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United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 43 of Security Council resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#), covers developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 21 March to 19 June 2023. It describes progress and challenges in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

II. Political developments

2. The reporting period was marked by continued preparations for the 2023 general elections, escalating tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda and continued regional efforts to advance peace processes in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3. On 23 March, the President, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi, reshuffled his Government to comprise 59 members, including 16 women. New appointments include the former State Vice-President, Jean-Pierre Bemba, as Vice-Prime Minister for Defence, the former Minister for Foreign Affairs, Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi, as Minister for Regional Cooperation, the former Chief of Staff of the President, Vital Kamerhe, as Vice-Prime Minister for Economy, and the legal adviser of the President's political party, Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, Peter Kazadi, as Vice-Prime Minister of Interior.

4. On 25 April, the Independent National Electoral Commission officially closed the voter registration process, stating that 95 per cent of the 50 million potential voters had been registered, 47 per cent of whom were women. However, it also acknowledged technical challenges and barriers to conducting registrations owing to insecurity in Kwamouth territory of Mai-Ndombe Province, Masisi and Rutshuru territories in North Kivu Province, and in parts of Maluku commune in Kinshasa.

5. On 22 May, the Independent National Electoral Commission validated the external audit of the voter register, which was completed by five national and international experts, including one woman. The exercise was conducted under six days, without independent oversight. National observer missions and the opposition



decried the process as lacking transparency and credibility. In total, over 3.3 million voters, including duplicates (2.23 million) and minors (0.98 million), were deleted from the voter register. On 22 May, the Independent National Electoral Commission submitted the draft law on the distribution of seats for national and provincial legislative, municipal and local elections to the Ministry of Interior. Despite a boycott by the opposition and allegations by the majority regarding discrepancies between the number of registered voters and the number of allocated seats, the draft law was adopted by the National Assembly and the Senate on 5 and 15 June, respectively. On 5 June, a decree creating an accreditation unit for international election observers under the leadership of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was issued. The unit will examine requests for accreditation sent to the government by foreign entities or independent personalities and share its decisions with the Independent National Electoral Commission

6. On 29 April, the majority coalition, Union sacrée de la nation, was officially established as a political and electoral platform to support a second term for the President. On 20 May, Martin Fayulu, Moïse Katumbi, Augustin Matata Ponyo and Delly Sesanga, who have each declared their presidential candidacy, jointly organized a demonstration against what they qualified as the “chaotic” electoral process, “rampant insecurity and the high cost of living”. The disproportionate use of force by the Congolese National Police during the demonstration prompted opposition leaders to call for the resignation of the Governor of Kinshasa Province. On 25 May, the four opposition leaders organized a protest for credible elections in front of the Kinshasa headquarters of the Independent National Electoral Commission. On 23 May, Mr. Katumbi denounced having been barred from conducting political activities in Kongo Central Province. On 30 May, his special adviser, Salomon Idi Kalonda, was arrested in Kinshasa on charges including undermining the internal security of the State to benefit a “Katangese citizen”, a move decried by Mr. Katumbi’s party as “illegal and arbitrary”. The draft law on Congolese nationality, which seeks to restrict access to key public positions only to citizens whose parents are both Congolese, continued to fuel tensions, as the opposition views it as a vehicle to exclude opponents from the presidential race and pave the way for a constitutional review.

7. Regional efforts to advance the peace process in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo continued. MONUSCO was incorporated into the joint secretariat established to prepare the fourth stage of consultations of the Nairobi process. On 22 March, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union concluded a two-day visit to Kinshasa and Goma, North Kivu. The President called on the delegation to take appropriate measures against a “flagrant violation of the African Union Charter by Rwanda”, accusing Rwanda of aggression in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Tensions between the Democratic Republic the Congo and Rwanda remained high.

8. On 3 April, the facilitator of the East African Community-led Nairobi process announced the full deployment of the East African Community regional force to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 27 April, the Government of the Democratic Republic the Congo and a delegation from the East African Community discussed in Kinshasa the renewal of the status-of-forces agreement of the East African Community regional force. On the same day, the commander of the regional force, Major General Jeff Nyagah, resigned, citing concerns regarding his personal security. On 28 April, Kenya appointed Major General Alphaxard Muthuri Kiugu as his replacement. On 31 May in Bujumbura, Burundi, at its twenty-first extraordinary summit, the East African Community extended the mandate of its regional force until 8 September and directed that a technical team should be established by 15 June to evaluate the implementation of its mandate within 90 days. At the summit the East African Community also called for enhanced coordination and synergies between the

Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO, the East African Community regional force and the ad hoc verification mechanism established under the Luanda process; requested that the suitability of the Rumangabo site for the cantonment of Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) and other armed groups should be verified within three weeks; and agreed to establish a civilian Head of Mission in Goma to coordinate all political matters related to the East African Community regional force.

9. On 27 April, MONUSCO agreed to fulfil a request from the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to assist with the pre-cantonment and disarmament of M23 combatants, in line with the Luanda communiqué of 23 November 2022. According to the Government, the disarmed M23 elements would be transported to Maniema Province for a six-week cantonment process under the supervision of an Angolan contingent before their reintegration into civilian life. However, earlier that month, on 12 April, the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had once again excluded the possibility of engaging in any political dialogue with M23. On 8 May, the President of Angola, João Lourenço, reiterated the readiness of Angola to deploy 500 troops to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to protect the staff of the ad hoc verification mechanism and secure cantonment sites of M23 in Maniema Province. On 8 June, M23 again denied access to the Rumangabo camp to technical reconnaissance mission, comprised of representatives of MONUSCO, the Congolese armed forces and the East African Community regional force, to evaluate the camp's preparedness for the pre-cantonment.

