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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women****Concluding observations on the report of the Democratic
Republic of the Congo submitted under the exceptional
reporting procedure***

1. The Committee considered the report of the Democratic Republic of the Congo submitted under the exceptional reporting procedure (CEDAW/C/COD/EP/1) at its 2120th and 2121st meetings (CEDAW/C/SR.2120 and CEDAW/C/SR.2121), held on 4 February 2025. The Committee's list of issues and questions prior to the submission of the exceptional report is contained in CEDAW/C/COD/QPR/EP/1.

A. Introduction

2. Following the consideration of the eighth periodic report of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (CEDAW/C/COD/8) at its 1700th and 1701st meetings (see CEDAW/C/SR.1700 and CEDAW/C/SR.1701), held on 9 July 2019, the Committee requested the State party to submit by 6 August 2021 written information on the steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendations to provide adequate resources to implement the second national action plan aimed at implementing Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and ensure the participation of women's civil society organizations in task forces and committees related to the implementation of Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2009); monitor and document cases of sexual and gender-based violence in conflict areas and improve the collection of reliable data and statistics on cases of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the military, the police and armed groups;; expedite the adoption of the law on legal aid to ensure that legal aid is available, affordable and accessible to all women, especially vulnerable groups of women, and introduce a law on the protection of victims/survivors and witnesses in the criminal justice system that is gender-sensitive and includes the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations;; and provide training for law enforcement officials on women's rights and gender-sensitive investigation methods and raise awareness among women and girls, in particular rural women and women with disabilities, of their rights under the Convention and the remedies available to them to claim those rights, in cooperation with civil society organizations. (CEDAW/C/COD/CO/8, paragraphs 11 (f) and (h) and 15 (a) and (e)). On 13 August 2021, the Committee sent a reminder to the State party.

3. By decision 86/7, in accordance with article 18 (1) (b) of the Convention and its decision 21/I, the Committee decided to request the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to submit an exceptional report on conflict-related sexual violence in its Eastern provinces. By decision 87/6, the Committee adopted a list of issues prior to the submission of the exceptional report (CEDAW/C/COD/QPR/EP/1), which was transmitted to the State party requesting it to submit the exceptional report by 21 June 2024 on the political response,

* Adopted by the Committee at its ninetieth session (3 - 21 February 2025).

the security and humanitarian response, the judicial response and the fight against impunity for sexual violence related to the conflict in the East of the State party.

4. The Committee commends the State party on its high-level delegation, which was headed by Her Excellency Ms. Chantal Chamбу Mwavita, Minister for Human Rights, and included Parliamentarians, representatives of the Ministry for Human Rights, the Ministry of Gender, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, FONAREV, the Police Nationale Congolaise, thematic counsellors of the President, representatives of the High Military Court, the Conseil Supérieure de la Magistrature, the Commission Interinstitutionnelle d'Aide aux Victimes et d'Appui aux reformes, and the His Excellency Mr. Paul Empole Losoko Efambe, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, as well as other representatives of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva.

B. Context

5. The Committee is alarmed by the ongoing conflict in the Eastern provinces Ituri, North-Kivu and South-Kivu and the persistent commission of conflict-related sexual violence, that for decades has become an appalling feature of the armed conflict in the State party with very limited levels of accountability. Conflict-related sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war especially by non-State armed groups, but also by the State party's armed forces and police forces. The Committee is also alarmed about cases of conflict-related sexual violence committed by UN peacekeepers. The pervasive nature of conflict-related sexual violence undermines the rights and protection, including the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of women and girls under the Convention and other international human rights law, as well as their rights and protection under international criminal law and international humanitarian law.

6. The Committee is gravely concerned that conflict-related sexual violence in the East of the State party takes place in the context of an armed conflict fuelled by illicit exploitation of minerals, including by foreign entities and states, rule of law and governance challenges, arbitrary boundaries created by the colonial legacy that led to different ethnicities across borders exacerbating ethnic tensions, transnational organized crime, including corruption, illegal trade in firearms, trafficking in women and girls and natural resources, and the existence of more than 200 armed groups nationwide and more than 100 estimated in the Eastern State party only that perpetrate numerous human rights violations, in addition to conflict-related sexual violence, including murder/mass killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detention, and torture, often amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes. In several cases these were also perpetrated by State actors.

7. The Committee is severely concerned that armed conflict in the Eastern provinces has further intensified since January 2025, with the State party losing control over parts of this territory, including the city of Goma and its surroundings and the city of Bukavu, to the "Mouvement du 23 mars" (M23) armed group, which continues to advance into the State party's Eastern provinces. This new surge in armed conflict has further exacerbated the grave and systematic human rights violations in these provinces, including conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the humanitarian crisis, displacing approximately 700,000 people in the city of Goma alone and significantly increasing the number of internally displaced persons in the East, at over 4 million, including a high number of women and girls, who live under disastrous humanitarian conditions.

8. The Committee underlines that conflict-related sexual violence cannot be considered an isolated phenomenon. It is symptomatic of deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes within society that lead to systematic gender inequality, discrimination and exclusion of women and girls, resulting in structural and systematic unequal access to opportunities, including in relation to economic empowerment, education, health services, and representation in decision-making, leading to gender-based violence against women, including conflict-related violence.

9. The Committee notes with concern that the unequal representation of women and girls in national and regional peace processes, including the East African Community (EAC)-led

Nairobi/ Luanda Processes a situation that hampers resolving the conflict in a gender-sensitive manner in the East of the State party ,and bringing sustainable peace and security to prevent and protect women and girls from different conflict-based violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. It recalls the Convention's preamble that the cause of peace requires the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields.

10. The Committee is concerned that despite the country's rich natural resources, including minerals, freshwater, and arable land, most of the population does not benefit due to a number of factors, including armed conflict, including over resource control, governance issues, and exploitation, preventing sustainable economic development and perpetuates a cycle of exploitation and violence, including conflict-related sexual violence.¹¹ The Committee notes that, at present, the State party does not hold effective control over the parts of its territory occupied by the M23. It reminds the State party that it nevertheless retains its *de jure* responsibility over the entirety of the territory and its legal obligations under the Convention. The Committee calls upon the State party to implement the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations, giving due consideration to its general recommendations, in particular No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (1992); No. 38 (2020) on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration; and No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. It recommends that the State party consider seeking international and technical assistance, as needed, for the implementation of the recommendations, including technical assistance by the Committee.

