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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 47 of Security Council resolution [2717 \(2023\)](#), covers developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1 December 2023 to 19 March 2024. It describes the progress and challenges in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

II. Political developments

2. The political dynamics during the reporting period were marked by the organization of the presidential, national, provincial legislative and partial communal elections, amid logistical, technical and security challenges. The Independent National Electoral Commission opened the voting process on 20 December, in line with the Constitution, but extended voting operations for several days to compensate for delays. The Commission, the Government, representatives of the political majority, opposition and civil society, as well as some national and international electoral observation missions acknowledged cases of violence, including against women, and alleged irregularities, such as insufficient or malfunctioning voting machines, incomplete electoral lists and fraud. On 5 January, the Commission shared the preliminary conclusions of its investigations during voting operations, which lead to the cancellation of the results of the legislative elections in Masimanimba (Kwilu) and Yakoma (North Ubangi) and the cancellation of votes cast for 82 candidates, including 15 women. National elections were not held in the territories of Masisi, Rutshuru (North Kivu) and Kwamouth (Mai-Ndombe) owing to the security situation. Despite calls from several presidential candidates, including Moïse Katumbi, to cancel the election process citing widespread irregularities, the Constitutional Court dismissed these requests as unfounded.

3. On 9 January, the Constitutional Court confirmed the re-election of Félix Tshisekedi as President, with 73.47 per cent of the votes, followed by Moïse Katumbi with 18 per cent of the votes. According to the provisional results legislative elections announced by the of the Independent National Electoral Commission, the political platform Union sacrée de la nation representing President Tshisekedi received around 450 of the 500 seats in the National Assembly. Women's representation is at 13.2 per cent of seats, representing a slight increase from 10.3 per cent during the 2018–2023



legislature term. Union sacrée de la nation candidates also dominated the provincial and partial communal elections. On 12 March, the Constitutional Court delivered its verdict on the appeals contesting the results of the national legislative elections of 20 December. Reportedly, of the 1,123 files received, the Constitutional Court deemed 43 cases admissible and founded, prompting some stakeholders, including from the political majority, to denounce the decision of the Court as being politicized. On 20 January, Félix Tshisekedi was sworn in for his second presidential term in the presence of 18 Heads of State.

4. On 7 February, the President appointed the Secretary General of Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, Augustin Kabuya, tasked with consulting political parties, groupings and personalities represented in the National Assembly to inform the composition of the new Government. On 20 February, the Prime Minister, Jean-Michel Sama Lukonde, presented his resignation letter to the President to take up his mandate as a member of the National Assembly, prompting the resignation of the entire Government. The President, however, asked the outgoing Government to continue its duties until the formation of a new Government.

5. During and after the election campaign, tensions and clashes between the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social and the political party representing Moïse Katumbi Ensemble pour la République, emerged along community lines between Kasaians and Katangese communities. On voting day, two women, an activist of Ensemble pour la République and the Chair of the local branch of the Independent National Electoral Commission were separately assaulted and stripped naked by several men around polling stations in the Provinces of Kasai Oriental and Lomami, respectively. In response, on 19 January, the Minister of Gender, Family and Children adopted the road map for the prevention and response to electoral violence against women involved in politics for the 2024–2028 electoral cycle.

6. During the electoral process, the good offices of MONUSCO facilitated dialogue between relevant national and international stakeholders and promoted the safe, meaningful and constructive participation of women, youth and Indigenous People, as well as initiatives against hate speech, political intolerance and gender-based violence. The Mission encouraged candidates dissatisfied with election outcomes to pursue legal and peaceful means and explore alternatives to continue their civic and political participation, considering the upcoming senatorial, gubernatorial and local elections. MONUSCO supported civil society and candidates to advocate against gender-based violence, focusing on the protection of female candidates and observers, and ensured those messages were extensively promoted on social media.

7. At the request of the Government, MONUSCO deployed 131,302 tons of electoral material and 101 Independent National Electoral Commission personnel and recovered 14,141 tons of material and 226 personnel between 4 December 2023 and 4 January 2024.

8. Tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda were marked by increasingly hostile rhetoric, mutual accusations of the use of armed groups as proxies and deadly cross-border incidents. During a campaign rally on 18 December, President Tshisekedi declared that he would seek authorization from Parliament to declare war on Rwanda should the latter not stop supporting the Mouvement du 23 mars (M23). On 18 February, in a press release, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Rwanda expressed its concern about the abandonment of the Luanda and Nairobi Processes by the Democratic Republic of Congo, adding that Rwanda had taken measures to degrade the offensive air capabilities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

9. Tensions also flared up between Burundi and Rwanda following attacks by Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara) in Burundi in December.

On 21 January, following the decision by Burundi to close its border with Rwanda on 11 January, the President of Burundi, Evariste Ndayishimiye, accused Rwanda of supporting the RED Tabara armed group based in South Kivu. The following day, the Government of Rwanda deplored the “inflammatory statements” by President Ndayishimiye.

10. Following the public announcement by the former president of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Corneille Nangaa, of the creation of the politico-military movement, Alliance Fleuve Congo (AFC), on 15 December in Nairobi, in the presence of the political leader of M23, Bertrand Bisimwa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo recalled its ambassador from Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania, which hosts the headquarters of the East African Community.

11. On 16 and 22 January, respectively, the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Antony Blinken, met with the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, and President Tshisekedi in support of the Nairobi and Luanda processes. Following the mini-summit on the security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo convened by the President of Angola, João Lourenço Gonçalves, in his capacity as Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community, on 16 February and on the sidelines of the thirty-seventh African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, with the participation of President Kagame and President Tshisekedi, President Lourenço met separately on 27 February, in Luanda, with President Tshisekedi, who agreed to meet President Kagame under certain conditions, including the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from Congolese territory, the cessation of hostilities and the cantonment of M23. On 11 March, President João Lourenço received President Kagame in Luanda. Following the meeting, the Foreign Minister of Angola, Tete António, announced that a meeting between the presidents of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda could take place soon. The African Union Peace and Security Council, held a virtual meeting on 4 March to discuss the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In its communiqué, the Council endorsed the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which started to deploy in Goma on 15 December, while stressing the need to implement the outcome of the quadripartite summit of the East African Community, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes and the Southern African Development Community, under the auspices of the African Union, held on 27 June 2023, in Luanda.