10. On 6 May, in Bujumbura, the Secretary-General attended the eleventh 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, during which meeting participants agreed to revitalize the Framework and directed the Operational Cell of the Contact and Coordination Group on non-military measures to pursue its engagement with foreign armed groups. Meeting participants also called for enhanced coordination and synergies between MONUSCO, the East African Community regional force, the ad hoc verification mechanism established under the Luanda process and the Congolese armed forces to impress upon all armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo the need to disarm.

11. On 8 May, in Windhoek, an extraordinary summit of the South African Development Community (SADC) approved the deployment of a SADC force as part of the SADC Standby Force to restore peace and security in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

III. Security situation

12. The security situation in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces was marked by a dramatic surge of violence against civilians, driven mainly by the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO) and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), while the ceasefire in North Kivu between M23 and the Congolese armed forces largely held. In South Kivu Province, clashes between Mai-Mai elements over mining sites persisted, while Congolese and Burundian troops continued operations against foreign armed groups, notably, Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara) and Forces nationales de libération (FNL).

Ituri Province

13. Insecurity in Ituri sharply increased, with a surge in killings, perpetrated mainly by CODECO, ADF and Zaire. The level of violence in the province was the highest seen since 2017. Between 21 March and 13 June, 287 security incidents involving

armed groups were recorded, resulting in 643 civilians killed, including at least 79 women and 67 children, compared with 485 civilians killed in the previous reporting period. In addition, 119 civilians were injured, including at least 16 women and 9 children, while at least 114 civilians, including 10 women and 7 children, were reportedly abducted. CODECO was behind most of the insecurity, having been responsible for 191 security incidents. CODECO and Zaire retaliatory attacks caused a high number of casualties and the destruction of community infrastructure, including schools and health centres. On 10 and 11 April, CODECO and Zaire clashes in the mining area of Mongbwalu and Kilo resulted in the death of 56 civilians, including 17 women and 8 children, and 11 injuries, including of 3 women and 5 children. Violent clashes between CODECO and Zaire, which are rooted in the long-standing conflict over power and land between the Hema and Lendu communities, increased in western Djugu territory, where the two groups continued to fight over control of lucrative gold mining sites in the areas of Mongbwalu, Kilo and Bambu. A lack of State authority, amplified by the redeployment of Congolese armed forces to Petit Nord to fight M23 and address its reported involvement in the exploitation and protection of certain mining sites, continued to contribute to persistent insecurity in Ituri. On the night of 11 to 12 June, alleged CODECO elements attacked Lala, a camp for internally displaced persons in Djugu territory, resulting in the killing of at least 47 civilians (11 men, 13 women, 12 boys and 11 girls, all of Hema origin), 6 men injured and 800 shelters burnt. The attack occurred following the signature of an agreement to end hostilities by the leaders of CODECO, Mouvement d'autodéfense populaire de l'Ituri, Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri and Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo.

14. In Ituri, ADF expanded its geographical scope of activities to unprecedented levels. Between 21 March and 13 June, the armed group killed 113 civilians, including at least 7 women and 7 children, and injured 7 civilians, including 2 women and 2 children. On 20 April, a popular protest erupted in Bunia as the population perceived the impact of the joint operations of the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces as limited, and the state of siege as ineffective.

North Kivu Province

15. The security situation was marked by a lull in the frequency of clashes between M23 and the Congolese armed forces, ADF attacks in Grand Nord and the proliferation and use of improvised explosive devices.

16. Some 300 security incidents involving armed groups were recorded between 21 March and 13 June. ADF remained the main instigator of insecurity, perpetrating at least 36 attacks, in which 139 civilians were killed, including 27 women and 5 children, while 25 civilians were injured. The northern, southern and south-eastern parts of Beni territory remained ADF hotspots.

17. On 5 April, in Beni, the Congolese and Ugandan army chiefs-of-staff chaired an evaluation meeting of the fourth phase of the joint Operation Shujaa, in anticipation of its fifth phase. Despite reported operational successes, the dismantling of several ADF bases in Grand Nord by the joint action of Congolese and Ugandan armed forces increased the likelihood of retaliation against villages and civilians in Grand Nord and southern Ituri. Operation Shujaa continued to push ADF further north-west into Ituri Province, where the group's territorial influence expanded.

18. Butembo and Lubero territories witnessed attacks by Mai-Mai groups against voter registration centres. Between 21 March and 9 June, repeated clashes between rival groups seeking to assert their dominance in north-west Lubero resulted in the deaths of at least nine civilians, including three women.

19. In Petit Nord, clashes between M23 and the Congolese armed forces ceased in early April. However, clashes between M23 and other armed groups, notably Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, as well as the reported presence of these armed groups in areas vacated by M23, fuelled insecurity. M23 was responsible for 102 incidents, resulting in 47 civilians killed, including 7 women and 2 boys, and 15 civilian injuries, including 2 women and 1 child.

20. Low-intensity armed skirmishes and ambushes between Congolese and Rwandan non-State armed groups and M23 caused repeated internal displacement, indirect attacks on civilians, traffic disruptions and delays in the return of internally displaced persons. Alleged massacres of civilians in areas under M23 control and areas under the control of Congolese and Rwandan non-State armed groups were reported.

