviceable munitions and stockpiles of small arms and ammunitions held by troop- and police-contributing countries.

D. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

65. The efforts of MONUSCO resulted in the release of 117 children associated with armed groups and the surrender of 46 adult combatants from Congolese armed groups, while 19 adults entered the third phase of the national programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In addition, during the reporting period, MONUSCO repatriated to Rwanda 45 former combatants of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), while 18 former FDLR elements and their dependents, who had surrendered in Lualaba Province, were transferred to Goma for repatriation to Rwanda.

66. Between 20 and 27 November, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo closed the disarmament camps of FDLR in Kanyobagonga in North Kivu, Kisangani in Tshopo Province and Walungu in South Kivu, and repatriated 1,594 former FDLR combatants and their dependents to Rwanda.

67. MONUSCO launched 18 new community violence reduction projects in addition to the 25 already under way. The projects' scope consists the creation of labour-intensive short-term employment opportunities, the reintegration of ex-combatants, the countering of sexual and gender-based violence, the provision of assistance to children formerly associated with armed groups, the creation of sustainable livelihoods and income generating initiatives. The projects led to the

temporary employment of more than 3,000 people, including demobilized ex-combatants, at-risk youth and other vulnerable groups, including 1,100 women and girls who had survived violence.

E. Stabilization

68. The national authorities promoted stabilization efforts. Under the leadership of the Governors of North and South Kivu, in October an inter-provincial committee started implementing a road map for the demobilization and reintegration of local armed groups in the border area between North and South Kivu, with the support of the secretariat of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy. Separately, the Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu provincial governments pledged to implement their respective stabilization compacts.

F. Progress in adjusting the Mission's priorities, posture and presence

69. Throughout the reporting period, MONUSCO continued to streamline its civilian efforts, focusing primarily on the protection of civilians and support for the political and electoral process.

70. MONUSCO adjusted the Force's sector boundaries with a view to having at least one rapidly deployable battalion ready in each sector during the electoral period.

71. Progress was also made with regard to adjusting the deployment of the Mission's formed police units, which provide protection to civilians and United Nations personnel and premises in key urban hotspots. One unit relocated from Bukavu to Lubumbashi, and another from Bunia to Kisangani. By November, one unit was kept in readiness to be relocated from Goma to Kisangani. The planned relocation of one unit from Beni to Lubumbashi was delayed due to the ongoing response to the Ebola virus disease, which demanded the protection of both aid workers and United Nations premises. Two formed police unit platoons were also relocated to Beni, in support of security arrangements for the increased United Nations staff presence as part of the Ebola response.

G. Assessment of performance of the Mission's uniformed personnel to protect civilians

72. With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the mandate to protect civilians, the leadership of the MONUSCO Force conducted field visits to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the troops. Eleven units were assessed against a number of criteria, including support to mandate implementation, aspects related to command and control, training and discipline, the sustainability of logistical capacity and medical support. The assessment of performance with regard to protecting civilians focused on the units' demonstrated willingness, readiness and capacity to respond proactively and appropriately to hostile acts and threats of violence against civilians. Of the assessed units, six were found to perform at an above-average level, one was found to perform satisfactorily and the assessment of the other four was ongoing. To improve the performance of troops, the leadership of the Force issued guidelines and instructions for effective mandate implementation, particularly in the electoral context. Drills were organized on a routine basis to test the ability of units to deploy quick reaction forces to respond to threats to the civilian population. Training efforts also included anti-riot drills, as well as drills on procedures for casualty evacuation and rehearsals of the electoral operations plan.

H. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

73. MONUSCO continued to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Between 1 October and 30 November, three new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were received, assessed and referred to the Office of Internal Oversight Services for investigation. MONUSCO, in coordination with the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, provided the necessary support to four victims of the alleged sexual exploitation and abuse.

