

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	738
Land:	Den Demokratiske Republik Congo
Kilde:	UN Security Council
Titel:	9007th meeting
Udgivet:	29. marts 2022
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	3. august 2022



Security Council

Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9007th meeting
Tuesday, 29 March 2022, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
China	Mr. Sun Zhiqiang
France	Mr. De Rivière
Gabon	Mr. Biang
Ghana	Ms. Tenkorang
India	Mr. Vinito
Ireland	Ms. Byrne Nason
Kenya	Mrs. Toroitich
Mexico	Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco
Norway	Ms. Heimerback
Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Roscoe
United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization
Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/252)

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22-30308 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Expression of sympathy on the passing away of Ambassador Jim Kelly, Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

The President: The members of the Security Council were deeply saddened to learn of the recent and untimely passing of Ambassador Jim Kelly, distinguished diplomat and Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations.

Ambassador Kelly was a true champion of the United Nations and of the Council. As a committed multilateralist, he believed in the power of diplomacy to change the world for the better. He brought a sharp intellect and encyclopaedic knowledge of the Council to our discussions around this table and outside this Chamber. As a colleague and friend, he was described by many members as warm and generous, with a great sense of humour. Within his Mission, Jim was a mentor to many of his younger colleagues, who will miss him.

The members of the Security Council express their heartfelt condolences to the family of Ambassador Jim Kelly, to the Permanent Mission and the Government of Ireland and to all the people touched by Jim, in Ireland and beyond.

On behalf of Council members, I would ask that we all stand and observe a moment of silence in memory of Ambassador Jim Kelly.

The members of the Security Council observed a minute of silence.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/252)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following

briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Ms. Léa Babite Inyobondaye, civil society briefer.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/252, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude for being given this opportunity to address the Security Council in order to provide an update of the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the issuance of the most recent report of the Secretary-General in that regard (S/2022/252). I also welcome the participation of Ms. Léa Babite Inyobondaye, in her capacity as representative of civil society in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since my previous briefing to the Council in December (see S/PV.8918), the security situation in the east of the country has deteriorated. Military operations of the defence and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in the context of the state of siege, have been carried out by the joint military operations of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF). However, the number of civilian losses and displaced persons has increased as a result of the bloody reprisals perpetrated by the Allied Democratic Forces against civilians living in North Kivu and Ituri, where they are displaced.

In those traumatized provinces, the tragic consequences of repeated attacks perpetrated by the majority Lendu armed group, known as the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, either on camps for displaced persons in the Hema community of Djugu territory or on villages in the Alur community in Mahagi territory, are exacerbated by the reprisals carried out by a majority Hema armed group and the Zaire militia and its spread into Mambasa territory in an attempt to control gold resources and fund its activities. Over the past three months, there has been an alarming increase

in activities by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in North Kivu, which led to major attacks with FARDC and attendant population displacement. Yesterday M-23 elements also perpetrated horrific attacks, targeting civilians in communities near Rutshuru, and fighting broke out in the three-border region near the border town of Bunagana.

In the Hauts Plateaux and Moyens Plateaux of Uvira and Fizi territories in South Kivu, fresh violence against civilians is regrettable, following attacks carried out by Mai-Mai groups on the villages of the Banyamulenge community and reprisals by the Banyamulenge militia in response to attacks on FARDC positions.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has recorded an average of 250 civilian deaths every month in each province — a total of more than 2,300 deaths in three months.

In North Kivu, the situation is compounded by the disturbing use of improvised explosive devices by the Allied Democratic Forces, whose leadership renewed its allegiance to the Islamic State on 11 March. MONUSCO has also recorded an approximately 10 per cent increase, on average, in human rights violations since December 2021. Attacks carried out by the members of armed groups on civilians, restrictions on democratic space and an increase in hate speech are the primary causes of such violations.

Following the deterioration in the security situation and the increase in the level of violence against civilians, the needs for humanitarian assistance have again increased in the east of the country. Limited access and incidents against humanitarian workers continue to hinder the response. Over the past three months, four humanitarian workers have been killed, one has been wounded and six have been kidnapped.

I must raise the alarm here about the considerable erosion in the protection of the civil status of sites for displaced persons and the frequent attacks on military medical services and other kinds of civilian infrastructure. I therefore take this opportunity to remind all parties to the conflict of their legal and moral duty to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid.

In the light of these very worrisome security developments, MONUSCO has redoubled its efforts to better protect civilians by conducting offensive operations in Ituri, working jointly with FARDC and

UPDF, deploying support units for FARDC to increase the deterrent effect against M-23 in North Kivu, and continuing mobile deployment to provide protection to displaced persons in South Kivu. Our civilian teams are also working tirelessly with the communities concerned in an attempt to ease tensions, encourage dialogue and document those responsible for crimes in order to continue the fight against impunity. However, we must be realistic and face the actual situation on the ground.

Without a combined approach that addresses the causes and the symptoms alike, our means and those of the FARDC will remain inadequate, given the deteriorating security situation. That proves the inherent limits of having recourse solely to security operations to resolve conflicts. Therefore, while we firmly condemn attacks by armed groups on civilians, I reiterate my call for the implementation by the Government of comprehensive political strategies that also include reforms and measures aimed at addressing the structural and root causes of those conflicts, allowing us to ensure lasting peace and stability.

The beginning of national consultations in the area of transitional justice are a step in the right direction. Progress in addressing the illegal trade in and exploitation of natural resources, which continue to fuel these conflicts, as well as in security sector reform to improve performance and efficiency, and in increasing resources earmarked for combating impunity for criminals, traffickers and the accomplices of armed groups are key components.

In that context, I welcome the opening on 15 March of the new parliamentary session and the inclusion on its agenda of essential proposals and draft bills, including a review of the electoral bill, a bill on combating discrimination, racism and xenophobia, and a bill on military training. With the setting up of the Independent National Electoral Commission and the start of preparations for the electoral process, I also welcome the goal expressed by the President of the National Assembly to conduct a consensus-based review of the electoral law so as to ensure the most inclusive, transparent and peaceful process possible to allow for, in particular, the active participation of women and young people within the constitutional time frame. The strategic importance of the review of the electoral law for the stability of the country cannot be underestimated. It is a key moment for the majority of the political class and for a civil society that expects

concrete measures to restore trust in the management of the electoral process.

(spoke in English)

I am glad to report that since my last briefing to the Security Council (see S/PV.8918), I have seen progress in the common efforts of MONUSCO, the United Nations country team and the Government to implement the joint transition plan. The joint working group has produced an initial report of the benchmarks and indicators to measure progress on the plan that we have drawn up.

The sub-working groups have also begun their work, with notable developments in the operationalization of the protection of human rights, as well as the disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration and stabilization. I take this opportunity to highlight the importance that I attach to the successful implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization programme.

Indeed, MONUSCO, together with the United Nations Development Programme, continues to support the work of the national coordination structure and facilitates its engagement with the provincial and local stakeholders to enable the implementation of community-based approaches to disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration and stabilization. The validation of the national strategy for the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization programme on 28 March, which is expected to be formally adopted in a ceremony chaired by President Tshisekedi on 4 April, will be an important stepping-stone in the operationalization of the programme.