21. M23 had yet to withdraw from all occupied areas as required under the Luanda communiqué of 23 November 2022. Its disengagement from some areas, including its partial disengagement from Bunangana and Tchengerero, appears to be largely tactical, to facilitate the group's repositioning in other key areas, which may lead to a resumption of hostilities. On 4 June, a MONUSCO patrol moving from Rwindi towards Kiwanja was stopped at an M23 checkpoint near Bumbi and forced to return to Rwindi. On 6 June, M23 reportedly prevented people from accessing their farms in Kingarambe, Hehu and Kasizi. M23 reinforcements were reported in Kibumba, which resulted in the displacement of persons, while illegal taxation by M23 continued in Kalengera, Kahunga and Kinyandoni. The blending of M23 units into the population and the establishment of stay-behind local defence units by the group has jeopardized security gains from the ceasefire. The defection of Congolese armed force officers to M23 was observed. The presence of armed group elements visibly carrying weapons in the centre of Goma, as well as a trend of armed vigilante citizens acting as de facto armed groups, called Wazalendo, raised further security concerns.

South Kivu Province

22. In South Kivu insecurity persisted, albeit at a lower intensity compared to Ituri and North Kivu, with continued armed violence between Mai-Mai elements over mining sites and activities by foreign armed groups. The province continued to be at risk of spillover from the M23 crisis.

23. Between 21 March and 13 June, 172 security incidents were recorded, resulting in 36 civilians killed, including 5 women, and 6 civilians injured, including 2 women. The main source of insecurity was Mai-Mai groups (including Yakutumba, Biloze Bishambuke and Ebuela factions), which were responsible for 35 incidents involving cattle rustling, illegal tax collection, forced recruitments and attacks on State security forces. In addition, Twigwaneho was responsible for 27 incidents.

24. Congolese and Burundian armed forces continued operations focusing on RED Tabara and FNL. Foreign armed groups from Burundi redeployed to the Hauts Plateaux of Uvira territory in March and April, where they continued to pose a threat to civilians. In Minembwe, a status quo was observed, with Twigwaneho controlling two thirds of the locality.

25. Clashes between Mai-Mai groups for control over mining sites in southern Fizi territory increased during the dry season. Between 10 and 11 April, Mai-Mai Yakutumba and Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke elements clashed over control of a quarry in Nyange and the Paris mining square, resulting in the death of two Mai-Mai Biloze Bishambuke elements.

26. South Kivu remained vulnerable to the risk of coordinated offensives by M23 and Twigwaneho, which would likely overstretch the Congolese armed forces and

have an overall destabilizing effect. The province also experienced an influx of more than 10,000 displaced persons from North Kivu. However, a return of displaced persons to North Kivu was also observed following the partial withdrawal of M23 elements from the Masisi area.

IV. Human rights situation

27. Compared with the previous reporting period, between March and May MONUSCO documented a slight decrease in human rights violations and abuses, 85 per cent of which were committed in conflict-affected provinces. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for 64 per cent of those violations and abuses. Mai-Mai factions continued to be responsible for most of the abuses (166), followed by ADF (142), Nyatura factions (110), CODECO (109), M23 (94), Twa militias (51), Raya Mutomboki (26), Zaire (25), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (12) and Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (10), among others. At least 830 persons, including 157 women and 56 children, were victims of summary killings by armed groups, notably M23, ADF and CODECO.

28. Intercommunal violence persisted in Mai-Ndombe, Kwilu and Kwango Provinces. At least 67 people were reportedly killed, including 4 women and 1 child, while more than 100 people were reported missing. Since the beginning of the mobile court hearings at the Bandundu garrison military tribunal on 13 December 2022, 41 defendants, including 15 Congolese soldiers and police officers, have been convicted. Their sentences range from two years' imprisonment to the death penalty.

29. Between March and May, the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo documented 45 violations related to the restriction of civic space, with most violations being recorded in North Kivu, Haut-Katanga, Kasai and South Kivu Provinces. Most documented violations were allegedly committed by the Congolese National Police (18) and armed forces (12). The remainder were committed by armed groups, such as the Mai-Mai, CODECO and M23. Between March and May, two instances of hate speech, as defined in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, were documented in Kinshasa and South Kivu, respectively.

V. Humanitarian situation

30. Protracted and resurgent armed violence increased the number of people in need of food assistance and resulted in massive levels of forced displacement, exacerbated by the M23 crisis and ongoing ADF attacks. Displaced populations live in camps, collective centres and host families, under extremely precarious conditions, characterized by a high prevalence of acute malnutrition and the lack of access to adequate shelter, health services, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, and education for children. As at 12 June, more than 6.3 million people had been displaced across the country. The vast majority of these persons (94 per cent) were displaced owing to conflict and violence, creating serious challenges for them to harvest crops, earn income and access food. With 26.4 million people, representing 25 per cent of the total population, currently in a situation of acute food insecurity, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is the country with the largest number of food-insecure people in the world. Despite the volatile security context, humanitarian access to areas controlled by M23 improved.

31. A growing number of women and girls, particularly in conflict-affected provinces, were subjected to gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and

increasingly resorted to transactional sex for survival. Gender-based violence against displaced populations was exacerbated by the proliferation of armed groups in displacement areas and frequent violations of the humanitarian character of sites.

32. In May, floods and landslides in Bushushu and Nyamukubi in Kalehe territory, South Kivu Province, ravaged villages and farmlands, claiming the lives of over 447 people and affecting over 40,000 others. As at 12 June, hundreds of people were still missing. Since 10 May, at least 17,000 people have been assisted by humanitarian actors. The Humanitarian Coordinator allocated \$3 million from the Humanitarian Fund for the Democratic Republic of the Congo to respond to the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Kalehe.

