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Seventy-seventh year

Provisional

9215th meeting

Friday, 9 December 2022, 10.40 a.m.

New York

<i>President:</i>	Mrs. Kamboj/Mr. Ravindran	(India)
<i>Members:</i>	Albania	Ms. Dautllari
	Brazil	Mr. De Almeida Filho
	China	Mr. Geng Shuang
	France	Mr. De Rivière
	Gabon	Mrs. Ngyema Ndong
	Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
	Ireland	Mr. Gilroy
	Kenya	Ms. Kinyungu
	Mexico	Mr. Ochoa Martínez
	Norway	Ms. Heimerback
	Russian Federation	Ms. Evstigneeva
	United Arab Emirates	Mrs. Alhefeiti
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
	United States of America	Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization
Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/892)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2022/892)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Mr. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, Secretary General of the East African Community; and Ms. Rebecca Kabuo, activist and member of Lutte pour le changement.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2022/892, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Ms. Keita, Mr. Mutuku Mathuki, Ms. Kabuo and by Ambassador Lilly Stella Ngyema Ndong, Deputy Permanent Representative of Gabon to the United Nations, on behalf of the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I now give the floor to Ms. Keita.

Ms. Keita (*spoke in French*): I thank the Security Council for giving me the opportunity today to present the report the Secretary-General on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (S/2022/892).

I welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Mr. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, Secretary General of the East African Community; and Ms. Rebecca Kabuo, of Lutte pour le changement.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to show resilience despite the immense challenges the country faces; its encouraging macroeconomic performance attests to that. On 3 December, the National Assembly adopted the 2023 finance bill, which amounts to \$15.8 billion, a sharp increase from the \$10.7 billion in 2022. That budgetary increase brings hope. It is essential to finance the reforms necessary for the gradual improvement of the well-being of the Congolese people, such as to the security sector.

With that ambitious budget, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is also giving itself the necessary means to prepare for the 2023 electoral deadlines. In the same way, we must welcome the publication of the electoral calendar, which sets the presidential and legislative elections for 20 December 2023 and details the provisions and measures taken by the Independent National Electoral Commission to start voter registration on 24 December. While it was well received as a whole, the publication of the electoral calendar was challenged by some opposition and civil society actors, in a context of tension and growing political polarization, sometimes leading to very violent speeches.

I would therefore like to reiterate the readiness of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), through its good offices, to promote a constructive dialogue among stakeholders in order to strengthen a political environment conducive to a transparent, inclusive and peaceful electoral process, which would see the active but non-violent participation of all political actors, as well as that of women and young people.

(*spoke in English*)

While the 2023 elections could make a significant contribution to the strengthening of democracy and stability in the Democratic Republic of Congo, one of the most significant challenges they face today is

insecurity. Over the past weeks, the security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated dramatically. Since 20 October, the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) has resumed hostilities and extended its control over Rutshuru territory, in North Kivu. MONUSCO has continued to provide operational, logistical and tactical support both to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the Congolese National Police in their efforts to confront armed groups in eastern Congo, most notably the M-23. Robust patrols, including jointly with the FARDC and the Congolese National Police, have been conducted in and around Goma to ensure the protection of civilians and deter the M-23 from advancing further towards the city. In addition, the Mission has set up additional community-alert networks in areas vulnerable to M-23 attacks in Rutshuru and Masisi territories.

The reports of atrocities and other crimes committed by the M-23 and other armed groups are gravely concerning. The preliminary findings of the United Nations fact-finding team established in response to allegations of human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by M-23 combatants in Kishishe and Bambo, Rutshuru territory, North Kivu, has confirmed that at least 131 civilians — 102 men, 17 women and 12 children — were either shot dead or killed by bladed weapons by M-23 fighters. During the same period, M-23 combatants raped at least 22 women, one of whom was killed after the rape. The team also confirmed the destruction of four schools and the occupation of two others by M-23 combatants.

I call on the Council to condemn those crimes with the utmost severity. The Council must also demand the immediate release of the survivors who were prevented from leaving the area by the M-23. Those responsible for those and other atrocities against the civilian population must be prosecuted, nationally or internationally.

The M-23's offensives have further exacerbated the ongoing humanitarian crisis. The Democratic Republic of the Congo already plays host to the highest number of internally displaced persons anywhere on the African continent, owing, in large part, to the activities of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and the Zaire, Twirwaneho and Mayi-Mayi groups. An estimated additional 370,000 people have been uprooted and forced from their homes in the latest round of hostilities involving the M-23. The outbreak of intercommunal violence in the western

provinces of Mai-Ndombe and Kwilu has also led to the displacement of more than 50,000 people, mostly women and children. In that dangerous environment, and despite persistent access constraints, particularly in areas under the control of the M-23 and the ADF, humanitarian actors continue to deliver indispensable aid and life-saving services. I therefore urge partners to actively continue supporting the humanitarian response plan, as well as the specific North Kivu response plan.

Encouragingly, regional initiatives have intensified in response to the increasing insecurity and regional tensions. I welcome the vigorous diplomatic efforts undertaken by the African Union mediator and Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, President João Lourenço, to support the implementation of the Luanda road map. I also commend the East African Community Facilitator, former President Kenyatta of Kenya, for the progress made in the context of the Nairobi process, with the support of the Chair of the East African Community, President Ndayishimiye of Burundi.

Since April, the Mission has provided political, technical, and logistical support to the joint Democratic Republic of the Congo-Kenya secretariat for the holding of consultations between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congolese armed groups, including the third round of consultations, which resumed on 28 November in Nairobi and ended on 6 December. The Mission facilitated the transport of more than 180 delegates from remote locations in North Kivu, South Kivu, Ituri, Maniema and Tanganyika to enable them to participate in the talks and deployed 14 staff members to Nairobi to help manage deliberations.

Regional leaders and national stakeholders, including representatives of 50 armed groups and civil society delegations, worked day and night to craft durable solutions to the cycle of conflict that has caused much suffering in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am particularly encouraged by the central role in those consultations played by Congolese women, who constituted more than 40 per cent of the civil society delegations, including 10 survivors of sexual violence. It is also noteworthy that the three provincial coordinators of the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reinsertion and Stabilization and the programme's deputy national coordinator also actively participated in the deliberations.

The 23 November mini-summit held in Luanda agreed on measures to address the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including a timetable for the implementation of priority actions to achieve the cessation of hostilities, the immediate withdrawal of the M-23 from occupied areas and the coordination of efforts under the Luanda and Nairobi processes. The communiqué also envisions an operational role for MONUSCO, in coordination with the East African Community regional force and the ad hoc verification mechanism.

It is imperative that the outcomes of those initiatives be faithfully implemented by all parties. First and foremost, the M-23 must cease all hostilities and withdraw from occupied areas in accordance with the road map set out in the final communiqué of the Luanda mini-summit. I echo former President Kenyatta's call on all other armed groups to lay down their weapons and adhere to the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reinsertion and Stabilization. I call on all partners to support the efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to operationalize the programme.

Meanwhile, the East African Community regional force has continued to deploy in support of the political processes. I welcome the recent meeting among the leadership of the FARDC, the East African regional force and the MONUSCO force from 29 to 30 November, held in Goma, which was a major step forward towards the establishment of an effective framework for coordination and information-sharing, including with the Burundian and Ugandan forces already deployed in South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has formally requested MONUSCO's active involvement in the implementation of the Luanda mini-summit communiqué. The East African Community regional force is also counting on the Mission's assistance to enable its full and timely deployment. I reiterate the Mission's readiness to leverage the capabilities at its disposal in support of the regional peace initiatives under way, in line with its mandate and in compliance with the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. I look forward to engaging further with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and regional partners to define the Mission's role in efforts to translate the decisions taken in the

framework of the Luanda and Nairobi processes into reality on the ground.

(spoke in French)

The deteriorating security situation in the country is also increasingly putting MONUSCO's operations at risk. The attack on our operational base in Minembwe, South Kivu, by members of the Twirwaneho armed group on 30 September, resulting in the death of a Blue Helmet, attests to that. I condemn that attack, the perpetrators of which must be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, and I once again express my condolences to the decedent's family and the Government.

MONUSCO remains fully committed to helping the Congolese Government and people create the conditions for its responsible and sustainable withdrawal from South Kivu, North Kivu and Ituri provinces where it remains deployed. The example of Tanganyika province provides valuable lessons for such a responsible departure. Since the withdrawal of MONUSCO, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes have developed a transition plan for the provinces with the Congolese authorities in defining the gains to be preserved. The plan includes the gradual deployment of Congolese National Police officers to ensure the continuity of security work, particularly in the context of the upcoming closure of the MONUSCO base in Bendera, in Tanganyika province. The transition in Tanganyika therefore demonstrates the benefits of good coordination between the Congolese authorities and MONUSCO.

In that regard, I welcome the Government's initiative of contacting the Mission on 15 November to begin a reassessment of the transition plan. During my meetings on 7 December with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, who is among us today, I reiterated the United Nations readiness to step up our cooperation in a spirit of partnership on the revision of the joint transition plan in order to define concrete actions for the effective implementation of priority benchmarks related to the creation of minimum security conditions for the responsible and sustainable withdrawal of MONUSCO. We also agreed that sustained cooperation with State institutions and mutual trust are critical to ensuring that the Congolese authorities and United Nations agencies, funds and programmes can do what is necessary to build peace after the Mission's departure.

Regrettably, the Mission continues to operate in the east of the country in a hostile environment fuelled by feelings of disappointment, frustration and despair among the people, owing to the deteriorating security situation. We have made numerous efforts to rebuild trust with them, especially young people, and with the Congolese authorities, and we will continue to do so. We will also continue to work with the authorities to put in place the conditions needed to implement the mandate in the spirit and letter of the status of forces agreement and ensure the safety of the Mission's personnel and facilities.

In conclusion, I would again like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries and their personnel, as well as national and international civilian personnel, for their invaluable support at this difficult time for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We remain fully mobilized through our assistance to the authorities and the defence and security forces and through our support to the peace and electoral processes and to the Government for a responsible and sustainable transition.

The President: I thank Ms. Keita for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ambassador Ngyema Ndong.

Mrs. Ngyema Ndong (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to deliver this statement in my capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

As my last briefing on the work of the Committee was on 30 September (see S/PV. 9142), I would like to take this opportunity to provide a brief overview of my visit, with some Committee members, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, from 7 to 18 November, the sixth visit by a Chair of the Committee since 2015. My predecessors last visited Rwanda in 2016, Uganda in 2019 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2021. Last month's visit took place in a challenging political and security context marked by increasing tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, specifically in connection to the actions of two sanctioned armed groups, the Mouvement du 23 mars and the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda. In that charged environment, the sanctions regime and the notification requirement have been invoked against the United Nations as a whole and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in particular.

Overall, in the discussions that took place during the delegation's visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I mainly emphasized that since March 2008 the arms embargo has applied only to armed groups, not the Government of the country, and that the notification requirement is binding only on supplier States and not the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself. Our discussions in Kinshasa also focused on the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the activities of armed groups, the alleged links between the Allied Democratic Forces sanctioned armed group and Da'esh, the illegal exploitation of natural resources and human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence.