The implementation of a progressive, responsible and sustainable transition also advances at field level with a view to ensuring that national and provincial institutions and partners continue to deliver on key tasks and preserve the gains achieved, with the support — as required — of United Nations agencies. To reduce some of the existing vulnerabilities in areas from which MONUSCO is progressively disengaging, efforts are also under way to advance the humanitarian development and peace nexus approach towards a common analysis and coherence in terms of planning and action among partners.

In line with that approach, MONUSCO remained engaged with the United Nations country team and the provincial authorities of the Kasais after its withdrawal from the area last year. In Tanganyika province, the Mission is closely monitoring the evolution of the security dynamics, particularly in Nyunzu territory and the Bandera area, to maintain a nimble planning for the scheduled withdrawal of MONUSCO in June this year.

We must not forget that the Democratic Republic of the Congo's stability is also tied to the support of its nine neighbouring countries. The interdependence of the States of the region, particularly the need to seek common solutions to challenges impacting all, was highlighted during the recent summit in Kinshasa of the tenth High-level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism, reuniting the signatory countries and guarantor institutions of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region.

I welcome the efforts deployed under the leadership of President Tshisekedi to increase regional cooperation, as well as the participants' pledge to continue engaging in dialogue and diplomacy to resolve tensions and strengthen their coordination and collaboration in the fight against negative forces. In that regard, I also salute the decision of the East African Community to admit the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a full member, as announced today during the nineteenth extraordinary summit of the Heads of State.

To conclude, allow me to thank the Council for its commitment to supporting MONUSCO, as evidenced by resolution 2612 (2021), extending the Mission's mandate, and by its continued engagement on these quarterly discussions. I would also like to express my gratitude to the troop- and police-contributing countries for their vital support enabling the implementation of the mandate, despite the challenges imposed by the coronavirus disease pandemic.

As multiple global challenges requiring the attention of Member States emerge, I urge the international community to continue supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo in achieving long-term stability, peace and prosperity.

The President *(spoke in Arabic)*: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

(spoke in English)

Due to technical difficulties, we will not be able to connect with the civil society briefer, Ms. Babite, this morning. We will, however, distribute her remarks to all Council members.

(spoke in Arabic)

I shall now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivi re (France) *(spoke in French)*: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

We have just learned that a United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) helicopter disappeared today in the Rutshuru area. I pay tribute to all of the Mission's personnel who dedicate themselves each day to achieving peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would like to highlight three points.

First, progress at the political level and in the region must be accompanied and supported. France welcomes the progress made in preparing for the presidential and legislative elections in 2023. Work must continue in accordance with the road map of the Independent National Electoral Commission. Parliament's revision of the electoral law should strengthen confidence in the country's institutions and the democratic process.

At the regional level, the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement follow-up summit confirmed the will for dialogue. The commitments made must be implemented. Here, I refer to the many bilateral agreements reached in recent months to strengthen good-neighbourly relations. Cooperation must be further strengthened in order to fight against armed groups and crime.

We have taken note of the concerted actions of the Ugandan and Congolese armed forces against the Allied Democratic Forces, as well as the agreements reached between the Rwandan and Congolese police. Depending on progress on arms control, the framework for military assistance could be made more flexible by the Council.

Secondly, we must disable negative forces. Armed groups continue their abuses. France condemns the cowardly and unjustifiable attacks on camps for displaced persons. Those camps shelter the most vulnerable populations, including women and children.

MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces must continue to protect them.

The results of operations on the ground must be visible. The Force Intervention Brigade has been reconfigured for that purpose. Coordination between the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces and MONUSCO must continue. The protection of civilians will be ensured only if there is full respect for human rights and international humanitarian law.

In order to address the root causes of the conflicts, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration strategy must be operationalized without delay. The fight against impunity must be strengthened, both for armed groups and for certain members of the security forces. In that sense, France welcomes the conviction of 24 members of the *Coop rative pour le d veloppement du Congo* in Ituri for crimes against humanity.

The traceability of natural resources must be ensured so that they do not fall into the hands of armed groups. It is up to the Security Council to sanction those who plunder the resources of the Congolese people.

Finally, the Congolese must continue to count on the support of their partners. The indicators in MONUSCO's transition plan are now being regularly monitored and will help regulate the gradual withdrawal of the Mission. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes must be ready to take over and begin immediately to invest in Tanganyika, from which MONUSCO will withdraw in June.

France will support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its transition. The French Development Agency will mobilize half a billion euros between now and 2025 to support health, agriculture and the empowerment of women, which is a major investment. The European Union will allocate  44 million this year to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. It will contribute to care for survivors of sexual violence, as well as promote access to water and education.

On the road to peace, the Democratic Republic of Congo is not alone. Let us continue to accompany it.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I would like to thank Special Representative Keita for her honest and informative briefing.

We too express our regret after hearing about the helicopter crash this morning in North Kivu and we will closely follow any updates from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We pay tribute to its peacekeepers for their hard work.

Norway is deeply concerned about the security and humanitarian developments in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. After more than 10 months of the state of siege, we see no decline in the threat from armed groups. The humanitarian response plan also remains severely underfunded.

The attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces this month — and the attack by the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* on Savo camp for internally displaced persons in February — illustrate the constant threat faced by the civilian population, and such attacks must stop. We underscore that all parties must fully respect international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

Allow me to focus on two main points, namely, the illicit exploitation of natural resources and the MONUSCO transition.

First, the illicit exploitation of natural resources remains a conflict-driver in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It generates significant revenues for armed groups and represents a lost opportunity for the Congolese State. These activities also inflict additional suffering on the civilian population. We are deeply concerned about the use of children in mines and the exploitation of women in the mining sector.

Regional cooperation is key to curb this trade. We urge relevant States to implement the recommendations from the Khartoum workshop last year. Additionally, a well-functioning sanctions regime can have a preventive effect and promote accountability for perpetrators. Norway supports the work of all relevant stakeholders, including the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes region, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the African Union, in establishing mechanisms to address this root cause of conflict.

Secondly, the ultimate success of MONUSCO hinges upon a well-executed transition. This must include a strong focus on the protection of civilians. We welcome the recent meetings in the joint working group and the sub-working group on the transition, which

are crucial to ensuring a conditions-based drawdown. We welcome the inclusion of civil society actors in that exercise.

The milestones and indicators set forth in the joint transition plan illustrate that stabilization cannot be achieved by military means alone. It must be accompanied by inclusive political and community dialogue and efforts to promote economic and social development. We encourage MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities to continue to include civil society, local community leaders as well as women and youth in identifying concrete steps to further stabilization efforts and dialogue.

The progress report (S/2022/252) shows that time, concerted efforts and close cooperation between relevant actors is needed to achieve the milestones in the joint transition plan. This process cannot be rushed. It must be based on the situation on the ground, rather than fixed deadlines. Norway remains committed to a timely and responsible draw-down and eventual exit of MONUSCO. Norway stands ready to work with all relevant stakeholders for sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her briefing.

It is with great alarm that we have learned about the missing helicopter belonging to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). We support the activities of peacekeepers in the country.

It is with further alarm that we note that problems in the area of security have escalated in the eastern and north-eastern parts of the country, specifically in Ituri and North Kivu provinces. There, since May 2021, a state of siege has been in effect, and since November 2021, a joint military operation has been carried out with armed units of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda.