C. Positive aspects

11. The Committee welcomes the political commitment by the State party to participate in regional peace processes aimed at resolving the conflict in its Eastern provinces and bringing sustainable peace and security to prevent and protect women and girls from different conflict violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. It also welcomes:

(a) Order-Law No. 023/023, signed on 11 September 2023, which supplements the Decree of 30 January 1940 containing the Criminal Code, and serves to criminalize the various forms of gender-based violence and ensure free access to justice for victims of gender-based violence;

(b) Order-Law No. 023/024, adopted on 11 September 2023, which amends and supplements the Decree of 6 August 1959 containing the Code of Criminal Procedure, and requires that cases involving sexual violence be handled promptly;

(c) Law No. 022/065 of 26 December 2022, establishing the fundamental principles relating to the protection of and reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and other crimes against the peace and security of humankind;

(d) Decree No. 23/09 of 22 February 2023 on the establishment, organization and operation of integrated multisectoral service centres for survivors of gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

(e) The establishment on 9 June 2023, of a commission of inquiry to investigate possible acts of violence committed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) in Goma and Kwamouth;

(f) The signature on 1 June 2023 of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to facilitate cooperation and information sharing in prosecuting crimes under the mandate of the International Criminal Court.

D. Context and root causes of conflict-related sexual violence

12. The Committee is gravely concerned about the strong prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence, with 94 percent of victims/survivors being women and girls, increasingly targeting young girls. It is alarmed that:

(a) Conflict-related sexual violence takes place in various contexts, such as military operations, humanitarian settings, including camps and during displacement, everyday survival tasks, including fetching water, firewood and procuring food, including in the Virunga National Park, schools and within prisons, such as the Makala prison, and that the State party faces challenges in ensuring sufficient and effective prevention and response measures to address the different contexts in which conflict-related sexual violence is taking place. It is also alarmed about the further increase of conflict-related sexual violence with the attacks by the M23 armed group, including the rape of 165 women prisoners during a jailbreak from Muzenze prison by male prisoners, the majority of whom were subsequently killed in a fire, the circumstances of which are still unclear;

(b) The multitude of forms of conflict-related sexual violence in the State party, including rape, gang rape, mass rape, sexual slavery, forced pregnancy, child marriage, forced marriage and forced prostitution, including in the form of “survival sex”, sexual violence in public, and the extreme brutality and cruelty applied by many perpetrators, the use of additional severe physical violence, the insertion of foreign objects into the genitals, rape leading to sexually transmitted infections, forced sexual violence against family members, sexual mutilation of victims/survivor, murdering the victim after the rape, and any other forms of sexual violence of comparable gravity all often constituting violations to humanitarian law and human rights law and often amounting to international crimes, including war crimes and crimes against humanity;

(c) That conflict-related sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war, rooted in patriarchy and gender stereotypes perpetuating expressions of extreme and deadly misogyny, and in the perception of women as the property of men with conflict-related sexual violence being used as a means to punish men from rival armed groups by violating what is perceived as ‘theirs, and perpetrated with the aim to torment the civilian population;

(d) That limited focus is placed on the misogyny against and subordination of women, rooted in patriarchy, male sexual entitlement, and gender stereotypes, underlying sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence;

(e) Women’s underrepresentation in decision-making systems in both private and public spheres, unequal access to education and their lack of economic independence, fuelling their marginalization and subordination, thereby increasing their risk of sexual violence;

(f) Rampant impunity reducing the chances of holding perpetrators accountable, which fosters a sense of “normalization” of sexual violence against women and girls and fails to deter future sexual violence crimes.

13. **The Committee recalls UN Security Council resolutions 2106, and 2467, and urges the State party to adopt a comprehensive approach to eradicate sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, and prioritize it as a key nationwide problem that should not only be reduced but fully and sustainably eliminated. It recommends that the State party allocate sufficient funds, for instance by adequately using and raising the tax on mining revenues and adopt a dedicated budget for the eradication of conflict-related sexual violence. It recommends that the State party strengthen, expand and fully operationalize its national zero tolerance policy, in cooperation with women and girls who are survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and local women’s organizations, and:**

(a) **Adopt a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and victim/survivor-centred strategy to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence in all contexts, including (i) the provision of safe shelters, access to legal aid and referral mechanisms, and gender-sensitive policing to protect women and girls at risk in displacement camps; ensure the implementation of systematic gender-sensitive reforms within the armed and**

security forces and armed groups under the control of the State party, strengthening vetting and accountability mechanisms to remove those who condone or tolerate gender-based violence against women; (ii) provide gender-sensitive international humanitarian law training for members of the security forces, ensuring full accountability; (iii) issue command orders to the armed and security forces and associated groups to prevent further violations; (iv) strengthen collaboration with civil society and international partners to implement a comprehensive, multi-sectoral, and victim/survivor-centred strategy to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence in all contexts; (v) establish community-based early warning systems and deploy trained and adequately equipped protection personnel to ensure protection for women and girls carrying out basic survival tasks; implement mandatory child protection policies for safety in schools, establishing confidential and accessible reporting mechanisms, ensuring gender-sensitive training for teachers and staff, and holding perpetrators accountable; and (vi) provide independent and safe monitoring and complaint mechanisms in detention facilities, ensure access to medical and psychological support, and hold prison authorities accountable for perpetrating or failing to prevent and respond to sexual violence and ensure accountability for perpetrators including for the recent attack at the Muzenze prison;

(b) Develop, implement and adequately resource awareness-raising campaigns and community programmes for the public at large and integrate corresponding education programmes into the school curricula at all levels to eradicate patriarchal norms, the objectification of women and girls, male sexual entitlement, gender stereotypes, misogyny and toxic and militarized masculinity and rebuild a culture of gender equality, respect, peace and social cohesion, ensuring the active involvement of local women's groups, traditional and religious leaders, as well as by involving men and boys;

(c) Adopt targeted measures to ensure women's equal representation in decision-making at all levels and ensure their economic empowerment, in line with General Recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems. This includes addressing structural barriers to women and girls' participation in public and private life, ensuring equal access to education, employment and financial resources, and implementing temporary special measures to accelerate substantive equality of women and men;

(d) Eradicate impunity, ensure justice, including transitional justice, for women and girls, and strengthen accountability for conflict-related sexual violence through effective and thorough investigations, prompt prosecutions, provision of effective and inclusive witness and victim/survivor protection mechanisms, and proportionate sentencing;

(e) Avail itself of the support of and cooperation with international and technical partners and private sector to secure adequate financial and technical support to accelerate the implementation of these concluding observations.