III. Security situation

12. During the reporting period, MONUSCO recorded 597 security incidents in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. In total, 531 civilians were reportedly killed, including 97 women and 34 children. A total of 283 civilians sustained injuries, including 36 women and 25 children. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) remained responsible for most killings of civilians (354 civilians killed in North Kivu and Ituri combined, including 75 women and 21 children), whereas protection of civilians concerns in North Kivu grew significantly, owing to repeated ceasefire violations between M23 and the Congolese armed forces in the Petit Nord.

13. In the context of heightened tensions between Burundi and Rwanda, both countries strengthened their military presence along their border and the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following the closure by Burundi of its border with Rwanda on 11 January.

14. The conflict between the Teke and Yaka communities, which began in the territory of Kwamouth, Mai Ndombe Province continued to affect Kwango, Kwilu,

Kongo Central and parts of Kinshasa Provinces, owing to ongoing activity of the Mobondo militia. In Tshopo Province, after a lull of around two months, hostilities linked to the land conflict between the Lengola and the Mbole communities resumed in January 2024; several schools and health centres have now remained closed for a year. Violent incidents during the electoral period were particularly prevalent in the former Katanga Provinces.

15. On 8 March, the Council of Ministers adopted a draft ordinance authorizing the sixty-eighth extension of the state of siege in North Kivu and Ituri Provinces for an additional 15 days starting on 13 March.

Ituri Province

16. In Ituri Province, MONUSCO recorded 180 security incidents between 1 December and 19 March, involving mostly CODECO, Zaïre and ADF. In total, 282 civilians were killed, including 57 women and 19 children. A total of 112 civilians sustained injuries, including 16 women and 11 children.

17. In Djugu and Mahagi territories, CODECO and Zaïre continued to target each other, as well as civilians from opposing communities, particularly at internally displaced persons sites in eastern Djugu, at mining sites in western Djugu, as well as along National Road 27. On 29 January, Zaïre signed a unilateral statement in Bunia, pledging to cease hostilities and join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, making it the sixth armed group to formally state its intention to join the peace process in Ituri. Other armed groups include Force de résistance patriotique d'Ituri (FRPI), Front Patriotique et Intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC), CODECO/URDPC, Chini ya Tuna and Mouvement d'auto-défense populaire de l'Ituri (MAPI). Nonetheless, attacks against civilians and territorial control by these armed groups continued. FRPI maintained full control over the Walendu Bindi chefferie, and several FPIC factions continued clashing over the control of mining sites.

18. In Irumu and Mambasa territories, the ADF split into small and mobile cells, enabling it to continue operating despite the joint Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF)/and Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, FARDC) air and ground operations. In the same area, the Front des Patriotes pour la Paix/Armée du Peuple and other Mai-Mai groups continued to threaten civilians around mining sites and in forested areas. In Irumu, attacks against Nande farmers by Chini ya Tuna impacted social cohesion, before a MONUSCO facilitated dialogue between the Nande and Lesse communities, in January 2024, contributed to de-escalation.

North Kivu Province

19. In North Kivu, MONUSCO recorded 251 security incidents between 1 December and 19 March, involving mostly ADF and M23. In total, 219 civilians were killed, including 31 women and 14 children; and 146 civilians sustained injuries, including 17 women and 14 children.

20. The ADF was most active north and northwest of Beni town, near the Ituri border, relocating there to evade UPDF/FARDC operations. In addition, the group increased its movements and isolated attacks in its traditional strongholds in eastern Beni territory. The risk of improvised explosive devices remained high both within the ADF operational zones and in urban centres.

21. As the East African Community Regional Force withdrew, completing the process on 8 January, M23 reoccupied all former positions held by the Regional Force and expanded its territory beyond the pre-March 2023 ceasefire lines, moving further west and south towards Goma and Sake.

22. The Congolese armed forces, supported by non-State armed groups, and Burundian armed forces targeted positions held by M23. The Congolese armed forces also used attack helicopters, bomber aircrafts and armed drones to target M23 positions, killing several M23 elements, including the Chief of Intelligence, Colonel Bosco Mberabagago, alias Castro, on 16 January. On 25 January, during an offensive against M23 in Mweso, at least 13 civilians were killed by a rocket. Both sides blamed the other for civilian casualties, with M23 reiterating its narrative of protecting the local population against a FARDC coalition, which it accused of having a genocidal intent.

23. Misinformation and disinformation campaigns targeting MONUSCO continued to affect its operations and threaten peacekeepers. On 24 and 25 January, the spokesperson for M23 threatened MONUSCO with ceasing their support to FARDC. On 2 February, a MONUSCO helicopter, conducting a medical evacuation, was shot multiple times over a zone controlled by M23, injuring two crew members, one of them critically. An earlier shooting at a MONUSCO helicopter occurred on 16 January. On several occasions from 9 February to 3 March, MONUSCO blocking positions around Sake came under direct and indirect fire from all sides, including the Congolese armed forces and the *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (VDP) resulting in several peacekeepers injured. On 25 February, a MONUSCO logistics convoy moving from Sake to Kimoka came under heavy fire by elements of FARDC and VDP and was forced to return. M23, FARDC and VDP impeded MONUSCO peacekeepers' freedom of movement on several occasions.

24. During the reporting period, MONUSCO documented the presence of mobile air defence systems in North Kivu, reflecting a significant evolution in the military equipment acquired by M23. This coincided with the loss of the last combat drone of the Congolese armed forces in the area. Likewise, the first ever deployment of commercial drones equipped with explosives to attack MONUSCO blocking positions on 12 February and bomber aircrafts of the Congolese armed forces at Goma airport on 17 February are indicative of the use of increasingly sophisticated weapons.