33. The scope of urgent need exceeds the humanitarian response capacity: as at 12 June, the 2023 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which was budgeted at \$2.25 billion, was only funded at 25 per cent.

VI. Protection of civilians

A. Mission strategies and political processes

34. Guided by the Action for Peacekeeping principles, implementation of the MONUSCO strategy for the protection of civilians, which integrates systematic attention to gender, youth and displaced populations, has taken into consideration the heightened risk to civilians from the ongoing clashes between the Congolese armed forces and foreign and Congolese armed groups. In the eastern provinces, despite challenges, the presence of MONUSCO was instrumental for the protection of civilians. As at 7 June, between 50,000 and 70,000 displaced persons were under active protection by MONUSCO in Roe camp, Djugu territory, Ituri.

35. In response to persistent anti-MONUSCO sentiment, the Mission conducted outreach activities focusing on local actors who could use their political leverage with the population and communities to address misinformation and disinformation. For example, on 4 May, in Beni, North Kivu, some 50 students, including 7 women, participated in a workshop on the fight against manipulation and disinformation.

36. In South Kivu, MONUSCO remained seized of conflict dynamics, including political tensions linked to the provincial Governor's reinstatement by the Constitutional Court, and organized a series of political cafés with 76 local community leaders, including 17 women and 28 youth in Baraka, Bunyakiri, Bukavu and Shabunda, on their role in contributing to peaceful and inclusive elections.

37. The Mission continued to ensure compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces in its support to Congolese defence and security forces. In March and April 2023, 40 risk assessments were carried out, including 32 on transport, 3 on logistics, 3 on joint operations and 2 on other activities. Challenges identified related to the apparent use of certain foreign security actors by the Congolese security forces and reports of collaboration between the Congolese armed forces and national and foreign armed groups.

B. Field-level responses

38. In Ituri, despite the challenges and limitations, MONUSCO maintained a robust posture, providing protection to displaced populations targeted by CODECO and Zaire. On at least 12 occasions, the timely intervention of MONUSCO helped thwart several CODECO attacks against civilians. From 28 to 30 April, in Kandoy, Aru

territory, MONUSCO and the provincial inspection agency of the territory held a workshop on early warning and response mechanisms for 43 participants with diverse affiliations. On 2 May, in Malaya, Sengi I, Sengi II and Bikima, MONUSCO conducted awareness-raising activities with 39 persons, including representatives of local authorities, local protection committees, and women's associations and youth leaders, 14 of whom were women, on the MONUSCO mandate and early warning and response mechanisms, which led to the identification of seven new Community Alert Network focal points.

39. From 25 March to 1 April, MONUSCO provided direct physical protection from CODECO to more than 300,000 displaced persons through its standing combat deployment base in Drodro and its temporary operating base in Ro, based on information received through the Community Alert Network. On 11 and 12 June, in response to the attack by alleged CODECO elements on the Lala camp for internally displaced persons in Djugu territory, Ituri, MONUSCO dispatched patrols to deter further attacks and protect civilians along the Bule-Dheja-Maze axis, carried out the medical evacuation of three victims to Bunia and transported others to Bule hospital.

40. In Grand Nord, North Kivu, MONUSCO adapted to the new ADF modus operandi of conducting retaliatory attacks in reaction to joint operations of the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces. On 28 March, in response to a credible alert, MONUSCO provided intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support and dispatched a joint show of force with Congolese armed forces that deterred an ADF attack on Oicha General Hospital. From 19 to 23 April, the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade and Congolese armed forces carried out the joint Operation Nirmul, which dismantled a major ADF camp in Apetina-Sana forest and killed 22 combatants. On 4 May, MONUSCO, together with the Congolese armed forces, launched the joint Operation Teteza to maintain recovered positions and deter anticipated reprisal attacks by ADF.

41. In Rutshuru and Masisi territories, in North Kivu, the Mission stepped up its patrolling and protective presence, enabling the return of more than 2,000 internally displaced persons. The Mission held at least 29 outreach activities and consultations with 429 participants, including 72 women, representing different sectors of society, to de-escalate tensions, address hate speech and disinformation and advocate the protection of civilians. However, the Mission's field operations remained constrained by frequent attacks by civilians and the halting of its convoys by local communities and Congolese armed forces. In South Kivu, MONUSCO maintained a protective presence in Baraka, Mikenge, Minembwe and Sange.

42. MONUSCO continued its weekly coordination meetings with the Congolese armed forces and the East African Community regional force. The Mission also bilaterally engaged with regional force contingents to deconflict planned movements.

43. The MONUSCO Community Alert Network system received a monthly average of 310 alerts, 47 per cent of which originated from North Kivu, 37 per cent from South Kivu, 15 per cent from Ituri and 1 per cent from Tanganyika and Kinshasa. State security forces and/or MONUSCO responded to 57 per cent of the alerts.

44. In Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, MONUSCO, through the Mine Action Service, conducted 65 spot tasks between 21 March and 5 June, destroying 128 explosive remnants of war and 35 other explosive devices. The Mission also held risk-awareness sessions on explosive devices and remnants of war in Kabare, Bukavu, Bunia and Beni for United Nations military and civilian personnel and personnel of non-governmental organizations, as well as local authorities and populations. As at 5 June, 5,300 weapons belonging to State security forces had been marked as part of the operation to enhance their traceability.

VII. Stabilization and the strengthening of State institutions

A. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and stabilization

45. MONUSCO continued to support the implementation of the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme strategy in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu.