We welcome efforts to counter the militias. However, it behoves us to note that the Congolese armed forces, alongside their regional partners and MONUSCO peacekeepers, have not yet managed to fundamentally curb the capacity of the numerous militias proliferating in the area. We note the stepped-up activities of a number of armed groups, first and

foremost, the Allied Democratic Forces. It is with alarm that we have learned of late that the activity of the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* has increased. On 1 February, following an attack by that entity in Ituri, more than 50 people died, including women and children.

The Russian Federation supported the adoption of a Security Council press statement on 4 February (SC/14787) to condemn this heinous act. In the first few months of this year, attacks targeting civilians were repeatedly carried out. We are particularly troubled by attacks on camps for internally displaced persons and the use by armed groups of improvised explosive devices. We believe that, in order to successfully vanquish the fighters, it is necessary to further step up coordination between the peacekeepers and the Congolese security forces, as well as to facilitate capacity-building for the latter.

We welcome the establishment, in October 2021, of a centre to coordinate the operations of MONUSCO and the Congolese army. We also welcome the establishment of tripartite cooperation, with the participation of Ugandan military personnel. We support the reinforcement of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade.

We believe during the implementation of the joint transition plan adopted on 15 September 2021 by the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the leadership of MONUSCO with regard to the Mission's drawdown and withdrawal from the country in 2024, it is important to account for the situation and developments on the ground and to operate in a phased and responsible way. There is an acute persistent problem of fighters illicitly exploiting natural resources to fund operations and build up military capabilities. We hope that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, working alongside United Nations peacekeepers and international partners, will manage to restore control over the security situation and normalize the situation.

It is crucial to implement non-military measures to strengthen local institutions of State governance, alleviate the humanitarian situation and provide conditions for sustained socioeconomic development. The priority in making headway for a long-term resolution and reconciliation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is, with the assistance of the Blue Helmets, the implementation of the programme for the

disarmament, demobilization and social reintegration of former combatants.

A key pillar for politics in the Democratic Republic of the Congo over the near term is presidential elections. It is necessary for elections to be carried out in line with the timetable set out under the Constitution, to ensure that they be inclusive and in line with international elections standards. We welcome the efforts of the authorities in preparing for the organization of elections.

We commend the commitment of the neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to develop practical cooperation aimed at stabilizing the situation in the Great Lakes region, as well as progress in bilateral dialogue between regional stakeholders vis-à-vis, first and foremost, security issues, strengthening of national borders and combating illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons.

We welcome the efforts of the leaders of the States in the region, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. We believe it is important that another meeting of the High-Level Meeting of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo was held in February.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me start by thanking the Special Representative of Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her informative briefing. I welcome the participation of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this meeting. I will raise three points today.

First, the security situation in Ituri province is cause for great concern. As described in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/252), the last few months have witnessed an escalation of violence by armed groups. The Security Council issued a press statement (SC/14787) on the particularly brutal attack perpetrated by militias of the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo* on Savo camp for internally displaced persons, which left dozens of civilians dead.

The situation in North Kivu province is no less worrisome. Brazil is particularly concerned by the increasing number of attacks using improvised explosive devices. In South Kivu, there are signs of increased activity by armed groups. The civilian population has been directly affected by the violence, with no exception being made for women and children.

Moreover, insecurity continues to hamper much-needed humanitarian support.

That leads me to the second point of my statement: the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Dozens of incidents have affected United Nations programmes and personnel, not all of them directly caused by non-State armed groups. We take note of the fact that Congolese authorities and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) are engaged to address the incident in which a MONUSCO patrol was fired at by soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC).

Brazil has had the honour of contributing to MONUSCO by appointing some of its most distinguished officers to the position of Force Commander. They have borne witness to the bravery and sense of duty of the troops and the civilians who perform their mission in adverse and oftentimes dangerous conditions. We are therefore saddened and concerned about the news of the missing MONUSCO helicopter in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Lastly, we note recent steps to increase cross-border cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, as well as the joint military operation involving the FARDC and the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF). Those initiatives, provided that they are fully respectful of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, could create conditions for more effective efforts in the stabilization of the region. Tripartite coordination among MONUSCO, the FARDC and the UPDF must be encouraged.

Mr. Biang (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3), namely, Kenya, Gabon and Ghana.

I take this opportunity to commend the outstanding work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita. Her detailed briefing provides additional elements enabling a better assessment of the activities of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the situation in the country. I also welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at this meeting.

The statement of the A3 will focus on three main points: the political situation, the security situation and the humanitarian situation.

With regard to the political situation, we welcome the opening of the March parliamentary session and are encouraged by the commitment of President Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo to hold elections in 2023, in accordance with the constitutional timelines. We welcome the adoption of the electoral road map by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). The express commitment the Congolese authorities to respecting the electoral deadlines will give credibility to the democratic process leading to free, inclusive and transparent elections.

By appointing Ms. Marie-Josée Kapinga as the Deputy National Executive Secretary of the CENI—the first woman to hold that position—the Congolese authorities have clearly grasped the importance of the full participation in the electoral process by all segments of society, especially young people and women.

Strengthening institutions and consolidating the democratic gains of recent years are the main political challenges vis-à-vis the upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Security Council must support the positive momentum of the Congolese authorities by bringing realistic and concrete proposals that are commensurate with the crucial challenges on the ground.

The magnitude of what is at stake demands of us an even more steadfast commitment to the Congolese people in encouraging all political actors to demonstrate self-sacrifice and a spirit of consensus. We urge development partners to provide the financial and material support necessary for the implementation of the Government's 2021-2023 programme of action, including the holding of local and national elections in 2023.

The complexity of the issues facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo makes regional dynamics particularly relevant. In that regard, the A3 welcomes the holding the High-level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Mechanism, which is important and agreed upon by the States of the region, prioritizes diplomacy and dialogue to resolve border-related challenges and promote their economic development.

The signing by the Congolese authorities of respective memorandums of understanding with Uganda and Rwanda, as well as the concerted military actions under way, are helping establish a constructive regional approach. In the interest of effectiveness and sustainability, the A3 recommends that the joint effort be expanded to cover all problems that are undermining stability in the region, including the thorny issue of the illicit exploitation of mineral resources. The authority of the Congolese State must be restored throughout the country, and the rule of law re-established in every part of the country.

The A3 is particularly concerned about the deteriorating security situation, especially in the provinces of Ituri and Kivu, owing to recurring attacks by armed groups. The eastern part of the Congo has been continuously faced by a cycle of unprecedented massacres and violence, the increased recruitment of child soldiers and barbaric acts perpetrated by the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and other rebel groups, all of which are clearly intended to create a climate of fear among the population.

The cycle of terror perpetuated by the armed groups has gone on for far too long. The supporters of armed groups and those who supply them with weapons must stop. The perpetrators of those crimes must be prosecuted and held accountable for their abominable actions. The conviction of 24 members of CODECO by the Congolese military courts merits acknowledgement in that regard.

