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United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 59 of Security Council resolution [2409 \(2018\)](#), covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the period from 4 January to 8 March 2019. The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) since my report of 4 January ([S/2019/6](#)); provides an overview of political developments since my update report of 19 February ([S/2019/159](#)) on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016; outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence, as well as the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians; and provides information on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The political situation was marked by activities linked to the installation of legislative bodies at the national and provincial level, proceedings before the Constitutional Court and Appeals Court regarding the results of national and provincial legislative elections, protests at the outcome of the presidential election and the initiatives undertaken by President Félix Tshisekedi following his inauguration.

3. The extraordinary sessions of the National Assembly and most of the provincial assemblies opened on 28 and 30 January, respectively, to validate the mandates of the parliamentarians, to elect provisional bureaux of the assemblies and to vote on the various rules of procedure. Over 1,000 complaints against the results of the legislative elections were pending before the courts as the members of the assemblies were being provisionally installed. The courts are expected to issue their decisions by 23 March.

4. The co-optation of 65 traditional chiefs into the provincial assemblies, which took place amid claims denouncing the validity of certain candidacies, was guided by relevant provisions of the Constitution and electoral laws. Regarding indirect



elections for senatorial, gubernatorial and vice-gubernatorial positions, 1,069 candidates had registered as at 13 February and were accepted by the Independent National Electoral Commission to compete for a total of 160 posts (108 senatorial, 26 gubernatorial and 26 vice-gubernatorial posts).

5. The Independent National Electoral Commission and the Government continued preparations for the holding of delayed elections in Beni city in North Kivu Province and in Yumbi territory in Mai-Ndombe Province by 31 March at the latest, barring any unforeseen circumstances.

6. In the first days of his presidency, President Tshisekedi displayed his intent to fully exercise his responsibilities as supreme commander of the army and the police. He reiterated his willingness to ameliorate the working conditions of the members of the security and defence forces and to work on matters of national security, which were central themes during his electoral campaign. In that regard, he convoked the Conseil supérieur de la défense, chaired at the ministerial level on 25 January. At a meeting held on 1 February with the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and other high-ranking officers, President Tshisekedi expanded on national security challenges and exhorted FARDC to fulfil its duties according to the constitution. The President's Chief of Staff, Vital Kamerhe, stated that continuity and collegiality between the security teams of the outgoing and the incoming administrations were necessary to address the country's security challenges.

7. From 5 to 8 February, President Tshisekedi made his first official visit abroad since his inauguration, meeting with the Presidents of Angola, Kenya and the Republic of the Congo to discuss issues of mutual interest, notably the strengthening of bilateral partnerships and cooperation agreements. On 10 February, the President attended the thirty-second Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa, where he reiterated his pledge to work towards the consolidation of peace, the rule of law and democracy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. At the Summit, the President was appointed as Second Vice-President of the Bureau of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in line with the rotating presidency practices of the African Union. On 26 February, the President travelled to Namibia and met with President Hage Geingob, Chair of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to exchange views on issues of common interest.

8. Opposition leader Martin Fayulu, who continued to protest the results of the 30 December 2018 presidential election, claiming that he is the legitimate president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, held a political rally on 2 February in Kinshasa calling on the population to participate in peaceful demonstrations across the country to demand that the will of the people as expressed at the polls be respected. On 6 February, he filed a case before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights to have his rights and the "truth of the ballot" upheld. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has not, however, ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the establishment of the Court and has yet to make a declaration agreeing that individual citizens may bring cases before the Court. Ahead of the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, he sent a letter, dated 8 February, requesting the African Union to create a special committee to verify the results of the presidential election and to consider the possibility of holding fresh elections within six months. Between 15 and 25 February, he held political rallies in several cities across the country, including Butembo, Beni, Goma and Matadi, to protest the outcome of the presidential election. While he continued to denounce the outcome of the elections, dissent emerged among the members of the coalition that had supported him during the electoral process. Some coalition members close to opposition leader Moïse Katumbi took note of the election of

President Tshisekedi, describing it as a process marred by irregularities, expressed doubts about the method being pursued by Martin Fayulu. The latter, however, remained determined to have the “truth of the ballot” upheld.