46. Between 21 March and 5 June, MONUSCO provided disarmament and reintegration support to 29 Congolese ex-combatants and supported family reunification for 12 children associated with armed groups. The Mission also facilitated the hosting of one Ugandan and one Rwandan ex-combatant at transit sites as part of its ongoing disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement efforts.

47. On 4 April, MONUSCO organized a meeting for 26 Hema and Lendu community leaders, including 2 women, to promote peaceful cohabitation and encourage a resumption of socioeconomic activities in Masumbuko, Ituri. On 26 April, MONUSCO and the Mayor of Beni launched the construction of three buildings for the Congolese police. Financed by MONUSCO, the new structures will serve to train law enforcement.

48. On 17 April, the disarmament and demobilization phase of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, coordinated by the provincial coordination team of the Programme and funded by the Ministry of Defence, was launched in Ituri with the establishment of a dedicated site in Diango.

49. MONUSCO continued to provide technical advice on mining governance and good offices to the tin and tantalum industry associations in order to strengthen traceability and control over key mining sites at risk of armed interference in Masisi territory, North Kivu. In close coordination with the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, the Mission liaised with the Congolese mining administration and judicial authorities to identify priority cases of illegal natural resource exploitation to be addressed through regional judicial cooperation and technical support. MONUSCO also launched a pilot project with the Federal Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources of Germany to equip and train technical mining services in South Kivu with commercial, off-the-shelf drones for the monitoring of mining activities.

B. Security sector reform

50. MONUSCO continued to support recruitment and capacity-building for the meaningful participation and retention of women in the security sector. On 6 April, in Kinshasa, MONUSCO, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and the Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies organized a mentoring session on leadership and strategic positioning for 200 female officers and staff in the security sector.

51. MONUSCO and UN-Women supported the sensitization and outreach campaign of the Congolese armed forces aimed at recruiting women aged between 18 and 25 in six communes around Kinshasa to serve as non-commissioned staff personnel. Of the 3,000 women expected to be enlisted for recruitment, as at 9 June, 1,818 had been selected and 862 deployed, and the others were undergoing a nine-month training.

52. On 4 May, the Senate passed a law establishing a military reserve force that allows civilian volunteers to be included among reservists and to defend the country and its territorial integrity in the case of an external threat or aggression.

53. MONUSCO continued to support the roll-out of the military code of ethics and conduct. From 11 to 20 May, the Mission, together with the German Embassy and the Dallaire Institute, provided capacity-building support for 30 trainers of military personnel, including 3 women representing the first military defence zone, covering Kinshasa, Équateur and Kongo Central, ahead of the outreach phase of the roll-out.

VIII. Women and peace and security

54. MONUSCO and United Nations system entities organized a “digital forum”, which was held in Kinshasa from 20 to 30 March, to promote the use of digital technologies in efforts to advance gender equality, women’s leadership and political and economic participation, and to prevent gender-based violence. These activities included approximately 2,000 participants, more than 80 per cent of whom were women. On 24 March, MONUSCO facilitated a workshop in Goma on women’s political participation for 40 participants, including men from civil society (3), women civil society leaders (15), politicians (15), journalists (3) and internally displaced women (4) from Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo territories.

55. On 11 April, in Goma, in collaboration with the local network of associations of women’s rights defenders associations, MONUSCO identified 75 women as local peace ambassadors in the Masisi, Nyiragongo and Rutshuru territories of North Kivu. The women peace ambassadors have conducted several awareness-raising activities in their communities on conflict prevention, disinformation, conflict resolution and the prevention of domestic violence. In May, MONUSCO supported the creation of a network of 100 women mediators in the framework of the Nairobi process and the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, to facilitate mediation and reconciliation efforts in Ituri, North and South Kivu.

IX. Integrated United Nations activities

A. Electoral process

56. MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, through an integrated electoral task force, provided limited logistical support to the Independent National Electoral Commission, deployed good offices to alleviate tensions related to the 2023 electoral process and provided capacity-building to electoral stakeholders.

57. In support of the Ministry of Interior, from 25 March to 1 April, MONUSCO, under the framework of the Technical Group on Securing the Electoral Process, conducted training sessions for 20 Congolese police officers on maintaining public order and safety during electoral periods in Beni and Oicha, North Kivu. On 10 April, the Mission transported two tons of electoral materials from Bunia to Aru and Mahagi, in Ituri. In addition, MONUSCO, together with the International Republican Institute, a non-profit organization, advocated the establishment of a network of women electoral observers.

58. On 25 April, as part of the 2023–2024 electoral support project, the Peacebuilding Fund and a bilateral donor pledged to fund two projects to support the elections in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, and in Haut-Katanga, Lualaba and Kasai Central, respectively. The two projects are aimed at securing elections and preventing conflicts before, during and after the polls.

B. Support to the judicial system and fight against impunity

59. MONUSCO continued to provide technical, logistical and financial support to military justice to fight impunity. From March to May 2023, MONUSCO supported two joint investigation teams and seven mobile courts, leading to 167 convictions for war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights-related violations. This included the conviction of 44 members of the Congolese armed forces, 13 police officers, 71 civilians and Mobondo group members in Kwilu and Kwango Provinces (including 1 woman), and 39 members of armed groups (including members of ADF and Kamuina Nsapu).

60. The United Nations Joint Human Rights Office continued to support the Ministry of Human Rights in organizing national consultations on transitional justice, with consultations taking place in Bas-Uélé in May 2023.