74. The Mission continued to implement preventive measures among personnel and remained engaged with members of the local population, disseminating information on the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and on existing reporting mechanisms, including the use of community-based complaint reception mechanisms.

I. Gender considerations in mandate implementation

75. MONUSCO continued to implement the gender marker accountability framework. Sex-disaggregated data from the Ebola outbreak showed that women are disproportionately affected by the disease, accounting for more than 60 per cent of confirmed and probable cases. The data revealed that women are particularly vulnerable because they prepare bodies for funerals, have limited access to prevention information due to higher illiteracy rates and, owing to the fragile security environment in and around Beni, need to take precautionary measures by staying indoors to avoid rape and abductions. Acting on the data obtained, MONUSCO paid greater attention to involving women in countering the Ebola outbreak and addressing the specific needs of women.

J. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

76. From 4 October to 14 November, 58 incidents related to security and safety affecting United Nations staff, uniformed personnel, assets and operations were recorded throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They comprised 30 crime-related incidents, 16 hazard-related accidents, 10 incidents of civil unrest and 2 incidents attributed to armed conflict. A total of 51 national staff members and 7 international staff members were affected by the incidents.

77. In Beni territory, North Kivu, United Nations personnel movements and access to areas were occasionally restricted due to ADF and Mai-Mai activities. Furthermore, the United Nations Ebola response faced security challenges to access certain areas within Beni.

IV. Observations

78. I welcome the holding of the presidential, national legislative and provincial elections on 30 December. The holding of elections was a decisive step in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016. I commend the efforts of the Government and the Independent National Electoral Commission to meet key milestones in the electoral process and to hold elections in a relatively peaceful atmosphere. I also welcome the largely peaceful electoral campaign period, despite the persistence of divisions on key issues going into election day, indicating the determination of Congolese political actors to place the interests of their country

and people first. I am encouraged by the resolve of Congolese citizens to freely elect their leaders and participate actively in the consolidation of democratic practices. I look forward to the publication by the Independent National Electoral Commission of the preliminary results of the presidential elections and call on all actors to ensure that the will of the voters is respected.

79. As the Democratic Republic of the Congo moves towards the publication of the official results of the 30 December elections and the swearing-in of a new president, scheduled to happen by 18 January 2019, I urge all stakeholders to remain calm, continue exercising maximum restraint and address any electoral disputes through the established legal channels. I welcome the support provided by the African Union, ECCAS, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC and international partners during the electoral process and encourage them to remain engaged in the post-electoral period with a view to consolidating stability and democratic governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

80. Although the holding of elections marks a historic milestone, I remain concerned by the persistence of intercommunal violence in the Kasai region and the South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces, as well as continuing ADF attacks in North Kivu, which have led to the displacement of thousands of people and the destruction of livelihoods. The United Nations, through MONUSCO, remains committed to helping the Congolese authorities protect the civilian population. I pay tribute to the ultimate sacrifice made by seven United Nations peacekeepers and several FARDC soldiers in November who laid down their lives in pursuit of that goal, as well as the Congolese civilians who lost their lives in violent outbreaks.

81. Intercommunal violence and armed group activities continue to have a negative impact on the humanitarian situation. With only 24 per cent of the funding requirements for the 2018 humanitarian appeal met, the ability of the United Nations to support the most vulnerable was severely hampered. It is therefore crucial that donors honour their commitments in order to close the funding gap as quickly as possible. I welcome the joint efforts of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the humanitarian community to work in a concerted manner to assess humanitarian needs to ensure a targeted and seamless delivery of humanitarian assistance in 2019.

82. I commend the Government for its response, efforts and leadership in fighting the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in Beni territory. The United Nations system, including WHO and its partners, remain committed to helping the Government treat the victims of the disease and prevent further contamination, with a view to fully eradicating the epidemic.

83. Finally, I thank my Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her steadfast leadership and dedication, and all personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, as well as the troop- and police-contributing countries, for their commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also commend the efforts of regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

