

Stressing the importance of diplomatic efforts over military solutions to deliver long-term stability for DRC

Thank you, President. Let me begin by thanking SRSG Keita and Ms Lusenge for their briefings today – and I also welcome the participation of the countries of the region in the meeting.

I will focus my intervention on three points – the security and humanitarian situation in eastern DRC; regional efforts; and MONUSCO.

President, the United Kingdom remains deeply concerned by the security situation in eastern DRC. The current spike in violence jeopardises recent efforts to pursue peace and prosperity, and exacerbates the already severe humanitarian situation.

The risk of regional war is the highest it has been for many years. An immediate de-escalation on all sides and a mutual respect for sovereignty is urgently needed. De-escalation efforts should include an absolute rejection of hate speech and the manipulation of regional public opinion by self-interested actors.

President, we welcome ongoing diplomatic efforts, including through the Nairobi process led by President Kenyatta and AU-endorsed engagement by President Lourenco. The United Kingdom offers our support to these efforts to pursue dialogue, de-escalate tensions and to make use of regional mechanisms to resolve disputes.

As these efforts continue, the United Kingdom stresses the primacy of political and diplomatic efforts over military solutions to deliver long-term stability and prosperity for DRC and the region. It is equally vital that regional engagement works with existing political processes, in particular the Government of DRC's newly developed DDR programme, and which contributes towards the end of the State of Siege, enabling the re-establishment of local civilian governance.

We await with interest the plans for the proposed East African Community (EAC) regional force and urge EAC Partner States to engage closely and effectively with MONUSCO to manage the potential risks of parallel military deployments. As they design their intervention, we encourage EAC Partner States to draw on lessons learnt from MONUSCO's deployment.

President, humanitarian considerations must also be given sufficient attention by all actors to ensure the 5.9 million internally displaced civilians in DRC receive the assistance they need. Recent violence by the M23 armed group has resulted in a large spike in humanitarian need.

Kidnapping and violence against humanitarian workers is increasing and is

severely impacting the ability of agencies to reach affected populations. We urge the Government of DRC to work more closely with humanitarian agencies, including OCHA, to find specific, and practical solutions to the threats to humanitarian delivery – including through strengthened civil-military cooperation.

President, let me acknowledge the challenges facing MONUSCO in this complex context. As we have seen by the loss of nine MONUSCO personnel in recent months, the Mission operates in dangerous circumstances, and we pay tribute to their personnel for what they do. We call on all actors to avoid any statements or actions which increase the risk to MONUSCO personnel and express our full support for the Mission in implementation of its mandate. In concluding, let me commend SRSG Keita and MONUSCO as a whole for their continued efforts in increasingly challenging circumstances.

I thank you.