14. The Committee is deeply concerned about the persistent links between extractive industries, including mining activities and illicit exploitation of minerals, conflict, and conflict-related sexual violence exacerbated by mineral resource governance challenges in the State party, including:

(a) The large number of women and girls, in particular those around mining sites facing high rates of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, and forced prostitution, perpetrated in particular by armed groups, State actors, mining actors, , and private security contractors with impunity;

(b) The use of conflict-related sexual violence by armed groups as a tactic of war to evict local populations living in the vicinity of mines to gain control over the natural resources;

(c) Women and girls' exclusion from decision-making on natural resource management and the lack of gender-responsive measures to regulate the mining sector and prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

15. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt and enforce stronger regulatory, accountability and integrity measures in the mining sector to prevent human rights violations, in particular conflict-related sexual violence, including by:

(a) Allocating adequate human, technical and financial resources to strengthen and implement legal frameworks to hold armed groups, artisanal and small-scale mining actors, corporate actors, State actors, and private security contractors accountable for human rights violations, in particular conflict-related sexual violence;

(b) Deploying mobile police stations in mining areas to facilitate reporting by victims/survivors, and ensure accountability and access to justice, including of extraterritorial corporate actors involved in mining operations by requiring mandatory human rights due diligence and transparency measures in global supply chains, and providing effective legal avenues for victims/survivors to seek redress for human rights violations by multinational companies;

(c) Strengthening multistakeholder partnerships, including with governments, private sector, civil society, and all actors in the extractive value chains to support the implementation of human rights due diligence obligations and accountability;

(d) Ensuring women's equal participation in decision-making on natural resource governance and adopt targeted measures to integrate gender into the environmental and social impact assessment of natural resource investments, regulate the mining sector in a gender-responsive manner and sustainable manner, including the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the mining sector;

(e) Amending the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) framework and regulatory policy guidelines for companies investing and trading in the extractive industry to increase gender justice for women and girls who suffer conflict-related sexual violence linked to business operations;

(f) Establishing a private-sector led fund to compliment government efforts and to better explore the obligations of the private sector to strengthen their due diligence to promote human rights, provide remediation and reparation to conflict-related sexual violence victims/survivors linked to business operations particularly in the extractive and forestry.

16. The Committee is concerned about the high vulnerability of the State party to the adverse effects of climate change and environmental shocks, including the recent floods of the Congo river, droughts, landslides and epidemics, which exacerbated by gender inequalities, disproportionately affects women and girls thereby increasing their risk to displacement, migration, and humanitarian crises, including food insecurity, significantly exacerbating their vulnerability to conflict-related sexual violence.

17. The Committee recommends that the State party integrate a gender perspective in all aspects of climate, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies, and that these policies explicitly provide for gender-responsive actions, targets, and indicators that put women's and girls' rights, climate smart mining, smart agriculture, gender equality, and protection from conflict-related sexual violence at the centre of climate adaptation and resilience solutions. It also recommends that the State party ensure women's equal and inclusive representation at all levels of climate change and disaster risk reduction decision-making, including at all stages of development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of climate change and disaster risk reduction legal and policy framework.

E. Women, Peace and Security

18. The Committee notes with appreciation that Article 52 of the Constitution enshrines the right of citizens to peace and to security, the adoption in 2024 of the third generation national action plan on Women, Peace and Security (2024 – 2027), of the five-year national action plan for the control of small arms and light weapons (2024 – 2028) and of the

disarmament, demobilization, community recovery and stabilization programme aimed at reducing the circulation of firearms,. The Committee is concerned, however, at the insufficient focus on conflict-related sexual violence in peace efforts. It also notes with concern:

(a) The lack of funding for the implementation of the national action plan on Women, Peace, and Security estimated to cost USD 26 million;

(b) That despite the crucial role of local women's groups and activists in advocating for peace, disarmament and reconciliation in their communities and the disproportionate impact on women of conflict and gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, women and girls remain largely excluded from formal conflict resolution and peace negotiation efforts, including the Nairobi/Luanda peace process ;

(c) That no specific measures have been put in place to ensure the protection of women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, including women and girls with disabilities and Indigenous women and girls and older women, who are frequently exposed to compounded impacts of the conflict;

(d) The continuous proliferation of firearms and small arms, which facilitate conflict-related sexual violence and often claim the lives of women and girls foraging for food, water and firewood.

19. The Committee, in line with UN Security Council resolution 1888 and 2106, emphasizes the interdependence between the elimination of conflict-related sexual violence and the achievement and stabilization of peace and that gender equality and the elimination of conflict-related sexual violence must be key components of peace efforts. The Committee recalls general recommendation No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, as well as general recommendation No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, UN Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions, including resolutions 1889 and 2122 and underlines women's crucial role as a driving force of sustainable peace in conflict prevention, management and resolution. It recommends that the State party make every possible effort, in cooperation with international partners and through renewed diplomatic engagement in the region, direct dialogue and negotiations with all state and non-state parties, including armed groups, to prevent and punish the commission of conflict-related sexual violence, implement a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, and achieve and sustain lasting and gender-sensitive peace, and that it ensure women's equal leadership in and ownership of conflict resolution and peace processes. It also recommends that the State party:

(a) **Ensure the allocation of the required funds, estimated at 26 million USD, for the implementation of the new National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security from the national budget and by seeking international assistance;**