The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has several times reiterated its call for the notification requirement to be waived for the transfer of military equipment and the provision of military training to the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), a demand echoed by some civil-society organizations. I clarified that the arms embargo applied only to armed groups, not the Government, but that the notification requirement for supplier States remained, although there has been a reduction in the kinds of weapons for which notifications are required — the remaining categories are listed in the annex to resolution 2641 (2022). However, the Congolese authorities noted that banks and shippers, concerned about reducing risks, were reluctant to be involved in the financing and transport of weapons and ammunition about which the Committee had previously been notified.

With regard to the sanctions list, I asked my interlocutors during my visits to Kinshasa, Kigali and Kampala if it would be useful to add new names to the list, particularly since no new names have been added since February 2020. Several interlocutors underscored the importance of sanctions of individual people as a tool for stigmatization and of listing individuals and entities involved in human rights violations, including for acts of sexual violence and the illegal exploitation of natural resources. No names were provided to my delegation for possible sanctions designations. Besides that, with regard to the exploitation of natural resources, concerns remained about the trafficking of gold and other natural resources through neighbouring countries as a way to enable armed groups to continue controlling territory in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

With respect to the monitoring mechanism concerning the March 2017 murders of Michael Sharp and Zaida Catalán, two members of the Group of Experts, and the four Congolese citizens who accompanied them, we received a detailed briefing from the Auditor General of the FARDC in Kinshasa on the investigation into the whereabouts of the four Congolese, as well as on the appeal proceedings that began at the end of October in Kinshasa regarding the people found guilty in January of murdering the Experts.

In conclusion, I would like to note that I intend to submit the report of my visit to the members of the Committee in due course. I hope that delegations will soon be able to discuss the report and its recommendations.

The President: I thank Ambassador Ngyema Ndong for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Mutuku Mathuki.

Mr. Mutuku Mathuki: I thank you, Madam President, for the opportunity to brief the Council.

At the outset, I want to confirm that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a full member of the East African Community (EAC), which it joined in July after the Heads of State of the Community met and confirmed that position, and subsequently committed to contributing to reconciliation and lasting peace. Determined to find a swift and lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they held a number of consultative meetings, known as conclaves. So far, three of them have been held, first based on the fact that the Heads of State agree there should be a continuing political dialogue between local armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its Government to address the sources of grievances that have led to the proliferation of armed groups and the resulting current level of insecurity. That is what they call the political track.

The second track formed within the conclaves is a military one, aimed at ensuring that a military and security enforcement approach is deployed to guarantee the disarmament of armed groups, either voluntarily or forcefully, and the repatriation of non-Congolese armed groups to their States of origin upon their disarmament. The two processes were designed to be undertaken simultaneously, under the leadership of the East African Community, with the full ownership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The time frame given for those processes was 24 months.

The EAC-led Nairobi process was designed as follows: first, to urgently address issues of trust and confidence-building; second, to ensure the cessation of hostilities and promote voluntary disarmament; third, to enhance the participation of all citizens in the country's political processes; fourth, to prioritize the participation of all citizens in the country's development; fifth, to find a lasting solution to the issue of citizenship for certain categories of residents in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; sixth, to enable the Government to repatriate foreign armed groups; seventh, to ensure the reintegration of combatants into society; and eighth, to ensure the repatriation and settlement of Congolese refugees and internally displaced persons.

At the twenty-second summit of the East African Community Heads of State, held in Arusha, on 22 July, it was decided to mainstream the Nairobi process into the East African Community by invoking the provisions of article 4 of the East African Community Protocol on Peace and Security. Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, former President of Kenya, was appointed as a facilitator to oversee the implementation of the Nairobi process, as provided for in the modality for the establishment and functioning of the East African Community Panel of Eminent Persons and the deployment of special envoys and representatives. Terms of reference for the facilitator were approved, and it was directed that a special fund be created to support the implementation of the process on both the political and military tracks. It was also decided to expeditiously deploy a joint regional force in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I can confirm that the Republic of Burundi, the Republic of Kenya and Uganda are already on the ground, with South Sudan expected to follow suit.

The East African Community Heads of State met again recently on the sidelines of the twenty-seventh Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. They decided to hold the third inter-Congolese dialogue on 6 December, at which a number of developments occurred. There were 60 armed groups present, as well as 20 civil society groups, including women's organizations and community leaders. The event was facilitated by President Kenyatta. In attendance were the Chair of the East African Community, President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi; President William Ruto of the host country, Kenya; President Paul Kagame of Rwanda; President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo of the Democratic Republic of the Congo;

and President Museveni of Uganda — demonstrating the political commitment prevalent in the process.

I therefore urge the Council to take note of the following.

As the Secretary General of the East African Community, I communicated the decisions taken at the summit to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and sent a copy to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, followed by another letter to them both in which I requested that they join and support the process, as it will require a great deal of resources. I want to thank the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the President of Senegal for contributing \$1 million, as did both the President of Angola and the President of the Republic of Kenya. That is what has largely been used to take care of the meetings that are being held, in particular the meeting just held in Nairobi on 6 December.

I addressed a letter to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Secretary-General of the United Nations to request support, including financial support, for both the political and military tracks, as the estimated cost of the East African Community-led Nairobi process is expected to be approximately \$350 million. It is proposed that the political process will require approximately \$150 million, while the military track will require close to \$200 million.

Once again, we request the Security Council to support the implementation of the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reinsertion and Stabilization. I would like to see whether we can create a form of operational synergy between the East African Community regional force and MONUSCO, which would be very helpful. It is important for the Security Council to look into that possibility and review MONUSCO's mandate in that context to see how such a synergy can be created between the East African Community regional force, the East African Community-led Nairobi process as a whole and the activities of MONUSCO on the ground. The total amount I mentioned of approximately \$350 million is the estimated cost of the two processes over the next 24 months. Without further ado, I have made available copies of the letters that I wrote to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and sent to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

I would like to once again briefly reaffirm that the EAC Heads of State are firmly committed to ensuring

that peace and security prevail in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I call upon the Council, as a very important organ of the United Nations, to get involved and support the East African Community in securing a permanent solution in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is our collective responsibility, not only as the East African Community but also as members of the Security Council, to work together to seek ways to secure a permanent solution to the challenges facing citizens in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that connection, I want to commend the Heads of State of the East African Community for the efforts they have undertaken, as well as Council members for making the time to listen to how the prevailing situation is developing. I think that what is now actually required is to see how MONUSCO and the East African Community Nairobi-led process, as well as the East African Community regional force, can work together to ensure that we reach a solution in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I thank Mr. Mutuku Mathuki for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kabuo.

Ms. Kabuo (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Madam President, for giving me the opportunity to share today some concerns and recommendations with regard to my country, the Democratic Republic of Congo. My name is Rebecca Kabuo and I am a member of the *Lutte pour le changement* (LUCHA), which is a non-partisan, non-violent, citizen-led movement that was launched in 2012 in Goma to call for respect for democracy and basic human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

My statement today will focus on three main points: first, the current situation in the country, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; secondly, the impact of this conflict on women and the crucial importance of women's political participation; and thirdly, the role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

The resumption of fighting between the *Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo* and the *Mouvement du 23 mars* (M-23) has aggravated tensions in the region, as well as the humanitarian crisis and the incidence of human rights violations in the country. As the region strives to find peaceful solutions to the conflict, Rwanda — through its President, Paul

Kagame — has continued to provide military support to the M-23. On 29 and 30 November, in the villages of Kishishe and Bambo, in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu province, M-23 rebels engaged in retaliatory attacks on civilians, killing 102 men, 17 women and 12 children — 131 civilians in total. They also raped at least 20 women and five girls. Moreover, the presence of East African Community troops has created great anxiety among a population already under a constant threat of violence and abuse of its basic rights. Civilians are being forced to pay taxes to armed groups to guarantee their safety in their own homes, and those who cannot pay have no choice but to flee or risk being subjected to violence. The situation has also increased the economic vulnerability of the women living in the context of conflict.

It is well known that this conflict has had a profoundly negative impact on women and girls. While gender-based violence increased by 80 per cent in 2021, justice remains elusive, as the perpetrators are rarely punished. Even the Security Council, which has the ability to set an example for the rest of the world through its sanctions regime, has listed no new individuals or groups since 2020. The conflict has displaced more than a million people, a significant proportion of them women and girls. Women are not only at increased risk of sexual and gender-based violence, but also of diseases such as cholera. Women human rights defenders continue to be targeted by combatants and subjected to death threats, arbitrary arrests, abductions, sexual and gender-based violence, office raids and stigmatization — all in the context of a culture of impunity for human rights violations. It is essential to monitor and report attacks on women human rights defenders and peacemakers, especially since the existing protection mechanisms have proved to be ineffective and gender-blind.

Unfortunately, there are no consultations with civil society on the electoral calendar. With elections now scheduled for December 2023, it will be crucial to consider the current context of women and young people's political participation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the civic space they are afforded to express themselves. Women continue to face fundamental barriers to accessing polling stations, particularly in remote rural areas. When they do have access to voting booths, women must contend not only with the reluctance derived from gender stereotypes but also practical obstacles, such as the lack of information about voting procedures. And women candidates have

to contend with a lack of information and of funding in addition to gender-based violence. The Independent National Electoral Commission recently announced an electoral timetable giving voters only 30 days to register. Such a short time frame is an additional obstacle to the full participation of internally displaced persons and people with disabilities as well as women, particularly in conflict areas.

The third round of peace talks on the Democratic Republic of the Congo was held in Nairobi last week. In the round of Nairobi peace talks held in April, there were no women among the 30 delegates from the armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And while the most recent talks held in November included women and civil-society representatives and women leaders, those leaders continue to reiterate how vital it is for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO to ensure that they are fully and meaningfully included in all current and future negotiations, given the active and essential role that women have played and continue to play in local peace efforts.

Anti-MONUSCO sentiment is growing among the population. Our people are frustrated by the fact that although MONUSCO has been present in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for more than 20 years, it has still not been able to end the cycle of violence or provide adequate protection and security for civilians in accordance with its mandate. Moreover, after at least 12 people were shot to death during the anti-MONUSCO protests in July, the population is even less accepting of the Mission.

A clear and well-communicated transition plan from MONUSCO with significant gender-related elements is crucial to finding a sustainable solution to the conflict. We expect that such a plan, in addition to meeting the current standards for gender inclusion, will go a step further by clearly articulating the ways in which women's civil-society perspectives will inform how we evaluate progress. In that regard, we urge the Security Council, first, to ensure that MONUSCO provides full protection to the civilians, especially women and girls, who continue to live in the conflict-affected areas. MONUSCO must also monitor and report on all human rights violations, including violations against women.

Secondly, the Security Council must ensure that all the parties, including the Congolese armed forces, the East African Community regional force and MONUSCO, act within a framework of strict respect

for human rights and international humanitarian law. We also ask that the Council ensure that all three of their mandates are clear and complementary, and that no human rights violations are committed in the course of their operations.