25. Following its deployment, the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo started to support FARDC for the first time on 28 January in Sake with rocket and mortar fire on positions held by M23. On 12 February, M23 dislodged the Congolese armed forces from three strategic positions north of Sake, entering the perimeter of Operation Springbok of MONUSCO, and advancing towards Sake, triggering the withdrawal of the Congolese armed forces from Sake towards Mubambiro and sending tens of thousands of internally displaced persons from the wider Sake area towards Goma. FARDC and VDP returned to Sake, but M23 remained in control of its immediate outskirts. On 1 March, M23 attacked Mubambiro and Sake using indirect fire, during a joint field visit to the frontlines around Sake by the Chiefs-of-Staff of FARDC, Burundian armed forces and the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

South Kivu Province

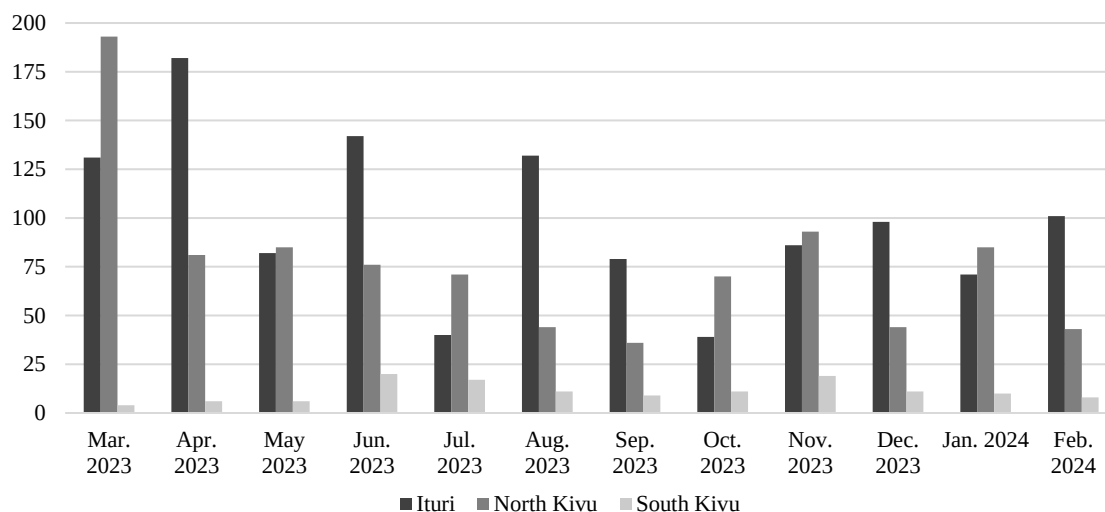
26. In South Kivu, MONUSCO recorded 166 security incidents between 1 December and 19 March, attributed to various armed groups; including 30 civilians killed, (including 9 women and 1 child), while 25 civilians sustained injuries (including 3 women).

27. Despite the comparatively lower number of civilian casualties, civilians remained vulnerable to violence by armed groups along ethnic lines. Particularly in the Ruzizi plain, escalating intercommunity tensions involving Banyamulenge and Barundi communities against Bavira, Banyindu and Bafuliru communities resulted in population displacement with violence spreading to other areas. In the Haut-Plateaux of Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga, confrontations were reported between the Twirwaneho and Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke near Mikenge and around mining sites. Increased

cooperation between Twirwaneho and M23 raised concerns about a spillover of the M23 conflict, whereas regional tensions led to an increased militarization of the Province, including along the borders with neighbouring countries.

Figure I

Civilian killings in armed group-related incidents by province, March 2023 to February 2024



Source: MONUSCO/Joint Operations Centre/Situational Awareness Geospatial Enterprise (SAGE).

IV. Human rights situation

28. During the reporting period, 1,253 human rights violations and abuses were documented across the country. In conflict-affected Provinces, different Mai-Mai factions were allegedly responsible for most of the abuses (159), followed by ADF (152), M23 (142), CODECO (90), Nyatura factions (65), Twa armed groups (36), Nduma Defense of Congo-Renové (26), and Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS) (24). At least 537 persons were allegedly victims of summary killings by armed groups, notably ADF (259), CODECO (88) and M23 (83). FARDC were responsible for 152 violations and the Congolese national police were allegedly responsible for 67 violations. State actors were allegedly responsible for the summary and extrajudicial killing of 75 persons (56 men, 10 women and 9 children).

29. At least 93 human rights violations and abuses related to restrictions of civic space were reported, including 11 election-related incidents. A significant rise in victims (460) from the previous reporting period (9) was noted, the rise is attributed to violence on election-day and its aftermath, and increased threats against human rights defenders, including journalists and members of civil society organizations. Specifically, on 25 and 31 January, M23 summarily executed two human rights defenders in Karambi and Mpasi, North Kivu Province for aiding victims of human rights abuses and reporting on attacks against civilians. On 3 February in Kinshasa, the National Intelligence Agency arrested seven civil society members for planning a protest against the 600-day occupation of Bunagana by M23, detaining them incommunicado for four days before releasing them without charges. One of them was reportedly subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment during detention. In the electoral context, in Kolwezi, Lualaba Province, on 26 December and 1 January, the Republican Guard arrested and detained over 50 men in their camp, releasing them on 6 January after the intervention of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, the National Human Rights Commission and representatives of civil society.

30. During the reporting period, 61 members of human rights organizations and three journalists received United Nations Joint Human Rights Office assistance to improve their individual protection owing to threats received from members of armed groups and State agents. In support of State institutions and civil society, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office organized 48 activities for 1,272 people, including 420 women, on issues of hate speech, the exercise of public freedoms and social, economic and cultural rights, conflict-related sexual violence, transitional justice and the fight against impunity, and the rights of persons with disabilities.