(b) **Ensure parity in all processes, including in the Luanda/Nairobi peace process, and at all levels and stages of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and peace maintenance, including in formal and informal peace negotiations, mediation, transitional justice and reconstruction processes, intercommunity dialogues, and transitional decision-making bodies, including truth and reconciliation processes, national, international, regional and hybrid commissions, councils, monitoring bodies, verification mechanisms, and monitoring groups, election preparation and political processes, demobilization and reintegration programmes, security sector and judicial reforms and wider post-conflict reconstruction processes;**

(c) **Remove all obstacles to 50:50 parity between women and men, including by ensuring adequate childcare services, security and flexibility in negotiation location, and provide active support to women, for example, by securing funding for the representation of women's civil society organizations in peace processes, in line with Security Council Resolution 2242;**

(d) **Develop, in collaboration with women facing intersecting forms of discrimination, tailored measures to ensure their protection from additional conflict-**

related risks and ensure their full involvement in humanitarian assistance and conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction and peacebuilding, and implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of women, peace and security legal and policy framework and initiatives;

(e) Allocate the necessary resources to adopt and enforce relevant legislation and implement the national action plan for the control of small arms and light weapons, in line with UN Security Council resolutions 2117, 2467 and 2616 to stop the proliferation of small firearms and ensure parity and the strict application of the women, peace and security agenda in the regulation and implementation of arms control, including the non-proliferation of weapons.

F. Legislative and Policy Framework

20. The Committee commends the State party for its comprehensive legislative and policy framework aimed at preventing and responding to human rights violations committed in conflict, including conflict-related sexual violence, such as articles 14 and 41 of the Constitution on the prohibition of sexual violence, including sexual abuse of children, Law 15/022 modifying the Penal Code; Law 15/023 modifying the Military Penal Code; Law 15/024 modifying the Penal Procedure Code domesticating the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and criminalizes different forms of conflict-related sexual violence as international crimes of crimes against humanity and war crimes thereby creating an enforcement platform for the adjudication of grave breaches and serious violations of humanitarian law, including conflict-related sexual violence, the 023/2023 order, which modifies and complements the Criminal Code with new typologies of conflict-related sexual violence crimes, as well as the government's action plan for the period 2024–2028, containing measures to halt the activities of armed groups on its territory, the national action plans to prevent conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by the armed and police forces and other national action plans related to the elimination of conflict-related sexual violence. It notes with concern, however:

(a) The limited implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of existing legislative and policy framework criminalizing conflict-related sexual violence due to lack of funding, monitoring mechanisms, technical and human resources, and long delays in administrative procedures;

(b) The insufficient human, technical and financial resources of the line ministries and women machinery, including the Gender Ministry in charge of the implementation of relevant National Action Plans relating to gender quality and countering conflict-related sexual violence;

(c) The lack of clarity on the full criminalization of sexual violence outside of armed conflict and that marital rape is not specifically criminalized in the State party;

(d) The lack of a coordination mechanism to implement the legislative and policy framework and the delays in the establishment of the high-level ministerial task force on conflict-related sexual violence to coordinate the government's efforts to address these crimes, as well as of the high-level technical team responsible for updating and implementing the national road map on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence, in line with the 2013 Joint Communiqué and the 2019 Addendum thereto;

(e) That the Department of Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Violence within the police forces is currently operating solely in Kinshasa and thus unable to address critical needs in conflict zones in the Eastern provinces of the State party.

21. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure effective, swift and concrete protection and response outcomes for civilians and victims/survivors, including through:

(a) The allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the existing legislative and policy framework on conflict-related sexual violence, the establishment and strengthening of corresponding implementation

and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including by eliminating bureaucratic obstacles;

(b) **Particular attention on the implementation of the National Action Plans to eradicate conflict-related violence within the armed and police forces to ensure that they can protect and regain the trust of civilians, and by ensuring that the Department of Protection of Children and Prevention of Sexual Violence within the police forces is operational in the Eastern provinces;**

(c) **A comprehensive assessment of the legislative framework to identify and address any protection and accountability gaps in cases of sexual violence, and relevant amendments to ensure that rape, including marital rape, is punished under all circumstances and that the definition of rape is based on the absence of free and voluntary consent only;**

(d) **The urgent establishment of the planned high-level ministerial task force on conflict-related sexual violence and the high-level technical team responsible for updating and implementing the national road map on preventing and responding to conflict-related sexual violence and by ensuring their effective collaboration to respond to multisectoral factors driving conflict-related sexual violence, reducing bureaucracy and strengthening their capacity to coordinate the effective implementation of the State party's legislative and policy framework to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence and ensure full implementation of the 2013 Joint Communiqué and the 2019 Addendum thereto;**

(e) **Ensuring the effective participation of women's organizations and survivors of conflict-related sexual violence in the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the legal and policy framework.**

22. The Committee notes with concern that some discriminatory legislation against women and girls persists in the State party, including the recognition that the husband is the head of the household, and that laws that discriminate against women and girls continue to be enforced, including by traditional leaders and courts. The Committee is concerned that this contributes to the subordination of women and girls in society on which sexual violence and conflict-related sexual violence feeds.

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party take immediate action to identify all discriminatory legislation against women and girls and abolish it. It also recommends that it ensure that statutory law continues to have priority over customary law and that the norms, procedures and practices religious and customary justice systems, although informal, are harmonized with the Convention, and provide capacity-building on women's rights and gender equality to customary justice authorities.**

G. Accountability, investigation and access to justice

24. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's efforts to hold perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence accountable, which has resulted in the conviction of members of non-State armed groups, the armed forces and the police force as well as of perpetrators among civilians between 2022 and 2024. It notes the establishment of mobile courts to prosecute conflict-related sexual violence, the appointment of more judges to ensure local access to justice for victims/survivors of sexual violence, the pioneering of war crime prosecutions within its national jurisdiction, notably the first-ever conviction of an offender by a national court for forced pregnancy in 2024 by a South Kivu military court, the establishment in 2023 of a commission of inquiry to investigate possible acts of violence committed by the armed forces in Goma and Kwamouth, as well as the referral of a number of cases to the International Criminal Court for investigation and prosecution. It also welcomes the enactment of a Transitional Justice Policy, including to address conflict-related sexual violence and promote accountability and also notes with appreciation the State party's championing of human rights and accountability in international settings, including at the UN Security Council and Human Rights Council. It notes with concern, however:

(a) That the number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence before the courts of the State party remains extremely limited and not commensurate to the scope of sexual violence crimes committed, compared with the high number of victims/survivors seeking support from humanitarian actors, and the impunity enjoyed by most perpetrators;

(b) The failure to initiate criminal proceedings against individuals and private companies affiliated with non-State armed groups active in the area (including Wazalendo/Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP) or M23) since mid-2023, despite the high number of cases reported in 2024;

(c) That courts are understaffed and face a significant backlog of cases, particularly in rural and conflict areas;

(d) That judgements are often not enforced, particularly against perpetrators of high military ranks or affiliated to powerful groups and that corruption persists in the justice system;

(e) The lack of information on any progress made by the commission of inquiry to investigate possible acts of violence committed by the armed forces in Goma and Kwamouth;

(f) The lack of accountability for sexual violence committed in the context of the 2023 elections;

(g) That the National Reserve Defence Force Law only precludes new candidates from eligibility when they have been convicted of war crimes and crimes against humanity, which may allow suspected perpetrators of sexual violence to integrate into the armed forces taking into consideration the low investigation, prosecution and conviction rates;

(h) The lack of clarity whether an adequately resourced mechanism has been established to implement the Transitional Justice Policy;

(i) That the current resource, access and security challenges to comprehensively document incidents and allegations due to the proliferation of the armed conflict may further reduce investigation and prosecution rates and weaken accountability and prevention, including vetting.

25. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure full accountability for human rights violations, in particular conflict-related sexual violence, and:

(a) **Adopt an investigation and prosecution strategy for conflict-related sexual violence that ensures accurate contextualization of conflict-related sexual violence as an international crime, so as to support effective collection of evidence and successful prosecution of cases, to increase the number of court cases, including by dismantling barriers to reporting, strengthening capacity of the judiciary and prosecutors, eliminating bureaucracy and cooperating with humanitarian actors;**

(b) **Initiate independent and impartial fact-finding investigations into allegations of conflict-related sexual violence by non-State armed groups, including “Wazalendo/Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie” (VDP) and M23, and establish a specialized task force to prioritize the prosecution of such cases;**

(c) **Allocate the necessary adequate human, technical and financial resources to strengthen the capacity of courts, prosecutors, and investigators to handle cases and reduce backlog, including by recruiting more judges specialized prosecutors, providing incentives to judges and prosecutors to work in remote and conflict areas, fast-tracking investigations in conflict-related sexual violence cases;**

(d) **Ensure the enforcement of judgments in cases of conflict-related sexual violence, including by establishing dedicated enforcement units, and holding officials accountable for obstruction of justice, regardless of the rank or affiliation of perpetrators;**

(e) **Allocate adequate resources to prevent, investigate and prosecute cases of corruption of justice personnel to ensure the integrity and independence of the justice system;**

(f) **Strengthen collaboration with governments to facilitate cross-border arrests and prosecution of perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence, including through universal jurisdiction;**

(g) **Accelerate and ensure transparency in the work of the commission of inquiry by publishing a progress report, with findings, on cases investigated, identified patterns and steps taken to prosecute cases of conflict-related sexual violence;**

(h) **Investigate the cases of sexual violence committed in the context of the 2023 election and ensure that perpetrators receive punishments commensurate with the gravity of their crimes as well as develop a framework for the prevention of all forms of election-related gender-based violence;**

(i) **Amend the National Defence Reserve Force Law to ensure that candidates convicted of sexual violence, including lesser crimes than war crimes or crimes against humanity, or who are under investigation for any such crimes are excluded from eligibility for the armed forces, unless acquitted, and ensure that similar regulations are applied for the police force;**

(j) **Ensure the establishment of a fully gender-sensitive transitional justice mechanism, and ensure it is endowed with the necessary human, technical and financial resources;**

(k) **Establish mobile investigation teams, secure digital reporting systems, and collaborate with third States in the region to ensure the documentation of cases and the identification and prosecution of perpetrators.**

26. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to strengthen access to justice for victims/survivors, notably Order No. 024/2023 introducing free legal assistance to victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. It notes with concern, however:

(a) The lack of resources allocated for the implementation of the free legal assistance scheme introduced by Order No. 024/2023;

(b) The significant underreporting of sexual violence due to stigmatization and reprisals against victims/survivors, their lack of trust in the authorities due to pervasive corruption and the involvement of some elements of the armed and police forces in such crimes, inadequate victim/ survivor and witness protection mechanisms that heighten the risk of reprisals—including from early-released offenders—and intimidation against human rights defenders;

(c) That deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes and gender stereotypes perpetuate a culture of silence and further deter victims/survivors from reporting incidents.

27. **The Committee recalls its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Prioritize the allocation of dedicated funding from the State budget for the implementation of the free legal assistance scheme under Order No. 024/2023, deploy mobile legal aid units to rural areas and cover court fees, transportation and other essential costs for victims/survivors and ensure the accessibility of these measures, including reasonable accommodation;**

(b) **Address the underreporting of sexual violence by providing effective protection to victims/survivors, witnesses and human rights defenders, ensuring that reporting mechanisms are victim/survivor-centred, establishing special sexual violence units in police stations to receive and register women's complaints, launching awareness-raising programmes to address stigmatization and ostracization of victims/survivors, conduct independent and transparent investigations into cases involving members of the security forces, establish robust safeguards against reprisals, including strong victim/survivor and witness protection programmes, ensure the integrity and independence of the justice system, and adopt strict measures to prevent the early release of convicted offenders;**

(c) **Conduct targeted awareness campaigns, engaging communities, traditional and religious leaders to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and gender**

stereotypes that legitimize sexual violence against women and give rise to a culture of silence, and integrate mandatory gender- and trauma-responsive training for the judiciary and law enforcement officers to address judicial gender bias and enhance responses to victims/survivors.

28. The Committee notes with concern that the State party has lifted the moratorium on the death penalty as deterrent for militant violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, despite long-standing research demonstrating that the death penalty does not serve as a deterrent for crimes.