Thirdly, the Security Council must ensure that women participate fully and equally at all stages of the electoral process, beginning with voter registration. We also ask MONUSCO to ensure the protection not only of citizens exercising their right to vote but also of women candidates, observers and administrators, especially in conflict areas.

Fourthly, the Security Council should remind the stakeholders in the peace process, including in the Nairobi and Luanda processes, that the full and active participation and involvement of women is essential to achieving sustainable peace, as set out in resolution 1325 (2000).

Fifthly, we call on the Security Council to ensure that MONUSCO's withdrawal is gradual, accountable and conditioned on respect for human rights and the protection of civilians. Another specific condition for the withdrawal should be the establishment of a mechanism for security-sector reform.

Sixthly, we call on the Member States of the Security Council to urge the Congolese authorities to begin reforming the security sector, particularly the army, as soon as possible in order to enable it to protect the Congolese people and their property throughout the country's territory.

The ever-growing challenges facing the Congolese people may seem insurmountable, but in times like these we must not despair. As representatives of civil society, we have not lost hope that peace will one day come to our country. However, we will only succeed if the international community, including the Security Council, supports us in our efforts.

The President: I thank Ms. Kabuo for her briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. De Rivière (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Ms. Keita for her briefing and especially for her work as Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). I welcome the participation in this meeting of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister

for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Let me express my horror at the reports of violence committed by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) against civilians in Kishishe and Bambo. These acts must not go unpunished. We welcome the willingness of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to bring the perpetrators to justice. France condemns these abuses in the strongest possible terms.

I would like to emphasize three points. First, the M-23 offensive must end, and the fighting must stop. France condemns in the strongest possible terms the actions of the M-23, an armed group sanctioned by the Security Council and the European Union. Yesterday, the European Union took restrictive measures against one of the leaders of the M-23. Despite the ceasefire called for in the Luanda agreement of 23 November, the continued violence undermines peace efforts. We call on the M-23 to cease hostilities, withdraw immediately and unconditionally from the territories it is occupying, and end this violation of international law.

France is concerned by reports of Rwandan support for the M-23 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We recall the Security Council's demand that all external support to the M-23 and other armed groups active on the territory of the Democratic Republic cease immediately. We also call on all armed groups to immediately cease fighting and engage without delay in the disarmament process.

To enable de-escalation, France supports regional efforts through the Nairobi and Luanda processes. France welcomes the conclusion of the third round of inter-Congolese consultations in the framework of the Nairobi process. The commitments made must lead to concrete results. To this end, it is urgent that international partners provide financial support for the new National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reinsertion and Stabilization.

In order to fight against armed groups that refuse to give up their weapons, a professional, trained and equipped Congolese army and police force must be strengthened. France will continue its support in terms of training, through the war college in Kinshasa and by training the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo in jungle combat.

Secondly, humanitarian and development support efforts must be strengthened. The humanitarian response plan remains underfunded. Increased support

from the international community is urgently needed. The European Union will provide half a million euros for the humanitarian response for displaced people in Mai-Ndombe and Kwilu provinces, which have recently experienced violent confrontations.

The protection of human rights, the fight against hate speech and against impunity are the keys to lasting peace. This is why the European Union yesterday sanctioned Justin Bitakwira, member of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for his calls for hatred and discrimination against the Banyamulenge community.

The protection of children and the promotion of women and youth are levers for development. France will continue to support these objectives. The French Development Agency has just mobilized €37 million to continue to reduce gender inequalities and create access to quality education in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

France welcomes the publication of the electoral calendar and the announcement of the date of the elections scheduled for 20 December 2023. We reaffirm our support for the Democratic Republic's Government in organizing transparent, free and inclusive elections within the timeframe set out in the Constitution. The conditions must be created for them to be held throughout the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thirdly, the partnership between the Government and the United Nations must continue. The Security Council is preparing to renew MONUSCO's mandate. For over 20 years, this operation has been saving lives and supporting the stabilization of the country. It has adapted its presence in the country by withdrawing from the Kasais and Tanganyika. France supports a reassessment of the transition plan in a spirit of trust and partnership between the Mission and the Government.

MONUSCO must continue to robustly protect civilians in conflict-affected provinces. To do so, its personnel must be protected from attacks and misinformation. I pay tribute to all of the Mission's personnel who have fallen this year in the service of peace. Those responsible for their deaths must not go unpunished.

Finally, as the East African Community regional force begins to deploy, coordination and information-sharing with MONUSCO will be key. Both forces must pursue a common objective:

protecting civilians in compliance with international humanitarian law.

France will continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the path to peace. Our compass clearly shows the way: the promotion of stability and dialogue, and the defence of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the Great Lakes region.

Mrs. Thomas-Greenfield (United States of America): First and foremost, I would like to extend my gratitude to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her briefing today. I would also like to thank Ms. Kabuo and Mr. Mutuku Mathuki, for their briefings. I welcome the participation of the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who is in the Chamber with us today.

We also appreciate the recent report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) (S/2022/892), which outlines the persistent security challenges facing the Mission and the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The report documents 845 human rights violations and abuses, but let us be clear: documentation is only the first step. We urge the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to hold all those who violate human rights accountable.

The United States would also like to thank Presidents Lourenço and Ruto, as well as former President Kenyatta, the facilitators of the East African Community-led Nairobi process, for their leadership in trying to broker a solution to the ongoing crisis in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate our call for armed groups to lay down their weapons, stop terrorizing the people of the country and join the Nairobi process as a means of seeking political solutions to their grievances.

We also urge all parties to adhere to the agreement reached in Luanda on 23 November. The armed group Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) must withdraw its forces in preparation for disarmament. Make no mistake: M-23 presents a serious threat to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the broader region. Moreover, its forces are dangerously close to Goma, the base of operations for the international community's humanitarian assistance in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic. We must protect this population centre and the indispensable services it provides, and

we call on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO to work together to proactively protect Goma from attack, invasion or from being surrounded by the M-23. We also call for the cessation of all State support for armed groups, including but not limited to Rwanda's assistance to M-23. We urge Council members to consider how this kind of support runs afoul of existing sanctions regimes.

With regard to sanctions relating to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United States acknowledges requests from the region and from the Democratic Republic to relax certain measures, in particular the requirement that arms transfers to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo be notified in advance to the Security Council. Let me stress that the current sanctions measures do not prevent the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from obtaining military equipment for defensive needs or from undertaking critical security sector reforms. To the contrary, the measures are carefully tailored to ensure that the Government can provide security for its citizens. We therefore urge Member States conducting military operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to formally notify the Council of their actions, in line with existing sanctions resolutions. We encourage such military forces to closely coordinate with MONUSCO and humanitarian actors.

Finally, as negotiations on the MONUSCO mandate get under way, the United States would like to urge the Security Council to deliver a strong and unified signal to support MONUSCO. The Government, civil society and the international community all have important roles to play in addressing the challenges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but MONUSCO in particular is doing essential work protecting civilians and supporting Government institutions, even as it implements a gradual transition. The United States will work to ensure that the mandate clearly supports a conditions-based withdrawal, not an arbitrary end date. We will do everything in our power to make clear that we stand behind Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and MONUSCO.

Ms. Heimerback (Norway): I thank the briefers for their insights.

Let me start by once again reiterating our deep concern for the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and its regional implications. Violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of human

rights, involving brutal attacks against the civilian population, including children, continue to be reported. We are appalled by the killing of civilians in the massacre in Kishishe village in North Kivu last week. I would like to convey my sincere condolences to the Government and the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The violence must end. Norway condemns the actions of all armed groups. We appeal to all groups and countries to respect the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Norway welcomes and supports the regional political and diplomatic processes led by former President Kenyatta and President Lourenço, aimed at stabilizing the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and easing tensions in the Great Lakes region. We are encouraged to hear about the progress made.

We stress the importance of coordination between the regional processes and the efforts of the United Nations, including between the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the East African Community regional force. We also welcome the ongoing efforts to establish a coordination mechanism between those forces.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has made progress regarding women's participation. Yet there is potential for increased direct and meaningful participation. Women must be heard and included in important political processes, including the ongoing regional peace processes. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that women be included and that they not be exposed to reprisals for their work.

Sanctions alone cannot resolve the conflict, but they are an important tool to be used to improve the stability of the region and the security of the population. Sanctions are only as good as we make them, and we encourage all parties to respect the sanctions regime and to continuously strive to improve it. We recall that designated individuals and entities should include those involved in acts that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly those that constitute human rights violations or abuses or violations of international humanitarian law.

MONUSCO will exit the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but the exit must be responsible and sustainable. The protection of civilians, including children, must remain a priority task. To that end, it is essential that

the transition process be guided by the situation on the ground, not by timelines or political considerations.

The return to peace and stability will require the commitment of all. Norway looks forward to working with all the relevant stakeholders for an inclusive and peaceful transition and for sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Special Representative Bintou Keita and Deputy Permanent Representative of Gabon Lilly Ngyema Ndong for their briefings. We listened carefully to the Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC), Mr. Peter Mathuki, and the representative of Congolese civil society, Ms. Rebecca Kabuo. We welcome the participation of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, in this meeting. We believe that the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Burundi and Rwanda to the United Nations is important.

The Security Council was compelled to meet more frequently than usual this year to discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That is proof of the seriousness of the events unfolding in the country, which the Security Council cannot ignore. That is particularly true in the country's eastern provinces, where, due to the activities of numerous illegal armed groups, violence and lawlessness have become a daily norm for the local population. The increased activities of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) have significantly exacerbated the situation. The latest offensive by the M-23 against the city of Goma resulted in a worsening humanitarian crisis, an increasing number of internally displaced persons and refugees and the suffering of ordinary people.

At the same time, other illegal armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, the Mayi-Mayi, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, the Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi and so on, continue their atrocities. The list is so long that a statement would not suffice to name them all.

We are deeply concerned about the tragic events in Kishishe on 29 November. We hope that the Security Council will learn all the details of what happened, and that the perpetrators of the crime will be found and held accountable.

We see that Kinshasa and countries of the region remain committed to overcoming the instability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome their efforts undertaken in the context of the Nairobi process and through the Luanda mediation process. We deem it important to link and coordinate those efforts in order to normalize the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region as a whole. We believe that it is important that the deployment of the EAC regional force be supported by the international community, in close coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and under Kinshasa's leadership. That is significant. The commitment to national unity and the unification of all political forces in the interests of achieving the common goal of sovereignty over the country's entire territory represent the logical continuation of the daily, persistent and difficult struggle for independence to which Patrice Lumumba referred and for which the Congolese people underwent great sacrifices, suffering and hardship. That remains as relevant today, and the international community should provide assistance in support of such goals.

We believe that it is necessary to keep working to find political and non-violent solutions for the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such solutions will make it possible to achieve a comprehensive cessation of hostilities and create genuine conditions for lasting stability. Consistent with such an approach, we welcome the commitment of the Congolese Government to negotiating with armed groups as part of the political track of the Nairobi process, another round of which concluded just a few days ago.

We also believe that it is important to continue efforts to implement of the basic fundamental agreements, such as the 2013 Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework Agreement for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region.