9. On 17 February, in Kinshasa, former President Joseph Kabila paid a call on President Tshisekedi. The visit took place in the context of ongoing discussions among and within political parties and platforms on finding a ruling majority in the National Assembly and forming a new Government.

10. From 20 to 24 February, in Kingakati, Kinshasa Province, former President Kabila convened members of the platform Front commun pour le Congo, which had won an absolute majority of the seats in the National Assembly. Members of the Front decided to transform the platform from an electoral coalition into a political group.

11. On 22 February, in Kinshasa, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Embassy of Belgium concluded an agreement on the modalities for the reopening of the Maison Schengen, the joint consular service of the European Union, which had been shut down by the national authorities in 2018 amid heightened tensions between the Government, Belgium and the European Union over the issue of restrictive measures taken by the Union against some senior Congolese political and military officials. On the same day, the Department of State of the United States of America, stating alleged involvement in significant corruption relating to the electoral process, placed visa restrictions on the outgoing Speaker of the National Assembly, Aubin Minaku; the President of the Constitutional Court, Benoit Lwamba Bindu; and the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Corneille Nangaa, the Vice-President of the Commission, Norbert Basengezi Katintima, and the Adviser to the President of the Commission, Marcellin Mukolo Basengezi. On 23 February, the Commission issued a communiqué rejecting the allegations of corruption and stating that a report on the conduct of the electoral process from 2013 to 2019 would be submitted to the National Assembly and published subsequently. The Minister of Information and Spokesperson of the Government, Lambert Mende, called on the Congolese people to be steadfast in the face of what he described as illegal and illegitimate sanctions. Martin Fayulu, for his part, called on the Government of the United States to extend the restrictive measures to those who had orchestrated and benefited from the alleged corruption. A senior member of the Front, André-Alain Atundu, called on the Government to respond firmly and appropriately to the measures with a view to preserving the dignity of the Congolese people.

12. During the reporting period, my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui, pursued her good offices with political actors and her mandate to support the political transition process following the 30 December elections.

B. Economic developments

13. At the end of December 2018, the Congolese Central Bank released data on economic developments during the year. In a positive development, the inflation rate had decreased from 54.5 per cent in 2017 to 7.2 per cent in 2018 as a result of coordinated monetary and fiscal policies. From a budgetary perspective, public spending had exceeded revenues, resulting in a 2 per cent public deficit.

C. Security situation

14. The security situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained relatively stable following the announcement of the results of the polls. In the western part of the country, the security situation has remained relatively calm, notwithstanding an outbreak of violence in Kikwit, Kwilu Province, following the publication of the provisional results of the presidential election on 10 January. The security situation in Yumbi territory, Mai-Ndombe Province, has stabilized but has not improved significantly since the violent clashes of 17 and 18 December 2018, which resulted in the deaths of at least 535 people. Some Congolese armed groups and militias, particularly in the Kasai region, expressed readiness to lay down their weapons, and, in certain instances, surrendered. Congolese armed groups, however, while less active, continued to pose security concerns in Ituri, the Kasai region, Maniema and North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces. The activities of foreign armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) on national security forces, civilians and MONUSCO, remained a concern. Activities of foreign armed groups from Burundi also continued to have a serious impact on the security situation in the southern part of South Kivu Province.

North Kivu

15. In North Kivu Province, the security situation in the Grand Nord area continued to be of concern owing to suspected ADF attacks against civilians and FARDC and MONUSCO patrols, mainly in the area between Beni city and the border with Ituri Province. Suspected ADF elements conducted attacks on FARDC positions in an attempt to free themselves from military pressure and to gain access to supplies. On 9 January, suspected ADF elements simultaneously attacked three FARDC positions near Mayi Safi (7 km northeast of Eringeti), resulting in at least 7 civilians and 4 FARDC soldiers killed, 11 civilians and 8 FARDC soldiers injured, and 7 civilians allegedly abducted. On 21 January, suspected ADF elements attacked an FARDC position at Mapobhu (6 km east of Mayi-Moya), killing at least 16 soldiers and wounding 14 others. Between 2 and 17 February, clashes occurred between FARDC and suspected ADF, resulting in the killing of at least 9 FARDC soldiers at Kasinga (7 km east of Beni), Mapobhu (6 km east of Mayi Moya) and Masulukwede (3 km east of Mavivi).

