

Committing to ensure long-term stability and security in DRC

Thank you, Mr President, and let me begin by thanking SRSG Zerrougui for her briefing today. I'd like to commend the continuation of MONUSCO's vital operations despite the complex and difficult operating environment and the continued challenges posed by the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic.

In particular, we welcome the mission's success in Pinga. Its effective intervention in a volatile situation, following the split of the NDC-R armed group, protected those displaced by violence and ensure they could receive humanitarian assistance.

But I want to reiterate the need for vigilance in the Mission's delivery of its mandate. The Beni prison break stands out and MONUSCO should consider if and how it could have been prevented with a more proactive approach and learn any lessons from it.

And in this vein, we call for the prompt implementation of mandated reforms within MONUSCO and its Force Intervention Brigade. Civilian loss of life remains unacceptably high in the east, in particular around Beni, due to attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces. The lack of progress on mandated reforms to the Force Intervention Brigade, such as the incorporation of additional Quick Reaction Forces, is hindering the Mission's efforts to tackle this threat. These reforms are key to enhancing the performance of the Mission.

We welcome the joint transition strategy developed by MONUSCO in collaboration with the Government of the DRC. We would like to see this go further, however, in detailing how transition would be taken forward, how it will be measured against clear benchmarks, and how the Mission will work with the UN Country Team and other development actors on the handover of tasks, with humanitarian actors and with the Government of the DRC. At the same time, we call on the Government to participate actively in planning MONUSCO's eventual exit: national ownership is crucial in ensuring that the exit allows for sustainable stability and development.

Mr President, as the DRC's second largest bilateral aid donor, the United Kingdom remains committed to ensuring long-term stability and security in eastern DRC. Tackling armed groups remains a major challenge to this. We are therefore pleased to see progress on a new approach to Community-focused Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR-C) and call on the Government of the DRC to support this momentum by developing a comprehensive national strategy.

Mr President, we remain deeply troubled by the human rights situation in the DRC, and we condemn the fact that security forces continue to commit almost half of all reported human rights violations in the country. This remains a major impediment to significant progress on Security Sector Reform, and I

call on the Government of the DRC to ensure accountability.

Finally, we would like to outline our concern over the ongoing political tensions in the DRC. It is vitally important that progress on stability and prosperity is protected and maintained, and that all political actors enable the delivery of crucial democratic and governance reforms for the benefit of the Congolese people.

Thank you, Mr President.