



Security Council

Seventy-fourth year

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New York

Provisional

President: Mr. Singer Weisinger (Dominican Republic)

Members:

Belgium	Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve
China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Ipo
Equatorial Guinea	Mrs. Mele Colifa
France	Mr. Delattre
Germany	Mr. Heusgen
Indonesia	Mr. Djani
Kuwait	Mr. Alotaibi
Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
Poland	Ms. Wronecka
Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
South Africa	Mr. Matjila
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Ms. Pierce
United States of America	Mr. Cohen

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/2019/6)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.40 a.m.

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/2019/6)

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia to participate in today's meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Joseph Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Johannesburg.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante; Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; and Monseigneur Marcel Utembi, President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo.

Ms. Zerrougui, Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo and Monseigneur Utembi are joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Kinshasa.

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/2019/6, 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. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui (*spoke in French*): I would like to welcome the representatives of the five countries that

have just joined the Security Council, including your own, Mr. President.

While in principle our discussions were supposed to focus on the latest quarterly report on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2019/6), I will limit my remarks to the most recent facts.

The implementation of the electoral process is entering its final stages. The elections initially announced for 23 December were finally held on 30 December throughout the national territory, with the exception of the cities of Beni and Butembo in North Kivu and Yumbi in Mai-Ndombe province, where the Commission électorale nationale indépendante decided to postpone them to next March for health and security reasons.

Millions of Congolese went to the polls, often with fervour and, in the vast majority of cases, voting took place peacefully as voters went to choose their future President and their national and provincial representatives. I would like to congratulate them on the impressive maturity they showed on that long-awaited election day and since then. I also commend the work done by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, as well as the election observers.

All national and international observation missions, as well as the teams of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) that are deployed in the field, reported in their preliminary reports that the elections were conducted correctly despite technical, logistical and security problems. All agreed that those difficulties had not, however, hindered the freedom of movement of citizens or the exercise of their right to vote. The waiting period for the publication of the provisional results, which was extended by three days, was also calm. Once again, I was greatly impressed by the patience shown by Congolese men and women, who were anxious to preserve and protect the expression of their votes, but above all fully aware of the importance of those elections for the future of their country.

I used that time to meet with the country's President and the main stakeholders in the electoral process to convey the importance of ensuring calm in anticipation of the publication of the provisional results, which were announced overnight on Wednesday to Thursday and which, for the presidential election, Mr. Félix Tshisekedi is in first place, followed by Mr. Martin Fayulu and Mr. Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. That

message was preceded by the announcement of the provisional results of the provincial elections.

(spoke in English)

Reactions to the Commission électorale nationale indépendante's announcement were swift and varied. Mr. Tshisekedi welcomed his victory and vowed to be a President for all Congolese. Although the Front commun pour le Congo stated that it would respect the Commission's results, the Lamuka coalition denounced what it called electoral fraud, with the potential to provoke disorder throughout the country. While the results were greeted by scenes of joy in some strongholds of the Union pour la nation congolaise and the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, many Lamuka supporters received the news with a sense of disbelief.

Regrettably, serious security incidents were noted in several locations. Most concerning, in Kwilu province, violent protests reportedly left at least 12 dead, including two national police lynched and 10 civilians killed by live ammunition, as well as significant damage to public property. Our teams are in the process of deploying to Kikwit, where MONUSCO has no presence, to ascertain further details and engage with a view to de-escalating tensions. In Kisangani and several locations in Kasai province, incidents of clashes and destruction have been reported, with injuries, arrests and possible deaths still being verified.

The situation has also been tense in several communes in Kinshasa, following clashes between supporters of Lamuka and Cap pour le changement supporters, and in some cases also with the police. I deplore all such acts of violence and appeal to the Congolese people and security forces alike to exercise calm and restraint in this critical period.

The week ahead may be characterized by a period of contestation and a judicial review of provisional presidential results, with the final results expected to be announced by the Constitutional Court within a week. The coming days are therefore critical to the conclusion of this historic electoral process. I continue to discharge my good offices by engaging with all Congolese stakeholders to reinforce the need for calm and recourse to established judicial procedures, as well as to emphasize that a supreme sense of responsibility must prevail in the days ahead.

Millions of Congolese women and men have demonstrated their commitment to the political process

in their country and their determination to exercise their democratic right to vote. We must therefore show our collective solidarity with them as the electoral process is finalized and the Democratic Republic of the Congo prepares to undertake the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history.

The President *(spoke in Spanish)*: I thank Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo.

Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo *(spoke in French)*: The Democratic Republic of the Congo just held its presidential, legislative and provincial elections on Sunday, 30 December 2018, in accordance with national legislation, specifically the country's Constitution and the organic law on the organization of the operations of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, as well as the general law. Of course, that architecture is complemented by other laws and regulations pertaining to the organization of elections.

Before I proceed with my statement, I would like to inform the Security Council that, three years after I was appointed President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, we have now reached what could be considered the culmination of our work. I would note that the process was fraught with numerous difficulties. As such, some would have thought it not humanly possible for me to now be able to share positive results.

The reason for that is that the process is rife with constraints and, above all, mistrust. There is total mistrust among the actors themselves, among the politicians and with regard to the electoral process itself, as well as between the Government and other actors, such as the international community, and even sometimes towards me, the President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante. Since I became President, not a day goes by without someone demanding that President Nangaa resign. This environment made it very difficult for us to carry out our work. Nevertheless, some of the obstacles could have been avoided because they were rooted in mistrust, innuendo, suspicions and other factors.

With regard to the registration of voters on the electoral rolls, everything was called into question. Of all the decisions taken by Electoral Commission, there is not one that is not challenged by this or that group or stakeholder, including the international community,

which, at times, surprises us with positions entirely divorced from reality, when in fact they are partners with whom we work day and night.

As for voter registration, we conducted seven rounds and, thank God, have ended up with 40 million registered voters. Since then, even the 40 million voters have been challenged because some believe that we are overstating or understating the number of voters, or that we have somehow made a mistake.

The electoral register was audited by the International Organization of la Francophonie. The Electoral Commission believed that the audit conducted at its request would help to build confidence. Unfortunately, the audit cast more doubt than expected. Thereafter, we were able to adopt all the laws required to conduct the process. Unfortunately, all the laws that were adopted have been challenged.

We have assembled the electorate and even the candidates, and we carry out our functions in accordance with the mission entrusted to us by the Constitution. Some of the Electoral Commission's decisions have been challenged, and some consider themselves to be the experts instead of the Commission for one reason or another. We registered 21 candidates for the presidential election. We also registered approximately 15,358 candidates for national elections and 19,640 candidates for provincial elections.

In order to facilitate successful elections, the Commission électorale nationale indépendante introduced technology in the form of what are known as voting machines. Even those machines have been the object of a year of bickering — saying no to the voting machine, we do not want it, it is for cheating, it is for this or that purpose. Regrettably, some candidates, even a week before the elections, were still telling their supporters not to use the voting machines. The elections nevertheless took place, and that is what is important. It was held on 30 December, and even the critics who did not want voting machines now welcome the holding of the elections.

I hold the Security Council somewhat accountable because, from the perspective of the Electoral Commission, these unhelpful discussions have been supported, and even created, by the international community. For obvious reasons, the voting machines had no problems and events proved us right, but the fact that this matter was escalated to the international

level is a little embarrassing and creates a very complicated situation.

The election took place, and before giving the Commission's analysis, it is very clear that on Sunday, 30 December, when many were predicting chaos, saying that we would not be able to vote with the voting machines and that elections would not be possible, the elections were held. Everyone was able to vote and today, unlike in 2006 and 2011, the election took place on 30 December in an atmosphere of peace. Whereas in the past there were casualties, the election on 30 December went well and everything proceeded rather smoothly.

After the elections it was necessary to move on to the post-electoral phase, which consists of two important elements. The first is, of course, the collection and processing of data for the announcement of provisional results, in accordance with the law. That is what the Electoral Commission has been working on, and two days ago it was able to announce the provisional results of the elections. Of course, we must not be under any illusions — something that was also said even before the elections. We were indeed anticipating reactions, starting with the Catholic Church. It should be noted that the Catholic Church challenged the results in 2006 and 2011, and it is now challenging the result of the 2018 election. That is no surprise. It is what we expected for well-known reasons.

Of course, when elections are held, there are many stakeholders and everything must be done in accordance with the law. Far be it from us to announce from this forum that the election was organized flawlessly. It is a human undertaking that was organized against the backdrop of well-known challenges, but the key point is that what is important has been safeguarded. We are in our third election cycle and the elections have taken place.

In a letter dated 4 January, we protested against the unlawful announcement of election results by persons and bodies legally incompetent to do so. We addressed that correspondence to the President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO) by clearly identifying the articles of the Constitution, the various laws and other texts that were systematically violated by the early announcements of the trends in the results. What is worse is that we went so far as to say that they knew the name of the person who would have won, which was surprising. We drew CENCO's attention to

the fact that this trend and this issue being managed in this way obliged the stakeholders to refrain from commenting on publications and trends in election results and that they would be responsible for what would happen in that regard.

Why are we saying that? There are many elements that we would like to make available to the Security Council. We have here a list of all the organizations and the witnesses of the political parties who participated in the monitoring of the elections. We tend to think that it was just the Catholic Church that observed. No, dozens of organizations did so as well. I have heard that 40,000 CENCO observers were deployed. That is very serious. The observation was deployed on the basis of the accreditation of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante.