16. Suspected ADF elements also targeted civilians, including through attacks on population centres. On 24 January, three civilians were killed in an ambush in Kisiki (10 km north of Oicha) and two civilians were killed on the Mbau-Kamango road on 28 January, bringing the total number of civilians killed by suspected ADF elements between early January and 25 February to 39. On 8 January, a unit of the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade providing support to FARDC troops who were under attack came under fire one kilometre north of the Mission's base in Mavivi. During the attack, the assailants killed 10 civilians and abducted another civilian in the area. A second attack near Mavivi took place on 18 February, with two civilians killed, one woman abducted and another civilian injured. On 24 February, presumed ADF elements attacked Mamove, killing at least two men. On 16 and 17 January, suspected ADF elements fired gunshots at the MONUSCO base on the Mbau-Kamango road (45 km northeast of Beni) and at a MONUSCO patrol. MONUSCO troops repelled the assailants.

17. In the Petit Nord area of North Kivu Province, militias continued to operate in the areas of Bwito, Kiwanja, Nyabiondo, Rubaya and Virunga National Park. In early January, a large group consisting of elements of the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie (CNRD) (a splinter group of the Forces démocratiques de

libération du Rwanda (FDLR)), their dependants and other accompanying civilians moved from North Kivu to South Kivu. The movement was allegedly prompted by military pressure on CNRD from FARDC and Mai-Mai Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové (NDC-R).

18. Other armed groups, seeking to fill the vacuum left in areas vacated by CNRD, fell into competition for control, posing additional threats to civilians. In this context, violent clashes continue to take place in the northern and western parts of Masisi between the Mapenzi and Janvier factions of the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain, backed by NDC-R and Mai-Mai Nyatura elements, respectively. Since early 2019, these clashes have resulted in over 60 deaths. For example, between 24 and 26 January, rival factions clashed at Nyabura, Kalungu district, as well as in Nyabikeri and Shingisha, Lukweti locality. On 1 and 2 February, NDC-R and its allies clashed with the Janvier faction of APCLS near Ngingwe, Masisi territory. The situation affected the main stretch of road between Kitchanga and Mweso, with the local population in the area being denied access to their fields. With regard to the activities of FDLR, although some members surrendered and FARDC significantly weakened the group, it maintained residual pockets of control in North Kivu, and continued to pose a threat to civilians.

South Kivu and Maniema

19. In both South Kivu and Maniema Provinces the situation was generally calm. However, both local and foreign armed groups remained active, particularly in Fizi and Uvira and in the gold mining areas under the control of Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki or other Mai-Mai elements and in militarized areas such as Salamabila, in Maniema.

20. In Fizi, Kabambare, Shabunda and Uvira territories, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki or other Mai-Mai elements clashed with FARDC and perpetrated abuses against civilians. On 22 January, Mai-Mai Chuyi combatants ambushed an FARDC convoy travelling from Kabambare to Pene-Mende (35 km south of Kilembwe). Reportedly, three FARDC elements were injured and one Mai-Mai element was killed during the ambush. On 24 January, unidentified armed men shot and killed three FARDC soldiers in Kasenga Quartier of Uvira town and seized their weapons.

21. During the night of 31 January to 1 February, CNRD combatants and their dependants, as well as accompanying civilians, moved from Masisi territory in North Kivu to the Kalehe highlands in South Kivu. The movement of the group into South Kivu increased tensions in the area. While only sporadic clashes were reported, the continued movement into and within South Kivu, in Kalehe and Hauts Plateaux, signified a heightened risk for civilians.

22. In the southern highlands of South Kivu Province, recent fighting between rival Burundian groups active in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including local Mai-Mai groups, had a serious impact on the security situation, with more than 25,000 people being displaced from their communities.

23. In Maniema, on 27 January, 46 Mai-Mai Malaika elements, including five children associated with the group, accompanied by 10 dependants, surrendered to FARDC in Samba (42 km southwest of Kasongo), seeking demobilization.