In order to build on that progress, the A3 advocates strengthening the judicial capacities of the Congolese State. In addition to those measures, the Council must address the issue of the arms embargo, which, in our view, limits the effectiveness of States' military actions against rebel movements, which maintain and often build their capacity to cause harm through obtaining supplies through parallel markets.

We ask the Council to accede to the legitimate request of the Congolese authorities to lift the notification requirement for the acquisition of arms. By strengthening its weapons and ammunition management system, the Government has demonstrated its commitment to implementing measures to ensure the control and management of weapons in its possession.

(spoke in English)

As we all know, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a victim of the richness of its mineral resources. Their illicit exploitation is the main source of destabilization and violence. We welcome the adoption by the Congolese Government of a national strategic plan for the exploitation and certification of mineral resources, which we very much hope will bring clarity to the exploitation of mineral resources in the Congo. We encourage neighbouring countries to implement their commitments under the Regional Initiative against the Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources. They should also adopt the certification mechanism of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region into national laws and practices in line with internationally agreed minimum standards, as well as establish internal systems of control, monitoring and verification to eliminate the presence of illicit mineral trade.

In echoing the call of the Congolese authorities, the A3 stresses the value of sanctioning all individuals and entities involved in the illicit trafficking of mineral resources. Those activities incentivize armed groups to sustain their violence and contribute to intercommunal tensions. Undercutting the economic lifelines of armed groups is one of the keys to restoring sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The response against armed gangs must also be accompanied by substantial financial and material support for the disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration and stabilization programme. The success of that important programme will undoubtedly have a positive reflection on security, stabilization and development processes.

The A3 notes with concern the increasing use of improvised explosive devices by rebels. Their use has a catastrophic impact on the safety and movement of populations. We condemn those barbaric acts in the strongest terms.

The A3 also notes with serious concern an upsurge in atrocities and the clear presence of terrorist groups in the region. The international community must commit to doing more to challenge those groups, not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also throughout the continent. We must take the necessary measures to curb that scourge before it takes root. Identifying the root causes and proposing viable solutions seem to us to be the beginning of strong action. In that regard,

we commend the invaluable support provided by MONUSCO to the Congolese defence forces. We also welcome the coordination and communication efforts between the Congolese authorities and MONUSCO.

It is essential that the MONUSCO transitional withdrawal plan be implemented based on an assessment of the benchmarks achieved. The withdrawal must be gradual, coordinated and concerted with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) to avoid any recurrence of violence. We welcome the progress made in the implementation of the 18 benchmarks set out in the joint transition plan by the Congolese authorities.

The security environment is an aggravating factor in the humanitarian situation. With 5.5 million displaced and 27 million people facing food insecurity, the humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is very alarming. We urge international and regional donors, as well as all Democratic Republic of the Congo partners, to support the 2022 humanitarian response plan, launched by the Congolese Government and the United Nations.

We commend the remarkable work of humanitarian workers who, at the risk of their lives, provide continued support to the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We pay well-deserved tribute to all the peacekeepers, humanitarian workers and members of the FARDC who lost their lives working for peace in that country. We call on the Congolese authorities to continue their efforts to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers so that they can carry out their mandates without hindrance.

In conclusion, the A3 reiterates its unwavering support for the Congolese Government and MONUSCO. We also reaffirm our commitment to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for his briefing and for her commitment to her mission. I would also like to welcome our colleague the Permanent Representative from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the Chamber today.

Also, let me express concerns about the report of the downed helicopter and my condolences for any

loss of life. This is just one more bit of evidence of the extraordinary danger that the troops of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) face in working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I would like to use my time today to discuss the recent attacks in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, our efforts to disrupt illicit resource networks, transition planning, the 2023 election and peacekeeper conduct.

First and foremost, the United States strongly condemns continued attacks by armed groups, including the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO). We are concerned by the grave threats to civilians posed by armed groups with networks across the region. As the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/252) notes, those also include a potentially reconstituted Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) and Burundian armed groups.

We are particularly disturbed, as others have mentioned, by the recent attacks in Plaine Savo internally displaced persons camp, in Ituri province. There, in the late hours of 1 February, CODECO assailants slaughtered more than 60 people, mostly women and children, before MONUSCO intervened jointly with the Democratic Republic of the Congo armed forces to repel the assault. The United States holds in high regard the work of non-governmental organizations and advocates who go to great lengths to shine a light on those kinds of attacks and abuses against civilians, which often target particular ethnic groups. And we are glad to see the Special Representative and her team thinking critically about how to bolster MONUSCO forces, including through enhanced use of standing combat deployments, to best protect the Democratic Republic of the Congo's vulnerable populations.

To that end, the United States welcomes the initial steps taken by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) and MONUSCO to achieve effective communication and deconfliction. We urge all parties to fully implement the agreed coordination. We also continue to urge Member States to maintain adherence to Security Council sanctions resolutions and all relevant obligations under international law in the conduct of all cross-border operations in the east.

Secondly, everyone sitting here in this Chamber and tuning in today knows full-well that illegal natural resource trafficking in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and cross-border regions directly fuels and finances activities that threaten the lives of Congolese people every single day. Instead, those resources ought to be used to build a future for the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo. We are concerned by the finding in the Secretary-General's report that, in areas of South Kivu, there is an increased presence of the armed groups that are connected to the regional criminal groups orchestrating illegal mining. We must put an end to that, which is why we remain committed to working with Member States to make robust use of the resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo sanctions regime. The United States sanctions on Alain Goetz and his network demonstrate our commitment to unearth and disrupt the networks of those who would profit at the expense of the country's security and development and of their people.

Thirdly, we welcome the ongoing coordination among MONUSCO, the Democratic Republic of the Congo Government, and all partners, including provincial authorities, to operationalize MONUSCO's transition plan. And as we think about the future, I know many eyes are looking at the elections set for December 2023. To that end, the United States supports strengthened protections for the freedom of expression, which is critical to a credible electoral process. And we stand ready, with the Council, to ensure that our Democratic Republic of the Congo Government partners have all the tools they need to plan and hold free, fair, transparent, timely, secure and inclusive elections.

Fourthly, and finally, within the MONUSCO context, we must not lose sight of a fight we continue to wage across United Nations field operations, that is, ending sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2021 alone, MONUSCO received reports of 23 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by United Nations personnel. I know the Mission's conduct and discipline team is hard at work processing and investigating those allegations. And I hope the countries whose personnel stand accused are working just as hard to hold perpetrators accountable when allegations are substantiated.

Between the recent attacks, the illegal mining and the December 2023 elections, MONUSCO's role is as important as ever. We look forward to continuing to

discuss that role and track all progress in the weeks to come.

Mr. Vinito (India): Let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bintou Keita for her update on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the developments in the country. I also welcome the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to today's meeting.

India's peacekeeping contributions to the Democratic Republic of the Congo date back to 1960, when our peacekeepers helped in the orderly withdrawal of colonial forces and the establishment of a national Government. Since then, 51 of our soldiers have made the ultimate sacrifice, the highest of any troop-contributing country keeping the peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As the second-largest troop contributor to MONUSCO, with over 2,000 personnel, India takes keen interest in the Mission's operations, as well as in developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

India expresses serious concern about the crash of the MONUSCO helicopter, which was on a reconnaissance mission earlier today near Rutshuru. We pray for the safety and well-being of the crew and the passengers. We look forward to an update on that incident by Special Representative Keita.

