

Political and diplomatic efforts should have primacy over a military solution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Thank you President, and I thank Special Envoy Xia for his briefing today, and welcome the participation of countries of the region in this meeting.

President, the United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the security situation in the Great Lakes region, in particular the resurgence of violence by M23 in the last week. We call for immediate cessation of violence and the withdrawal of M23 from their current positions. All parties must respect national sovereignty and uphold the principle of territorial integrity.

We call upon countries in the region, with the support of the Special Envoy, to continue to work in close coordination with the Government of the DRC and MONUSCO to bring lasting peace to the country.

President, we have said many times that political and diplomatic efforts should have primacy over a military solution. Humanitarian considerations should also have equal priority. Military action alone will not bring peace to the Great Lakes. So we encourage the resumption of the Nairobi and Luanda processes. The UN, including through the offices of the Special Envoy, should actively support these efforts and ensure coordination with existing efforts, such as the DRC's P-DDRCS process.

President, any military action in Eastern DRC requires careful planning, coordination with MONUSCO, adherence with international law and a clear exit plan. The EAC Force and DRC Armed Forces must substantively engage with MONUSCO on de-confliction of forces, to ensure, primarily, the protection of civilians. We trust Special Envoy Xia will support this coordination.

The United Kingdom remains concerned about the humanitarian situation in the Great Lakes region. The DRC is suffering from the world's largest food security emergency, with 26 million people in crisis levels of food insecurity. Recent violence is adding to the 5.9 million people already displaced in the DRC. Access to those that need relief is severely limited. Coordination between military and humanitarian operations is vital and we call on all parties to facilitate humanitarian access.

In conclusion, President, we call upon countries in the region to intensify efforts to improve their regional cooperation, address shared security challenges via political and diplomatic means, improve humanitarian access, and bring an end to the violence. Thank you.