Ituri, Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé Provinces

24. The southern part of Irumu territory in Ituri Province saw a significant decrease in militia activity and human rights abuses as a result of the ongoing dialogue between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI). In January, FRPI elements that had agreed to regroup in pre-cantonment sites ahead of the signing of a negotiated peace agreement, looted at least three villages near Aveba and Geti

and raped a 15-year-old girl. Furthermore, the security situation in Djugu territory remained tense as attacks by alleged Walendu militias on FARDC positions flared up in January. FARDC, in turn, launched military operations in several localities occupied by Walendu militias along the shore of Lake Albert. On 22 January, the leader of an ex-Mai-Mai Simba faction, Manu, was killed during a clash with FARDC in Bendele (205 km southwest of Mambasa).

25. In Bas-Uélé and Haut-Uélé Provinces, the latter half of January and the month of February were marked by an increase in the number of security incidents attributed to suspected elements of the Lord's Resistance Army, including cases of looting and abduction. FARDC launched military operations in response to those attacks. The presence of LRA subgroups and other armed elements posed a persistent threat to civilians.

Tanganyika Province

26. In Tanganyika Province, the intercommunity conflict continued between the Luba and Twa, with recruitment on both sides and attacks against civilians and security forces, predominantly in Bendera and on the Kalemie-Moba axis. Between 2 and 3 January, Twa militiamen ambushed civilian vehicles along the Kalemie-Moba road, killing 4 civilians and injuring 11 others. On 4 January, Twa militiamen attacked an FARDC position in Muhala (75 km northwest of Kalemie). In addition, Mai-Mai groups were active in the region, with Mai-Mai Fimbo Na Fimbo elements harassing civilians and looting supplies at Mulange village (18 km south of Kalemie) on 2 January and at Kasebu village (65 km south of Kalemie) on 5 January. Despite such activities, on 4 February Mai-Mai Fimbo Na Fimbo also indicated to MONUSCO its desire to enter discussions to disarm. On 18 January, Twa militiamen allied with Mai Mai Yakutumba reportedly raided the Majengo mining site in the northeastern part of Bendera territory. These incidents continued to trigger displacement among the local population. Diverse Mai-Mai factions operating in the northern parts of Nyunzu and Kalemie territories held meetings. On 25 January, some Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale leaders opposed to President Tshisekedi met in Kasongo Mukuli (28 km northwest of Bendera) to revitalize their movement. In contrast, other Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale leaders discussed possible surrender options on 28 January in Kampulu and, in early February, indicated their desire to commence dialogue with the local authorities with a view to disarming.

Kasai region

27. Following the elections, the Kasai region, a stronghold of President Tshisekedi, was relatively calm and saw the spontaneous surrenders of hundreds of Kamuina Nsapu militiamen, while many more reportedly expressed their intent to surrender in Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces. The provincial governments encouraged members of Kamuina Nsapu to surrender but seemed overwhelmed by the logistical challenges posed by the large numbers of militiamen who came forward to disarm and demobilize. During this period, however, Kasai Province witnessed a continuation of inter-ethnic violence between the Luba and the Chokwe, Pende and Tetela communities and their respective militias. On 10 January, people from the Luba community reportedly attacked a group of Pende, which heightened the risk of an escalation in reprisal attacks. On 12 January, broadcasts on local media promoted attacks against the Luba community, which triggered minor incidents on 13 January that were managed by the police. On 25 January, in Tshikapa, the private residence of a member of the National Assembly from the Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie, re-elected for Tshikapa city, was attacked for a third time, allegedly by a group of individuals from the Luba community, prompting the intervention of the police to disperse the group. Incidents and hate speech increased in February. On

19 February, in Tshiniota, 15 Luba civilians, including 6 women, were reportedly killed by presumed Bana Mura militiamen following incitement to violence by Chokwe journalists on local radio. Tensions were also high in Kamako, where, just days after the surrender of more than 200 Kamuina Nsapu elements, violence broke out on 24 February. On that day, a group of former Kamuina Nsapu members attempted to forcefully collect food from civilians and abducted a Tetela chief at a marketplace in Kamako. FARDC and angry members of the Tetela and Chokwe communities intervened. In the ensuing confrontation, 19 former Kamuina Nsapu members, including 1 woman and 7 children, were reportedly killed by FARDC. In a separate incident, 6 other people belonging to the Luba community were allegedly killed by members of the Tetela and the Chokwe communities. As a result, hundreds of Luba civilians and former members of Kamuina Nsapu temporarily sought refuge around a MONUSCO base in the area. The Mission reached out to local authorities to help defuse the tensions. In other developments, there were reports of recruitment by the Bana Mura militias.