61. MONUSCO and the United Nations Development Programme engaged with national partners to revitalize the Joint Justice Reform Support Programme. The Programme supported military justice authorities to conduct investigation missions and mobile trials in priority cases in Kasai Central, Tanganyika and South Kivu, provided criminal analysis training to Congolese police officers, supported inspection missions of the High Military Court and provided logistical support to the prison administration.

62. In order to strengthen the criminal justice chain and address the issue of prolonged detention, MONUSCO provided technical and financial support for a series of inspections of judicial institutions and prisons in North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika and Ituri, which included screening of the files of more than 3,800 inmates. The Mission also funded four cycles of training on the handling of criminal cases in South Kivu. As at 15 May, training had been provided to a total of 82 judicial and court staff, including 20 women.

63. In support of the Government's efforts to reduce overcrowding in prisons and combat violent extremism, the recruitment to armed groups and the radicalization of their members, in April, MONUSCO rehabilitated two cells and provided 294 mattresses to the Central Prison of Goma, supported the construction of high-risk blocks for prisons in Ndolo and Luzumu, with a capacity of 250 and 500 inmates, respectively, and on 30 March handed over a new building for the military prosecutor's office for the garrison in Beni. On 4 and 5 May, MONUSCO also facilitated a two-day workshop for the design of a prison deradicalization strategy, which would be presented to the national authorities for them to take ownership and operationalize.

C. Child protection

64. The country task force on monitoring and reporting, co-chaired by MONUSCO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), continued to monitor and report on grave violations of children's rights. Between 21 March and 31 May, the Mission verified 573 grave violations perpetrated against 454 children (332 boys and 122 girls), including 290 children who were recruited and used (243 boys and 47 girls). The Alliance des forces de résistance congolaises was responsible for the largest number of verified violations (135), followed by CODECO factions (73) and Mai-Mai Mazembe factions (66). Congolese armed forces were reportedly responsible for the killing of one boy in North Kivu.

65. Between 21 March and 9 June, at the invitation of the Congolese armed forces, MONUSCO and UNICEF jointly conducted age-verification assessments of 794

candidates (including 41 female candidates) for recruitment to the armed forces, 98 of whom were confirmed to be children (93 boys and 5 girls) and were excluded from the recruitment process.

D. Gender and sexual violence in conflict

66. From March to May, at least 109 women were victims of conflict-related sexual violence. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for incidents affecting 99 women. Twa factions perpetrated most of the abuses (29), followed by M23 (16), Mai-Mai factions (16), Ngumino (11), CODECO (9), Nyatura factions (8), Raya Mutomboki (4), Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové of Guidon (2), Zaire (2), RED Tabara, Chini ya Tuna and Mai-Mai Apa na Pale (1 each). Congolese security forces were allegedly responsible for incidents of sexual violence involving 10 women, of whom 9 were allegedly attacked by Congolese soldiers and 1 by a police officer. The provinces with the highest number of victims of sexual violence, committed by all parties, were Tanganyika (34), followed by North Kivu (25), South Kivu (25), Ituri (17) and Maniema (1). Insecurity continued to hamper the monitoring and investigation of cases related to conflict-related sexual violence, particularly in Rutshuru territory in North Kivu.

67. On 25 April, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO attended a high-level event on gender-based violence and legislative progress, chaired by the First Lady of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denise Nyakeru Tshisekedi, which helped mobilize partners and offered an opportunity to present the Government's mechanisms, protection and reparations measures for victims and survivors.

X. Exit strategy

68. MONUSCO continued to hold high-level and technical engagements with, inter alia, the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Planning on the revision of the 2021 joint transition plan for MONUSCO. On 18 May, the Prime Minister, Sama Lukonde, chaired a meeting with a MONUSCO delegation, led by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to discuss key benchmarks that would create the minimum security conditions for the withdrawal of MONUSCO. The Congolese authorities reaffirmed their call for an accelerated transition. Discussions on the revised transition plan continue, with the Government agreeing to make its communications consistent with the Mission-related public communication. From 3 to 7 June, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations visited eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kinshasa to discuss the transition of MONUSCO and the reconfiguration of the United Nations presence with national and local authorities and civil society, including women representatives.

A. Implementation of priority actions

69. On 6 April, in North Kivu, MONUSCO conducted a mission to officially close its base in Kamango (47 km north-east of Beni), reassuring local authorities and civil society of its continued support for the protection of civilians in the area and encouraging the use of the Community Alert Network and local protection Committees that had been established with the support of MONUSCO.

70. In South Kivu, pre-closure missions were conducted in Walungu and Bunyakiri bases on 18 April and from 19 to 26 April, respectively. In Walungu, MONUSCO handed over assets to local authorities, while in Bunyakiri, the Mission sensitized the

local community on the roles and responsibilities of State actors and civil society for the promotion of security, social cohesion and democratic governance. From 16 to 23 May, MONUSCO conducted a joint assessment mission to Shabunda to build the capacity of local authorities and communities to manage security threats following the closure of the Mission's base in the area.

71. On 3 May, the Governor of South Kivu Province and representatives of the United Nations country team and MONUSCO led a workshop to launch the provincial joint transition planning process. A total of 65 participants, including 13 women, representing provincial authorities, civil society organizations and the United Nations country team, adopted the terms of reference of the provincial integrated transition team for transition planning in South Kivu Province. Similar workshops were held in Bunia, Ituri, on 14 June and in Goma, North Kivu, on 15 June, to discuss and identify transition priorities with a view to developing provincial transition plans.

