

Expressing our hopes for a more stable and peaceful environment for the people of the DRC: UK at the UN Security Council

Thank you very much, Madam President, and I begin by joining others in thanking SRSK Keita for her characteristically thorough and clear briefing, and we look forward to reading Ms Inyobondaye's contribution, in due course.

I also wanted to share the concerned express by others around the Council table at the news that a helicopter has gone down today in Rutshuru, North Kivu. We hope that the rescue mission underway today is successful, but we are also reminded of the risks taken daily by peacekeepers across the world to implement our mandates.

The United Kingdom is extremely concerned, as we've heard today around the Council table, by the violence facing civilians in eastern DRC, including the persistent attacks by armed groups. In addition to armed groups such as the ADF and CODECO, we are increasingly concerned about the resurgent M-23 group.

We welcome MONUSCO's efforts to enhance protection in the Djugu area of Ituri, but note that insecurity around IDP camps continues. Also of concern is the number of recent kidnappings in North Kivu, which have made a large proportion of the province inaccessible to humanitarian actors.

Whilst we take note of the Government of the DRC's efforts to address the security in eastern DRC, we call upon them to intensify those efforts in order to improve security, humanitarian access and lessen the suffering of the Congolese population.

Almost a year after the declaration of the State of Siege, the United Kingdom welcomes the reinstatement of civilian judicial processes. We urge the Government of DRC to continue to mitigate the negative impacts of the State of Siege. This includes setting clear objectives and an exit plan, and addressing the recommendations of the National Defence and Security Committee.

Regarding joint DRC-Ugandan military operations, we welcome efforts to de-conflict operations. However, we remain concerned that joint operations in the Beni area of North Kivu have not yet been successful in improving the security situation or decisively tackling the threat of the ADF.

We urge the Governments of DRC and Uganda to increase their coordination with MONUSCO. Not only is this essential to ensuring protection of civilians and the safety and security of UN personnel and humanitarian workers, but could also support efforts to hold cleared areas and to prevent the ADF from spreading into new territory where they can re-establish their footholds.

Regarding the safety and security of UN personnel, the firing at a MONUSCO patrol by FARDC soldiers in North Kivu is also deeply concerning, and we echo the Secretary-General's call for those responsible to be held to account.

Madam President, the United Kingdom welcomes progress made to develop and operationalise the DRC's new DDR community recovery and stabilisation program, the PDDRCS. It's essential to learn from previous DDR efforts, including by adopting a decentralised and community-based approach. We welcome the technical support provided by the UN in this regard. As the operational phase begins, the establishment of inclusive coordinated structures between the UN, the international community and the PDDRCS, will be critical.

Turning to MONUSCO's transition, we share the Secretary-General's view that the transition plan, and its associated benchmarks, offer a comprehensive framework for mobilising the collective efforts of the government, the UN and international partners. Establishing baselines and tracking progress against transition indicators, collectively, by the UN and the government of DRC, will be particularly important as the Council looks to assess progress in implementation of that transition plan. We look forward to future updates on the transition as part of the regular reporting cycle.

To conclude, Madam President, let me commend the work of SRSK Keita, and her team, in extremely challenging circumstances. It is our sincere hope that the collective efforts of MONUSCO and the government of DRC can soon create a more stable and peaceful environment for the people of the DRC.

Thank you.