Accreditation statistics for CENCO have never reached the figures that are put forward. We have 17,000 observers accredited by the Commission. We are told that, apart from the accredited observers, there were others who were not accredited by the Commission. Of course, in addition, there are more than 6,000 other observers who are considered permanent or long-term observers, and therefore we have approximately 20,000 to 23,000 observers. I do not know where the 40,000 observers come from. On that issue, there is a fundamental question.

Observation missions are organized and managed by the law. The observers are not tasked with compiling data. I do not know where the CENCO results are from. The observers are not qualified to obtain, at the polling station level, the various reports and cards, which are rather issued to witnesses of the political parties. Should I take that to mean that the CENCO observation mission conducted itself as a witness of the political parties? I would be interested to know which party it favoured. Those are serious issues, and I challenge anybody who may claim that they have collected all of the records. For the Commission itself to do so, it would have taken nearly a week. These are serious issues.

Having said that, we announced the results in accordance with the law. I believe that the Commission is of the view that it has done its job. If there is a dispute, the law provides for verification mechanisms and other mechanisms, and I think that there are competent courts to do that. Nevertheless, we would like to make it clear to the Security Council that we seem to be losing sight

of the objectives that were the reason for this process. I believe that there are three main objectives.

The first objective is that the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo did not want their Constitution to be changed. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was not changed. That was a victory for the opposition, the majority and civil society. It was a victory for the opposition because it more or less demonstrated that we are in a country where there is an opposition that does not allow the authorities to do whatever they want. It was a victory for the majority and those in power because, by not changing the Constitution, they could also consider making a forced transition, but they did not do so. It was a victory for civil society, which has always sought to defend the Constitution, because that objective was achieved.

The second objective, which I underscored for the Congolese people, is that the Congolese people did not want there to be a third term for the Head of State, the outgoing President of the Republic. Indeed, he did not run as a candidate, which reflects the fact that we had 21 candidates other than him. That is a victory that has been achieved.

The third objective is that we have achieved a handover of power at the highest level of the State. This handover of power is all the more important for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as for the first time in the 60 years of its post-independence existence, we will experience in the weeks to come a handover of power between an outgoing Head of State and an incoming Head of State. For the very first time, we will see how, as is done in other countries, the two Heads of State greet one another. Indeed, over the course of 60 years we have had four Presidents: President Kasavubu, President Mobutu, President Laurent-Désiré Kabila and President Joseph Kabila. The first four Presidents succeeded one another without ever engaging with one another — either through coups or assassinations. We will have the first peaceful handover of power in the weeks to come, of course after having processed all the documents and dossiers pertaining to the provisional results. The Commission stands ready; its team has already been put together to manage the challenges.

In conclusion, what should I say? You, Mr. President, invited me to take part in this meeting. In about 30 minutes after my statement, we will proclaim the provisional results of the national legislative elections.

This is an election conducted under circumstances of which we are all aware. However, to general surprise, the elections were well organized. In that regard, we wish to pay tribute to the Commission's representatives. A large number of them — 32 agents of the Commission — perished during this process. We pay tribute to them by noting that we have achieved what we sought to achieve, what the Congolese people have been awaiting all this time. That is briefly what I wanted to note.

I will conclude by stating that the Commission worked under difficult conditions with constant challenges, whether the controversies were fabricated not. However, regardless of the difficulties encountered, it has done what it was able to do. We also say that we were not perfect. The Commission, through me, asks for indulgence for every time we made a mistake. However, the essential thing is that the results are within reach today and that it is time, with the beginning of this new mandate, for the new authorities to be supported by the international community as always. Why should one try to weaken them when they have not even taken their first steps yet? Yes, there may be challenges from various quarters. We believe that the competent courts will take care of the rest. We expect to submit the final reports of the process, which will lead us, more or less, to the first peaceful and civilized handover of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

It would be remiss of me to conclude without thanking the United Nations. Some believed that the Commission received only logistical support for the process. That is not true. We wish to thank the United Nations for its ongoing technical assistance to the Commission. More than 150 international experts work alongside us in the same building. Only badges distinguish a Commission employee from a United Nations employee. The relationship was decisive in the planning stages, the concept and design of certain processes and for our reporting. We would also like to thank other actors and stakeholders, including the political parties, who participated in the process. The Congolese voiced their views. Today we have a President-elect. We hope that the process will continue until he is officially sworn in as President.

I also wish to draw the attention of members to the fact that there is controversy. There are only two options for addressing it: either confirm the result of the Commission or cancel the election. Cancelling the election would mean that current institutions would

remain in place because we will not have a President until new elections are organized.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union.

Ms. Mohammed: First of all, I would like to convey to you, Mr. President, the greetings of Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat and his thanks for the invitation extended to the African Union Commission to brief the Security Council on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular on the recently held elections in that country.

That invitation is a further illustration of the close partnership that exists between the African Union and the United Nations on matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. The partnership has been significantly strengthened over the past few years. One its main features is the promotion of African leadership and ownership as a key principle for ensuring sustainable solutions to the peace and security issues of concern to the continent.

The situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a matter of the utmost importance to the African Union. Peace and security in the Congo is critical to the well-being of its people, but also to the overall stability and prosperity of the region and the continent as a whole. The African Union has therefore been actively involved in efforts to assist the Congolese stakeholders in reaching the required political consensus towards the holding of the recent free, fair and transparent elections, in order to consolidate the gains made over the past decades. Let me take this opportunity to also express the African Union's deep appreciation to the United Nations for its invaluable support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including through the deployment of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In that context, the African Union, in response to the invitation received from the Congolese authorities, decided to dispatch an election observation mission to monitor the polls that took place 30 December 2018. The African Union deployed 80 long- and short-term observers, under the leadership of former President Dioncounda Traoré of Mali. The team included members

of the Pan-African Parliament and election management bodies on the continent, as well as civil society representatives. On election day, the African Union election mission deployed 23 teams in 13 provinces, which observed voting and tallying operations in 317 polling stations that served as samples. It is important to highlight that there were 75,000 polling stations in total, including those located in the provinces where the voting was eventually postponed due to security and health concerns.

The mission made the following observations relating to the polling stations it visited. First, the polling stations opened on time, although in some of them the commencement of voting operations was delayed. Secondly, voting materials were available in most of the polling stations and polling staff was present throughout the operations. Thirdly, the elections took place in a calm and peaceful atmosphere. There were, however, isolated incidents of violence and shortcomings that marred the voting operation. Fourthly, the representatives of the candidates were present in all the visited polling stations. And, fifthly, closing and tallying operations were conducted in accordance with the existing legal framework. The observation mission strongly urged that, first, the results that will be proclaimed should reflect the will of the people. Secondly, the Congolese stakeholders should preserve the climate of peace that prevailed during the voting. And, thirdly, any challenge to the result should be channelled through the existing legal process.

As members are all aware, the Commission électorale nationale indépendante proclaimed the provisional results of the elections yesterday. As far as the presidential election is concerned, Mr. Félix Tshisekedi, from *Cap pour le changement*, was declared the winner. Given that the Commission is the only legally mandated body to proclaim the results of the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the African Union can rely only on the outcome as announced. It is important to note in that connection that the African Union election observation methodology focuses on the process that leads to the outcomes of the elections. Additionally, given the limited number of polling stations that were observed by the election observation mission, the African Union, even if it were granted that power, is not in a position to provide figures on the outcome of the election.

Obviously, the results that were announced, while welcomed by Congolese stakeholders and part of the

population, have been challenged by others, including in street protests that led to unfortunate loss of life. In line with the rule of law, it is the African Union's position that such challenges, including claims relating to discrepancies between the proclaimed results and the verdict of the ballot boxes, should be addressed peacefully and through recourse to existing legal avenues and political dialogue.

Clearly, the 30 December 2018 elections were a watershed in the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Congolese people and the institutions involved in the electoral process should be commended for their efforts. The Congolese stakeholders owe it to their people and their country to act in a manner that fosters democracy and preserves peace. In that respect, the African Union is of the strong view that the current situation in the Congo calls for as large a consensus as possible among all Congolese based on respect for democracy and human rights, as well as the maintenance and consolidation of peace. The African Union is ready to assist to that end in any way deemed to be appropriate.

The statements issued by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Chairperson of the Southern African Development Community on 10 and 11 January, respectively, clearly articulate the views of the continent on the issue at hand. It is our hope that the Security Council, as it has done before, will extend full support to the African-led efforts to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its people to successfully complete the electoral process and overcome related challenges. That approach is the surest path towards effectively achieving our shared objective of peace, democracy and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Ms. Mohammed for her briefing.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia.

Mr. Malanji (Zambia): As you have indicated, Mr. President, I am Honourable Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia and Chairperson of the Ministerial Committee of the Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation of Southern African Development Community (SADC). Allow me to deliver this statement to this meeting of the Security Council.

On 30 December 2018, the Democratic Republic of the Congo held its much-awaited presidential, legislative and provincial elections. In line with its long-standing tradition, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) deployed its electoral observer mission, which I had the honour to lead. The elections were postponed from 23 December 2018 following an unfortunate fire that gutted the warehouse of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante in the capital city of Kinshasa. No party could ascertain whether it was arson. On that premise, we therefore consider it an act of force majeure. Security threats and an outbreak of the Ebola virus also necessitated the postponement of the elections to March 2019 in three areas of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, for us not to be biased, we had to receive communication from the World Health Organization, which provided us with clear statistics indicating the existence of the Ebola virus in those areas. Furthermore, there were isolated incidences of violence in a few areas of the country. Such circumstances understandably created some tension leading up to the election day on 30 December 2018.