B. Update on integration and resource mobilization

72. MONUSCO, the United Nations country team and other partners pursued efforts to mobilize resources and implement activities in preparation for the Mission's withdrawal. On 1 May, the United Nations country team initiated a mapping exercise, to be completed by 30 June, on the programmatic portfolio of the United Nations country team and human resource requirements.

73. On 4 April, the Mine Action Service and an international cooperation agency launched a sustainable, humanitarian anti-mine action programme to support 1 million refugees, internally displaced persons and affected communities in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu over two years, while also building the capacity of national authorities to address explosive ordnance-related threats.

74. On 6 and 8 June, in Kinshasa, MONUSCO, together with the delegation of the European Union to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported by the United Nations Transitions Project, organized a workshop on United Nations transition partnerships to ensure that Government expectations and engagements in the three main areas of the revised transition plan (protection of civilians, security sector reform and the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme) are understood and supported by partners in their coordinated interventions. The event also introduced the provincial integrated transition teams to the donor community and identified a list of entry points to enhance cooperation, including the Prevention and Resilience Allocation of the World Bank.

XI. Mission effectiveness

A. Mission performance (military, police, and civilian personnel)

Military component

75. As at 23 May, the military component of MONUSCO had deployed 12,547 troops, 6 per cent of whom were women, and 493 United Nations military experts on mission, 25 per cent of whom were women, of an authorized strength of 13,500 troops and 508 United Nations military experts on mission. From 21 March to 30 May, MONUSCO established 12 standing combat deployments and conducted 3,349 day patrols, 2,420 night patrols, 338 long-range patrols and missions, 166 joint patrols, 311 escorts and 2 aerial reconnaissance operations.

76. In line with its Action for Peacekeeping Plus commitments, MONUSCO conducted evaluations of 12 military units, 1 aviation unit, 1 special force unit, 2 medical units and 1 treatment unit. All units met the required standards. A performance improvement plan was developed for each unit to implement specific improvement measures.

77. The number of female engagement teams remained at 14, representing 9 per cent of the total strength of the force. The military component conducted in-mission evaluations that are still under review, using the task, standards and indicators methodology developed by the Office of Military Affairs. Pilot evaluations for sector headquarters, medical and military police units remained under way.

78. Women represented 25 per cent of MONUSCO military staff officers and military observers, compared with 24 per cent during the previous reporting period, while contingent female participation decreased from 7.6 per cent to 6.2 per cent. Female and mixed engagement teams conducted over 75 activities, compared with 60 in the previous reporting period, including civil-military cooperation activities, outreach projects focused on women and children and gender-sensitive patrols.

Police component

79. As at 8 June, the police component had deployed 1,614 personnel from 31 contributing countries: 1,229 formed police personnel, including 211 female personnel, and 385 individual police officers, including 116 female officers, out of an authorized strength of 1,410 formed police unit personnel and 591 individual police officers. Formed police units completed 2,361 quick-response interventions, 193 escorts, 4,594 patrols, 728 joint patrols with individual police officers, 109 joint patrols with Congolese National Police, and 78 patrols around camps for internally displaced persons.

80. Individual police officers benefited from in-mission training on occupational safety (26 officers, including 23 women), awareness of mandate (120 officers, including 30 women), training for trainers (12 officers, including 3 women) and protection of civilians (26 officers, including 6 women). The overall performance rating of individual police officers increased from 74 per cent in the previous reporting period to 80 per cent.

81. All formed police units benefited from a total of 24 operational readiness inspections, 1,136 scenario-based training sessions, 113 scenario-based training inspections and 8 contingent-owned equipment inspections to uphold the standard of operational preparedness and maintain logistics capability. The performance of eight formed police units was evaluated as satisfactory. Performance improvement plans were designed to address the gaps identified, including the need to replace defective contingent-owned equipment and to engage in advocacy for increased female participation.

Civilian component

82. As at 23 May, 2,162 civilian personnel (21.2 per cent women), including 305 United Nations Volunteers (43.1 per cent women) and 34 government-provided correctional personnel, were serving with MONUSCO. This represented 91.7 per cent of the approved positions.

Comprehensive planning and performance assessment

83. MONUSCO continued to implement its Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System results framework, conducting its third impact assessment on 3 and 4 May. The exercise will contribute to the development of options

for the reconfiguration of the Mission's civilian, police and military components and the future United Nations configuration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as requested by the Security Council in its resolution 2666 (2022).

B. Strategic communication

84. Based on the Mission's social media monitoring, a 50 per cent decrease in anti-MONUSCO sentiments was recorded compared with the previous reporting period. MONUSCO nevertheless continued to be targeted by the inflammatory use of photographs and video footage as calls-to-action, coupled with text messages and coordinated trolling on social media against the Mission's leadership. The attacks mainly accused MONUSCO of undermining the host country's sovereignty and interfering with its internal affairs. Online campaigns against MONUSCO became more sophisticated, using innovative means to avoid algorithmic screening by social media platforms.

85. To debunk false accusations, MONUSCO produced monthly reports on misinformation and intensified its presence on social networks through video, pictures and voice notes in French and Swahili. The Mission also strengthened communication on its efforts to protect civilians.

C. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

86. From 1 March to 31 May, MONUSCO recorded 18 new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that had occurred between 2006 and 2022 and involved 16 military, 1 police and 1 civilian personnel. All 18 allegations are pending investigation by the relevant troop-contributing countries or by the United Nations.

