

Enhanced regional efforts to pursue peace in DRC

Thank you, President. Let me begin by offering a warm welcome to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Lutundula of the DRC, as well as the Representatives of Rwanda and Uganda. Let me also thank ASG Pobee and Special Envoy Xia for their briefings.

I will focus my intervention on the security and humanitarian situations in Eastern DRC and ongoing regional efforts to pursue peace.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the fragile security situation in Eastern DRC. The latest renewal of violence threatens recent efforts to pursue peace. In particular, we note the deep, and understandable, anger of countries in the region in relation to alleged cross-border attacks.

The United Kingdom recalls the impact that decades of violence in the Great Lakes has had on the lives, and futures, of the people of the DRC and the wider region. This Council cannot become hardened to the displacement of over 5 million people, as well as serious and sustained violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law.

The United Kingdom welcomes recent enhanced diplomatic outreach and dialogue between countries in the region. The region's leaders, convened by President Kenyatta, have shown the statesmanship their people deserve. We also welcome engagement by the African Union and regional mechanisms.

It is clear that there are many actors in the DRC and wider region who would be happy to see this regional determination to deliver peace fail. In this context, we call on the leaders of the region to redouble their efforts to pursue dialogue, de-escalation and the use of effective regional mechanisms to resolve disputes.

We also reiterate our call on all armed groups operating in Eastern DRC to immediately cease violence and participate unconditionally in the ongoing political process in Nairobi.

President, high levels of violence and insecurity, perpetuated in particular by the Allied Democratic Forces, CODECO and M23 armed groups are hampering humanitarian access and risking the lives of a highly vulnerable population. Similarly, the continued kidnappings of humanitarian staff in the Sake-Masisi area mean vital assistance is not reaching those in greatest need. We urge the Government to take concrete action against criminality in the area and ensure the protection of humanitarian workers.

We are also concerned by the risk posed to civilians by intercommunal violence, particularly in IDP camps in Ituri province. A sustainable plan for their protection is desperately needed. In this regard, it is vital that there is strong coordination and a supportive relationship with MONUSCO in

order to sustain security and the protection of civilians. This will be particularly important as MONUSCO prepares to withdraw from Tanganyika province and focus its efforts on the conflict-affected provinces of North and South Kivu and Ituri.

President, we see this as a moment of both hope and risk for DRC and the wider region. The United Kingdom stands with those who seek a more peaceful future for the people of DRC and its region.

Thank you.