Notwithstanding the abovementioned and the historical challenges facing the country, our considered view is that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Commission électorale nationale indépendante and all stakeholders managed the elections and the immediate post-election period relatively peacefully and in a calm atmosphere. In addition, we note that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo funded the elections, thereby showing its commitment to consolidating the democratic process in the country.

SADC has taken note of the release of the provisional results of the presidential election provided by the Electoral Commission on 9 January. We also note that there are some stakeholders that are not satisfied with the outcome of the presidential election in particular and that it is within their constitutional right to present their grievances through the legal framework of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in a peaceful way. SADC remains on hand to assist the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the process of consolidating their democracy and urges the international community to give stakeholders in the country an opportunity to engage themselves and their legal institutions in the post-election period. I know that it has already been mentioned by other stakeholders, but

allow me to quote some paragraphs of the statement of His Excellency Mr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu, President of the Republic of Zambia and Chairperson of the Organ:

“SADC further takes note of the disputes that have arisen, and encourages all concerned stakeholders to remain calm and act in a way that consolidates democracy and preserves peace.

“SADC calls upon stakeholders with concerns, including regarding the accuracy of the results, to pursue any election dispute about the provisional results peacefully through the avenues provided by the existing national legal framework, and to resolve their differences through political dialogue among all stakeholders.

“SADC reaffirms its commitment to continue to assist the Democratic Republic of the Congo with respect to neutralizing the negative forces and other armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.”

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Malanji for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Monseigneur Utambi.

Monseigneur Utambi (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO) and in my personal capacity, we would like to sincerely thank the Secretary-General and the members of the Security Council for the special attention that they pay daily to the situation in our country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the beginning of this new year of 2019, we would like to express our best wishes to them. We are pleased to have this opportunity to provide a general overview of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, focusing on a few points.

First, recalling the sociopolitical commitment of the Church, since 2003, the Catholic Church has supported the Congolese people through numerous actions, in particular through civic and electoral education, to promote the dignity of the human person and to strengthen democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That commitment was also expressed through mediation, which resulted in the comprehensive and inclusive political agreement known as the Saint-Sylvestre agreement, which essentially focused on the electoral process to ensure the legitimacy of the elected institutions. Through a pastoral approach, CENCO enabled the parties involved in the electoral process to

resolve certain differences and to reach agreement, inter alia, on the electoral register and on the use of voting machines for the elections that have just taken place.

With regard to the electoral mission, CENCO participated in observing the elections through its Justice and Peace Commission in order to contribute to the credibility of the electoral process in our country. For the presidential, national and provincial legislative elections of 30 December 2018, CENCO's electoral observer mission trained 41,026 short-term and long-term observers. It obtained the accreditation of 40,850 observers. One hundred and seventy-six candidates did not receive accreditation. However, they assisted in monitoring incidents outside the polling centres.

From the pool of accredited observers, at least one was deployed to each of the 21,784 polling stations throughout the entire country. That represents 100 per cent comprehensive coverage of the polling stations, as foreseen by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, with a ratio of one observer to every one to two polling stations. Of the 40,850 observers, 959 were deployed to Beni, the cities of Beni and Butembo, and Yumbi. Rather than the 40,000 short-term observers who were initially planned for, only 39,824 were effectively deployed. Until the very moment when text messaging services were cut off, the CENCO observer mission had already received at least 43 per cent of the data transmitted by its observers in areas covered by mobile-phone networks, as well as those who were in areas lacking such coverage but had access to Thuraya satellite phones. It is worth noting that our observer mission worked synergetically with other accredited observers, in particular those of the Church of Christ in the Congo and of the Synergie des Missions d'Observation Citoyenne des Elections, but it worked independently from all parties and political platforms and received no financing from them.

With respect to methodology, in terms of the collection and transmission of data, the CENCO observer mission had a data collection and analysis hub with a call centre staffed by 408 agents who were in contact with observers on the ground. In order to enable data to be transmitted back to the centre from areas lacking cell-phone network coverage, during the period when texting service was suspended, the CENCO observer mission had the use of 600 Thuraya telephones, which enabled the CENCO mission to collect data relating to more than 13,110,999 of the 18,329,318 votes cast that were reported by the Commission électorale nationale

indépendante, which translates into more than 71.53 per cent of legitimately cast votes counted by CENCO.

In terms of analysis, in order to analyse the number of votes received by the various candidates for the presidency of the Republic, the CENCO election observer mission used a parallel vote tabulation based on a representative sample of 10.72 per cent of the polling stations, applied proportionally to each of the electoral wards of the provincial deputies, that is, territories in rural areas and communes in urban areas, resulting in a sample of 7,886 polling stations for parallel vote tabulation. That sample was selected randomly and has a strict margin of error of 1 per cent, with a confidence level of 95 per cent. In addition, a further verification measure was taken based on a representative sample of 42.92 per cent of the votes legitimately cast that confirmed the trends just mentioned. Lastly, voting trends remained relatively similar following the counting of 71.53 per cent of the legitimately cast votes.

Concerning the 30 December 2018 holding of elections, voting took place throughout the entire country, with the exception of a few areas, namely, Beni territory and the cities of Beni and Butembo, in North Kivu province, and Yumbi territory, in Mai Ndombe province. Our observers noted a significant level of voter participation, although some of them were unable to participate effectively in the voting owing to unforeseen circumstances.

The provisional results of the 30 December 2018 elections were made public by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante on 10 January. CENCO took note of the publication of the provisional results, which make it possible, for the first time in our country's recent history, to embark upon the path leading to a peaceful transition of power at the highest levels of the State. However, in its analysis of certain elements that it has considered objectively, the CENCO observer mission noted that the results of the presidential election, as they appear in the publication issued by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, do not correspond to the data collected by the mission originating at the polling and counting stations.

We call for a recommendation to be made based on the solidarity of the United Nations with the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and call on the Security Council to ask the Commission électorale nationale indépendante to publish, as soon as possible, the records of the polling stations so as

to enable candidates to compare their data with that of the Commission. That would dispel any doubts regarding the number of votes among the people and the candidates, and thereby put their minds at ease. In the case of any potential challenge to the outcome, the Security Council could invite the relevant stakeholders to prioritize the path of truth and peace, which would go a long way towards maintaining peace and stability in our country.

In conclusion, in reiterating CENCO's sincere gratitude to the Security Council, we once again wish members a happy 2019 and commend the Council to God so that, through its constructive deliberations, peace can be achieved in our country, the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Monseigneur Utambi for his briefing.

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

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, to whom I wish once again to pay tribute; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia; the President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante; the President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo; and the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations for their important interventions. It is vital that the Security Council gain a broader perspective on the conduct of the elections, including through the assessments of the organizations that carried out electoral observation missions on the ground, alongside civil-society organizations.

France wishes first of all to pay tribute to the Congolese people as a whole, who demonstrated patience when the elections were postponed for more than two years and who turned up in large numbers on 30 December to exercise their right to vote. While there were many technical and political pitfalls during those two years and numerous hiccups in the implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016, what we will remember most of all is the image of those Congolese who queued up in an orderly manner, sometimes for several hours, in order to exercise their right to freely choose their representatives. That is an example of democratic vitality that France wishes to commend.

France also extends its congratulations to the political actors, civil society and relevant institutions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the organization of the elections, which were held under conditions that were deemed satisfactory, despite some irregularities, by the international election observation missions of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community and the African Union. France commends the work of the observer missions and of Congolese civil society, whose presence throughout the country contributed to the smooth conduct of the vote.

The process is not over. The Commission électorale nationale indépendante announced provisional results on 10 January regarding part of the provincial elections, as well as the presidential election. France is now awaiting the publication by the Commission of the results of the legislative elections, as well as the compilation of the minutes for the provincial elections and the detailed results of the presidential elections. The initial results have been disputed publicly. Congolese law provides for remedies and, as the African Union has pointed out, it is vital that any challenge to the results, in particular in relation to a discrepancy between them and the verdict of the ballot boxes, be carried out peacefully through existing legal procedures and political dialogue among all stakeholders.

In this crucial period, France renews its appeal to all parties to stay calm. It calls on all actors concerned to demonstrate responsibility and to foster national consensus, based on respect for democratic principles and the will expressed at the polls by Congolese voters, as well as for human rights and civil peace. These elections represent a historic moment for the Democratic Republic of the Congo that could lead to the first peaceful alternation of power in the history of the country as well as to the strengthening of its democratic institutions. That would be the culmination of a cycle that began in Sun City, South Africa, 16 years ago.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has taken important steps in recent weeks towards that goal. France stands with the Congolese nation and people and will accompany them on their path, while respecting the democratic choice made by the Congolese. In that context, France will propose to States members of the Council to adopt as soon as possible a press statement welcoming the conduct of the elections, calling on all parties to engage calmly in the next stages of the

process and inviting them to build national consensus in respect for the law and in the service of peace.

Mrs. Mele Colifa (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): We convey sincere greetings to all of the speakers who are with us this morning representing the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community and the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo, and we welcome the presence of the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at this important meeting. We welcome their interventions, which help provide us with a full understanding of the situation under consideration this morning.