I will focus my remarks on the two main objectives concerning MONUSCO's mandate — the protection of civilians and support for the stabilization and strengthening of State institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and key governance and security reforms.

The primary responsibility to protect civilians rests with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO's role is to supplement those efforts, including in its areas of deployment. In that regard, we note that the persistent violence and insecurity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's eastern provinces — mainly in Ituri, the Grand Nord area of North Kivu and parts of South Kivu — is a cause for concern. The *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo*, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and other armed groups continue to be active, killing scores of civilians and attacking Government security forces and United Nations peacekeepers. The Islamic State-Central Africa Province has also claimed responsibility for the 25 December improvised-explosive-device attack in Beni, which had the bearings of a typical terror attack.

We strongly condemn those attacks and offer our condolences to families of the victims.

The established links between the ADF and terrorist groups and the potential spread of terrorism to the Central African region is a cause for concern. The Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities have been raising the issue of the presence of terrorists operating under the cover of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and the ADF in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu and Maniema. That needs to be taken seriously. We welcome the enhanced regional efforts among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda to combat armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We also underscore the critical need of regular tripartite coordination among MONUSCO, the Ugandan People's Defence Force and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo during military operations, especially at the tactical level.

We take note of the ongoing preparations for MONUSCO's withdrawal from Tanganyika by June 2022. A successful drawdown, as per the timeline, would further boost the Mission's own plans for rationalizing the resources and focusing on the three eastern provinces.

We have also noted the steps taken in implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme against the benchmarks and the establishment of the provincial coordination mechanism. Tangible progress in its implementation, with the equal and meaningful participation of women at all stages, will be crucial to the eventual establishment of peace and stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We encourage MONUSCO to continue to support the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to security sector and judicial reforms.

With regard to MONUSCO's operations on the ground, we believe that greater clarity on the interpretation of the mandate as it relates to the Force Intervention Brigade and other battalions is important. That would help TCCs to have a clear understanding of operations to be undertaken and to equip themselves appropriately, and it is especially important for the safety and security of peacekeepers.

The authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have made progress towards the holding of

elections by way of appointments to the Independent National Electoral Commission, the unveiling of an electoral road map and the submission of the requisite draft legislation. We welcome those developments, while noting the challenges in the road map. We encourage all stakeholders to keep up the positive momentum and create an enabling environment for the holding of peaceful, inclusive and transparent elections.

India also welcomes that the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has assumed the role of Chairperson of the Economic Community of Central African States and welcomes the country's admission into the East African Community as a full member. We believe that will help promote the country's continued leadership and engagement with its neighbours and the wider Central African region. We also welcome the convening of the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which took place in Kinshasa on 24 February. The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework has enabled countries of the region to collaborate and work together to eliminate negative forces operating within the region. We firmly believe that the framework remains the key architecture to usher in and safeguard lasting peace and stability in the region.

In conclusion, a peaceful and stable Democratic Republic of the Congo will contribute immensely to the overall development of the region. That potential can be seen in the increased partnership and cooperation among regional stakeholders. The country's leadership has shown its firm resolve to address existing challenges, and the international community needs to take cognizance of the same and continue supporting the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On our part, India will remain steadfast in supporting the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Sun Zhiqiang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Special Representative Keita for her briefing, and I welcome the presence of the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in today's meeting.

We are deeply worried about the missing helicopter of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and hope that its whereabouts and the

safety and of its crew and passengers will be confirmed as soon as possible.

The security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo saw continued deterioration in the recent period, with escalating violence by armed groups and more frequent attacks on civilians and displaced persons. China strongly condemns such incidents of violence and supports the swift and strong Council response through the issuing of a press statement (SC/14787). We hope that, through the implementation of the state of siege in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Government will enhance coordination with MONUSCO in order to effectively protect civilians.

The safety of the lives and property of third-country nationals should also be taken seriously and protected. We call upon the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to thoroughly investigate the egregious cases of armed looting, attacks and kidnappings, among other things, and hold perpetrators accountable.

The causes for the prolonged turbulence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo are intricate and complex and will not be rooted out by military means alone. China supports the Government's efforts to strengthen its governance capabilities, promote reform in key sectors, implement the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme and exercise effective control over its eastern region.

It is important to value the role of development in enhancing security and to take advantage of natural resources in order to create jobs, improve livelihoods and eliminate poverty, so as to break the vicious cycle of violence. Strengthening mutual political trust and engaging in mutually beneficial cooperation among countries of the region are conducive to the improvement of the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the successful convening of the summit of the tenth high-level meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and support MONUSCO in enhancing cooperation with the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and playing a positive role in achieving peace and stability in the country and the region. Maintaining political

stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is essential to the country's peace and development.

We note that the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2022/252) indicates recent political volatility, controversy and challenges concerning the 2023 elections. China welcomes the commitment of President Tshisekedi Tshilombo to holding free, democratic and transparent elections within the constitutional time frame. We welcome the adoption of the electoral road map by the Independent National Electoral Commission and call on all political leaders to overcome their differences, maintain unity and jointly advance specific matters, such as electoral reform, and finalize the electoral calendar and budget.

The humanitarian and development needs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must not be ignored. Although the world today is turbulent, with hotspot issues arising more frequently, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other Africa-related agenda items must not be marginalized. China strongly calls on the international community to ramp up its help and assistance to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other African countries. China recently donated yet another batch of anti-virus supplies to the hospital of the University of the Kinshasa and will continue to contribute to peace and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

MONUSCO has played a vital role in stabilizing the security situation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. China appreciates the tireless efforts of the Special Representative and the troop- and police-contributing countries in that regard.

The recent incident involving the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo firing at patrolling MONUSCO personnel is shocking. We hope that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will investigate and more effectively manage its military and police.

With regard to the MONUSCO drawdown, China's supports MONUSCO in stepping up coordination with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the relevant United Nations agencies to advance the drawdown plan in an orderly and responsible manner, according to the situation on the ground and the benchmarks for withdrawal. The drawdown progress report recently submitted to the Council by MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo helps improve

our knowledge of the situation on the ground and the changes made to, and progress in, the drawdown.

Mr. Roscoe (United Kingdom): I begin by joining others in thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her characteristically thorough and clear briefing. We look forward to reading Ms. Babite Inyobondaye's contribution in due course.

I would also like to share the concern expressed by others around the Security Council table about the news that a helicopter went down today in Rutshuru, North Kivu. We hope that the rescue mission under way today is successful, but we are also reminded of the risks taken daily by peacekeepers across the world to implement our mandates.

The United Kingdom is extremely concerned, as we have heard today around the Council table, about the violence facing civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the persistent attacks by armed groups. In addition to armed groups such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, we are increasingly concerned about the resurgent Mouvement du 23 mars group. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to enhance protection in the Djugu area of Ituri but note that insecurity around camps for internally displaced persons continues.

Also of concern is the number of recent kidnappings in North Kivu, which has made a large proportion of the province inaccessible to humanitarian actors. While we take note of the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address the security in the east of the country, we call upon it to intensify those efforts in order to improve security and humanitarian access and lessen the suffering of the Congolese population.