87. The Mission ensured that all 18 victims, and 16 children alleged to be born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse, subject to paternity claims, were supported and received medical and psychosocial support in a timely manner and in accordance with the victim assistance protocols established with service providers, including UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund.

88. In line with the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, MONUSCO enhanced its preventive efforts through outreach and training activities and engagement with local communities and humanitarian organizations. In addition, the Mission recorded 12 new allegations of other serious misconduct, all attributed to civilian personnel. Allegations concerning fraud and/or theft (8), physical assault (3) and wilful acts that could cause reputational damage to the United Nations (1) were under investigation.

XII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

89. On 28 March, civilians pelted with stones a patrol of the Intervention Brigade in Oicha, North Kivu. Similar incidents were reported on 13 April, when a joint MONUSCO-Congolese armed forces patrol in Mungamba, Ituri, was targeted, injuring three Congolese soldiers, and on 3 June, when a MONUSCO convoy near Goma airport was targeted, with no casualties reported. Security and safety incidents increased from 87 during the previous reporting period to 152. These incidents affected 108 United Nations personnel, including 23 women. They included 84 crime-related incidents, 20 civil unrest cases and 48 cases of hazards. In North Kivu, the Mission maintained the mitigation measures implemented following the large-scale

anti-MONUSCO demonstrations in 2022, including restrictions on movement and the use of unmarked vehicles.

90. MONUSCO continued to monitor the weekly appeal hearing before the High Military Court at Ndolo prison in Kinshasa of 50 people convicted in relation to the assassination of the two United Nations experts in Kananga in 2017. MONUSCO provided ballistic expertise to support Congolese military justice investigations related to the attack on MONUSCO premises in Goma in July 2022 and the attack on 7 February 2023 of a MONUSCO convoy near Munigi, North Kivu. The Mission also provided redacted copies of Board of Inquiry reports to the Congolese military justice authorities related to the killing of a Tanzanian peacekeeper in North Kivu in 2013 and the attack on a United Nations helicopter on 29 March 2022, which killed eight peacekeepers.

XIII. Observations

91. I am encouraged by the temporary conclusion of the voter registration, which marked an important milestone in the electoral process. The commitment to gender parity demonstrated throughout the process is a positive step towards women's meaningful political participation in the upcoming elections. I urge the electoral authorities and relevant stakeholders to devise consensual and corrective measures for the areas where insecurity hampered registration and to take additional measures to reinforce the credibility of the voters roll for the next stages of the electoral process. The disproportionate use of force by the police and other security incidents during the demonstrations on 20 May is concerning and I call upon the Congolese authorities to take the necessary measures to respect and protect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations system to support constructive discussions to restore confidence in the electoral process and address key contentious issues.

92. I remain deeply concerned by the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The surge in violence, particularly in Ituri and North Kivu, is deeply disturbing. I strongly condemn the despicable acts of violence committed by CODECO, ADF, Zaire, M23, Mai-Mai, Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and other armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and reiterate my call upon all Congolese and foreign armed groups to unconditionally lay down their arms and bring an end to the spiral of violence that has plagued the country for far too long. I call upon Member States to support ongoing efforts to alleviate the suffering of displaced and vulnerable populations and create a conducive environment for the implementation of ongoing peace processes.

93. I welcome the ceasefire between M23 and the Congolese armed forces and ongoing preparations for the cantonment of M23, with support from the East African Community regional force, Angolan troops and MONUSCO. This positive yet fragile momentum must be maintained to avoid a return to large-scale conflict. I call upon M23 to fully withdraw from all occupied areas and comply with the decisions of the Luanda communiqué of 23 November 2022.

94. I am encouraged by the mobilization of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the full deployment of the East African Community regional force, the imminent deployment of Angolan troops to secure M23 cantonment sites and the decision of SADC to deploy part of its Standby Force to the region as a testament to the region's commitment to restoring peace and stability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to work with regional leaders to address the underlying drivers of conflict and violence.

95. Greater efforts are required to ensure that ongoing regional peace initiatives are mutually reinforcing. Effective coordination between MONUSCO and the numerous security actors present in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains essential to maximizing their respective contributions to current peace efforts and the protection of civilians. I am encouraged by the announcement of the next phase of the Nairobi process consultations and call for a swift implementation of the measures already agreed upon to enable the sustainable disarmament and reintegration of armed group members into civilian life. I commend the efforts undertaken to revitalize the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region and better align it with the Nairobi and Luanda processes.

96. It is critical that all actors uphold the underlying principles of the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, which are designed to break the cycle of violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In this regard, it is important that the recent draft law establishing a military reserve force does not lead to the de facto integration of armed groups into the Congolese armed forces as this would jeopardize the gains achieved under the Nairobi process, threaten the viability of the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, and impede efforts to fight impunity.

97. I welcome the continuing consultations between the Congolese authorities, MONUSCO and the United Nations country team on the re-evaluation of the joint transition plan for the phased, responsible and conditions-based withdrawal of MONUSCO. I take note of the Government's desire to accelerate the Mission's departure. I look forward to the swift conclusion of ongoing discussions between the Government and MONUSCO to enable the implementation of provincial-level transition plans to ensure that the withdrawal of MONUSCO does not jeopardize the gains made as a result of its presence. I stress the utmost necessity to ensure that the transition avoids the creation of a security vacuum for those Congolese civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo who continue to depend on MONUSCO for their physical protection.

98. I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative for her steadfast leadership and continuous efforts. In addition, I wish to convey my gratitude to all MONUSCO personnel, members of the United Nations system, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes for their tireless efforts in support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region in achieving sustained peace and stability.

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