We commend and value positively the high level of determination and commitment of the Government, the political parties, the Electoral Commission, civil society and the Catholic Church, but above all the attitude of the Congolese people, who have demonstrated their great sense of historical responsibility. We also thank all the regional and international actors who have accompanied the Congolese people on the long journey that culminated on 30 December with the conduct of fair, transparent and peaceful elections. The Congolese people, in spite of alarmist predictions, managed to overcome the many political, logistical and technical challenges in an authentic democratic election that the African continent is proud of and that undoubtedly constitutes a decisive step towards the consolidation of democracy, peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the subregion.

In accordance with the official declaration of the African Union following the publication of the provisional results of the presidential elections, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea calls on all the political actors and the general population of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at this crucial juncture in the country's political situation, to remain calm and exercise restraint, prudence and moderation in order to preserve an atmosphere of peace, tranquillity and national harmony in this post-election period. Equatorial Guinea believes that any claim or assertion challenging the results should be made through the legal institutions of the country that are competent in such cases, so that the way to a peaceful transfer of power to the victorious candidate may be opened, in accordance with the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the same vein, we ask regional and international actors to remain politically neutral and to refrain from carrying out actions or making statements that could alter the development of events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is very important that the Congolese themselves take the reins of their destiny at this historic moment.

We believe that, at such a decisive and delicate moment of its history, all of the Congolese people must prioritize the supreme interests of their country over their personal interests in order to guarantee a peaceful transfer of power in accordance with the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the agreement of 31 December 2016. We would also like to recall that elections cannot be considered as a zero-sum game, where the winners take all and the losers get nothing.

We cannot conclude without conveying our best wishes for calm, tranquillity and peace to the brotherly people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and reminding all political actors to abide by their commitment to the road map until power has been transferred effectively, in an atmosphere of solemnity, pride and national harmony, thereby opening up a new chapter in the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We have listened attentively — extremely attentively, even — to today's briefers, and we thank Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, Ms. Fatima Mohammed, Mr. Joseph Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, and Monseigneur Utembi for their information.

We have taken note of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante's publication of the preliminary results of the presidential elections held on 30 December. As we understand it, in accordance with the election law of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the official outcomes of an election must be certified by the Constitutional Court, after which the inauguration of the elected Head of State will take place. We view the holding of the presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as an important step in the gradual normalization of the situation in this major African country, which has been experiencing internal political tensions for several decades, and we hope to see Congolese society making further progress on the path to political and socioeconomic development.

We note that the elections were held peacefully, and we respect Kinshasa's right to postpone the voting in areas where there are security problems or where the Ebola outbreak has not yet been stamped out. We note the generally positive reports by the regional observer missions from the Southern African Development Community and the African Union. We agree with the observers' opinion that the fact that the elections took place is in itself a major victory for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and we commend the efforts of the Government and the Electoral Commission in that regard.

In our view, the parties in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should resolve potential disputes about election issues through legal channels, and we join the Secretary-General in his call to that effect. We hope that the country's political actors can display calm, patience and a commitment to exclusively legal and peaceful methods of political expression. We consider any pressure on the country's judiciary or the Electoral Commission unacceptable.

We would like to remind those who have been actively commenting on the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that the right to certify election results is the sovereign prerogative of that country's relevant authorized bodies. We urge the international community to behave responsibly in that regard and to avoid any interpretations of issues related to the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We believe that at the moment any speculation about the published voting results is not simply inappropriate and a violation of the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but could have far-reaching repercussions for the stability of the country and the entire Great Lakes region.

We hope that during this critical period the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will adhere strictly to its mandate under resolution 2409 (2018). Right now it is especially important to maintain the unity of the Security Council and take a calm and balanced approach to the situation without interfering in the domestic affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in full respect for its sovereignty.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I would like to begin by thanking Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing and for her efforts to promote peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also listened

attentively to the briefings by Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, Ambassador Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union (AU) to the United Nations, Mr. Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, and Monseigneur Utambi, representing the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo.

On 30 December, the Democratic Republic of the Congo held its presidential, National Assembly and provincial assembly elections, in which nearly 20 million people voted. Regional organizations such as the AU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) sent observers, and on the whole the election process was peaceful, stable and smooth. The Electoral Commission announced the preliminary results on 9 January. All this testifies to the strong desire of the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to safeguard peace and stability based on Congolese ownership and on their aspirations to achieve a smooth transfer of power through peaceful elections. China commends the Government and the Commission for their efforts.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is now at a historic juncture. A peaceful handover of power is in the interests of its people and will be conducive to peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Africa as a whole. We see elections as a country's internal affair. We believe that the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have the ability and wisdom to resolve the issues involved in their own way, and we hope that the Congolese parties will remain calm, show restraint and resolve their differences through dialogue and negotiation with a view to maintaining peace and stability. We believe that the international community should focus on the following three priorities.

First, the international community should show full respect for the country's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and for the authority of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante. Secondly, in order for the international community to continue to assist the Government in maintaining internal peace and stability, we are keen to see the AU, SADC and other regional organizations continuing to lead the mediation efforts. We encourage the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue to help the Government as and when it is needed. Thirdly, we should maintain active humanitarian assistance to the

Democratic Republic of the Congo. Last year, as the security situation in certain parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo improved, approximately 1 million displaced people returned home. Nonetheless, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face challenges and the level of food insecurity is especially serious. China calls for vigorous support from various quarters of the international community. The Ebola epidemic in the country's north-east remains dire and requires the continued support of the international community for the work of the World Health Organization and the International Committee of the Red Cross in order to enable them to effectively respond to the outbreak and contain its further spread.

China has been a staunch and long-standing supporter of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and is actively involved in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the country. We will continue to provide medical, food and other humanitarian assistance, remain actively engaged in its economic and social development and do our part for peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium): I would first like to thank Special Representative Leila Zerrougui, Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo, representing the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, Ms. Mohammed, the Permanent Observer of the African Union (AU), Mr. Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, representing the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Monseigneur Utambi, representing the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO).

I would like to focus my statement this morning on three key points.

First, Belgium is and will remain a staunch partner of the Congolese people, in a spirit of solidarity with them. Since November 2016 and the signing of the Saint-Sylvestre agreement of 31 December 2016, the entire Congolese people, from the Atlantic coast to Virunga, from Gbadolite to Lubumbashi, had been awaiting the holding of inclusive, transparent, credible and peaceful elections. The holding of such elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was crucial, as this represents an important stage in the process of peacebuilding and promoting security and lasting, inclusive development not only in the country, but also

in the broader region. The elections promised to be a historic opportunity for the peaceful handover of power for the first time in the country's history.

Despite the many shortcomings that marred the inclusive, equitable and transparent character of the presidential, legislative and provincial elections of 30 December 2018, the high rate of turnout of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the elections reflected their unshakeable determination to ensure that their voice was heard. They sometimes used creative means to that end, including in Beni and Butembo, where the elections were postponed. We hail this democratic commitment on the part of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who voted in an atmosphere of calm. The voice of an entire people must be heard and respected.

Secondly, we have taken note of the provisional outcomes announced by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante on 10 January. Together with our international partners, we are awaiting clarification on questions that have been raised by some segments of the opposition and civil society concerning the vote count. Electoral transparency is therefore vital.

A milestone was reached with the announcement of the provisional outcome. It now falls to stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region, who have followed the elections closely, to speak up and to indicate whether the results reported reflect what was observed and if the count was done correctly.

We commend the work done by the observation missions dispatched by regional organizations, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union (AU) and Congolese civil society. Belgium has already echoed the various appeals made, particularly that of the AU electoral observation mission and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission calling for official results to accord with the votes cast by the Congolese people.

Against that backdrop, we have taken note of the statement issued on 10 January by the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO), which monitored the electoral process through a mass deployment of observers across the country, to the effect that the data collected by its observation mission at polling stations and counting offices did not correspond with the data compiled by the Independent

National Election Commission. This morning we heard Monseigneur Utambi reiterate this observation.

This message is of importance. In order to guarantee that the democratic choice of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is respected, a discussion based on facts and figures is crucial. Transparency could provide answers to the questions that have been raised from certain quarters and at the same time set minds at ease and forestall any violence.

We thus encourage CENCO to share its findings and figures. The Commission should publish the results, disaggregated by polling station, as well as the minutes of each local counting centre, and, ideally, also provide neutral observers access to the central server, in keeping with the electoral law. Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo spoke of a climate of total mistrust, and I think that, against that backdrop, it is all the more important to ensure the maximum degree of transparency.

The parties also have the option of requesting a recount. We would suggest that national observation missions as well as those of the AU and SADC continue with their work during this crucial stage.

We deplore also the fact that the elections took place in an atmosphere in which public space was clamped down on, which does not promote transparency. During the campaign we heard appeals for greater openness; it is regrettable that they have not yet been heeded. We therefore remain deeply concerned by the repeated interruptions of Internet capabilities and other means of communication, as well as by the decision of the Congolese authorities to withdraw the reporting permit previously granted to Radio France Internationale.

The Security Council must remain attentive to the remarkable people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who, calmly but with determination, continue to insist that their voice be heard so as to claim their right to vote and to a better future. We must remain attentive also to civil-society organizations and to those that have since the very outset supported the electoral process, such as CENCO — a key player in the context of the 2016 Saint-Sylvestre agreement, which created the framework within which the long-awaited elections were finally able to take place.