29. **The Committee, recommends that the State party reinstate the moratorium on the death penalty with a view to abolishing it and adopt evidence-based approaches to combat conflict-related sexual violence, including by ensuring the effective enforcement of sentences and prioritizing survivor-centered criminal justice responses, in line with international human rights standards and emphasizing that the abolition of the death penalty contributes to the enhancement of human dignity and to the progressive development of human rights.**

H. Rehabilitation and reintegration

30. The Committee welcomes the efforts made by the State party to rehabilitate and reintegrate victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, in particular the adoption of Law No. 22/065 of 26 December 2022 establishing the fundamental principles relating to the protection and reparation of victims of conflict-related sexual violence and crimes against peace and the security of humanity, as well as a corresponding mechanism to implement a National Reparations Fund (FONAREV). The Committee notes with appreciation that this framework provides for both individual as well as structural reparations and that it contains guarantees of non-repetition. However, it is concerned about the lack of information on the forms of reparation and an implementation mechanism. It also notes with concern:

(a) The insufficient resources allocated for the implementation of the law and the Fund;

(b) The slow implementation of FONAREV, which has so far identified 150,000 victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, few more than 1,000 of whom have obtained a decision awarding them damages totalling 7,340,385 USD, which have moreover not been disbursed yet;

(c) The lack of information and data disaggregated by age, sex, and disability on the support provided to women and girls and children born of rape for the transgenerational harm and discrimination faced, including in acquiring birth registration and civic documents to prevent their risk of being stateless and ensure their equal access to inclusive basic services, including education, health, and employment;

(d) The lack of information on comprehensive social and economic reintegration and rehabilitation measures, and access to education for victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that its reparations programme is implemented based on a victim/survivor-centred approach, in line with the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law, and that it contains a specific mechanism for the implementation of structural reparations and guarantees of non-repetition;**

(b) **Allocate the necessary resources to accelerate the identification of victims/survivors and expedite the disbursement of awarded reparations by streamlining administrative procedures, ensuring accountability for delays, and implementing an interim support scheme to provide immediate relief to identified victims/survivors while they await full reparations;**

(c) **Ensure adequate human, technical and financial resources for the effective implementation of Law No. 22/065 and FONAREV, including through the establishment of a dedicated budget line, mobilization of international support, and transparent allocation of funds to guarantee timely reparations for victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence;**

(d) **Expediently establish and operationalize the national reparation fund for children born of rape, ensuring its sustainable funding, clear implementation timelines, and a victim/survivor-centred approach that addresses the specific vulnerabilities, emotional and psychological suffering faced by these children and their mothers, including by taking the necessary measures to eradicate any direct and indirect discrimination in law, in particular ensuring the children's birth registration and access to civic documentation, providing access to social protection to the children and their mothers and conducting destigmatization awareness-campaigns in line with UN Security Council resolution 2467;**

(e) **Develop and implement comprehensive reintegration and rehabilitation programmes that include access to education, vocational training, economic opportunities, psychosocial support, and social reintegration initiatives, ensuring a victim/survivor-centred approach that prioritizes long-term well-being and autonomy.**

32. The Committee notes with concern that victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence are frequently stigmatized and ostracized in their families and communities.

33. **The Committee recommends that the State party conduct largescale awareness-raising campaigns, including among boys and men to de-stigmatize victims/survivors, establish and enforce legal protections against discrimination and social exclusion, and provide adequate capacity building to all duty bearers, coupled with impact assessments, including law enforcement, educators, healthcare providers, and social workers to prevent secondary victimization and ensure a supportive environment for survivors.**

34. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts made by the State party to ensure access to health services for victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including the adoption of Decree No. 23/09 of 23 February 2023 on the Creation, Organization, and Functioning of Integrated Multisectoral Service Centers for the Care of Survivors of Gender-Based Violence, the establishment of mobile clinics in rural areas and in camps for internally displaced persons, the provision of access to Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits, albeit in limited numbers, the provision of capacity building in the holistic care of victims/survivors of gender-based violence, and the deployment of humanitarian midwives in camps for internally displaced people. The Committee is concerned, however, that a high number of victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence lack access to adequate necessary physical and mental health services. It also notes with concern:

(a) The high number of pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases resulting from rape and the very limited access to quality and inclusive health care services, including maternal and neonatal services and sexual and reproductive health care, including safe abortion services because of stigmatization, lack of service providers, poor health care infrastructure, and the criminalization of abortion under articles 165 and 166 of the Penal Code;

(b) The dire security situation that is further limiting access Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits during the critical 72-hour period following rape, increasing victims'/survivors' risk of HIV;

(c) Reports of direct threats and attacks against healthcare providers, which further impede victims/survivors from accessing health services.

35. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Integrate physical and mental healthcare into reintegration and rehabilitation programmes by prioritizing cost-effective community-based mental health support, training local health workers in trauma care, and expanding access to**

essential long-term medical treatment, including fistula repair and maternal healthcare;

(b) Ensure access to quality and inclusive health care services, including maternal and neonatal health care, climate resilient health care infrastructure, and sexual and reproductive health care, including access to information about and testing for sexually transmitted infections and access to the necessary medical care, access to contraception, and safe abortion services for victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence by legalizing access to safe abortion, providing capacity building to healthcare providers on confidential, non-discriminatory and trauma-informed care, and addressing stigma through public awareness campaigns;

(c) Strengthen access to Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) kits and emergency care by pre-positioning supplies in conflict-affected areas, expanding the reach of mobile clinics, and strengthening coordination with humanitarian partners to ensure rapid response despite security challenges as well as ensure access to Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs);

(d) Provide protection to healthcare providers, including surgeons undertaking reconstructive surgery for women recovering from sexual violence injuries, by investigating and prosecuting threats and attacks against them, increasing security at critical medical facilities, establishing emergency protocols for the safe transport of victims/survivors and medical staff in high-risk areas.

36. The Committee is gravely concerned that the recent escalation of hostilities, the takeover of parts of the Eastern territory by the M23 and the withdrawal of Government render governance structures ineffective and deprive victims/survivors of essential services, including access to PEP kits, Antiretroviral drugs (ARVs).

37. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt and implement immediate emergency response measures for victims/survivors in areas under the occupation of M23, including the provision and dispense of PEP kits and ARVs, under the new guidelines of WHO to enhance access to PEP kits by seeking international and technical assistance and support to negotiate and establish a humanitarian corridor to assist victims/survivors.