The countries of the region should reach an understanding that their well-being and prosperity ultimately depend primarily on how well they get along with each other. We call on our African friends to display will and commitment to a constructive, good-neighbourly dialogue in order to find solutions to African challenges. Without that, it will be impossible to cope with the humanitarian crisis, satisfy mutual concerns in the military-political field, guarantee

sustainable socioeconomic development and deepen integration processes.

We would like to once again reaffirm our principled support for the efforts of MONUSCO, its leadership and its peacekeepers, as well as the activities of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, Mr. Huang Xia. With regard to the implementation of the joint transition plan for the gradual drawdown of the Mission and its withdrawal from the country, we believe it is necessary to first take into account the evolution of the situation on the ground in order to proceed step by step and in a responsible manner.

We hope that, together with the peacebuilding Mission and partners in the region, the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be able to regain control over the situation and advance towards the implementation of long-overdue measures in order to address the root causes of what is happening in the east of the country, the reasons for which are well known. We are all aware that the country's great wealth of natural resources attracts a lot of attention and brings out the worst in some people. We have faith that the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will find a way to transform the riches of their subsoil not into a source of problems but rather into a tool for ensuring national well-being. Provided that the international community is supportive and not indifferent, that will be feasible.

In conclusion, I welcome the publication of the electoral timetable and the continued efforts of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to prepare for the elections to be held in December 2023. That is an important milestone for the country, demonstrating both the commitment of the Congolese people to achieving peaceful development and their desire to participate in political processes and to lead a normal and sane life as citizens of their country. We also advocate an expeditious adjustment of the sanctions regime imposed on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo so as to provide its security sector with all the necessary means for achieving its objectives.

Mr. Gilroy (Ireland): I thank Special Representative Keita, Secretary General Mutuku Mathuki and Ms. Rebecca Kabuo for their briefings. We also welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

After nearly two years as a member of the Security Council, Ireland is more worried than ever about the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and across the Great Lakes region. Ireland is appalled by the recent massacre of civilians in Kishishe and Bambo. We condemn those heinous acts in the strongest terms. The persistent and growing violence and insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo perpetrated by the Mouvement du 23 mars, the Allied Democratic Forces, the Coopérative pour le développement du Congo and many other armed groups is alarming. That insecurity is creating a complex crisis and exacerbating the already dire humanitarian needs, with widespread displacement contributing to food insecurity and malnutrition. We reiterate the importance of protecting civilians and humanitarians and delivering assistance to the millions of people affected.

Human rights violations and abuses continue to be perpetrated by armed groups and State forces. It is deeply disappointing that the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) is unlikely to receive a briefing from Special Representative Patten on the appalling situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in relation to sexual violence in conflict. The persistently high rates of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence cannot continue to be ignored. We must end impunity and hold those responsible to account. We fully support the role of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in the protection of civilians. The rise in hate speech, misinformation and anti-United Nations rhetoric is worrisome. It is imperative that all citizens be protected and that the Mission continue to deliver on its mandate. In that regard, we recognize the importance of community engagement and communication with partners.

Ireland has consistently highlighted that regional cooperation is paramount for peace, yet tensions continue to increase, with the deteriorating relationship between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda being of particular concern. We reiterate the importance of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework and commend the Member States of the region, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the African Union, the East African Community (EAC), the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and the Southern African Development Community for their efforts to ease tensions and build trust. The Nairobi and Luanda

processes are important platforms for peace, and we urge all parties to engage fully in that regard. The deployment of the EAC regional force must have clear objectives. Close cooperation and coordination with MONUSCO and other actors is essential. The regional force must comply with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is fundamental for lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the expansion of the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reinsertion and Stabilization, including the elaboration of the provincial operational plans. There is a need to scale up their implementation if they are to make the needed impact on building sustainable peace. Effective transitions are also essential for sustaining peace. The review of the joint transition plan must recognize the need for continued engagement, cooperation and inclusion, and must set clear and realistic transition benchmarks and indicators that are aligned with realistic timelines. We urge the full inclusion of civil society in the transition process, as well as the provision of space for women's full, equal and meaningful participation across all efforts towards peace.

As the 2023 elections draw closer, we welcome the continued efforts of the Independent National Electoral Commission and reiterate the importance of respecting and protecting human rights. We condemn all dangerous rhetoric, hate speech and incitement to violence, whatever the medium. The United Nations can and should play an important role in supporting the timely holding of transparent, credible, inclusive and peaceful elections. It is vitally important to ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in that process, as well as to ensure that young people are fully engaged. We hope that, unlike the past two years, the next 24 months will bring progress on the path to peace for the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mrs. Alhefeiti (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I thank Ms. Keita for her efforts and detailed briefing today. I also thank Ambassador Biang for leading the recent visit of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda. I thank Ambassador Ngyema Ndong for briefing the Security Council on the details of that visit,

in which the delegation of my country participated. The briefing gave us a clearer picture of the status of the implementation of sanctions on the ground. I welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the representatives of Rwanda and Burundi. I also wish to express my appreciation for the briefing by Mr. Mathuki and the efforts of the East African Community to support peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

I would like to express the deep concern of the United Arab Emirates at the escalation of insecurity in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo following the attacks by armed groups, which target civilians and threaten to undermine peace efforts and the progress achieved by the international community in its decades-long presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There are also growing concerns about the rise of hateful rhetoric, in addition to the increasingly severe humanitarian crisis due to the exacerbation of the conflict and the continuing rampant spread of the Ebola virus. As civilians continue to flee, the numbers illustrate the gravity of the situation. So far, there are 5.7 million internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — the highest rate of displacement ever recorded in Africa.

As such, the current situation requires the prioritization of dialogue and a focus on reducing escalation and tensions, while giving the utmost importance to the protection of civilians. It is also imperative to redouble political efforts at the regional level and make them as inclusive and action-oriented as possible. In that context, we welcome the continued efforts of the leaders of the region to harmonize the Luanda road map with the Nairobi process, as well as their high-level engagement with actors in Luanda and Kinshasa.

Given the dire living conditions of the population, we stress the need to ensure that humanitarian aid reaches all those in need and affected in the country in a safe and unimpeded manner. The protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as the safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities, must remain a priority for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO.

The situation calls for intensifying efforts to address the growing spread of hate speech, disinformation and misinformation, including incitement against the

United Nations. We underscore the importance of all actors contributing to United Nations efforts to refute misinformation, including by making it clear, for example, that the Security Council's arms embargo is imposed on armed groups, not the Government. MONUSCO could also consider adopting a new strategy to address hate speech and disinformation and work to involve local communities in such efforts.

With regard to the situation of women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, they require special attention from the international community, as we all know they are the primary targets of sexual and gender-based violence. That requires holding the perpetrators of such crimes accountable, while providing adequate protection and support to women and girls. We reaffirm that ensuring the long-term protection of civilians requires increased efforts to create the conditions necessary for the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, together with other projects for reforming the security sector so that reintegration becomes the sole option for all armed groups.

In the context of the Council's readiness to renew MONUSCO's mandate in the next few weeks, we emphasize the Mission's important role in deterring the actions of armed groups, on the one hand, and its engagement with political actors, on the other, in order to create an environment conducive to holding the upcoming elections. We acknowledge the Mission's important work in facilitating dialogue with and within local communities to ensure social cohesion in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, the United Arab Emirates will continue to support the path of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region towards achieving peace and stability.

Mr. De Almeida Filho (Brazil): Let me start by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for her very informative briefing, and above all for her work on the ground. I thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Gabon for her comprehensive briefing in her capacity as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also thank our other briefers, Mr. Mutuku Mathuki and Ms. Kabuo, for their contributions, and I welcome Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Lutundula Apala Pen'apala of the

Democratic Republic of the Congo and the delegations of Rwanda and Burundi to this meeting.

Brazil is a proud contributor to the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) through its peacekeepers, including the Mission's Force Commander, General Affonso da Costa, and a jungle-warfare training team. We have therefore followed with concern the resurgence of the *Mouvement du 23 mars* and the consequent deterioration of the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are particularly worried by the incidents of violence against MONUSCO personnel and facilities that have resulted in the destruction and looting of equipment and the tragic deaths of peacekeepers and civilians alike.

Although those acts of violence peaked during the riots in July, the hostility to the United Nations presence continues to this day. In late November, for instance, military and police advisers from missions in New York were travelling in a MONUSCO convoy in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo when an angry crowd attacked it by throwing stones. As a result, the group had to continue their visit in an armoured vehicle. Such actions are lamentable, and all the more so because MONUSCO is present on the ground with the consent of the host country in order to fulfil a mandate whose number-one priority is the protection of civilians.

According to a number of reports, the violence against peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been fuelled by a deliberate misinformation campaign by actors who believe that they stand to benefit in one way or another from the increased tension, either because they want to scapegoat MONUSCO or because they could benefit from the Mission's early departure. We should bear in mind that the host country has the responsibility to provide a safe operating environment for Blue Helmets and Blue Berets. We also want to point to the cooperation that has been agreed on between the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO in order to tackle such campaigns. That is not to say that United Nations missions should be immune from criticism. Like other missions, MONUSCO has been actively reaching out to the local authorities, civil society and the general public to provide information and listen to local demands. What is unacceptable is violence that prevents it from fulfilling its mandate.

We believe that MONUSCO's emphasis on strategic communications is an important tool for dispelling misinformation and creating trust among the local population. We understand that the Mission has been doing its utmost in that area and that efforts to reinforce its communications capabilities are under way. Brazil will work actively to emphasize the issue in the current renewal talks on MONUSCO's mandate. Brazil believes that a streamlined and clearer mandate would help prevent misunderstandings and unrealistic expectations.

The situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo presents a disheartening picture of a long-running conflict whose impact on the lives of millions of civilians cannot be overstated. However, there are reasons to be encouraged. I have in mind in particular the tireless efforts of regional actors — both neighbouring countries and regional organizations — dedicated to the cause of bringing peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that context, Brazil commends the diplomatic negotiations in the framework of the Luanda process, facilitated by President João Gonçalves Lourenço of Angola, and the Nairobi process, facilitated by former President Kenyatta. We take note of the deployment of troops of the regional force of the East Africa Community. We emphasize the need for close and constant coordination and information-sharing between the regional force, MONUSCO and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo.

Peace missions do not and should not last indefinitely. However, their withdrawal should be done in a responsible and orderly way in order to prevent reversals of hard-won gains. We take note of the work of the joint working group on the transition plan. We hope that the presence of the regional force, continued diplomatic efforts and the general elections to be held next year will bring about progress in achieving the benchmarks set out in the plan.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): Let me begin by thanking all our briefers for their remarks today and welcoming Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Lutundula Apala Pen'apala to our meeting.

I will focus on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, regional efforts, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and sanctions.

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly the increased armed-group violence. We strongly condemn the attack by the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in Kishishe that killed 131 civilians, as confirmed by the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office and MONUSCO. We take note of the M-23's statement indicating its members' willingness to withdraw from their current positions. We call on them to do so immediately and to uphold the Luanda ceasefire. We also urge the Government, with the support of MONUSCO, to use all necessary measures to prevent further M-23 advances, including towards Goma.