Let us also remain attentive to the countries of the region, which, through their political commitment, have expressed their determination to uphold regional

peace and stability, and which might need our support in the days and weeks to come.

The current situation is tense, and there is a palpable atmosphere of confrontation. Belgium joins the call of the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the main players to refrain from acts of violence and to resolve any electoral dispute through the institutional mechanisms established under the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in line with the relevant electoral legislation.

Thirdly, today's briefings should not obscure the other ongoing challenges facing the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, most of which are listed in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/6). They include the fight against armed groups, myriad humanitarian challenges, the fight against impunity, health challenges such as Ebola and cholera, and the fight against the illegal exploitation of natural resources. The challenges are many, and Belgium will remain committed to helping the Congolese people overcome them.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is mandated to ensure the protection of civilians and to support the implementation of the 31 December 2016 agreement and the electoral process. We encourage MONUSCO to fully play that role in the evolving context in the country. Given the very high level of political tension and the increase in the activities of armed groups, we must all be alive to our responsibility, as members of the Security Council, to ensure that MONUSCO can fully play the role conferred upon it.

Mr. Cohen (United States of America): Our profound thanks go to Special Representative Zerrougui, Foreign Minister Malanji, Ambassador Fatima Mohammed, Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, and Monseigneur Utambi, President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO), for their informative, important and timely briefings today. I thank Ms. Zerrougui for the continued efforts of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to support the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, protect civilians and secure areas for health workers who are responding to the Ebola

outbreak. We are especially grateful for MONUSCO's work during the past week and throughout the electoral process. We know that Ms. Zerrougui and her team have repeatedly offered to support the Government and have stood at the ready in case that call for support ever came. We appreciate the Mission's efforts.

We want to acknowledge the millions of Congolese throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo who exercised their right to vote last week after two years of delay. Despite confusion, technical issues, inclement weather and long lines, the citizens of the Democratic Republic of the Congo showed the world that they have a voice. The United States stands with the Congolese people at this historic moment. It is they who should determine their country's future.

We take note of the provisional results of the elections and await the clarification of questions that have been raised regarding the electoral count. We look forward to hearing more from the Electoral Commission and CENCO about the data underlying their vote tallies. We will continue to urge all parties to use the systems and procedures in place to reach a final outcome, and refrain from all violence. We remain prepared to hold accountable individuals who threaten the peace, stability or security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo or undermine its democratic process.

In the post-electoral phase, we must not forget that the eastern areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are still confronting both increased armed-group activity and the second largest Ebola outbreak in history. While the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has cancelled presidential elections in Yumbi, Beni and Butembo, we expect that citizens will be able to vote for their provincial and legislative representatives by March, as announced by the Electoral Commission.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the briefings by Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Foreign Minister Joseph Malanji, Ambassador Fatima Mohammed, Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo and Monseigneur Utembi.

Peru takes note of the holding of presidential, legislative and provincial elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which were described by various bodies as inclusive. We congratulate the Congolese people and all the institutions that have contributed to the process on this historic event. We also welcome the constructive role of the United Nations Organization

Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this complex electoral stage. We were interested to hear the announcement of the provisional results by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante last Wednesday establishing the winner of the elections, as well as the valuable information provided by the observers. Like them, we deplore the incidents that took place yesterday and hope that the transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of Congo will take place in a peaceful, orderly manner and in accordance with the constitutional mechanisms and electoral regulations of the country, with the full participation of Congolese civil society. We believe that any challenge to the results by participating political actors or observers should be carried out peacefully through the competent legal bodies.

We also believe that it is vital that the Council remain united in support of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in this post-electoral period, which will help to strengthen democracy in the country and its institutions and promote a political dialogue that seeks a genuine national consensus and preserves and consolidates peace, as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission has indicated, with all of it being done on a basis of respect for the decision of the Congolese people, as expressed at the polls.

However, with regard to the Secretary-General's latest report (S/2019/6), we are very concerned about the continuing precarious situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, exacerbated by the Ebola outbreak, which according to the World Health Organization had claimed the lives of 370 people as of 2 January, and which is the reason for the three-month postponement of the elections in the provinces of North Kivu and Mai-Ndombe.

Finally, we would like to stress the need for the international community, particularly the regional and subregional organizations that played a pivotal role in the pre-electoral phase, to continue monitoring the post-electoral process closely, with a view to overcoming any impasses and supporting an orderly transfer of power that will enable the new Government to focus on the major challenge that lies ahead, that of building sustainable peace.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I would also like to add my voice to those of all who thanked all the briefers.

I want to start by underlining what my French colleague said, which is that the elections represent

a historic moment for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also want to echo Ms. Zerrougui's point about the fact that the elections truly expressed the will of a majority of the Congolese people and that we must commend the patience they showed during the postponement of the elections and the delay in announcing the results.

We take note of the provisional results as published by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante. We recognize that the results have been contested by the opposition and by members of civil society. Right now, I want to echo what everyone has said, that what is most important is ensuring that the situation remains calm. We therefore call on all sides to refrain from violence.

The electoral process has not ended. As others and our Belgian colleague have said, what is most important is full transparency. To that end, Internet access must be restored. The Electoral Commission must then release detailed election results from polling stations and especially from the compilation centres. After we see the published results from the Commission and those arrived at by civil society, we must ensure that the challenges are handled as has been described. First, the appropriate legal procedures must be followed and, as the African Union and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have requested, there must be a political dialogue. We urge the African Union and SADC to continue to be engaged in a political dialogue and in the process for publishing the results. What is most important is that a dialogue be held and work to create real trust among the parties in the country.

I want to end by echoing Ms. Mohammed's words when she said that calm, peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are very important not just for the country but for the entire region and for all of Africa. I also support the call by my French colleague for a press statement in which the Security Council also demonstrates its unity on the issue.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): At the outset, I would like to thank Special Representative Leila Zerrougui for her briefing today. I want to express our appreciation to her personally and to the entire team of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their tireless efforts in support of peaceful elections and the consolidation of stability in that country.

I would also like to thank all of our briefers, especially Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, Ms. Fatima Mohammed, Mr. Joseph Malanji and Monseigneur Marcel Utembi, for their contribution to our discussion. I also thank all the observer missions engaged in the process, such as the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo, the African Union and the Southern African Development Community, for their extremely important work in challenging conditions on the ground.

Poland congratulates the Congolese people and praises their restraint and determination to participate in the elections and to execute their democratic rights. Poland takes note of the announcement made by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) of the provisional results of the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the same time we note that these results are disputed by some important national actors. Therefore, we call on CENI to publish the data from all local results collecting centres, in accordance with the electoral law, as the most important way of addressing concerns about the transparency and legitimacy of the election.

We do hope that the presidential, legislative and provincial elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will constitute an important step in the consolidation of peace, stability and democracy in the country. We hope that elections will be the beginning of a period of peaceful transition and necessary reforms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge all the political and civil society actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to explain any doubts through dialogue and call upon them to use only legal channels for possible recourse. We hope that all the stakeholders will remain constructively involved until the final conclusion of the electoral process.

Peaceful assemblies should not be restrained by unproportionate measures. No violence should be tolerated towards the peaceful expression of the public opinion of the sovereign Congolese nation. Poland welcomes the reports of the observatory missions, indicating that despite some irregularities the elections were held under satisfactory conditions. Poland shares the view of the African Union Commission Chairperson that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires genuine national consensus based on respect for democratic principles and human rights, as well as the preservation and consolidation of peace.

To conclude, there is no doubt that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has significant impact on the stability of Central Africa and the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore, Poland emphasizes the critical role that regional and neighbouring States need to play at this historic moment. Thus, we encourage them to maintain their effective support for the credibility of the political process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as the only way to bring peace and stability to the Congolese people.

Mr. Alotaibi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to join my colleagues in thanking all the briefers this morning: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI); Ms. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; His Excellency the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, Mr. Malanji; and Monseigneur Marcel Utambi, President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo. I thank them for their valuable briefings.

I wish to focus on three main issues: first, the political situation and the electoral process; secondly, the security situation; and thirdly, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With respect to the political situation and the electoral process, we have followed the conduct of the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the issuance of the electoral timetable on 5 November 2017 and the commitments undertaken by CENI to implement the timetable until the elections, which were held on 30 December 2018. The elections took place, despite the fire that occurred on 13 December 2018 and destroyed nearly 8,000 electronic voting machines in the capital, Kinshasa. That postponed the date of the election from 23 to 30 December 2018, in addition to the acts of violence that compounded the situation in some parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the election campaign and on election day.

As for 30 December, elections were held in a relatively peaceful environment. That said, we wish to commend the efforts undertaken by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the Electoral Commission. We commend their commitment

and their organization of the elections as scheduled. We also laud the support extended by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Southern Africa Development Community and other international partners that made positive contributions in election day.

On Wednesday, 9 January, we took note of the statement issued by CENI, in which it noted the provisional outcomes of the presidential election held on 30 December 2018. We commend the responsible and committed approach of the Congolese people during the three electoral processes — the presidential, legislative and municipal elections — as well as of all the candidates and the large-scale participation by the political parties. We call on all parties to demonstrate the same degree of responsibility and to refrain from any acts of violence. That is necessary to move on to the next stage of challenging the outcomes with the relevant authority, in line with the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the applicable electoral law.