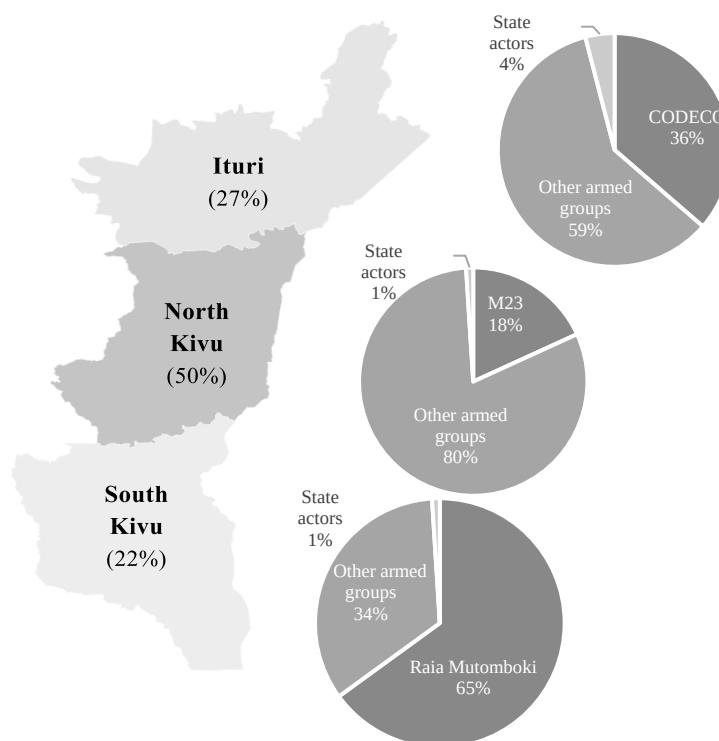
31. On 13 March, the Minister of Justice issued a circular on the modalities of the application of the death penalty, following the decision by the Government during the Council of Ministers meeting on 9 February to lift the moratorium on the execution of the death penalty, in force since 2003.

Child protection

32. Between 1 December 2023 and 29 February 2024, 763 grave violations perpetrated against 646 children (427 boys and 219 girls), including 446 children who were recruited and used (320 boys and 126 girls), were verified. Elements from Raia Mutomboki were responsible for the largest number of verified violations (325), followed by M23 (109), ADF (80), Nyatura (48), and 18 other non-State armed groups (193). The Congolese security forces were found responsible for four killings, two cases of sexual violence, one case of abduction and one attack against hospitals.

Figure II

Grave violations against children in armed conflict verified in 2023



Source: MONUSCO/Child Protection Section.

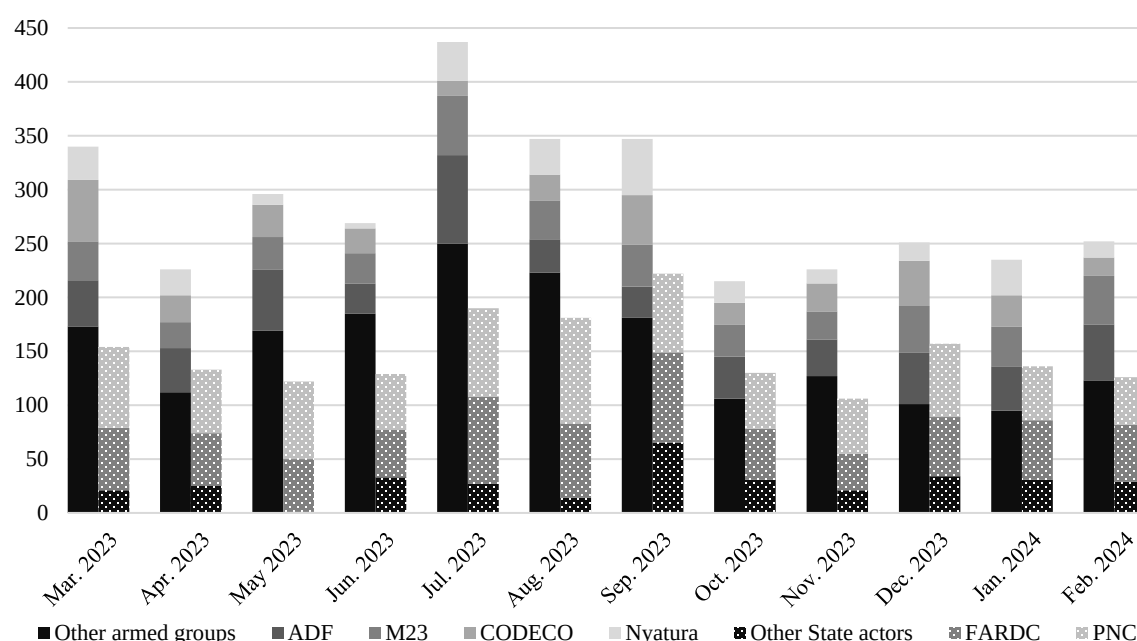
Note: The boundaries shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Gender and sexual violence in conflict

33. In December 2023 and January 2024, the number of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence included at least 118 persons affected, including 87 women, 30 girls and 1 man. However, such cases likely continue to be underreported owing to access and security challenges for MONUSCO and fear of reprisals and stigma among survivors of sexual violence when compared with the high figures of victims of gender-based violence seeking services from humanitarian actors. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for incidents affecting 106 victims, including 81 women, 24 girls and 1 man. Mai-Mai factions perpetrated most of the alleged abuses on 34 victims (26 women, 7 children and 1 man), followed by CODECO (19 women and 6 girls), M23 (14 women and 8 girls), and Nyatura (10 women and 1 girl). The Congolese armed forces were allegedly responsible for incidents of sexual violence involving four women and five girls, and the Congolese national police in cases involving for two women. The Provinces of North Kivu (46 victims), Ituri (41 victims), Tanganyika (22 victims) and South Kivu (9 victims) bore the brunt of sexual violence in conflict.

Figure III

Human rights violations and abuses by actor,* March 2023 to February 2024



Source: MONUSCO/Joint Human Rights Office.

* Includes violations and abuses across all Provinces documented by the Joint Human Rights Office.

V. Humanitarian situation

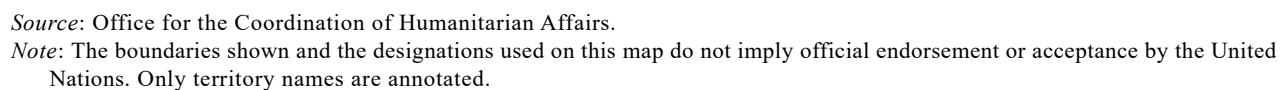
34. Protracted armed violence perpetrated by armed groups continued to exacerbate humanitarian challenges and cause large-scale population displacement. At the end of February, the number of internally displaced persons in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces amounted to 6 million, out of a total of 7 million displaced persons throughout the country, placing the Democratic Republic of the Congo among the countries with the largest internally displaced population in the world. Despite the system-wide humanitarian scale-up, the 2023 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, budgeted at \$2.25 billion, was only funded at

40 per cent, a sharp drop from 53.2 per cent in 2022. On 20 February, the Government, together with humanitarian partners, launched an appeal for \$ 2.6 billion to fund the 2024 humanitarian response plan. As at 15 March, the 2024 humanitarian response plan was funded at 14 per cent (\$371 million).

