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The United Nations commits to support the Great Lakes region in finding durable solutions to the issue of South Sudanese disarmed elements present in eastern DRC

Kinshasa, 16 January 2017 - The United Nations Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Said Djinnit, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO), Maman Sidikou, kick-started a series of joint consultations in Goma and Kinshasa, DRC, on 12 January 2017, to address the presence of elements of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-In Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) in eastern DRC.

While in Goma, the UN officials met the Governor of North Kivu, Julien Paluku, and the SPLM/A-IO ex-combatants accommodated in Munigi camp, in addition to receiving briefings by humanitarian and legal experts. Governor Paluku expressed serious concern at the potential for further destabilization of the situation in North Kivu if the SPLM/A-IO elements are not relocated as soon as possible. He requested the support of the United Nations in facilitating the relocation of these elements without further delay.

The SPLM/A-IO elements expressed their deep appreciation to MONUSCO for its efforts and support. Renouncing any intention to return to fighting, they requested the support of the United Nations to be reunified with their families in the region.

Special Envoy Djinnit and SRSG Sidikou reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to assist in finding solutions, in cooperation and consultation with the authorities of the DRC, the countries of the region, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) to the presence of the SPM/IO elements. "The United Nations is determined to work with the Government of the DRC, the concerned countries of the region, IGAD and the AU to find durable solutions for these elements and support the implementation of the peace agreement in South Sudan", said Special Envoy Djinnit. "We must do everything possible to avoid a spill-over of the crisis from South Sudan into the DRC which would have a serious impact on the people living in the area already under stress due to activities of many illegal armed groups", he added.

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In Kinshasa, the UN officials held separate meetings with Prime Minister Sammy Badibanga, the Chief of Staff to the President, Néhémie Wilondja, and Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary who led a delegation composed of senior officials from the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs and Defence. The DRC Government and UN officials agreed to establish a joint technical committee tasked to develop some options for the relocation of the SPLM/A-IO ex-combatants. The committee is scheduled to have its first meeting on 18 January 2017.

“I welcome the decision of the Government to establish a Technical Committee, jointly with MONUSCO, to resolve the issue of the SPLM/A-IO elements in MONUSCO premises. I am confident that this will provide an opportunity to deepen the Mission’s cooperation with the Government in this matter,” stressed Special Representative Sidikou.

Following the DRC consultations, the UN officials will continue their engagement with national and regional stakeholders in Juba, South Sudan, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in early February.

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