We hope that the efforts undertaken by all stakeholders will be completed and that CENI, the Congolese Constitutional Court, the Government, political parties and civil society will shoulder their responsibility so as to safeguard stability and democratic practices until the culmination of the electoral recourse procedure and the announcement of the final results in an official and transparent manner. That would lead to fulfilling the aspirations of 38 million Congolese who turned out at the polling stations on the day of the vote. We hope that the results will reflect their will and lead to the realization of their aspirations.

Turning to the security situation, the ongoing incidents of violence and armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are very disturbing, specifically in the eastern part of the country, a region that has witnessed armed escalations directly threatening the lives of unarmed civilians, exposing them to danger and depleting the natural resources of the State. We call on all stakeholders to cease such hostile acts so as to safeguard the lives of unarmed civilians and to achieve stability and security. In that context, we commend the efforts of MONUSCO and its troops to ward off those armed attacks and to protect Congolese civilians.

We strongly condemn the acts of violence perpetrated in the Democratic Republic of the Congo yesterday, which claimed the lives of a number of policemen and civilians. We call on all parties to exercise restraint during this sensitive period in the history of the country.

As for the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is of a concern in some regions, especially after the decision to close certain camps for internal refugees, the spread of the cholera epidemic and other diseases, as well as the ongoing armed conflict in certain regions, particularly in the east of the country.

We are deeply concerned also at the continuing spread of Ebola in the east of the country. That has been compounded by deterioration in the security situation, which is preventing the disease from being addressed. The number of people contaminated by the Ebola virus, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), is 563, of whom 326 have died. Despite the fact that the epidemic still represents a great danger to Congolese civilians and neighbouring countries, we highly appreciate the concerted efforts undertaken by the Congolese Ministry of Health, WHO and the United Nations through MONUSCO to combat the virus. We hope that efforts will continue in order to fully eradicate the epidemic as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, Ms. Leila Zerrougui, as well as to all the Mission personnel, for their tireless efforts and consistent support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We wish them every success.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): Like others, let me also thank Special Representative Leila Zerrougui; the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Zambia, who spoke on behalf of the Southern African Development Community; my sister Ambassador Mohammed, who spoke on behalf of the African Union; Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante; and the President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo for their briefings.

My statement today focuses on three main issues: the elections, the security situation and the need for sustained international assistance.

First, we would like to congratulate our Congolese brothers and sisters on the convening of the historic elections on 30 December 2018, which took place in a relatively calm and peaceful atmosphere, despite many challenges. The democratic experience is anything but easy. Elections are not an easy task, in particular in an area as large as the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have experience in elections in areas as large as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with remote areas to be covered. Covering an area with 75,000 polling stations is an enormous undertaking. Indonesia commends the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for taking ownership and full financial responsibility of the elections, while demonstrating perseverance throughout the process.

We are encouraged by the reports of high voter turnout—evidence of the commitment of the Congolese to the country's first democratic and peaceful transfer of power. It is imperative now for all stakeholders to exercise maximum restraint in their actions and statements and to respect the democratic process of the election. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure a calm and stable environment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is for the Congolese now to seize that momentum to consolidate stability in the country and create an environment conducive to development. We should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Secondly, with regard to the security situation, Indonesia is deeply concerned about the continued presence of armed groups in some parts of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Just two days ago, the Allied Democratic Forces attacked a military post in Beni, taking the lives of seven civilians and three soldiers. For far too long, the country has suffered from recurring cycles of conflict, persistent violence and the loss of life of innocent civilians. My delegation concurs with the view that the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources are among the root causes of conflict in the region. The implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region holds the key to building confidence among countries of the region and promoting lasting regional stability.

Thirdly, we urge the international community to provide sustainable development and humanitarian assistance to the people in need in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Years of war and instability have left millions of Congolese in dire humanitarian

situations and extreme poverty. The outbreak of Ebola has exacerbated pre-existing needs for international assistance. We express our solidarity to our Congolese brothers and sisters who are affected by Ebola, and commend the swift response of the World Health Organization in leading international efforts against one of the world's deadliest viruses. It is critical for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the World Health Organization to have the support needed to prevent a further outbreak of Ebola.

I should like to pay tribute to the important role of the African Union and the Southern African Development Community in helping the people of the Congo. We believe that neighbours know best and will be the first to assist. In that regard, I would like to commend the critical work of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), including its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, as well as support to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes. Indonesia takes pride in being one of the largest troop-contributing countries to MONUSCO, with 1,039 personnel on the ground. We now have 27 female peacekeepers, who we hope will be able to contribute to community-building. That includes an 850-personnel rapidly deployable battalion, which was deployed in November to provide assistance in the elections.

We will continue to support any effort to secure long-lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As we are approaching the mandate renewal for MONUSCO, I would like to reiterate the importance of meaningful consultations with troop- and police-contributing countries and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, once again we look forward to a peaceful and prosperous Democratic Republic of the Congo. Peace is a luxury that the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have deserved for far too long. I think that it is our responsibility to ensure that they achieve peace at this time.

Mr. Ipo (Cote d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation thanks Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), for her briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo following the elections held on

30 December 2018. We also thank Mr. Joseph Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia; Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante; and Monseigneur Utambi, President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo, for their insightful briefings.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the generally calm and peaceful environment in which the presidential, legislative and provincial elections of 30 December 2018 were held. It appreciates the many efforts made by the Congolese Government and the Commission électorale nationale indépendante to meet the technical, logistical and security challenges that arose during the elections. My delegation takes note of the provisional results of the presidential election, announced by the Commission on 10 January. It urges all stakeholders to preserve the overall peaceful atmosphere that prevailed during the elections and in the waiting period before the results were announced and encourages them to employ institutional and legal channels to contest them. In that regard, we echo the call made by the Secretary-General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo must not divert the attention of our Council from the security and humanitarian challenges in the country. The recurrence of destabilizing activities by armed groups and the persistent Ebola epidemic have had an adverse impact on the humanitarian situation in several provinces, in particular North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika and certain regions of the West, including Kasai, and remain a source of concern. In an environment marked by ongoing attacks by armed groups against civilians, peacekeepers and members of the Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo, my delegation encourages the Congolese authorities to continue and strengthen cooperation with MONUSCO to end the activities of armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the continued engagement of Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, all MONUSCO personnel, as well as the staff of United Nations agencies, in the process of ending the crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It also welcomes the multifaceted support that regional and international organizations and all partners continue to provide to the country.

Mr. Matjila (South Africa): Let me join colleagues in thanking the briefers: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); Mr. Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo, President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Her Excellency Ms. Fatima Mohammed, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations; His Excellency Mr. Joseph Malanji, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia, who spoke on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and Monseigneur Utembi, President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO). We welcome Ambassador Ignace Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta, Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Security Council's involvement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been one of the most protracted, heavily invested and multiphased engagements in the history of the United Nations. Today, we meet at one of the most critical junctures in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's process of consolidating democracy, nearly 60 years since its independence from Belgian colonial rule. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is larger than the entire Western Europe. It is less developed and has a far less developed physical and social infrastructure. The challenge to organize presidential, legislative and provincial elections in such a vast country is therefore enormous.

South Africa welcomes the announcement of the provisional election results, and we commend the Commission électorale nationale indépendante for its hard work under difficult circumstances. We further congratulate the Commission on managing the electoral process. The Commission électorale nationale indépendante is the official legitimate authority mandated to manage and conduct the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is the delegated authoritative body to pronounce on the results of the elections and must be accorded the right to do so. It remains imperative that the Commission's actions and declarations, including with regard to the outcome of the elections, should be respected by all, especially the Security Council.

South Africa calls on all parties to preserve the generally peaceful climate of the elections and

to take up any reservations or disputes through the proper mechanisms and processes provided for in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its electoral laws, thereby refraining from any violence or incitement thereof. We must ensure that, as members of the Security Council, our words and actions should contribute positively to the aspirations and collective will of the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is rich but the Congolese people are poor. South Africa remains concerned about the continuous illicit exploitation of the natural resources of the country. Since its independence, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been subjected to interference in determining its future by external factors. The abundant resources with which the country is blessed have in many ways led to the scramble for those resources, to the detriment of the Congolese people. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, parts of the economy are informal and the sometimes illicit links between politics and illegal economic activities have long existed. The estimated value of the illicit exploitation of natural resources in the eastern part of the country is billions of dollars annually.

South Africa has keenly supported efforts to ensure peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In 1998, our late President, Nelson Mandela, hosted a historic meeting between the former leaders of Zaire/Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mobutu Sese Seko and Laurent-Désiré Kabila, off the coast of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and averted a potentially destructive civil war. In 2002, South Africa hosted the groundbreaking Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which led to drafting of the Constitution and the hosting of the first-ever inclusive multiparty democratic elections in that country. Such elections took place again in 2011 and now in 2018.

President Ramaphosa issued a statement in which he congratulated all the parties and stakeholders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on ensuring peace and stability during the election process and urged all regional, international and interested parties to refrain from speculation and to allow the Commission électorale nationale indépendante to complete the process. The President also urged all political parties and their supporters to allow the Commission to perform its legal and constitutional duties without interference or pressure.