Almost a year after the declaration of the state of siege, the United Kingdom welcomes the reinstitution of civilian judicial processes. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to mitigate the negative impacts of the state of siege. That includes setting clear objectives and an exit plan and addressing the recommendations of the national defence and security committee.

With regard to joint Democratic Republic of the Congo-Uganda military operations, we welcome

efforts to deconflict operations. However, we remain concerned about the fact that joint operations in the Beni area of North Kivu have not yet been successful in improving the security situation or decisively tackling the threat of ADF.

We urge the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda to increase their coordination with MONUSCO. Not only is that essential to ensuring the protection of civilians and the safety and security of United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers, but it could also support efforts to hold cleared areas and prevent the ADF from spreading into new territory where they can re-establish their foothold.

With regard to the safety and security of United Nations personnel, the firing at a MONUSCO patrol by soldiers of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo in North Kivu is also deeply concerning. We echo the Secretary-General's call for those responsible to be held to account.

The United Kingdom welcomes progress made to develop and operationalize the new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme. It is essential to learn from previous disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, including by adopting a decentralized and community-based approach. We welcome the technical support provided by the United Nations in that regard. As the operational phase begins, the establishment of inclusive coordinated structures among the United Nations, the international community and the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme will be critical.

Turning to MONUSCO's transition, we share the Secretary-General's view that the transition plan and its associated benchmarks offer a comprehensive framework for mobilizing the collective efforts of the Government, the United Nations and international partners. Establishing baselines and tracking progress against transition indicators, collectively by the United Nations and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will be particularly important as the Council looks to assess progress in the implementation of the transition plan. We look forward to future updates on the transition, as part of the regular reporting cycle.

In conclusion, let me commend the work of Special Representative Keita and her team in extremely challenging circumstances. It is our sincere hope

that the collective efforts of MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo can soon create a more stable and peaceful environment for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Gómez Robledo Verduzco (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As other speakers who have taken the floor before me, I would like to thank Special Representative Bintou Keita for her very comprehensive briefing today. Of course, I pay tribute to her work.

Over the past three months, we witnessed major changes on the political front, in particular the drafting of the road map for the holding of elections. We trust that the necessary legislative, logistical and budgetary changes will continue to be consolidated to ensure that elections in 2023 are held within the time frame established by the Constitution.

With regard to the security situation and the protection of civilians, we must express our deep concern and condemn the violence perpetrated by armed groups, such as the *Coopérative pour le développement du Congo*, against civilians, including girls and boys and, in particular, the deliberate attacks carried out on camps for internally displaced persons. The information the Special Representative just shared with us is very serious and could jeopardize progress on the political front. Also very serious is the apparent downing or disappearance of a helicopter of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which clearly shows the extreme volatility and fragility of the security situation.

Mexico believes that the investigation undertaken by the Congolese authorities in response to the attack on the Plaine Savo camp is, of course, a step in the right direction. However, violence also has a serious impact on humanitarian access, and that is why various humanitarian organizations have had to suspend their work in regions such as Beni. We therefore underscore the need to ensure full respect for the work of humanitarian staff, as well as the importance of measures to strengthen security along distribution routes where humanitarian aid and personnel circulate.

In the light of this disturbing situation, it is essential to restrict the flow of weapons. Without that key element, armed groups would be unable to carry out violent campaigns with the relative ease with which they appear to do so. Of course, we acknowledge the progress in implementing the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme

and the measures taken in the area of transitional justice. We encourage the stakeholders concerned to continue to make progress in those areas. We believe that their efforts have a multiplier effect and provide opportunities for former combatants, which will help promote national reconciliation.

With regard to accountability, we take note of the verdict rendered by a military court that has found 50 people guilty of the death of United Nations experts Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp and their four Congolese companions. However, we call for the moratorium on the death penalty that has been in force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 2003 to be maintained and for perpetrators to receive a custodial sentence rather than capital punishment.

Regarding MONUSCO's exit strategy and transition plan, Mexico will remain attentive to progress made on the benchmarks, as well as everything related to the Mission's withdrawal programme in Tanganyika, which will take place in June. It is important that the transition process aligns with the reality on the ground and is able to evolve in accordance with developments there.

MONUSCO's work and the presence of the United Nations country team cannot be considered separately, as we always say, from the underlying causes of the conflict such as population displacement, violence and, as highlighted this morning, the illegal exploitation of natural resources. For Mexico, a comprehensive approach, taking into account all development parameters, is indispensable for building sustainable peace.

Ms. Byrne Nason (Ireland) (*spoke in French*): I too would like to thank Special Representative Keita for her insightful and important briefing this morning. Ireland welcomes her leadership and the essential work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I also acknowledge the presence this morning of our colleague from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who is most welcome.

I would like to make three points.

First, Ireland welcomes President Tshisekedi's express commitment to holding elections in 2023, in accordance with the Constitution. We welcome the adoption of an electoral road map by the Independent National Electoral Commission and stress the importance of an inclusive and credible electoral

process held in the proper conditions. Failure to ensure that could undermine social cohesion.

Creating stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo depends on many factors. Regional cooperation should be strengthened, including through the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.

We congratulate President Tshisekedi on holding the tenth session of the Regional Oversight Mechanism in Kinshasa. That meeting and its communiqué demonstrate the continued commitment to joint efforts to establish lasting peace through dialogue, coordination and collaboration. A comprehensive strategy on security sector reform is also necessary.

Strengthening the justice system, combating impunity and implementing a community-based disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process for ex-combatants are also essential. The inclusion and meaningful participation of women will be essential for the success and sustainability of all those efforts.

(spoke in English)

My second point concerns the fact that Ireland is gravely concerned by the continuing insecurity and dire humanitarian and human rights situations in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge the Government to ensure that the implementation of the state of siege is time-bound, with clearly measurable objectives. Military operations must be consistent with international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Ireland welcomes the efforts to establish effective tripartite coordination between MONUSCO, the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Uganda People's Defence Forces. That is essential to ensuring the protection of civilians and the safety and security of United Nations personnel and humanitarian workers. We remain concerned by the incident in which FARDC soldiers fired at a MONUSCO patrol in North Kivu, and welcome the Congolese authorities' assurances that they will initiate investigations.

Ireland strongly condemns all attacks against civilians and notes Ms. Keita's concerning remarks in that regard today. Persistent and sustained attacks by armed groups on civilians in the eastern Democratic

Republic of the Congo, as well as the attack last month on the Plaine Savo internally displaced persons site, where more than 60 of the country's most vulnerable people lost their lives, show just how challenging it will be to build a sustained peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They are also tragic reminders of how badly that is needed.

Ireland notes the verdict in the case of the assassination of United Nations experts Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán and their four Congolese companions. We call on the authorities to maintain the moratorium on the death penalty and to take steps towards abolishing it in law.

We remain deeply concerned about violations and abuses of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law, including conflict-related sexual violence, committed by armed groups and State agents. All survivors of such violations must be provided with safe and unhindered access to appropriate medical and other services and to reparations. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to accelerate the work on a national transitional justice commission in that regard.

Thirdly, we welcome the transition plan and its benchmarks, which can offer a comprehensive framework for mobilizing the collective efforts of the Government, the United Nations system and all stakeholders, including civil society and youth. The recent progress report is a starting point, although we would wish to see more regionally disaggregated data and more clarity in relation to the measurement of progress against benchmarks.