The humanitarian toll of the violence has been devastating. We urge all actors to ensure that assistance reaches the people who are affected, including the 1.29 million newly displaced this year. The United Kingdom reiterates its full support for the Nairobi and Luanda political processes. We are delighted to announce funding provided by the United Kingdom to support the East African Community (EAC)-led Nairobi process. We encourage continued dialogue through the Nairobi process and encourage Congolese armed groups to participate in it. We welcome the recently agreed ceasefire in Luanda and urge all parties to uphold their commitments to ensure that peace prevails. All support for armed groups must stop, including external support for the M-23. We call on the countries of the region to use all means available to urge an immediate cessation of hostilities and the immediate resumption of consultations on concrete steps to de-escalate current tensions.

We welcome the information shared by EAC Secretary General Mutuku Mathuki today. Both the EAC force and the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must substantively engage with MONUSCO on the de-confliction of operations in order to ensure the protection of civilians, as well as the safety and security of peacekeepers and an effective implementation of MONUSCO's mandate. The United Kingdom fully supports the work of MONUSCO and commends the Mission and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita for their continued efforts in increasingly challenging circumstances. We remain deeply concerned about the widespread anti-MONUSCO sentiment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which undermines the Mission's ability to implement its mandate. We encourage the Government of the country to engage in a structured dialogue with MONUSCO

in order to clarify its roles and responsibilities for a responsible, conditions-based drawdown.

Let me conclude by welcoming the cooperation that was extended by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, during its recent visit to the region. It is regrettable that Russia has blocked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict from briefing the Sanctions Committee, particularly since that issue is a significant problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and one that the Government is committed to working with the international community to tackle.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China welcomes His Excellency Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'Apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Permanent Representatives of Rwanda and Burundi to today's meeting. We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita and the other briefers for their briefings.

For some time now, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has continued to advance reforms in key areas and improve its governance, making progress in stimulating economic growth, balancing the 2023 elections process, promoting local development and demobilizing armed forces, which are all encouraging and deserving of recognition. Meanwhile, the security situation in the eastern part of the country has not yet improved, as the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) continues to mount attacks against the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo, resulting in many casualties and displacement, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and casting a shadow over regional security and development. It is crucial to de-escalate the situation and restore stability as soon as possible. All armed groups, including the M-23, should immediately cease hostilities, unconditionally lay down their weapons, withdraw from occupied areas and engage in political dialogue and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process.

The countries of the region are a security community, and the parties concerned should resolve their differences as soon as possible based on respect for each other's interests and concerns, through dialogue and consultations, and should eliminate the security threat with a range of measures. The leaders

of Kenya, Angola and Burundi, among others, through their good offices and mediation efforts, have promoted dialogue and engagement among the countries of the region, thereby making a major contribution to easing tensions in the area. The recent mini-summit on peace and security in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo set a timetable for the withdrawal of the M-23 from occupied areas. A third inter-Congolese dialogue, held under the Nairobi process, provided a platform for armed groups to engage in political dialogue. Those regional efforts have played an important role in de-escalating the situation and deserve full recognition. We look forward to the prompt implementation and effectiveness of the consensus and outcomes of those meetings.

The international community should continue to support Africans in their quest for African solutions to African problems, step up political, humanitarian, technical and financial support and form synergies with the countries of the region to promote the restoration of security and stability in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as soon as possible. According to multiple reports, armed groups such as the M-23 possess weapons that are more sophisticated than those of the security forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. That shows the negative impact of the Security Council's arms embargo on the security capabilities of the country's Government, which defeats the purpose of establishing the sanctions regime. During the recent visit by members of the sanctions Committee to the region, headed by Ambassador Biang, the Democratic Republic of the Congo again demanded that the Council lift its arms embargo on the country. China will support the next draft resolution on renewing the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and it also supports the lifting of the notification requirement for arms imports by the country's Government.

Under the leadership of Special Representative Keita, MONUSCO has overcome a series of daunting challenges and plays an important role in maintaining regional peace and security. China commends those efforts. We support the one-year renewal of MONUSCO's mandate and hope that the Mission will streamline and optimize its mandate and devote more of its resources to its core tasks, such as supporting the peace process, protecting civilians and maintaining security and stability. We hope that it will refer mandates that are beyond its capabilities to the Government of the country concerned and the United Nations country team

and, in the light of the actual needs of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, provide the necessary technical and logistical support for the 2023 elections.

China encourages MONUSCO to continue strengthening its communication with the Congolese Government and all social sectors through various channels in order to enhance understanding and trust so as to create the right environment in which MONUSCO can perform its duties. We also hope that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will take effective measures to ensure the safety of peacekeepers. MONUSCO has now successfully withdrawn from the Kasai and Tanganyika provinces. We hope that MONUSCO will take stock of its successful experience, continue to communicate with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, respect its views and, in the light of the situation on the ground and the benchmarks for withdrawal, advance the drawdown plan in an orderly and responsible manner.

Ms. Kinyungu (Kenya): I have the pleasure of delivering this statement on behalf of the three African members of the Security Council — Gabon, Ghana and Kenya (A3).

We thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; Mr. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, Secretary General of the East African Community; and Rebecca Kabuo for their briefings. We also thank the representative of Gabon, as Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the briefing. We welcome His Excellency Mr. Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'Apala, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We recognize the presence of Mr. Claver Gatete, Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations, and Mr. Zéphyrin Maniratanga, Permanent Representative of Burundi to the United Nations.

Our statement will focus on the political, security and humanitarian situations.

On the political front, we commend the Government's commitment to holding elections in 2023, in accordance with the Constitution. We welcome the commitment by President Félix-Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi to rebuilding trust and confidence between

the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries. We also welcome regional efforts to de-escalate tensions and pave the way for lasting peace, stability and development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We note with concern the heightened tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, as well as the use of hate speech, disinformation and misinformation. We implore both countries to use the available regional mechanisms to normalize relations. Both countries need each other for peace, security and prosperity. We strongly condemn all forms of social, cultural and political manipulation that can contribute to mistrust, tension and animosity and even incite violence. We reiterate that people engaging in hate speech, disinformation and misinformation campaigns must be held accountable. We urge for the various communities' continued participation and dialogue in order to contribute to building a climate of trust and promoting a culture of tolerance, respect and harmonious relations. That remains the primary objective of the inter-Congolese peace dialogue.

With regard to the security situation, the A3 strongly condemns terror activities by armed groups, especially the Mouvement du 23 mars, as well as the recent massacre of civilians that took place in Kishishe. We reiterate the need for concerted efforts to bring an end to all violence and hold the perpetrators accountable. All of the parties to the conflict must put a definitive end to the armed conflict and the historical cycles of violence. Only collectively can they herald a new chapter in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo to lay the foundations for peace and the rule of law. The process of laying the foundation for a stable and lasting peace requires the effective reintegration of ex-combatants into the country's social, economic and political life. Emphasis should be placed on ensuring that ex-combatants recognize that reintegration constitutes a commitment to closing the chapter of armed conflict as a means for addressing political grievances, making a resolute contribution to consolidating peaceful coexistence, preventing a relapse into conflict and dismantling the conditions that have facilitated the persistent violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We welcome the support of the United Nations and the international community for the deployment of an East African Community regional force aimed at the demobilization and disarmament of all armed

groups, including complementing ongoing political and diplomatic efforts, as well as the operations of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in support of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. There is a need to improve the effectiveness, safety and security of all the forces deployed on Congolese territory. That calls for setting up a joint coordination framework under the aegis of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that supports liaison in every area of operation, including the protection of civilians, communications and information-sharing, operational support, the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and training.

The A3 reiterates its call for all armed groups to agree on an immediate ceasefire, withdraw from positions recently taken and utilize the inter-Congolese peace dialogue. The only sustainable path to peace and security in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains a political one. We call on the United Nations and the African Union to enhance their support for those regional processes in order to sustain the peace and security efforts. We also call on the international community to redouble its efforts to support the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in restoring its State presence and authority throughout its territory. It is unacceptable that the Congolese populations are constantly under the threat of armed groups who loot, terrorize and perpetrate unspeakable atrocities with impunity.

The A3 underscores the importance of truth, justice and reconciliation in all peacebuilding efforts. We encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo to continue strengthening the rule of law and ensuring that social and cultural conflicts can be resolved through institutional channels, with justice for those taking part in the process. We urge all international partners to support the Government's efforts to establish a transitional justice system. That commitment will represent a critical step towards ending the enormous suffering that the conflict has caused millions of Congolese men, women and children. The quest for truth, justice and reconciliation for the victims will ensure the centrality of the needs of communities affected by violence. That is essential to the ability of future generations to understand their origins and identity and the truth about events that occurred before they were born, as well as ensuring that they are exempt from any responsibility for the actions of previous generations. It

will contribute to greater social and cultural integration and inclusion, promote equality and ensure the people's full enjoyment of citizenship rights.

The A3 remains concerned about the deteriorating humanitarian situation, which has left many civilians, especially women and children, disproportionately affected. We call on the Secretary-General to enhance humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons. We underscore the importance of socioeconomic development in sustaining peace and alleviating human suffering through poverty eradication, the promotion of entrepreneurship and the lawful and sustainable use of natural resources. We urge for comprehensive social and economic reforms aimed at fostering structural change, particularly in conflict-prone areas, overcoming the disparities that exist between communities and creating the conditions for a better quality of life and well-being among the Congolese population.

In conclusion, the A3 commends the efforts of MONUSCO in promoting peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We reiterate our solidarity with its Government and people and reaffirm our respect for its territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence.

Ms. Dautllari (Albania): We thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Keita, Secretary General of the East African Community Mutuku Mathuki and Ms. Kabuo for their briefings and updates. We welcome the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the representatives of the countries of the region, to today's meeting. We also thank the Deputy Permanent Representative of Gabon for her statement on behalf of the Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004) concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Since we last met to discuss the developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see S/PV.9142), the violence and uncertainty have continued despite the ceasefire announced during the latest mini-summit in Luanda and the talks held in Nairobi between armed groups and the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Albania commends the diplomatic efforts of Angola, Kenya and other regional stakeholders to defuse the growing tensions in the region and restore security on the ground. Echoing those mediation efforts, we reiterate their urgent call for an effective cessation

of hostilities and for the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) to withdraw from all the occupied areas and refrain from advancing further. It is important for the actors in the region to refrain from allowing or providing any support to armed groups, especially external support to the M-23.

Credible solutions for sustainable peace should be based on political and diplomatic tools. The inclusive participation of all Congolese armed groups in the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is one of those tools. At the same time, foreign armed groups must immediately disarm and return to their countries of origin. In that vein, we welcome the statements issued by the President and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo condemning the dangerous rhetoric and hate speech against ethnic communities and other actors.