38. The Committee is concerned that there are currently insufficient specific reintegration and rehabilitation measures to allow members of armed groups to reintegrate into civilian life, which constitutes a significant impediment to reaching and maintaining peace.

39. The Committee recommends that the State party set up a comprehensive and adequately resourced and gender-sensitive reintegration and rehabilitation mechanism for former combatants, in consultation and cooperation with women's groups, and in accordance with international humanitarian law, ensuring that such a mechanism:

(a) Ensure perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence are held accountable and effectively reintegrated and rehabilitated into the community, including through their participation in truth-seeking and reconciliation processes in coordination with the WPS agenda and transitional justice activities;

(b) Incorporate strong safeguards to prevent reprisals and the risk of renewed conflict-related sexual violence, including measures to dismantle patriarchy, gender stereotypes and misogyny at the root of conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure that reintegration and rehabilitation efforts do not compromise the access to justice, safety, dignity, or rights of victims/survivors;

(c) Promote a victim/survivor-centred approach by integrating trauma-informed practices and ensuring that the perspectives and lived experiences of women and girls, particularly victims/survivors of sexual violence, are at the core of all reintegration and rehabilitation policies and programs;

(d) Comprehensively address the specific needs of women and girls who were forcibly recruited into armed groups, including for forced and child marriage, forced prostitution and sexual slavery, by providing gender-responsive rehabilitation

programs, economic empowerment opportunities, education, and vocational training to support their reintegration.

I. Closure of MONUSCO

40. The Committee notes with concern that MONUSCO has been asked to discontinue its operations. It notes the existence of a joint comprehensive disengagement plan for the gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO, accompanied by a dedicated Peacebuilding Fund, and acknowledges the efforts by the government to prepare to take over MONUSCO's functions, including the training of armed forces and the police forces to take over protection responsibilities previously exercised by MONUSCO. It is concerned, however, that the withdrawal might create an additional security vacuum for the protection of women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and that the documentation of conflict-related violence incidents might be hampered, and that members of the armed forces and police force, institutions who are taking over some of the functions, have been involved in conflict-related sexual violence.

41. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the closure of MONUSCO does not create a security vacuum, by strengthening the capacity of the armed forces and the police force, prioritizing civilian protection, and ensuring that the Peacebuilding Fund is effectively used to support security sector reforms. It also recommends that the State party:

(a) Implement strict vetting procedures to exclude members involved in conflict-related sexual violence from the armed forces and the police forces, alongside ensuring mandatory training on international humanitarian law, international human rights, including gender-sensitive protection strategies and ensure that the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics of the armed forces and police forces include violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in particular conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence and crimes;

(b) Strengthen regional and international cooperation to enhance security and civilian protection of women and girls in conflict-affected areas;

(c) Allocate the necessary adequate human, technical and financial resources to ensure effective disarmament and demobilization of armed groups for peace and security and ensure documentation of cases, which is key to ensure accountability.

J. Humanitarian Situation and internally displaced camps

42. The Committee is gravely concerned about the large-scale and increasing displacement of millions of civilians, especially women and children. It is alarmed at overcrowding in camps for internally displaced persons with disastrous living conditions, and that the current offensives by the M23 is further exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, with a high number of women and girls being re-displaced. The Committee notes with appreciation the efforts made by the State party to enhance protection in camps for internally displaced persons, including the deployment of armed forces to ensure security around the camps, the training on camp management provided to police elements, and the provision of sentry boxes and containers to host police personnel in camps. However, it is gravely concerned that these measures are largely insufficient to address acute security risks, including the exposure of women and girls to conflict-related sexual violence in and around camps. It is furthermore concerned that:

(a) Internally displaced women and girls face lack of livelihood opportunities, poverty and scarcity of humanitarian assistance, often at the brink of famine and at a high risk of sexual exploitation, as many women and girls must resort to forced prostitution, including "survival sex", often in brothels, so-called "Maisons de tolerance", as well as forced labour around camps to access basic survival items;

(b) Internal displacement and the scarcity of resources significantly increase the risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation and child marriage, including the phenomenon of

so-called “famine brides”, whereby families arrange marriages for their daughters out of economic desperation in exchange for money, food and other items, a practice which frequently affects girls with disabilities, who are perceived as a burden on their families, who often believe that marriage is the sole sustainable option for their daughters, while it exposes them to human rights violations, as well as insufficient mechanisms to identify and free victims/survivors and provide them with access to the necessary referral structures;

(c) The State party’s humanitarian response plan, for which the State party has launched an appeal for USD 2,6 billion, is currently funded at approximately 21 percent only;

(d) The deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation due to the recent offensives by M23 has further limited women’s and girls’ access to food and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) electricity, essential health care services, and other essential utilities, and that a number of service providers have been attacked and seen their premises and/or warehouses looted;

(e) According to UNICEF statistics, over 2,500 schools and learning spaces in North Kivu and South Kivu have closed since the beginning of 2023, increasing the number of children out of school from 465,000 in December 2022 to 795,000, that including Ituri province with over 1,6 million children in the Eastern part of the State party being out of school, and that the lack of education prevents girls and women from building an independent life and significantly increases their vulnerability to sexual violence.

43. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Urgently allocate sufficient spaces to decongest the overcrowded IDP camps and deploy armed forces and police to ensure security for displaced women and girls in areas that are not controlled by armed groups and establish reporting mechanisms within camps to ensure that victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence can access basic services;**

(b) **Significantly strengthen food and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) security and humanitarian aid for internally displaced persons, by prioritizing rapid food distribution mechanisms, water distribution centres, restoring electricity, enhancing cooperation with humanitarian organizations, and integrating protection measures against sexual exploitation in food assistance programmes;**

(c) **Take urgent measures to prevent and address so-called “survival sex” in and around camps by reinforcing community-based protection mechanisms, increasing police patrols, and ensuring safe and autonomous access by women and children to food, water and essential services and providing for alternative livelihood opportunities;**

(d) **Adopt and implement a new national action on the prevention of trafficking, strengthen identification procedures and corresponding referral mechanisms and enhance efforts to prevent trafficking for sexual exploitation by improving border and transit monitoring, establishing local initiatives for inclusive safe shelters, and strengthening reintegration programmes in collaboration with international partners;**