We expect the Security Council to be at the forefront of providing support to the Congolese authorities to maintain a peaceful and stable environment following the landmark elections, and to discourage any violence after the conclusion of the electoral process. That is necessary in order to facilitate the historic outcome of the first-ever democratic transfer of power in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. South Africa welcomes the reports of the Secretary-General's Special Representative and the electoral observer missions of SADC and of the African Union, and takes note of CENCO's concerns. We welcome their continued commitment to assisting the Democratic Republic of the Congo in achieving sustainable peace, security and stability. The continued support and partnership of the United Nations, the African Union, SADC and other regional and international actors are necessary for the consolidation of peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

MONUSCO played an important role in creating a climate of relative peace for the conduct of the elections in some difficult regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The provision of timely logistical support assisted in containing the spread of the Ebola virus in parts of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Intervention Brigade, which is part of the MONUSCO force, comprising brigades from South Africa, Malawi and Tanzania, have successfully neutralized the threat posed by negative and belligerent armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

South Africa calls for greater inclusion of women peacekeepers and an increase in the civilian component of MONUSCO, increasing the role of women mediators in dealing with conflict mediation at the communal level in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We recall the role that women played at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in South Africa.

We would like to pause and pay tribute to the men and women who paid dearly and made the supreme sacrifice in carrying out their international duty on behalf of us all around the table and in protecting the Congolese people.

The international community should not lose sight of the importance of addressing the peace and security challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which preceded the election process about which we are talking. Addressing the root causes of conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo requires recognition

of the nexus between development and peace. In that regard, South Africa emphasizes the need for post-election support in the context of peacebuilding and for the Security Council to mobilize to the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to provide the necessary support for the broader Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The PBC Framework is the most holistic peace mechanism for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is guaranteed by the United Nations, the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community and has been signed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and all the countries in the region.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo has come a long way in its quest for peace and security.

The elections that have just taken place will lead to the first democratic transfer of power in the country's history. The community of the Congolese people should be commended for this process. We therefore call on the international community and the Council in particular to continue to support the process with a balanced and measured approach. The road ahead may be difficult and long, but the journey to long-term stability, peace and happiness for the Congolese people has begun. As a Council, let us accompany them.

Ms. Pierce (United Kingdom): The fact that we have been fortunate enough to have so many briefers today testifies to the importance of this issue. I would like to thank them and like to thank in particular Minister Malanji and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for being with us. I would like to make five brief points.

My first point, as many other speakers said, is that this is a critical moment in the history of the Democratic Republic of the Congo precisely because of the prospect of the peaceful transfer of power. Therefore, there is a lot at stake. This is a historic chance for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The second point is that the important thing is that the democratic will of the Congolese people be respected. As others have noted, these are provisional results, so there is a chance for the Congolese people to have the result that they voted for. To that end, it is critical that the data and methodology of the voting be examined. We noted the statement made on behalf of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO)

that its data do not reflect the announced result, and we therefore request both CENCO and the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI) to provide further data and other analyses relating to the electoral process. Like others, we would like to know if it would be possible for CENI to publish the results at the level of local polling centres and *bureaux de vote*. We believe that that is a very important next step.

My third point is that, as we know, the electoral process is ongoing. It will therefore be important in the coming days that the Congolese people see a process that delivers what they voted for and that any disagreement is voiced through the proper channels, peacefully and constructively.

My fourth point is to echo calls for lifting media restrictions, including with regard to the Internet.

My fifth and last point is to support the African Union's call for all stakeholders to act in a way that consolidates democracy and preserves peace and for violence to cease.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my national capacity.

First of all, we thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2019/6) on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), as well as the good offices of Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge her to pursue her efforts in the post-electoral stage and in the implementation of the mandates of MONUSCO in order to successfully conclude the election process and continue making progress towards the political, economic and social stability of all the Congolese people.

I also want to highlight and commend the valuable briefings delivered by the President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI), as well as by the representatives of the African Union, the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo and the Southern African Development Community. We commend their dedication and valuable contributions to the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In particular, the Dominican Republic wishes to congratulate the Democratic Republic of the Congo for undertaking this historic election process. We recognize

the sign of maturity and political determination that the Congolese people have shown, as evidenced in the high rate of participation and in the good management of the organization of the electoral contest, despite the challenges that arose. However, we regret the loss of lives and the episodes of violence that occurred during and after the process, and offer our condolences to the relatives of the victims.

We received with interest the publication by CENI of the preliminary results of the presidential elections. We also understand that the incoming Government should enjoy the maximum possible consensus, which would guarantee a climate of stability and governability in the country. We therefore urge all actors to do their best to ensure that the final results accurately and beyond all doubt reflect the decision of the majority of the Congolese people and that this decision is respected. We also trust that the process of the transfer of power to the winners is carried out peacefully and with respect for the Congolese Constitution.

We support the statement of the Secretary-General, calling on all actors to channel any electoral dispute through the established institutional channels. Similarly, we trust that they will act responsibly by putting the democratic stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo above all other considerations.

To conclude, we trust that the conclusion of the recent elections and the presence of new actors in the national political life will open a new stage of open dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and contribute to the development of an increasingly participatory democracy, with the inclusion of all sectors of the population. We urge the Congolese people to undertake the process of transition in a peaceful climate, to look to the future with optimism and to participate actively in the construction of an inclusive country, in a climate of peace and lasting union that will bring stability to the entire Central African region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

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

Mr. Gata Mavita Wa Lufuta (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Sir, I am honoured to congratulate your country, the Dominican Republic, on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month and to express our

full appreciation for the good manner in which you are leading our debates. I also thank you for having taken the initiative of convening this important meeting to consider the situation in my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I take this opportunity to once again express the thanks and gratitude of the Congolese people and their Government to all members of the Security Council for the tireless efforts they continue to make in seeking solutions to ensure that my country regains the peace and stability it so badly needs for its reconstruction and development.

My delegation thanks Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Zambia; the Permanent Observer of the African Union Mission to the United Nations; the President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante (CENI); and Monsignor Marcel Utambi of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo (CENCO) for their briefings on developments in the electoral process in my country. I, in turn, should like to convey the position of my Government developments in that process.

As the Special Representative highlighted in her briefing, the electoral process has just reached a milestone with the organization of elections on 30 December 2018 throughout the country, with the exception of the region of Beni and Butembo in North Kivu province, where the Ebola epidemic has been raging for several months, and in the Yumbi territory of Mai-Ndombe province, which has seen violence causing loss of life. The elections were postponed until March 2019 for all of those regions.

The Council is already aware that Mr. Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo was proclaimed the winner of the presidential election by the Commission électorale nationale indépendante and will be invested as President of the Republic as soon as the Constitutional Court publishes the final results.

I should emphasize that, despite some scattered incidents during the electoral campaign that have already been mentioned and occasional voting machine power failures registered on polling day, which were repaired by CENI technicians, it is important to recognize that the elections went smoothly in general. The candidates for the three polls conducted their

campaign freely, and voters came out in large numbers and expressed their choice with complete peace of mind. Similarly, the candidates' observers, deployed in all constituencies across the country, also performed their duty freely. As for the duly accredited national and international observers, they welcomed the smooth conduct of the elections. In the end, the voting machine that was disparaged by some was not only appreciated but was also used by the population and all candidates.

Given the low percentage of votes — 20 per cent — counted in the two or three days preceding the scheduled date of 6 January for the publication of the provisional results, CENI deferred the publication, which occurred on 10 January, opening the way for a changeover at the highest level of State for the first time in the history of our country. The results that were released to the public were received favourably across the country.

It goes without saying that, in the event of a possible challenge by those candidates who do not agree with the results, especially with regard to the presidential election, they have remedies similar to those available in other countries. According to the Constitution and the laws of the Republic, the deadline for appeal is 48 hours after the publication of provisional results. My delegation draws the attention of the Council to the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo, like any sovereign State, has institutions established by the Constitution and the law of the land to settle disputes. Many Council members have advised us to resort to that procedure. However, it is not good policy for the international community to impose requirements on the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are likely to replace those institutions.

In view of the foregoing, we feel it important to urge our partners and friendly countries not to pour oil on the fire by speculating on the results, but instead to work to strengthen democracy and peace by encouraging all political actors and their supporters to exercise restraint, to prioritize the greater interests of the nation by avoiding any act of violence likely to compromise social calm, and to resort to legal channels if necessary. It is important that the peaceful climate that prevailed during the elections continue after the publication of the results until the peaceful and historic transfer of power at the highest level of State between an outgoing Head of State and an incoming Head of State occurs.

I cannot close this chapter without paying due homage to His Excellency Mr. Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Republic, who honoured his commitment to respecting the Constitution by not seeking a third term and leading the country towards the organization of free, democratic and transparent elections. In the same vein, the Government should be commended for the efforts made to fully fund the elections with its own funds. CENI is also to be congratulated on having remained on course despite interference and pressure. It can be proud today of the work accomplished. Finally, the Congolese people, who have demonstrated maturity and patriotism throughout this process, must be congratulated.

My Government, as the principal body responsible for ensuring the well-being of its people and for consolidating democracy, has a duty to ensure by all legal and regulatory means that the electoral process succeeds in peace. In that context, it shares the desire expressed in the various pre-reports of international election observers to see this electoral cycle continue in a calm manner until the local and municipal elections. The Government therefore invites all stakeholders in the electoral process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combine their efforts responsibly to ensure a soft landing for the aforementioned process.