Ireland is pleased to see strengthened planning and coordination between the Government and the United Nations system to ensure MONUSCO's sustainable withdrawal from Tanganyika province. Given the security challenges that persist in certain areas, we believe it vital that the drawdown of the Mission's presence in the province be conducted in a phased and responsible manner. Such a drawdown will help to preserve the hard-won gains made by and for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Before concluding, like others, we have become aware of reports this morning that a MONUSCO helicopter has crashed in the North Kivu region of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We understand that the circumstances of the incident are being investigated and that a search-and-rescue mission

is being prepared. Of course, details on casualties remain to be confirmed, but I want to say that our thoughts are with the MONUSCO personnel on this very difficult morning. They serve on the front lines of peace in an extremely difficult context. We await further details on that serious incident.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): I join the other speakers in thanking the Special Representative for her briefing and welcome the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to this meeting.

We also join the other members of the Council in paying tribute to the peacekeepers who may have lost their lives today in the crash of a United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) helicopter. This is indeed a sad day and reminds us of the risks that peacekeepers take on a daily basis.

As we have heard, the political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains tense. Ahead of the country's elections in 2023, we call on all the parties to avoid actions that could produce a negative fallout by placing their personal agendas aside. It is of great importance to maintain the positive momentum of the ongoing preparations and the electoral road map, which will ensure the elections' credibility, as will the participation of women and youth. We take note of the violations of democratic space mentioned in the report (S/2022/252) and call on the authorities to refrain from actions that may harm the electoral climate.

The security situation, particularly in the eastern provinces of North Kivu and Ituri, is ever more alarming, considering the ongoing state of siege and attacks on civilians. In South Kivu, we have also witnessed persistent intercommunal violence fuelled by hate speech in local and social media.

Albania is deeply concerned about the conflict-related sexual violence against women and children committed by armed groups, but also by State agents. Moreover, there is an alarming new trend in the use of improvised explosive devices in recent attacks, raising new questions with regard to the link between armed groups and international terrorist organizations. What is more devastating are the attacks on internally displaced persons sites, followed by serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We condemn in the strongest way these acts. Instead of bloodshed, Albania believes that the way forward is accountability, not impunity, and reconciliation, not mistrust.

Cooperation with third States to bring a military end to the conflict in the east of the country has not achieved the anticipated results. We urge that these operations be made even more transparent and coordinated, and we welcome the first steps being taken towards this end. We also call on the authorities for a robust implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which needs to be supported by all stakeholders, including civil society, women and youth.

It is vital for MONUSCO to step up its efforts to respond effectively to the challenges on the ground and the mandate given to it. Albania supports a phased transition and the exit of the Mission based on the implementation of the agreed benchmarks to avoid any gaps and secure what it has achieved so far. Nevertheless, for this process to succeed, United Nations system agencies and other international stakeholders must work together and urgently provide funding in such critical areas as Tanganyika.

In conclusion, it is important that the resources that are now fuelling the conflict and illegal trafficking should be redirected to the socioeconomic development of the country and for the benefit of Congolese people. Albania supports the work of the Security Council Committee established by pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) in holding accountable those responsible for the illegal exploitation of natural resources and for violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, for her comprehensive briefing and her work. I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to today's Council meeting and congratulate his country on joining the East African Community.

I join others in expressing our condolences to the people and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the families of the victims of the most recent attacks in Ituri and North Kivu. These attacks underscore the need to further address the complex and interconnected security challenges facing the country, particularly in its eastern region, if sustainable peace is to be achieved. Key among these challenges is the

persistence of intercommunal violence, the spread of hate speech, the rise of sexual and gender-based violence, the illicit trade in natural resources, and cross-border crime, which have all unfortunately exacerbated the already fragile humanitarian situation.

The United Arab Emirates emphasizes the importance of upholding international humanitarian law and mitigating the impact of violence on the most vulnerable. In addressing security challenges, the protection of civilians needs to remain front and centre in all stakeholders' considerations. We are also concerned about continued attacks against United Nations personnel, including those working to protect civilians. It is important to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers. Additionally, special attention must be paid to the situation of women in areas of heightened violence to ensure that they have access to adequate protection and support.

Furthermore, it is important to build on the existing cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours and regional partners, including the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Economic Community of Central African States. Having an integrated regional approach is key to addressing common security challenges, strengthening diplomatic relations and economic cooperation. A combination of these factors could contribute to the security and stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire region.

With regard to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), we are encouraged by its continued cooperation with the Government in the implementation of the 2021-2023 transition plan. We join others in acknowledging the important role that MONUSCO plays in supporting the Government's efforts, including through the promotion of women's full, meaningful and equal participation in the political process, as well as their continued empowerment.

In conclusion, as part of our presidency's commitment to bringing attention to the implementation of resolution 2565 (2021), I want to take this opportunity to highlight the ongoing challenge that the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) still poses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. According to the World Health Organization and the most recent reports, infections are on the rise and the number of people fully vaccinated is far less than 1 per cent of the population. We call

on the international community to intensify its efforts in supporting the Democratic Republic of the Congo's response to the COVID-19 pandemic to alleviate the burden on the country's health system.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Nzongola-Ntalaja (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I join the members of the Security Council who have expressed their concern about the helicopter accident that took place in the Rutshuru region. We too are very affected by this news. We hope that the group that went looking for this plane will do what is necessary to prevent any unfortunate circumstances from arising. We hope that most of the people who were on that plane will be found alive.

I am also very pleased that the Council has seen fit to invite us to this meeting on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and I would like to thank Ms. Bintou Keita for her work and for her briefing, which we are discussing today.

I would like to begin by congratulating the President on her country's presidency of the Security Council for the month of March 2022 and thank her for taking the initiative to organize today's meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres, for his determination and commitment to my country's cause and for his report on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/252), which is the subject of our discussions today. I would like to thank all the members of the Security Council whose qualities I have greatly admired; I see that most members of the Council are truly committed to improving the situation in the Congo, and we thank them for that.

Allow me also to welcome the presence in the Chamber today of our compatriot Ms. Léa Babite Inyobondaye, founder of the "Young People Enemies of Hunger" association.

My delegation has taken note of the report of the Secretary-General on MONUSCO, covering the period from 1 December 2021 to 16 March 2022, which Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of

the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, just presented to us.

Let me make a few comments on the issues raised in the report and the concerns raised by Council members.

As the report before us highlights, the political situation in my country has been mainly dominated by preparations for the upcoming elections and the pursuit of regional partnerships.

With regard to preparations for the 2023 general elections, President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, as the report underscores, reiterated during his speech on the state of the nation on 13 December 2021 his commitment,

“to making the Democratic Republic of Congo a truly democratic State, which cannot be achieved without the holding of free, democratic and transparent elections within the constitutional time frame”.

That resolve has been reflected by the following progress: the completion of the composition of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), as several Council members underscored earlier; the appointment of a woman as the Commission's Deputy National Executive Secretary; the gradual allocation by the Government of resources to CENI; the adoption of the road map for the 2021-2027 electoral process by CENI; and the adoption by the Government of three draft decrees. The first of the latter concerns the organization of the pooling of operational activities within the framework of voter identification and registration, population identification and the general census. The second and third draft decrees concern the creation of a national identity card and general population database, respectively.