(e) **Prevent child and forced marriage, including by ensuring that families have access to the necessary livelihoods, conducting awareness-raising programmes to dismantle false perceptions about child marriage and gender stereotypes against women and girls with disabilities, and provide capacity building to armed and police forces to identify and intervene in cases of child and forced marriage;**

(f) **Strengthen efforts to mobilize humanitarian funding, ensuring that resources from the 2024 humanitarian response plan are effectively allocated to protect internally displaced women and girls, and seek increased international donor support to close funding gaps;**

(g) **Establish contingency plans jointly with international partners to maintain essential services for victims/survivors in the context of the attacks and areas currently controlled by M23, and strengthen the security of humanitarian workers and**

service providers by ensuring safe access to conflict-affected areas, investigating attacks on aid facilities;

(h) Mitigate the impact of displacement on education by expanding community-led educational programmes for girls and boys, including early childhood education, supporting alternative learning spaces, and integrate adult education programmes and vocational training to enhance economic opportunities for women;

(i) Through direct negotiation with non-state armed groups, ensure respect women and girls' right to education without fear of violence or attack through preventing attacks on schools, teachers, school administrators, and students guided by the Safe Schools Declaration and the Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict.

K. Data collection and analysis

44. The Committee notes with concern the lack of disaggregated data collection on:

(a) The availability and accessibility of essential health services for victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, including on the number of health facilities built, equipped or renovated; the percentage of victims/survivors who received medical care within the required timeframe; the number of ARVs and PEP kits distributed; the training of health providers and the number of post-training interventions and on sexual and gender-based violence against women and their access to services;

(b) The number of investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and the sentences handed down or disciplinary measures taken against perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls;

(c) The number of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, and the number of children born of rape without civic registration documents in the State party.

45. The Committee recommends that the State party establish a systematic and disaggregated data collection system to ensure evidence-based policymaking and the effective tailoring of prevention and response measures to conflict-related sexual violence. It recommends that the State party enhance transparency and accountability by regularly publishing data and strengthening partnerships with international and humanitarian actors to support data collection and analysis despite resource constraints.

L. Recommendations to the international community

46. The Committee welcomes the regional peacebuilding processes, and the work by the Office of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. It notes the significant challenges, including the decade-long protracted conflict, endemic conflict-related sexual violence and the continuous deterioration of the humanitarian and security situation, and the importance of coordinated international efforts to support the State party in achieving sustainable development, peace, justice, recovery, gender equality and the elimination of conflict-related sexual violence.

47. The Committee recalls its general recommendations No. 30 (2013) on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, and No. 40 (2024) on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions, recommends that the international community:

(a) Support a peaceful resolution of the conflict, including a cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire through direct dialogue and negotiation with armed groups through regional peace processes, including the Nairobi/Luanda peace processes and ensure women's equal representation therein;

(b) Provide the funds necessary to meet the costs of the State party's Women, Peace and Security national action plan and support in priority, women's equal and inclusive representation at all levels of all peace negotiations, conflict resolution, and post-conflict governance and in the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in the State party, including by providing adequate financial and technical support for local women's organizations;

(c) Provide adequate financial and technical resources, including by exploring the possibility of funding by private sector, to support the State party's humanitarian response plan to restore and provide essential utilities for humanitarian support and strengthen protection of women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence;

(d) Provide adequate financial and technical support to strengthen coordination with local organizations and international partners, for gender-responsive humanitarian assistance in the State party, including programmes aimed at improving food and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) security, electricity, livelihood opportunities, and psychosocial services for women and children at risk of conflict-related sexual violence, accessible quality and inclusive health care, including maternal, neonatal and paediatric health care and sexual and reproductive health and rights services;

(e) Provide adequate technical and financial assistance to support the strengthening of the justice and judicial system in the State party, particularly in addressing conflict-related sexual violence;

(f) Strengthen international and regional cooperation in investigating and prosecuting human rights violations, in particular conflict-related sexual violence, in accordance with international criminal law and international humanitarian law, including through the application of universal jurisdiction and cross-border prosecutions, as well as supporting the establishment of a specialized mechanism to prosecute conflict-related sexual violence in order to ensure accountability of all perpetrators of grave human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence;

(g) Ensure full accountability for conflict-related sexual violence committed by UN peacekeepers and foreign nationals operating in the State party;

(h) Allocate adequate resources to the fact-finding mission on the serious human rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law committed in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu, in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, established by the Human Rights Council on 7 February 2025;

(i) Contribute to strengthening protection measures for women and girls in conflict-affected areas by supporting the establishment of safe spaces, legal aid services, awareness-raising campaigns, education services, and independent and victim/survivor-centered complaint mechanisms;

(j) Provide support, in particular adequate financial and technical resources for the full operationalization and strengthening of the State party's national reparations fund for victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence, as well as for the establishment of a reparations fund for children born out of rape, including the development of victim/survivor-centered policies focusing on non-discrimination, education, healthcare, psychosocial counselling and economic empowerment to facilitate long-term reintegration and resilience-building.

48. The Committee also recommends, particularly to States hosting multinational corporations operating or whose own enterprises operate in the extractive sector in the State party, to ensure compliance by those States and companies with human rights due diligence standards to prevent State and/or corporate responsibility and/or complicity in human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. It also recommends significantly strengthening measures to ensure transparency and accountability in global supply chains and to support the adoption of gender-responsive policies within the sector. It further recommends strengthened transnational

mechanisms to effectively curb illicit mineral exploitation and illicit trade in firearms and small arms in the State party to protect women and girls from rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence.

M. Optional Protocol to the Convention and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

49. The Committee encourages the State party to ratify, as soon as possible, the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.

N. Follow-up to the concluding observations

50. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within one year, written information on the steps taken to implement the recommendations contained in paragraphs 19; 25 (a); 31 (c); and 43 (b).

51. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the combined ninth and tenth periodic reports of the State party in line with a future clear and regularized schedule for reporting by States parties (see A/RES/79/165, para. 6) and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The combined ninth and tenth periodic reports should cover the entire period up to the time of its submission.