The security situation prevailing in the eastern part of our country continues to be an issue of concern for my Government. The Forces armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), in collaboration with MONUSCO, is pursuing military operations in that part of the country. Particularly with regard to the Allied Democratic Forces terrorists who, in recent months, have distinguished themselves with a series of deadly attacks against our people in Beni and Butembo and against MONUSCO and FARDC troops, Council members will recall that following the dismantling of their main strongholds early last year, their operational capacity was appreciably diminished. Their current modus operandi is unusual and should lead MONUSCO and the FARDC to review their strategies and join forces to do away with these terrorists and put an end to the suffering endured by the populations of Beni and Butembo.

With regard to child protection, the latest report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/6) states in paragraph 52 that:

“MONUSCO continued to engage with armed groups in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, resulting in the release of more than 440 girls and boys. During October and November, six commanders of armed groups signed a declaration stating that they would no longer recruit children or commit other grave, child-related violations. That brought the total number of armed groups who have signed engagements with MONUSCO to eight, five of which are listed by the Secretary-General for child recruitment. The commanders also committed to implementing a road map, which, in addition to preventing grave child rights violations, also requires them to take measures to stop and prevent sexual violence.”

The Council will agree that, in the context of the restoration of State authority and peace, my Government is waging a great struggle to eradicate armed groups that disturb the peace and sow insecurity in the communities where they operate. The FARDC is assisted in this fight by MONUSCO. We ask ourselves therefore how MONUSCO is able to maintain relations and collaborate with the armed groups it is supposed to fight alongside the FARDC.

Turning to humanitarian concerns, the many population displacements due to the insecurity created by the armed groups of which we have just spoken, the resurgence of certain diseases and the unscheduled return of several thousand of our compatriots from Angola along the border with that country are issues of concern to the Government to which it is working to find urgent solutions. It goes without saying, moreover, that any assistance from our partners to ease the suffering of those in need will always be welcome.

Turning to the Ebola virus, which is raging in the Beni and Butembo regions, efforts continue to be undertaken by the Government, in collaboration with the World Health Organization and a number of other partners, to combat the disease. Since the outbreak of the epidemic, the total number of cases reported as of 8 January is 628 — of which 580 are confirmed and 48 probable — with 383 deaths reported and 222 persons having recovered. In terms of treating those afflicted, a new centre opened on 3 January in the Katwa health district. Also, the Beni transit centre, which was destroyed during protests on 27 December, is once again operational.

Before concluding, allow me to remind the Council that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is writing a new chapter in its history. It looks forward to the support of the international community and all its friends to help it usher in a new era in a calm and peaceful way. In that regard, my Government commends and warmly thanks all those who stood by our side in good times and in bad and who offered their assistance when we needed it most. We are especially grateful to the Southern African Development Community, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the African Union. We also express our profound gratitude to the troop-contributing countries and the United Nations, which have contributed so much to the restoration of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. My delegation also reiterates its gratitude to all the members of the Security Council for their consistent focus on the situation in our country and, as the new year opens, we wish all members the very best in 2019.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo to respond to the comments that have been made.

Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the Security Council once again for giving me this opportunity to clarify a number of issues. I would also like to thank the President of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo for providing certain details drawn from their own observation mission, while noting at the same time that the law provides that the mission should present its report to the Commission électorale nationale indépendante, which has not yet received any such report; we have learned about it only from the media. In the meantime, I would like to clarify three points.

First, the elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo were organized in conformity with the legal framework as defined by the Constitution, laws and relevant electoral provisions. Accordingly, the Electoral Commission announced the provisional results in conformity with that legal framework.

Secondly, the Electoral Commission has of course taken note that the elections, as I mentioned in my introduction, have aroused much passion so that, for some people, as long as a certain candidate does not win it will never be right. As I also indicated in my introduction, the process was conducted over three years, and at every stage there were requests and demands that we clarify this or we do that. All of that

reflects the distrust among all the stakeholders. I was fully expecting that, when the results were announced, some people would say they did not agree and some people that they did agree, but that is democracy. In the interim, it has to be recognized that the Electoral Commission has announced the preliminary results of the elections and the country is calm, which shows that the people have accepted the outcome. If that were not the case, Kinshasa would already be in flames and there would be blood on the streets. The country is calm in the aftermath of the elections, and all the pressure everyone was feeling is for the most part behind us.

Meanwhile, in conformity with the law, the Electoral Commission has just published the preliminary results. I must stress that they are provisional results. The law provides that, after the publication of the preliminary results, those who do not agree with them may address themselves to the relevant authorities. And we are prepared for that. If a clarification or some other response is called for, the Commission will answer only to those authorities. If called upon by the Courts to provide information, the Commission will provide information regarding its activities. Again, regarding the Constitutional Court, there will be two options: either to declare the results of the Electoral Commission as valid — in which case we will put this cycle of elections behind us and await the next one in five years — or else to declare the results as invalid, in which case the elections will be annulled and the electoral process restarted — or some may even protest that. But all such considerations are under the jurisdiction of the Court, and in the meantime it would be a violation of the law for me to claim to be in a position to present any clarification or certification to any authority other than the Court. That would not be allowed under Congolese law.

Moreover, what is essential is that dialogue should continue, and that whoever wins, whatever the outcome of the elections, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo speak to each other, talk to each other. They need to look at each other and say “OK, this is the situation we are in. What do we do now?” But my advice, not as a representative of the Commission but as a Congolese, would be to say, look, the elections were organized in difficult circumstances against impossible odds. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is a vast country, and everything was stacked against us getting to where we are today. One cannot clean house overnight given everything that was done by the different parties,

or continue to act as if we can just keep starting over every day. The Commission has published its results. It cannot be said that the elections were perfect. Even in the United States, we have learned that in the last elections certain things happened. Is that a reason to challenge the entire process? No.

At every stage, it must be said, there are always protests, probably legitimate ones. We will duly answer to the competent authorities and will continue to monitor the situation. That is all we will do. I cannot make a commitment to exceed what is provided by law and put myself at the disposition of some other body or organization that questions what went on and calls on us to justify ourselves. No. We will abide by the law and we hope that others will do the same. We will see what the Constitutional Court does about the presidential and legislative elections, and what the various courts of appeal do about the provincial elections.

Three elections in one day in a country like ours was no easy feat. We slept only two or three hours a day for a month. Given that we held three elections in one day and managed to achieve what we have — that is, the Congolese people voted and we are now enjoying calm in the country — my advice is that we must not poke the bear or seek justifications to be bogged down in the perpetual beginning of negotiations.

As has been said, these elections are historic, so let us not make the Congolese people miss what they have been waiting for so long. We now find ourselves within 10 days of proceeding with the establishment of the new institutions, such as the swearing-in of the new President-elect, if the Constitutional Court confirms the results, and the installation of the new National Assembly and the new provincial assemblies, which will ultimately lead to the holding of indirect elections — those for the members of the Senate, as well as governors and vice-governors.

However, for the province of North Kivu specifically, I note that we have scheduled those elections for March. We are, of course, already beginning to prepare accordingly, in the hope that the efforts led by the Congolese Government, with the support of its partners, with respect to the Ebola virus disease will bear fruit, and that the formation of the new Government will also lead to stability and security in the region. For the North Kivu province, the provincial assembly will therefore be established only after the North Kivu elections because the related indirect

elections — those for governor and senators — will be held only after those elections.

That is what we meant when we said that we are not perfect. No election in the world is perfect, but I will remain at the disposal of organizations that have something to say. The Election Commission will remain at the disposal of the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo for further exchanges on anything that may arise, in the understanding that, in our opinion, the priority should be to move forward and turn the page.

The population is suffering. We have been in the midst of political discussions for two, three, even four years. There is a time for everything — a time for elections, but also a time for development. These are the clarifications I wanted to make at this stage, in the hope that we will inch closer to an end with the final reports that we will present in March, if necessary.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of Germany has asked to make a further statement.

Mr. Heusgen (Germany): I sincerely thank the President of the Commission électorale nationale indépendante for his clarifications, which lead me to the following question. According to the information that I have, the election results have to be published. In the President's explanation, I understand that he said that the details of the elections results will go only to the Constitutional Court. Perhaps he could clarify that point, because I think that it is very important that the elections results, according to the polling stations, be published, as several speakers around the table have requested.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo to answer the question.

Mr. Nangaa Yobeluo (*spoke in French*): It should be noted that the elections took place at 72,000 polling stations. Each polling station opened in the morning, at 6 a.m., and closed 11 hours later, at 5 p.m. Once the voting was closed, the polling stations turned into counting stations. The manual counting was carried out and other results were also available because of the voting machines. After the counting, the law requires that the results be posted. That is the first level of publishing the results.

Each polling station was able to post the results. But we must be careful, because when we publish the results in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, if a

candidate senses that they are not good enough, his or partisans may often tear up the posted sheets. Those results, however, are the voting records. The district sends the voting records and result sheets to the central level via the local compilation centres.

In this case, since we are interested in the presidential election, the corresponding constituency is national territory. The results therefore are not posted in a specific territory or district. The posting or publication of the results of the presidential election is done at the national level, which is what we mean by national consolidation, because the constituency is the national territory. That said, the results that were posted at the polling stations are what we have. Some are sent to the various courts and others to the Commission électorale nationale indépendante.

They say that people will challenge the results. We will, of course, forward to the courts the evidence at our disposal that led us to whatever the results are. As we have said, we will provide those results to the Constitutional Court, especially since the law does not stipulate that we must give them to the Conférence épiscopale nationale du Congo or other organizations. Those results will be presented to the Constitutional Court if they are disputed. That is how that works.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): 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 12.30 p.m.