We welcome the deployment of Kenyan troops in Goma. The East African Community regional force is an important addition to the diplomatic efforts, adding pressure to armed groups and assisting the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in their mandates to protect civilians. It is vital for the regional force to closely coordinate with MONUSCO and conduct its operations against armed groups in strict compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We are convinced that MONUSCO still plays a critical role in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With the current security, political and humanitarian situation, the proposed review of the transition plan should be gradual, responsible and conditions-based. At the same time, the safety of peacekeepers must not be in question, and we look forward to seeing enhanced cooperation with national authorities in further tackling the campaigns against and misperceptions about MONUSCO.

In conclusion, in preparation for the 2023 elections, further measures for improving the democratic space and freedom of expression are needed, along with the meaningful participation of women.

Mr. Ochoa Martínez (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Mexico thanks Special Representative Bintou Keita, as well as the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1533 (2004), concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the representative of the East African Community and Ms. Rebecca Kabuo for their

briefings. We also welcome the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the delegations of Burundi and Rwanda.

Mexico condemns in the strongest terms the attack of the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) in North Kivu, which has seriously affected the civilian population and regional stability. Recent reports of massacres in the villages of Kishishe and Bambo are clear evidence of the brutality of that new wave of violence, which must be fought with all means available. Given that critical situation and the tensions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, we commend regional efforts in the framework of the Nairobi and Luanda processes. We urge participants to ensure that those processes advance in a coordinated and harmonious manner in order to maximize their positive results. We are firmly convinced that there are no purely military solutions and that those regional initiatives should open up spaces for dialogue in order to address the root causes of the violence. In that regard, we welcome the conclusion of the third inter-Congolese dialogue held in Nairobi. We also support the ceasefire agreement announced at the most recent mini-summit held in Luanda. In accordance with the call of the leaders of the region, the M-23 must lay down its arms and withdraw from the areas under its control.

Similarly, Mexico continues to be attentive to the deployment of regional forces within the framework of cooperation with the East African Community. We stress that the success of that mission depends, to a large extent, on its communication and coordination with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo. Those operations must comply with international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

With regard to MONUSCO's exit strategy, we take note of the steps that have been taken to review the Mission's transition plan. Mexico believes that any possible adjustments to the plan must be guided, first and foremost, by the protection of the civilian population, while considering the humanitarian and security situation. It is also essential that the transition be conducted in accordance with conditions on the ground and that it be gradual and not rushed. We also stress the importance of the prompt implementation of the Demobilization, Disarmament, Community

Recovery and Stabilization Programme, as well as the security sector reforms. Both are key to dismantling the armed groups and creating professional State institutions that assume their responsibility to protect the population and guarantee peace. By the same logic, it is crucial to continue to combat the illicit trafficking in arms that end up in the hands of groups that defy State authority. We welcome the adoption of a timetable for the 2023 presidential and parliamentary elections, which should be a step towards a more robust and inclusive governance.

In conclusion, Mexico reiterates its full support for the work of MONUSCO, which has faced extraordinary challenges this year. We believe that the work of the Mission continues to be fundamental to the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region. That is why we will participate constructively in the renewal of its mandate.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of India.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, and the Secretary General of the East African Community, Mr. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, for their briefings. I also thank Ms. Rebecca Kabuo for presenting civil society's perspective to the Council. Similarly, I also welcome the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at our meeting today.

India remains concerned about the volatile security situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The activities of armed groups have continued unabated, resulting in the killing of civilians, the displacement of the population and a dire humanitarian situation. The Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) is expanding its territorial control in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and its movement towards Goma is indeed a matter of deep concern. In the past, we have seen how Goma's capture by armed groups led to large-scale devastation and casualties. The long-drawn cycle of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot continue in perpetuity. Support for armed groups — external and internal — must cease immediately. We also note with concern the increase in the scale of the attacks carried out by the Allied Democratic Forces, including the use of improvised explosive devices. The threat of terrorism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region

cannot be ignored either, given the established terrorist links within armed groups.

Lasting solutions to conflict hinge on enduring diplomatic efforts. We welcome the role played by the wider region in opening up the political space for dialogue. The decisions taken at the Luanda mini-summit held last month must be honoured by all armed groups, including the M-23. The Luanda road map and the Nairobi process provide a promising framework for dialogue and talks. We expect the countries of the region, in particular the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, to take full advantage of those constructive efforts. We also welcome the allocation of \$6 million to begin the pilot phase of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme (PDDRCS) projects in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. We underscore the importance of a long-term commitment to outcomes, deeper community participation and transparent processes while implementing those projects. In that context, the development by the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) of a communications strategy to sensitize stakeholders about the PDDRCS will be critical.

MONUSCO peacekeepers have been working in an extremely challenging environment, both operationally and politically. The lack of clarity in the Mission's mandate and its creative interpretation have added to the existing complexities. That has also widened the gap between people's expectations and MONUSCO's delivery. As a result, peacekeepers have borne the brunt of anti-United Nations sentiments among the people and the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is clear that the Mission's credibility has been dented. We also reiterate the importance of implementing resolution 2589 (2021) in order to deter the culture of impunity by providing greater accountability for crimes against peacekeepers. As one of the largest troop-contributing countries, we are cognizant of the challenges of peacekeeping in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and are fully committed to the implementation of MONUSCO's mandate.

As we discuss the upcoming renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, we acknowledge the efforts made to date towards a steady transition and the joint transition plan agreed between MONUSCO and the Democratic Republic of the Congo authorities. However, the assessment of progress should be

realistic. The situation on the ground should guide the eventual drawdown, while ensuring that gains made in the violence-prone provinces are secured on a firmer footing first, so as to avoid any reversal. Strengthening State authority, security organs and justice institutions is equally important. The transition and eventual exit of MONUSCO needs to be gradual, responsible and orderly.

In conclusion, we commend the initiatives of the leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to address the existing challenges, including the security situation in the eastern region. We welcome the preparations for the next general elections and note the efforts made towards an inclusive democratic framework. India has long-standing relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We recall with immense satisfaction our contribution to protect its territorial integrity in March 1961 during the Katanga province crisis. Going forward, we remain committed to playing our part in supporting the people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on their path towards securing lasting peace, stability and prosperity.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

Before I give the floor to other speakers, I would like to draw their attention to paragraph 22 of presidential note S/2017/507, which encourages all participants in Council meetings to deliver their statements in five minutes or less, in line with the Security Council's commitment to making more effective use of open meetings.

I give the floor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Lutundula Apala Pen'apala (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to say that I would have preferred to be the last speaker so that I could address the concerns of all the other speakers on a debate that concerns my country and my country alone, for the large part. That was not an option for me as you have sequenced the briefers, Madam President. However, I would like to be able to clarify certain points and contribute to the discussion, if need be.

At the outset, on behalf of the Head of State and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to thank the Security Council for its warm welcome expressed through the statements I

heard today. That attests to the importance the Council attaches to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the interest States place on resolving the crisis that has been ravaging my country for some 23 years. This is a unique situation.

I also wish to thank the Council for once again giving me the opportunity to take stock today of the almost-chronic security crisis that has continued to ravage the east of my country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to kill its people for 23 years.

On 31 May of this year, which is now drawing to a close, I had the privilege of addressing this organ, the highest decision-making organ of the United Nations for matters of global peace and security, on this painful situation, its harmful consequences on the stability and development of both the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, as well as on possible solutions (see S/PV.9051).

At the end of the Council's deliberations, on 3 June, the presidency of the Council issued an important statement expressing the Council's position and recommendations to put an end to crisis (S/PRST/2022/4). Previously, the East African Community had taken up the issue and had launched a peace-restoration process called the Nairobi peace process, supported not only by the African Union, particularly through its Peace and Security Council, but also by the Southern African Development Community and bilateral and multilateral international partners. In the positions taken by all those international actors, there is, if not unanimity, at least a very broad consensus on the approach and the elements of a sustainable solution to the security crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region.

The elements of such a solution are, first, respect for the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; second, condemnation of the activities of armed groups, in general, and of the Movement du 23 mars (M-23), in particular, operating in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; third, the demand for the immediate and unconditional cessation of those activities, and especially of the M-23's attacks against the positions of the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the troops of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); fourth, the withdrawal of the M-23 from the occupied areas without delay or conditions; fifth, the return

of war-displaced persons to their homes; sixth, the cessation of all support to armed groups operating in the eastern the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the M-23; seventh, support for the Nairobi and Luanda processes; eighth, the organization of internal political dialogues by the Heads of State of the region with the armed groups in their respective countries with a view to their return to the fold; ninth, the implementation of the National Programme for Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Reinsertion and Stabilization with a view to ensuring the social reintegration of former combatants of armed groups; and tenth, the settlement of disputes among the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Rwanda through dialogue, with a view to normalizing their relations and creating a climate favourable to regional cooperation.

Those elements together can be considered as a plan for the return of peace to Congo and the region — a plan reached consensually by the international community. The elements of the solution must now all be implemented.

In order to materialize this peace plan, which enjoys international consensus, the Head of State of Angola, His Excellency Mr. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, the facilitator appointed by the African Union to maintain the dialogue between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda; the Head of State of Burundi, His Excellency Mr. Evariste Ndayishimiye, current President of the East African Community (EAC); and the Head of State of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, met in Luanda on 23 November for a mini-summit, with the participation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, representing its Head of State, Mr. Paul Kagame, and of the former President of Kenya, His Excellency Mr. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, EAC mediator.

At the end of the mini-summit, those Heads of State signed, on behalf of the African Union (AU) and the EAC, a final communiqué containing the timetable for the implementation of the various actions agreed upon by the stakeholders of the Nairobi and Luanda processes, together with guarantees for their successful completion. That is very important. Those guarantees consist of the political and diplomatic involvement of the United Nations, the AU and the EAC and, on the military and security front, of the intervention of the East African regional force, alongside the FARDC,

with the support of MONUSCO, in order to force the M-23 and the other armed groups that refuse to comply with the demands of the international community to lay down their arms and take up the offer of peace made by their respective Heads of State. However, despite these guarantees, which are not yet operational, the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains sceptical that Rwanda and its protégé, the M-23, which has always arrogantly and contemptuously rejected the decisions and recommendations of international bodies, will respect them this time.

Moreover, as if to defy these international bodies — every member of the Council has expressed regret about this — the M-23 did not tarry in violating the final communiqué of the Luanda summit only five days after it was issued by committing a serious crime on November 28 and 29, in the form of a massacre of approximately 200 people, including children, in Kishishe and Bambo, in the territory under its control in Rutshuru. In the face of a tragedy that is a crime against humanity, the Security Council should not remain indifferent. It is not enough to denounce it. There must be sanctions, which is why the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is requesting the Council not only to strongly condemn this heinous crime, of course, but also to order an independent international investigation to establish responsibility and severely punish its perpetrators and masterminds. That said, for its part, under circumstances such as these, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo always assumes its responsibilities. Moreover, I wish to hereby inform the Council that the Congolese justice system has already been seized to coldly and objectively uphold the victims' rights.