D. Humanitarian situation

28. The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remained precarious as a result of continuing conflicts between communities, the destabilizing activities of armed groups, the military operations of FARDC against those groups and a number of other vulnerabilities. An estimated 12.8 million people remained in need of humanitarian assistance and protection. Those affected by the complex and widespread crisis remained exposed to chronic malnutrition and epidemics, notably cholera, measles and viral hemorrhagic fever diseases, including Ebola. The update of the three-year humanitarian response plan, containing a request for \$1.65 billion to assist 9 million people in 2019, was finalized in mid-January.

29. It is estimated that 13 million people face acute food insecurity across the country, with levels rising sharply in 2018, affecting 101 of 145 territories nationwide. More than 4.3 million Congolese children were severely malnourished, including 1.3 million cases of severe acute malnutrition.

30. According to the Direction générale de migration, as at 2 February, more than 402,000 Congolese had returned from Angola in the wave of expulsions that had begun in October 2018, principally to Kwango and Kasai Provinces, where the influx put a further strain on the already limited basic services available to host communities and raised concerns regarding the escalation of pre-existing intercommunity tensions. Humanitarian activities were underway but remained largely limited to Kasai Province. The Central Emergency Response Fund supported the financing of services in Kasai, Kasai Central, Kwango and Kwilu Provinces with close to \$10 million.

31. An ethnic conflict in mid-December between the Banunu and Batende communities in Yumbi territory, Mai-Ndombe Province, resulted in at least 535 confirmed deaths. The violence also led to significant population displacement, with an estimated 12,500 people internally displaced and approximately 16,000 people seeking refuge in the Republic of the Congo. An inter-agency, multisectoral assessment led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs which took place from 28 January to 2 February reported that approximately 1,000 houses and 17 schools, and their associated water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, were destroyed, while 4 health centres were pillaged or damaged in the towns of Bongende, Nkolo and Yumbi. The first phase of humanitarian response continued, including through the conduct of life-saving health activities for displaced and host communities.

32. An outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in North Kivu Province and in adjacent areas in Ituri Province has continued and now affects 19 health zones. As at 21 February, the epicentre of the epidemic encompassed two health zones, Butembo and Katwa, and the number of reported cases totalled 859, including 536 deaths, bringing the fatality rate to 62 per cent. On 13 February, the third strategic response plan prepared by the Ministry of Health with the technical support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and other United Nations agencies was adopted with an estimated budget of \$147 million for a six-month period.

E. Human rights situation, justice and corrections

33. In January, MONUSCO released the 2018 annual report on the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. MONUSCO documented 6,831 human rights violations, representing a constant increase since 2014 (2,360 violations documented). State agents were responsible for 61 per cent of violations, while armed groups were responsible for the remaining 39 per cent: 79 per cent of all violations occurred in conflict-affected provinces, predominantly in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. A significant increase in the number of violations was recorded in Bas-Uélé, Haut-Uélé, Kasai, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces. A 4 per cent increase in the number of reported human rights abuses by armed groups and militias indicated that their activities had spread and intensified, fuelling inter-ethnic and inter-community violence in Ituri, Kasai, North Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces. In 2018, 1,169 persons, including at least 208 women and 101 children, were victims of extrajudicial executions or arbitrary killings.

34. In 2018, human rights violations related to restrictions of democratic space (1,035 violations) decreased slightly compared with 2017 (1,375), returning to the 2016 level (1,102). That reduction is notable, considering that 2018 was an election year. Nevertheless, the number of violations remains high. Violations of political rights, including the targeting of journalists, political candidates and militants, as well as of civil society activists, who were exposed to harassment, threats and intimidation, were predominantly committed by State agents, often in a context of impunity. The year was marred by the violent repression of demonstrations organized throughout the country. During the course of 2018, armed groups committed 54 human rights abuses linked to democratic space, a large increase compared with 4 cases in 2016. Most of those cases were perpetrated during the electoral campaign period.

35. In my update report of 15 February on progress in the electoral process and implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 (S/2019/159), I provided information on developments related to the human rights situation following the holding of the 30 December 2018 elections.