35. At the end of February at least 104 displacement sites, both improvised sites and others with proper site planning, were recorded around Goma, hosting more than 630,000 internally displaced persons, including people displaced as a result of the resurgence of hostilities between M23 and FARDC. Gender-based violence, including in internally displaced person camps, remained a serious concern. Humanitarian actors continued to provide multisectoral assistance, including food, health care, protection service, water and sanitation, essential household items and shelter. The risk of cholera also increased, with over 200 cases reported in the city of Goma.

36. The presence of artillery near the concentration of internally displaced persons sites represented an additional protection risk for civilians and further restricted humanitarian access. Mortar shells near Bambo and Mweso hospital in January prompted humanitarian organizations working in the area to temporarily cease their operations. Displacements towards Minova town and Kalehe territory in South Kivu were also reported. Despite limited humanitarian access, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF were able to reach Minova on 26 February to carry out the necessary needs assessments.

37. Outbreaks of cholera and measles continued to exacerbate the humanitarian situation, particularly in North and South Kivu, where 48,000 cholera cases and nearly 311,500 cases of measles were reported, doubling the numbers registered in 2022.



VI. Implementation of mandated priorities

A. Protection of civilians

38. MONUSCO continued to implement its protection mandate through comprehensive and integrated approaches, leveraging both armed and unarmed capacities to protect civilians through dialogue and engagement, physical protection, and the establishment of a protective environment, in coordination with the Congolese authorities and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes.

39. In view of its gradual, responsible and sustainable disengagement, the Mission conducted assessments in South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri to examine risks that could arise from the closure of military bases and identify mitigation measures. Such measures, ranging from facilitating intercommunity dialogues to building of local infrastructures were identified and began to be actively pursued across the Mission's area of operations. MONUSCO, national partners, the United Nations country team, international non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations worked together to identify the most effective approach to the protection of civilians post-MONUSCO, and to identify protection of civilians' priorities during the disengagement from South Kivu.

40. During the reporting period, the Force maintained five blocking positions around Goma to protect the town from M23 by restricting M23 access the area and limiting fighting within urban centres. The Mission began developing guidance that supports civilian harm mitigation. The Force worked in close coordination with FARDC from the Centre de Coordination des Operations to deconflict targeting and establish safety radiuses around population centres when using artillery and mortars, with varying degrees of success. By preventing the isolation of Goma by M23, the Force also helped to ensure the continued delivery of aid to camps of internally displaced persons that sprung up within the city and on its outskirts.

41. In Ituri, on 30 occasions during the reporting period, the timely intervention of MONUSCO troops thwarted impending or ongoing attacks by CODECO elements against civilians. MONUSCO troops exchanged fire with assailants and/or fired warning shots, often compelling them to stop attacking and to retreat. MONUSCO, working closely with the provincial authorities, continued to engage with armed groups within the framework of the June 2023 Aru Act of Commitment to contain violence and foster peaceful coexistence between communities. On 30 December, MONUSCO and the provincial authorities secured the release of 52 civilians from the Alur community who had been abducted by CODECO combatants. Thanks to the engagement of the provincial authorities, with support from MONUSCO, two additional armed groups, Zaïre and Chini ya Tuna, signed the Aru Act of Commitment, on 24 and 29 January, respectively. On 12 March, MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces undertook a joint offensive operation targeting CODECO elements in the vicinity of Masumbuko, in Djugu territory, capturing two CODECO strongholds.

42. The police component prioritized building host-State capacity through training sessions on community policing, public order management, and weapons handling. Seminars on sexual and gender-based violence and refresher courses were provided to Congolese police officers to deepen their understanding and skills. MONUSCO also provided technical advice and material support to help strengthen the Congolese national police Integrated Operational Strategy in the Fight Against Insecurity.

43. Between 1 December and 15 March, the Mission's community alert system received 1,030 alerts from Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. State security forces, MONUSCO and humanitarian actors responded to 63 per cent of these alerts.

44. As at 19 February, MONUSCO, through the Mine Action Service, conducted 167 explosive ordnance spot tasks in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, destroying 7,147 explosive remnants of war. The Mine Action Service also cleared 95,599 m² of land. More than 850 explosive ordnance risk education sessions were facilitated across the Mission's area of operations, to the benefit of more than 34,000 civilians (including some 7,000 women and more than 20,000 children). Notably, a third of the beneficiaries were internally displaced persons.

B. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and stabilization

45. Intensified fighting between M23, other armed groups and the Congolese armed forces, as well as the expressed intent of armed groups organized under the Wazalendo umbrella to join the new Armed Defense Reserve, continued to hamper the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. Nonetheless, the Mission continued to provide its good offices and support to the coordination of the Programme and work towards the finalization of a joint United Nations programme on the Programme.

46. In North Kivu, on 5 March, the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, the International Organization for Migration and MONUSCO launched labour intensive projects in Beni intended for 1,050 beneficiaries, including 360 ex-combatants. This comes in response to an increase in the number of ex-combatants who voluntarily joined the Programme in the Beni and Lubero area in mid-2023. Of the 360 ex-combatants, 120 were previously cantoned in Mubambiro base near Goma. MONUSCO supported their transfer to Beni and Lubero, where they will join the International Organization for Migration pilot project and another project implemented by the non-governmental organization HEKS/EPER, both financed by the Stabilization Coherence Fund. On 7 March, a first group of 11 ex-combatants and 2 dependants were transported on a MONUSCO special flight from Goma to Beni. Community reinsertion projects in Ituri and South Kivu also continued.

47. As part of its mandate to support disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration, the Mission repatriated three combatants (two men and one woman) with two dependants (one woman and one girl). It provided life support (3.32 tons of rations) to 219 Congolese ex-combatants at the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme site in Kasando, North Kivu, and rehabilitated one transit camp in North Kivu. In the context of disengagement planning, the transit sites in South Kivu were closed on 31 January 2024. A successor arrangement at the national level for conducting repatriations has been envisaged with the Programme.