Despite challenges related to security and financial and logistical constraints, the Government, under the leadership of the Head of State, is working to ensure the success of the electoral process, and all other forms of support, facilitation and constructive contributions that can help make the process a success are welcome.

Moreover, in confirming the desire that he expressed at the beginning of his term to strengthen good-neighbourly relations and cooperate with the leaders of the region, the President of the Republic recently participated in two major regional events: the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States, held

in Brazzaville on 19 January, and the tenth High-level Meeting of the Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, held in Kinshasa on 24 February. Both summits reaffirmed the shared resolve expressed by member States to cooperate further in bringing peace to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Concerning the security situation, it remains generally calm throughout the country, apart from the activities of armed groups in certain territories in the east of the country. Joint operations by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) in the framework of the state of siege against the terrorists of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and the Madina Tawheed wal Muwahideen (MTM) are being pursued and developing at a regular pace in the Grand Nord area and in the southern part of Ituri.

Those operations have led to the dismantling and destruction of several of the groups' strongholds, thereby forcing them to change their combat strategy. They have evolved into small and mobile groups, raping and massacring the civilian population in their path. In addition, they are also using terrorist methods, such as the use of suicide bombers, for example, in Beni on 24 and 25 December 2021, and the parcel bomb at Oicha on 5 January. In retaliation for the operations, the ADF and MTM terrorists and their supporters are also using improvised bombs to terrorize the population. On top of that, we note the resurgence of activity by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO), which was mentioned here earlier several times, in Ituri.

Those operative methods require the FARDC and MONUSCO to readapt and recalibrate their strategies and pool additional joint efforts to neutralize those negative groups and provide lasting security for the populations of the eastern part of my country. In addition to the military strategy, in upholding his commitment to restore peace and security in the east of the country, the Head of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to engage in regional diplomacy that could eventually change the situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as in the entire region.

In addition to the regional approach to pacify the east, my Government is also considering non-military

solutions for both domestic and foreign armed groups to bring peace to the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

The synergy among the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the National Monitoring Mechanism of the Framework Agreement of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other regional and international guarantors that are working to promote cooperation around non-military measures will contribute to the gradual eradication of negative forces in the region.

Pacifying the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo must also inevitably lead to the strengthening of the fight against the illegal trafficking of arms and ammunition, as well as the plundering of natural resources, which was mentioned by several speakers earlier. In that regard, an effective and well-targeted sanctions policy must not be ruled out as a means of disrupting all mafia-like networks.

Finally, in the context of the many current and future acts of surrender by combatants operating in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the new Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reintegration and Stabilization Programme, established by President Tshisekedi Tshilombo, is a key instrument to pacifying the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We echo the call for increased partnership and support to ensure the full functioning of the programme.

Despite those efforts of the President of the Republic in his pursuit of regional partnerships to change the narrative of the security situation both in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, unfortunately, on the night of 27 to 28 March, the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) carried out incursions and attacked FARDC positions in Chanzu and Munyonyi, in Rutshuru territory. After all the agreements signed with the M-23 and its annihilation, by inter alia the United Nations Intervention Brigade, there is reason to wonder about the resurgence of the M-23. Moreover, many questions remain, including the source of their supplies and who is supplying them with arms and ammunition and why?

With regard to the fight against violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including sexual violence, my delegation would like to emphasize that this fight remains at the heart of the work of the President of the Republic, as well as his Government;

from the outset, he has committed himself to working to establish the rule of law. The various existing State structures, as well as other agencies newly set up by the President since 2019, such as the Agency for the Prevention and Fight against Human Trafficking and the National Committee for the Prevention against Torture, are all hard at work to achieve that goal.

In the same vein, my Government is also committed to fighting impunity within the army and the police. Paragraph 26 of the Secretary-General's report under consideration illustrates that focus: in addition to the severe sentences handed down for the perpetrators, the operationalization of a new military court in February 2022 in Beni, on account of its proximity, will contribute to the fight against impunity.

With regard to the allegations of violations committed by elements of the security forces, the Congolese military justice system has adopted measures to prosecute the perpetrators of the crimes, and they will continue. In addition, it is worth noting the efforts undertaken by the Government for the operationalization of transitional justice, as well as the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The alarming humanitarian situation observed in my country is largely attributable to the activity of armed groups and the conflicts that are also affecting neighbouring countries, whose people sometimes take refuge on our territory. Those armed groups, in particular the ADF and CODECO, have been carrying out unacceptable deadly attacks. We emphatically denounce such attacks against displaced persons camps, as well as against peaceful citizens.

My country continues to address this delicate and difficult situation, given the very high number of internally displaced persons and all the attendant challenges. That is why my Government, in partnership with the United Nations, launched a humanitarian response plan on 17 February. The plan is targeted at 8.8 million of the most vulnerable people. As the needs are immense, the Democratic Republic of the Congo would greatly appreciate any additional assistance that other partners could provide to this population in distress.

With respect to MONUSCO, my Government makes the following requests.

First, the United Nations and the Security Council should allocate sufficient resources to the Mission so that it can effectively carry out its mandate.

Secondly, considering that the reconfiguration process of the MONUSCO force is more or less complete, including that of the Intervention Brigade, the Democratic Republic of the Congo requests that more joint, planned and intense FARDC-MONUSCO operations be conducted, in accordance with resolution 2556 (2020). The objective is to increase pressure on the armed groups and prompt them, if possible, to surrender. The result of those operations, in the context of the 2023 elections, could also facilitate the smooth conduct of the electoral process in the respective territories.

Thirdly, the Council should ensure that the vacuum left by the withdrawal of the Ukrainian unit in terms of personnel and equipment can be filled within a reasonable amount of time to prevent the weakening of certain essential operational capabilities of the MONUSCO force in this context of asymmetrical war.

Fourthly, the Council should ensure an even more impactful strengthening of partnership between MONUSCO and the defence and security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has already been initiated, in terms of transfer and effective capacity-building.

Lastly, my delegation encourages the use of the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System and its horizontal implementation within MONUSCO.

Concerning the implementation of the transition plan and the gradual and phased withdrawal strategy of MONUSCO, the Government of the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO are working in close cooperation on the basis of the road map that has been drawn up. The initial joint assessments reflect progress achieved on the 18 benchmarks and indicators set out. In connection with the withdrawal from Tanganyika province, scheduled for June 2022, a joint field assessment, as a prelude to the withdrawal, would be desirable. My Government favours the withdrawal and is preparing for it.

As for the investigation into the murder of the two United Nations experts, the sentence was handed down in the first trial against the 51 people found guilty. My Government takes this opportunity to express its solidarity with the families and the countries affected by this incalculable, painful loss and wishes to reassure the international community that justice will be done.

I would like to conclude by once again thanking Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, for her commitment. My Government highly values the excellent work that she is carrying out in my country in a difficult time. We assure her of our full cooperation to ensure the success of her work.

I must not fail to thank the MONUSCO troops in general, and the Intervention Brigade in particular, for the sacrifices they continue to make so that peace can be restored in the eastern part of my country.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.