Furthermore, the M-23's unmanageable and criminal behaviour, sustained single-handedly by the Rwandan authorities, clearly demonstrates that the challenge to be met today is to execute the actions on the ground recommended by the international community to solve the crisis and impose peace on the armed groups in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I emphasize that peace must be imposed. To that end, it is an imperative for the Government of my country that MONUSCO be reformed and that all obstacles to strengthening the capacities of the FARDC be removed. The major challenge at today's meeting of the Security Council lies therefore in its ability to provide adequate and effective responses to these two fundamental requirements if it really wants to put an end to the activities of terrorist groups in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo and restore lasting peace in the Great Lakes Region.

Let me state to its members today with regard to MONUSCO that the Security Council would do well to take the following into account in its deliberations: first, the Congolese people strongly believe, rightly and in view of the results on the ground, that, overall, in the 26 years of United Nations involvement in the country, initially by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which later became MONUSCO, the United Nations has not met the expectations of the Congolese people or even of the international community, and the continuation of its mode of operations is no longer justified and does not promise any results.

In this regard, on behalf of the President of the Republic and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I would like to reiterate that there is and can be no crisis in our relationship with the United Nations, nor is there any desire for a break between my country and the Organization. On the contrary, our shared concern is to improve our collaboration and the credibility of the United Nations in the region in the delicate management of this complex crisis. Moreover, it would not be appropriate for the Council's attitude at this meeting to be misinterpreted as contempt or defiance of the Congolese people, which would do no one any good. In any case, in order to succeed in its mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO or any other United Nations or even African Union institution needs the support of the Congolese people themselves, and we have been working in this direction.

Secondly, we must also take into account the courageous and sincere admission of the Secretary-General, the highest political and administrative authority of the United Nations, as to MONUSCO's inability to neutralize the M-23 terrorist movement, which is more armed than the Mission itself. We must also take his call for strengthening MONUSCO's resources into account.

Whatever the modality, utility — if not necessity — or importance of MONUSCO's role, it must be recognized that the Mission has weaknesses that must be addressed so as to make it more effective and useful. Doing anything else would condemn this important United Nations peace operation to failure. It is clear that either way what we have experienced is serious and has shaken us. However, as I have

said to Ms. Keita, and as the Head of State and the Prime Minister have also told her, we must calmly, responsibly and dispassionately think about, find appropriate solutions to and straighten out the situation of MONUSCO and the image of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so that we can all work together.

In sum, the Democratic Republic of the Congo expects today's meeting to clarify the Security Council's mandate for MONUSCO in the current context. There is a kind of unspoken ambiguity in the MONUSCO mandate that creates confusion and might in fact aggravate frustrations. Is MONUSCO a peacekeeping force, or is it a peacemaking force, or is it both? This clarification will allow expectations of MONUSCO to be reconfigured, permitting its scope of action to be better circumscribed and avoiding misunderstandings and intentions in relation to a shift in MONUSCO's mandate towards a sort of special political mission, which could be perceived as a desire to set the Mission up as a pole of governance parallel to the Government of the Republic. That would be counterproductive.

It is clear that the Democratic Republic of the Congo's preference is to see MONUSCO, alongside the FARDC and the East African Community regional force, imposing peace, because peacekeeping presupposes that peace has been restored, which is not yet the case in the eastern part of the country. In addition, when it is said that MONUSCO's mission is to provide security for the civilian population, further confusion is sown. Ensuring the security of the civilian population means countering a danger, be it a bodily threat to people or a threat to property; but how can the security of the civilian population be ensured if a mission cannot respond to an attack against that population? That is the fundamental question.

Incidentally, it is in terms of strengthening the MONUSCO mandate to which the Democratic Republic of the Congo barely meets the expectations of the Heads of State signatories of the final communiqué of the Luanda summit, which called on MONUSCO to support the regional force and the FARDC to ensure the implementation of the planned timetable. Council members will see from the timeline that, if MONUSCO had become significant in the Congo, the Heads of State would not have called for its support.

However, contrary to what can be said, strengthening MONUSCO can in no way hinder or slow down the gradual and responsible withdrawal programme

established by resolution 2556 (2020), which is already under way in Katanga and Kasai, as Ms. Keita said, and which, in the opinion of the Government of my country, can realistically be brought back to another time frame that is a little closer than 2024 — we thought about the end of 2023. I stress that it is a time frame and a continuation. We must not give the impression that we are stopping with the withdrawal. It has begun, and it has been agreed with target areas — areas of withdrawal and continuity areas — and, once again, under what mandate. As the President of the Republic, Mr. Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, and Ms. Bintou Keita also said, that withdrawal cannot take place before holding the upcoming general elections in the Congo.

With regard to the elections, I do not have any more details. Ms. Keita fully briefed us. The process is under way. There is nothing that will stop the process. We will proceed.

I am happy to hear Council members say that they support the evaluation, but it is important to end up with a positive review. On behalf of President Tshisekedi Tshilombo and the Government, I reaffirm and reiterate that we will not carry out the review alone. We will do it with MONUSCO and the United Nations, and we will draw conclusions together to meet the expectations of the Congolese people.

It goes without saying that such strengthening of MONUSCO's mandate, for which the Democratic Republic of the Congo calls, will involve an increase in its resources and combat equipment and the entry of the Intervention Brigade into joint military operations with the FARDC and the regional force, as in 2013 — this is not the first time — of course in consultation with the troop-contributing countries, as well as a better coordination of actions with the FARDC and the East African regional force. In that regard, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is already pleased to note that the commanders of the FARDC, MONUSCO — I reiterate, MONUSCO — and the regional force already met in Goma from 28 to 30 November to coordinate and see how they will work together to establish peace. That must be encouraged.

With regard to the obligation to notify the Sanctions Committee of the acquisition and supply of certain types of arms and ammunition to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, following the address by our Head of State at the rostrum of the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session (see A/77/PV.5), the Government reiterates its request to the

Security Council, through the Chair of the Sanctions Committee, to lift that unjustified obligation, which is humiliating for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and which is unfortunately perceived by the Congolese people and their leaders as a strategy to weaken their country and expose it to the mercy of its enemies for the following reasons.

First, the sanctions regime was established in 2004, when the Democratic Republic of the Congo was still divided into three entities led by three Governments, two of which were insurgent. That regime has not been justified since the 2006 elections, as the country was unified and resumed the life of a normal State, led by a single national Government, elected by the entire Congolese people and recognized by the international community. It is no longer understandable that the Security Council continues to treat the Congolese Government as that of a rebel and terrorist group. Contrary to what the Council thinks, that restriction impeded the worthiness and credibility of my Government internationally, and that is not a figment of the imagination. Not long ago, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, I was informed of claims that there were carriers and bankers who did not want to deal with us because of the mess that the United Nations had thrown at our country.

Second, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a post-conflict country, which must reorganize its army, police and security services. What is happening in the Kivus will end only once we have completed the reorganization of our army. Moreover, as the Council knows, the Democratic Republic of the Congo faces negative forces of Islamist terrorism. It cannot succeed in that reorganization or eradicate terrorism without having the freedom and the ability to provide its defence and security forces with efficient equipment to carry out their sovereign tasks. In its place, what State would do otherwise?

Third, the renewal of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's military leadership is under way. Those who follow the situation know that President Tshisekedi Tshilombo has begun the changes in the military leadership in our country. It is not fair to attribute to the new heads of the FARDC the defects and faults of their predecessors, who are accused of collaborating with armed groups.

Fourth, the evidence of the investigative reports by United Nations expert groups and other independent national and international sources established that armed

groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are supplied with troops, and even sophisticated weapons that MONUSCO itself does not have, by neighbouring countries. Subjecting the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the notification obligation weakens it to the advantage of its enemies, which are not subjected to such a constraint and can buy weapons and give them to insurgents to fight us. But we cannot equip ourselves. That also exposes our country to another danger. All States hold defence secrets. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has no defence secrets because it is in the public arena and has to declare even a machete.

Fifth, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is at war. To hinder, even through suppliers, the strengthening of its army, particularly with efficient war materiel, is to weaken it and to deliver it to its enemies.

Sixth, the Democratic Republic of the Congo is neither a manufacturer nor an importer of nuclear, chemical or other weapons of mass destruction to justify it being placed under close surveillance by the United Nations.

Seventh, and this is important, mechanisms have been created at the regional level in the context of the Nairobi and Luanda processes and are already operational. There is the ad hoc verification mechanism with the Angolans, and there is the East African Community regional force to neutralize all armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. If the Security Council believes that the current notification system does not prevent the Democratic Republic of the Congo from equipping and reorganizing itself, then why maintain it? What is its purpose? We are talking about sanctions. Why are we being sanctioned?

If, in the draft resolution that it adopts at the end of its deliberations, it could be agreed by the Security Council to carry out the reconditioning of MONUSCO and to lift the useless and unjustified obligation to notify the purchase of war materiel, which unjustly affects the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we will have every reason to believe that the United Nations has a genuine desire to put an end to the security crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo once and for all and to contribute to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region. There will no longer be any reason to reproach the United Nations. What is needed is a resolution aimed at reducing tensions rather than scoring points.

Before I conclude, now is the time to renew the Security Council's appeal to bilateral and multilateral donors to honour their commitments regarding financing the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, whose implementation is essential for the social reintegration of former combatants of armed groups. I will not touch on what happened in Nairobi any further, as that has already been discussed.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Head of State and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I want in all solemnity to ease the international community's concerns regarding the previously mentioned hate speech against the Rwandophones who are supposedly threatened in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Congolese people are not against the Rwandan people, a brother people with whom they are destined to live for eternity. However, they will always rebel against belligerent and hegemonic leaders who attempt to turn the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo into a zone of influence and free exploitation whose natural resources they can plunder as they please. The Congolese will fight with all their might against that race of leaders, wherever they come from, who are enemies of prosperity, of the influence of their country and of peace and brotherly coexistence between the peoples of the Great Lakes region.

The responsibility for solving the problems of Congolese citizens, regardless of the community to which they belong, comes under the purview of Congolese institutions alone. The fate of the so-called Rwandophone Congolese will never be played out anywhere in Africa or the world other than in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, of which they are nationals. It is therefore a pretence and an act of instrumentalization by our compatriots to position themselves as defenders of their own interests by attacking the country in which they claim nationality. The interference of Rwandan leaders in the internal affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will not solve any Congolese problems. On the contrary, it fuels intercommunal tensions in North Kivu and weakens national unity in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially by giving some Congolese the impression that there are people who are being used by foreign countries against their fellow citizens. That is extremely dangerous and compromises any possibility of establishing good-neighbourly relations and cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda.

I appeal to our external partners in the international community not to fall into the trap of endorsing such interference, directly or indirectly. We only have to imagine, in Africa, a continent fragmented by colonization, what would happen if every State granted itself the right to intervene in another's territory on the grounds that part of its community was under threat. In Africa there would be no end to that, because all our countries have cross-border populations — and that is extremely significant.

I would like to correct the French Ambassador's remarks about Justin Bitakwira when he referred to him as a member of the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is no longer a member.

As President Tshisekedi Tshilombo continues to reiterate, "Africa has better things to do than wage war. The Congolese are not and never will be a genocidal people."