48. MONUSCO continued implementing 11 community violence reduction projects that directly benefit 1,648 people (972 men and 676 women), including 384 ex-combatants, vulnerable women and at-risk youth. The projects have sought to mitigate community-level drivers of conflict through high-intensity labour, income generation and vocational training activities.

C. Security sector reform

49. MONUSCO continued its good offices and technical support to encourage the development of a comprehensive national strategy for security sector reform. The Mission engaged with the Conseiller National de Sécurité (CNS) to relaunch efforts towards establishing a national security sector reform coordination mechanism and the drafting of the national security policy.

50. From 4 to 16 March, MONUSCO supported the third phase of training of 30 FARDC trainers on the Military Code of Conduct increasing the trainers to 300, including 10 women within the three zones of defence, enhancing the ability of FARDC to popularize the code amongst the military.

51. As part of the Mission's phased and responsible withdrawal from South Kivu, the number of individual police officers in Bukavu and Uvira decreased by 29 per cent and 34 per cent, respectively. Simultaneously, the police component intensified efforts to strengthen the capacities of the national police to assume its responsibilities. In Bukavu, 69 national police officers (9 women) and in Uvira 50 national police officers (12 women) were trained on how to handle sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence.

52. As of 29 January, the Mine Action Service delivered a container armoury to FARDC in Beni, North Kivu, along with 11 weapon safes to the national police in South Kivu, allowing for secure storage of a total of 530 weapons and mitigating the risk of diversion. Alongside the installations, 19 members (17 men and 2 women) of FARDC and the national police received training on the safe handling and storage of weapons.

Support to the justice sector and the fight against impunity

53. MONUSCO continued to support the strengthening of the justice sector with a focus on addressing pretrial detention. This resulted in the release of at least 88 pretrial detainees, including 57 children. On 14 February, a building for the Tribunal de paix of Kabare, built with MONUSCO support, was handed over to the judicial authorities.

54. MONUSCO and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office provided technical and logistical support to judicial authorities in the fight against impunity for international crimes and gross human rights violations and abuses. Four investigation missions in relation to war crimes and crimes against humanity, including conflict-related sexual violence were carried out in December in Miti and in March in Sange and Irambi-Katanga, South Kivu. On 29 December 2023, the mobile court organized by the Garrison Military Court in Angenga military prison, Mongala Province, with the support of the Joint Human Rights Office, resulted in the conviction of 191 members of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) charged with participation in an insurrectional movement and terrorism. Capacity-building for military justice actors was also provided in December in North Kivu on the investigation of terrorism-related offences and the financing of terrorism, and in South Kivu in December and in February on digital investigations.

55. MONUSCO supported the national prison authorities in improving prison conditions in accordance with international standards. The Mission facilitated the establishment of gender desks within the ministry and in two priority prisons in Kinshasa, supported the construction and handover of a high-risk block in Kinshasa and an accommodation block in Luzumu prison in Kongo Central, enabling the security transfer of 236 prisoners and contributing to the decongestion efforts and the fight against radicalization and violent extremism.

VII. Women and peace and security

56. MONUSCO supported the drafting of the third-generation National Action Plan on Security Council resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), with workshops held on 19, 23 and 24 January, together with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to tackle implementation challenges of the previous National Action Plan. The workshops defined an evaluation methodology

for the second National Action Plan; recommended an increase in women's participation in decision-making through compulsory legislative measures, gender quotas and the creation of database of qualified women; the adoption of measures for the implementation of the National Action Plan, the provincial action plans, and their technical secretariats. The development of the third National Action Plan is scheduled to be completed by June.

57. In January 2024, MONUSCO engaged with the Network of Women Ambassadors from Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo territories, including on early warnings related to the conflicts between Hutu and Hunde communities in the Masisi territory. The women mediators expressed their readiness and commitment to act as community mediators for peace and contribute to conflict resolution efforts.

VIII. Gradual, responsible and sustainable withdrawal

A. Update on implementation of the joint disengagement plan

58. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO engaged with Congolese authorities at the central and provincial levels to advance the practical modalities for the transfer of responsibilities to the Congolese authorities and ensure joint communication. The exchanges focused on ensuring adherence to the principles of the disengagement plan, particularly synchronizing MONUSCO base closures with the deployment of state security forces to avoid security gaps. The Joint Government-United Nations Working Group on Transition was reactivated to oversee and advise on practical aspects of the disengagement process, including the evaluation of its first phase.

59. In January, the Mission conducted joint assessment missions to all nine bases in the southern sector, meeting with provincial authorities and civil society organizations, local leaders, community members and internally displaced persons. In most locations, some interlocutors expressed concerns about the Mission's withdrawal, considering the security dynamics, raising the need for mitigation measures to ensure the protection of civilians and support the restoration of State authority to ensure a sustainable withdrawal.

60. Between 26 February and 1 March, MONUSCO leadership, the United Nations country team and representatives of the Congolese Government visited South Kivu to assess progress on the disengagement, to engage with the provincial authorities and civil society. The joint assessment mission took note of the relaunch of the provincial integrated transition team for South Kivu on 15 February, which will provide the framework for the provincial government, the United Nations and civil society actors to discuss the modalities for disengagement and transition. It will also support the development of the Government's provincial road map for the disengagement and transition, with support from MONUSCO, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and partners. To effectively hand over protection responsibilities at the provincial level to Congolese authorities, it was emphasized that deploying adequately equipped national defense and security forces to the high-risk areas previously covered by MONUSCO, along with maintaining early warning and response networks, was crucial. Civil society actors recommended to be systematically implicated in security structures at the territorial level and in conflict resolution mechanisms. On 28 February, MONUSCO handed over the Kamanyola base to the Government. The base, established in 2005, will be managed by the national police.

61. The MONUSCO Integrated Office finalized a mapping of the activities of United Nations entities and partners operating in South Kivu, to identify gaps linked to the disengagement of MONUSCO.

B. Implementation of priority collaborative actions and joint programmes

62. On 16 January, in a meeting between representatives from MONUSCO, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as representatives from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the groundwork was laid for the development of a new joint programme in support of justice reform from 2025, taking into account the disengagement of MONUSCO, the transition plan and the 2025–2029 United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.

