

Highlighting the urgent need for change in eastern DRC

Thank you Mr President.

Let me begin by thanking SRSK Keita, Ambassador Abarry and Ms Mbangi for their briefings. I will focus my intervention primarily on two issues: the state of siege currently in place in North Kivu and Ituri province, and the MONUSCO transition strategy.

The continued deterioration of the security situation, increased frequency of attacks by armed groups, rising casualties and harrowing humanitarian situation amidst the state of siege continues to give cause for concern. Ms Mbangi's testimony was very powerful on this point. We condemn the ongoing violence and displacement of civilians.

The 1.3 million people newly displaced this year and nearly 400 civilians killed in the past 3 months highlight once again the desperate need for change in eastern DRC.

Mr President, the United Kingdom welcomes the improved operational collaboration between MONUSCO, including its reinforced Force Intervention Brigade and the Armed Forces of DRC. We encourage relevant stakeholders to continue this collaboration, in strict compliance with the UN's Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, under the State of Siege.

We welcome the Government of DRC's recent evaluation of the State of Siege. We call on the government to ensure the delivery of basic services and that the State of Siege remains transparent, time-limited. It must be implemented with respect for human rights and international law.

Mr President, a further positive development is the signing of the disarmament, demobilisation and community-based reintegration and stabilisation (DDCRS) ordinance. It is, however, regrettable that combatants who have previously surrendered are reportedly returning to the bush. We strongly encourage the timely development of the DDCRS strategy and mechanism for its delivery.

Mr. President, before I come to MONUSCO's transition, let me express concern about sexual exploitation and abuse. We were deeply disappointed to learn of seven new cases reported to MONUSCO during the latest reporting period.

In the same week as the final report of the independent commission on the review of sexual exploitation and abuse cases during the 10th Ebola crisis in DRC, it is timely reaffirm the need for robust action to prevent, tackle and ensure accountability for such incidents. In this regard, we call on MONUSCO to expedite delivery of its action plan on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Turning to MONUSCO's transition, the United Kingdom welcomes the strategy and the identified benchmarks agreed with the Government of DRC and recently

transmitted to the Council.

Ultimately, the Government of DRC bears responsibility for creating the long-term conditions for peace and MONUSCO's withdrawal. We are therefore encouraged by the strategy's combined focus on UN and Government actions and welcome the establishment of the joint working group.

Given that many of the current challenges in eastern DRC will continue after MONUSCO's eventual departure, we also recognise the utility of dividing the benchmarks into the minimum conditions required for MONUSCO's exit, and priority areas for collaboration with the UN Country Team.

We encourage MONUSCO to focus on ensuring the minimum conditions for its withdrawal are met, whilst simultaneously preparing the handover of other tasks to the UN Country Team and the Government of DRC against a clear timeline.

The successful delivery of the benchmarks will also require donor support and continued engagement after MONUSCO's departure. We therefore encourage enhanced coordination, in particular with the World Bank, as well as donors, humanitarian agencies and further inclusion of civil society.

Thank you Mr President