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Gatete (Rwanda): I thank you, Madam, for allowing me to address the Security Council. I thank Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for her briefing. I also thank Mr. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, Secretary General of the East African Community, Ms. Rebecca Kabuo and the members of the Security Council for their statements. Rwanda welcomes the efforts and commitment of the leaders of the region to find a durable solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially President Lourenço of Angola, on the Luanda road map, and Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, former President of Kenya, as facilitator for the East African Community-led peace process.

A military solution alone cannot solve the root causes of the security crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. Every country in the Great Lakes region understands that peace in one country depends on peace in the others. The regional Luanda and Nairobi mechanisms are therefore essential processes that need shared commitment and political will for their full implementation, as well as the support and understanding of the international community to ensure their sustainability.

As a member of the region, Rwanda remains committed to and fully supports the ongoing regional peace processes. We have high expectations that they will ultimately address the root causes and drivers of the endemic crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which has an impact on its neighbours, including Rwanda. However, we deplore the unhelpful external interference in the regional and continental processes by some members of the international community, which serves to shield the Democratic Republic of the Congo from accountability with regard to its unresponsiveness to commitments made through the ongoing processes and ultimately risks undermining the success of those initiatives. Rwanda believes that long-lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be achieved by spreading a dangerous and false narrative that exacerbates the problem and puts lives at risk. Furthermore, parallel forums led by some countries are counterproductive where the ongoing African regional efforts are concerned and will have to cease if African regional processes are to succeed.

Rwanda has made it clear that the conflict between the Mouvement du 23 mars (M-23) and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is an internal matter, and that Rwanda should therefore be neither a scapegoat nor equated with the M-23. That distortion only masks the real problem and is an obstacle to accountability for those who should be answerable for addressing the root causes and drivers of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A lasting solution requires responsibility to be placed where it belongs.

While we agree with the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/892) that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be respected, some questions remain unanswered.

First, when are we going to address the violations of Rwanda's sovereignty and territorial integrity by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have occurred on several occasions, as verified by the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism? This year alone, cross-border shelling on Rwandan territory took place on 19 March, 23 May and 20 June, followed by the violation of Rwandan airspace and territory by a Democratic Republic of the Congo Sukhoi Su-25 fighter jet on 7 November.

Secondly, when will the international community address the persistence of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the alliance between

the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and deadly armed groups, including the FDLR? The FDLR is a sanctioned genocidal terrorist group made up of remnants of the force that committed the 1994 genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda, and it is known for spreading genocidal ideology. It is surprising that while Ms. Keita mentioned all the other key rebel groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in her statement, she did not once mention the FDLR, which is sanctioned by the Council. I do not know if that was an accidental or a deliberate omission, or whether she feels that the FDLR poses no threat to any country. Rwanda has expressed concerns about the FDLR for decades, including about its support from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its collusion with the country's national army, the FARDC. The alliance between the FARDC and the FDLR was responsible for several attacks on Rwandan territory and for skirmishes that claimed the lives of innocent civilians.

At the last count, there were 132 armed local and foreign armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Yet the international community remains concerned about only one armed group and ignores the rest, many of which are far more dangerous, including the FDLR — a genocidal force that has been listed by the Security Council. As I mentioned earlier, military capabilities alone are not enough to resolve the problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. More important, that will require the political will to engage in inclusive dialogue, the implementation of the signed agreements and addressing the lack of accountability. With regard to the disarmament of the armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially the foreign ones, we remain concerned that the issue is not given enough attention and support. Yet their presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo forms the core of the problem, as raised in ongoing regional mediation efforts.

Hate speech against Rwandans and the Kinyarwanda-speaking communities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has recently intensified, as reported by the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Ms. Alice Nderitu. Hate speech not only undermines social cohesion and peaceful cohabitation but also endangers lives, as we have seen in recent months. But unfortunately, hate speech is becoming a way to gain political power, and therefore a reason to perpetuate such violence against ethnic minorities. In that regard, the issue of ethnic minorities and ethnic cleansing must be a top priority on

the Security Council's peace agenda in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are appalled by the silence of the Council on the hate speech, xenophobia and killings targeting the Congolese Tutsi population, which has escalated. On that note, we thank the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide for condemning and pointing out the ongoing atrocious crimes. We also thank the representative of Kenya for elaborating on the issue of hate speech in her statement today on behalf of the African members of the Security Council (A3). We have all heard the call of the political, military and church leaders and civil society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo calling for the killing of those whom they term enemies, traitors, infiltrators, the unwanted and foreigners.

Rwanda calls on the elected members of the Council, particularly the A3, not to ignore the incidents of atrocities and crimes against humanity committed against people because of who they are, how they look or their ethnic group. The Council should never again allow itself to repeat its silence of 28 years ago, when it passively watched the rapid, systematic and most widely broadcasted genocide that took more than 1 million lives in Rwanda. At that time — 28 years ago — only three elected members of the Council — the Czech Republic, New Zealand and Nigeria — spoke out, while the other Council members remained silent in order not to anger the genocidal regime.

Rwanda would like to remind the Council that there are more than 80,000 Congolese refugees living in refugee camps in Rwanda, many of them for more than 20 years. When will those refugees be allowed to safely return to their homes and finally live dignified lives in their own country?

Let me conclude by reiterating the need for a holistic approach to address the endemic crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and call for the recommitment to the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region for a long-lasting solution. In the same vein, Rwanda calls on the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to honour the various regional peace agreements that have been established to restore order and stability in the region.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Burundi.

Mr. Maniratanga (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Burundi would like to congratulate

India on its presidency of the Security Council for the month of December and takes this occasion to reaffirm its full support. I welcome the participation in this meeting of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Permanent Representative of Rwanda. The delegation of Burundi welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (S/2022/892) and the comprehensive briefings by Ms. Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); Mr. Peter Mutuku Mathuki, Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC); and Ms. Rebecca Kabuo, activist and member of *Lutte pour le changement*.

The delegation of Burundi would like to reaffirm its firm commitment to do everything possible to advance the return of peace and security in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. To that end, Burundi will always favour finding a solution and all regional and multilateral initiatives in the search for peace, security and stability. Burundi welcomes the outcomes of the Luanda and Nairobi processes, namely, the operationalization of the ad hoc verification mechanism on 9 November and the continued deployment of the regional force of the East African Community in North Kivu and South Kivu. Following the adoption of the communiqué endorsing the Nairobi and Luanda processes and the extraordinary meeting of the Chiefs of General Staff of the EAC armed forces held in Bujumbura on 8 November, it is clear that restoring peace is a noble but immense task that will require the international community's political, diplomatic, logistical and financial support for the Nairobi process related to the military operations carried out by the EAC regional forces, while not failing to provide logistical support for the inter-Congolese dialogue.

The time has come to draw direct and concrete lessons and to rethink the MONUSCO mandate in the light of the current situation. While acknowledging the immense work done by MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the presence of a regional force calls for an up-to-date readjustment of its mandate in order to coordinate military efforts among the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUSCO and the EAC regional force and to secure areas that have been overrun by negative and terrorist forces, made up of local and foreign armed groups. In that way, MONUSCO would take charge of defensive and other tasks and the regional force would lead active

and operational missions, particularly in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Based on certain elements of the Secretary-General's report and in the light of the deplorable security and humanitarian situation, the delegation of Burundi calls on the international community to become more involved in order to end the suffering of innocent civilians, women, children and the elderly, while stressing the impact of forced displacement on the agricultural production of the populations living in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the importance of taking appropriate preventive measures. If nothing is done, an unprecedented humanitarian crisis is to be feared. Given the persistence of negative and terrorist forces, which pose a threat to peace and security, the Burundi delegation welcomes the inclusive inter-Congolese consultations within the framework of the EAC process, which once again attest to the region's commitment to the return of peace and security in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The delegation of Burundi believes firmly in the region's prospects for peace. War is the worst option in any conflict insofar as it only creates more suffering, causes the blood of innocent people to be spilled, increases the number of orphans and casts a shadow over the future of a State, a people and an entire region. It is Burundi's duty to do everything possible to prevent a domino effect and unrest throughout the region. Regional diplomacy is at work even if the whiff of gunpowder is increasingly intense. However, nothing will weaken the determination of President Ndayishimiye of Burundi, the current Chair of the EAC, who can draw on Burundi's experience and his own wisdom to find the tools necessary for restoring peace, stability and security in the subregion.

Considering all of this, there is still hope. Peace and stability are possible in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and in our Central African and East African subregions, on one condition. We need to see all the countries of the region, and the entire international community, join the regional processes aimed at neutralizing the negative and terrorist forces that are sowing destruction in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in hopes of turning the page on war once and for all to open a new chapter — one that will mark a new beginning for peace, stability and development in our subregion.

The President: The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Lutundula Apala Pen'apala (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): I will be brief.

I had two reasons for not wanting to address the issue of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR).

First, I would like to remind the United Nations that on 20 September (see A/77/PV.5), in the General Assembly Hall, President Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo called on all our partners, multilateral and bilateral, on non-governmental organizations, national and international, and on the leaders of Rwanda and all individuals and groups who have information on an FDLR leader who may be somewhere in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; on an area in the Democratic Republic of the Congo where the FDLR is stationed; on FDLR attacks carried out with the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) on Rwandan territory; on any FDLR activity against Rwanda, even if only political rather than military — to tell us about it. The President said that right here at the United Nations. It has been three months now and we are still waiting.

Secondly, as I said, there is currently an ad hoc mechanism, agreed with Rwanda in Luanda, for verifying accusations made by one country about another, led by a general of the Angolan armed forces. The mechanism is now operating in Goma, assisted by a Congolese liaison officer, who is a general, and a Rwandan liaison officer who I hope has been appointed. In other words, there are mechanisms that are now in place. We are waiting — and I have reiterated here in the Security Council the call by President Tshisekedi at the United Nations — for anyone with information to pass it on to us. We have even heard an FDLR leader speaking on the radio since leaving the Congo. We are at his disposal.

The representative of Rwanda spoke about ethnic minorities, ethnic cleansing and genocide, which leaves

me with the impression that he may be confused about the country he is referring to. We in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not familiar with terms such as “ethnic minorities”. Even adults in the Democratic Republic of the Congo learned of the existence of the term of genocide only in 1994. It was Rwandans who carried out genocide in Rwanda. No Congolese citizen has been associated in any way with such vile and disgraceful acts, which brought shame on the whole of humankind.

Indeed, quite the contrary, it is we in the Democratic Republic of Congo who have suffered the effects of genocide for the past 23 years. At the time, we wanted to turn away Rwandan fugitives. It was here in New York that we were told no, and that we had to respect the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Other African countries refused, but we obeyed the United Nations. And today it is we who are paying a heavy price for a genocide we did not experience in our own country. That approach is not working any more, and the international community must denounce the completely cynical and brazen exploitation of an act debasing humankind that has been systematically carried out on the other side of our borders. It has nothing to do with us. That is the outcome they want — to provoke this kind of response so that they can say, “See, we told you so”. But that will never happen. President Tshisekedi said it here at the United Nations. Neither ethnic cleansing nor anything else will ever occur in our country. We are taking steps to ensure that it will not be exported to us.

The President: There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 1.35 p.m.