63. Between 29 January and 2 February, the Ministry of the Interior, Security and Customary Affairs, the national police and the United Nations held a workshop to review the United Nations joint police reform support programme. The programme aims to strengthen the capacity of the Ministry of Interior to oversee comprehensive police reforms, while ensuring coherence in United Nations-wide efforts in support of police reform.

64. Between 26 December 2023 and 6 March 2024, at the invitation of the Congolese armed forces, MONUSCO and UNICEF conducted age-verification assessments of 1,229 candidates (including 34 women) for recruitment into the armed forces, 152 of whom were confirmed to be children (including five girls) and were excluded from the recruitment process.

C. Update on integration and resource mobilization

65. The common country analysis is under finalization. It will underpin the formulation of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the period 2025–2029, which will reflect the transition of MONUSCO. The partners coordination group, co-chaired by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, conducted a donor mission to Tanganyika Province to look into good practices resulting from the roll-out of the nexus approach (with Tanganyika Province being one of the three pilot Provinces determined in 2019), as well as lessons learned from the transition.

IX. Mission effectiveness

A. Mission performance

Military component

66. As at 11 March, MONUSCO had deployed 12,642 troops, 6.6 per cent of whom were women, and 480 United Nations military experts on mission, 22 per cent of whom were women, out of an authorized strength of 13,500 troops and 660 United Nations military experts on mission until 30 June 2024. During the reporting period, MONUSCO established 8 standing combat deployments and conducted 7,247 day patrols, 5,317 night patrols, 983 long-range patrols and missions, 1,119 joint patrols, 688 escorts, and 64 aerial reconnaissance operations.

67. In line with its Action for Peacekeeping Plus commitments, MONUSCO conducted evaluations of 15 military units: 8 infantry units, 1 Sector Headquarters unit, 2 aeromedical evacuation units, 1 medical level II unit, 1 aero-tactical unit, 1 signals unit and 1 tactical intelligence unit. All units met the required standards. A

performance improvement plan was developed for each unit to implement specific improvement measures.

68. The number of engagement teams remained at 16, representing 2.3 per cent of the total strength of the Force. The operational effectiveness inspection for all the military units, except sector headquarters, medical and military police units, was based on the military unit evaluation tool developed by the Office of Military Affairs. The inspection for sector headquarters, medical and military police units remained under way during the reporting period. Engagement teams conducted 173 activities, including 135 targeted patrols and 38 activities, compared with 94 activities during the previous reporting period.

69. The percentage of women among the Mission's military staff officers and military observers decreased, compared with the previous reporting period from 24.4 per cent to 22 per cent. Contingent female participation saw a slight increase, from 6.63 per cent to 6.68 per cent.

70. In line with the Force Commander's training directive, MONUSCO conducted 11 induction courses for 88 military staff officers and 46 military observers, a senior officer induction course for the Northern Sector Commander, four contingent training capsules and five refresher contingent training capsules. Other training sessions conducted included riot control and casualty evacuation training courses imparted to three military units, and jungle warfare training to one military unit. MONUSCO also conducted jungle warfare training for FARDC (30 officers and non-commissioned officers in Beni under the jungle warfare mobile training team).

Police component

71. As at 29 February 2024, MONUSCO police component had deployed 1,640 personnel from 31 contributing countries: 1,266 formed police personnel, including 207 female personnel, and 374 individual police officers, including 109 female officers, out of an authorized strength of 1,410 formed police unit personnel and 591 individual police officers until 30 June 2024. Formed police units achieved 3,400 quick response interventions, 178 escorts, 1,400 patrols, 905 joint patrols with individual police officers, 88 joint patrols with Congolese National Police, of which 68 patrols around internally displaced camps.

72. A total of 362 individual police officers took part in periodic performance assessments, including 103 women. The overall performance rating of individual police officers, attributed to a high turnover, dropped by 2 percentage points from the previous reporting period to 69 per cent. To improve the overall performance, individual police officers benefitted from in-mission training on fire simulation drill (5 officers, including 2 women) and career development (102 officers, including 33 female officers). In addition, MONUSCO held awareness sessions on combatting sexual exploitation and abuse, targeting all members of the police component.

73. Formed police units underwent 24 operational readiness and 8 equipment inspections, alongside 1,418 scenario-based training sessions. The performance of all eight formed police units was satisfactory. Additionally, 34 joint scenario analysis training sessions to enhance capacities were conducted for 330 officers, including 34 women; 22 public order training sessions were provided to 150 MONUSCO military personnel, including 24 female participants, aimed to ensure the continued effectiveness and professionalism.

Civilian component

74. As at 29 February, 2,367 civilian personnel (22 per cent women), including 310 United Nations Volunteers (50.7 per cent women) and 45 government-provided personnel (42 per cent women), were serving with MONUSCO.

B. Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System

75. MONUSCO continued to implement the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System. Data generated against the Mission's Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System results framework also informed the discussions around the disengagement plan for MONUSCO, and the associated discussions on the accelerated transition process.

76. A further review of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System results framework in January confirmed a strong alignment with the disengagement plan and equally provided valuable insights for the development of additional indicators to be tracked in the assessment of the various disengagement phases.

C. Strategic communications

77. MONUSCO continued to address sophisticated disinformation campaigns that undermined its efforts, with online campaigns originating mainly outside the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and which at times led to physical attacks on peacekeepers. The Mission significantly stepped up its strategic communication, collaborating with champions and 150 journalists and members of civil society, along with an additional 260 influencers, to effectively counter disinformation through 20 dedicated WhatsApp groups. Radio Okapi produced special election news programmes and chronicles on air and through social media to call-out tactics used by trolls during elections campaigns. The Mission intensified donor partnerships through new radio programming and worked closely with the Government on joint communications, notably on disengagement, receiving extensive coverage. Media engagements in Kinshasa, Goma, and Beni with journalists and fact-checkers helped debunk misinformation. On social media, over 300 posts, especially on the Mission's electoral and disengagement efforts, garnered significant positive feedback.

D. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

78. From 1 December 2023 to 1 March 2024, MONUSCO recorded 28 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that had taken place between 2005 and 2023, and involved 12 military, 4 police officers and 9 civilian personnel. One is pending completion of investigations by a troop-contributing country, 11 by the United Nations, 8 by joint investigations and 1 is pending appointment of a National Investigations Officer. Four of the allegations took place in 2023, one in 2022, one in 2021 and three in 2000.

79. MONUSCO continued to ensure that victims receive medical and psychosocial support in a timely manner and in accordance with the victim assistance protocols established with service providers, including UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund.

80. In line with the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, MONUSCO continued to enhance its preventive efforts including through

outreach and training activities and engagement with troop-contributing countries, local communities and humanitarian organizations.

81. The MONUSCO Force updated and published the directives and orders to strictly enforce sexual exploitation and abuse prevention measures. More than 400 routine patrols were conducted in Goma, Beni, Bukavu, Bunia and Kavumu, to reinforce good conduct and discipline. The police component conducted three specialized sexual exploitation and abuse training programmes for individual police officers and formed police unit personnel and 567 sexual exploitation and abuse awareness sessions for officers.

82. As part of its ongoing misconduct risk management, the Mission conducted a mission-wide misconduct risk assessment in collaboration with members of the United Nations country team and civil society. The Mission continues to follow up with risk treatment owners to monitor implementation of recommendations made during risk assessment visits in support of prevention, ensuring accountability and supporting victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

83. From 31 January to 7 February 2024, Under-Secretaries-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Catherine Pollard and Christian Saunders visited the Mission with the aim of reviewing and evaluating MONUSCO response and overall management of risks of sexual exploitation and abuse by mission personnel.

84. The Mission also recorded 10 new allegations of other serious misconduct concerning harassment, theft, and fraud in relation to United Nations entitlements. Those cases are under investigation.

X. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

85. Security and safety incidents for United Nations personnel decreased from 207 during the preceding reporting period to 163 cases, affecting 140 personnel, including 5 women. The incidents encompassed 42 hazards, 56 crimes, 41 instances of civil unrest, and 24 instances of armed conflict. In North Kivu, mitigation measures implemented following the violent anti-MONUSCO demonstrations in July 2022, such as movement restrictions and unmarked vehicles, were maintained.

86. Notable incidents included the attack on a MONUSCO helicopter near Goma on 2 February injuring two MONUSCO personnel, and various instances of harassment and movement restrictions by the national police and FARDC towards United Nations staff in Bunia, Goma and Kinshasa. Several burglaries at residences of United Nations staff and attacks on personnel and vehicles were also documented. Convoys and vehicles of MONUSCO were subject to stone-pelting incidents, including in Bunia, Goma, Kinshasa and Sake.

87. On 10 February, demonstrations over the perceived inaction of the international community took place in Kinshasa. Protestors burned tires in front of MONUSCO facilities and outside western embassies. Attacks against United Nations staff and diplomatic vehicles and the burning of United Nations vehicles were reported, leading to an intervention by the Congolese national police supported by MONUSCO formed police units. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General engaged with President Tshisekedi and senior Government officials and urged the authorities to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators.

XI. Observations

88. The December 2023 national elections were an important milestone for the Democratic Republic of Congo. The commitment by President Tshisekedi during his inauguration speech to the unity of the Democratic Republic of Congo and to fostering an inclusive government for the development of the country is welcome. It is vital that all ongoing investigations into irregularities during the electoral process be completed in a timely fashion and that the findings and recommendations be made public. I am encouraged by the adoption by the Minister of Gender of a road map for the prevention electoral violence against women involved in politics and reiterate the full support of the United Nations for this critical initiative.

89. I am deeply alarmed by the intensification of hostilities between M23 and the Congolese armed forces in North Kivu, which has compounded the suffering of hundreds of thousands of vulnerable civilians. The conflict has brought the region perilously close to the brink of war. I call upon all stakeholders to lend their full support to the implementation of the Luanda and Nairobi processes. I reaffirm the determination of the United Nations to support ongoing efforts to de-escalate regional tensions and find lasting political solutions. As requested by the Security Council in its resolution [2717 \(2023\)](#), the Secretariat continues to explore options for possible logistical and operational support by the United Nations to regional forces present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the Southern African Development Community Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

90. I reiterate my call upon all Congolese and foreign armed groups to lay down their arms immediately and unconditionally, and engage, without delay, in the disarmament process. I also urge M23 to withdraw fully from all occupied areas and abide by the provisions of the Luanda Roadmap. The sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected by all Member States. I denounce all forms of ethnically targeted hate speech and call upon the Congolese authorities to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.

91. I am deeply troubled by reports of MONUSCO assets being targeted by sophisticated weapons systems and condemn the recent string of attacks on MONUSCO positions in and around Goma and Sake by Government forces and associated armed groups. I urge the Congolese authorities to uphold their responsibility to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and installations.

92. I am also troubled by the persistent insecurity in Ituri Province, where MONUSCO provides life-saving, physical protection to more than 100,000 internally displaced persons under permanent threat from CODECO combatants in Djugu territory. I call on the Congolese authorities to urgently strengthen the presence of State authority in the Province, including through the deployment of additional forces.

93. I welcome the progress made, together with the Congolese authorities, towards the implementation of the Mission's disengagement plan. I commend the continued commitment of the Congolese authorities to swiftly take the measures necessary to extend state authority and fully assume their primary responsibility for the protection of civilians. I welcome the steps taken to ensure the smooth transfer of tasks from MONUSCO to the Congolese state, with the support of the United Nations country team and key partners. I urge partners to provide the resources required to ensure that the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are able to play their part in preserving and consolidating the gains achieved during the Mission's presence.

94. I welcome the launch of the prioritization and planning process of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for 2025–2029, based on the joint country analysis, which identifies the structural causes of conflicts and

development deficits. It constitutes an essential reference document to guide the future cooperation framework while accounting for MONUSCO transition and disengagement.

95. The protracted, and largely neglected, humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo demands an urgent response from the international community. The lack of funding is forcing humanitarian actors to restrict their assistance at a time of unprecedented needs. Funding must be increased to avoid such impossible choices. I call upon the parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and human rights law, including by guaranteeing humanitarian access to reach the populations in need. However, without greater investment in efforts to address the root causes of violence and instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, humanitarian needs will only increase.

96. I firmly condemn any act of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel and reaffirm my commitment to zero tolerance for such incidents. MONUSCO civilian, troop and police contingents and the United Nations country team will continue to enhance preventative and response measures and strengthen survivors' assistance.

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

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