36. MONUSCO continued to support efforts by Congolese authorities to fight impunity and address cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations. On 1 February, former FARDC Colonel Marcel Habarugira Rangira was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for war crimes, including rape and the recruitment and use of child soldiers, as well as other military offences committed between 2011 and 2014. MONUSCO also continued to support the ongoing trial of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka and his co-defendants, who are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

37. In 2018, at least 223 persons died while in detention, mainly from tuberculosis and cholera, lack of access to adequate health care, lack of access to clean water and malnutrition. To address the alarming rate of 12 deaths per month in Bunia prison in Ituri in the last quarter of 2018, MONUSCO supported the medical screening of 383 prisoners.

38. MONUSCO also initiated a joint project with the Ministry of Human Rights and other partners aimed at decongesting penitentiary centres by reducing prolonged preventive detention.

39. Following a presidential ordinance issued by President Kabila on 29 December 2018, at least 1,131 persons, including at least 35 women, had their sentences remitted and were reportedly released.

F. Sexual violence

40. In 2018, at least 609 adults, including 4 men, as well as 436 girls and 4 boys, were victims of conflict-related sexual violence. Armed conflicts in the eastern part of the country created conditions conducive to sexual violence, notably on the part of FARDC soldiers in Uvira in South Kivu, Beni in North Kivu Province and Kabambare in Maniema Province, as well as other members of national security forces in Kasai Province. MONUSCO documented a 34 per cent increase in the number of cases perpetrated by State actors in 2018 as compared with 2017.

41. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories (North Kivu Province), armed groups, including APCLS-Mapenzi, FDLR, Mai-Mai Nyatura and NDC-R retaliated against civilians by attacking villages and perpetrating rapes and gang rapes against women. In at least two cases, gang rapes led to the deaths of the victims. In Shabunda and Mwenga territories in South Kivu Province, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions targeted villages in gold mining areas and perpetrated mass rapes. In Haut-Uélé Province, the upsurge in the activities of suspected elements of the Lord's Resistance Army was accompanied by rapes and abductions of women.

G. Child protection

42. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 144 grave violations against children since 1 January 2019. At least 137 children, including 30 girls, escaped or were separated from armed groups. In January 2019, two armed group commanders signed unilateral declarations by which they committed to end and prevent child recruitment and other grave violations of children's rights, bringing to 10 the total number of signatories of such declarations.

43. In 2018, 25 per cent of separated children (550 children) were voluntarily released by their commanders as a direct result of advocacy efforts by MONUSCO. Also in 2018, the number of attacks on schools and hospitals continued to increase, with a total of 153 attacks documented, including 118 in Ituri Province, the majority of which were committed in the context of inter-ethnic conflict between the Hema and Walendu communities in Djugu territory.

III. Deployment of the Mission and implementation of its mandate

A. Strategic dialogue and exit strategy

44. In an address to the diplomatic corps in Kinshasa on 15 February, President Tshisekedi stated that the Government would support the envisaged drawdown of MONUSCO, while taking into account the evolving security situation, by fully participating in the development of a joint exit strategy and the gradual transformation of MONUSCO within the framework of the strategic dialogue. Regarding the renewal

of the Mission's mandate, he added that the Government, during consultations, would call for a reconfiguration of the Mission through a qualitative resizing of its troops, which would have to be fewer in number but better equipped and experienced in asymmetric warfare in order to track down, in collaboration with FARDC, armed groups, which continue to pose the main threat to civilians.

45. MONUSCO will hold consultations with the Government regarding the presence and priorities of the Mission going forward, in line with the recommendations of the strategic review of MONUSCO conducted in 2017 and the Mission's mandate in the post-electoral period.

B. Preparations to address risks linked to the electoral process

46. MONUSCO continued to address risks related to the electoral process. From 11 to 14 January, in response to the outbreak of violence in Kikwit, Kwilu Province, following the announcement on 10 January of provisional results by the Independent National Electoral Commission, MONUSCO dispatched a mobile monitoring and response team to assess the situation, identify threats against the civilian population and make recommendations for actions. Subsequently, MONUSCO temporarily deployed a team of human rights officers and civil affairs officers to the area to investigate allegations of human rights violations and to support efforts aimed at defusing tensions. During the reporting period, the mobile monitoring and response team conducted similar field missions and provided good offices in four other provinces.

47. The MONUSCO force and police component continued to support national security forces on the use of non-lethal measures for public order management and in establishing early warning mechanisms on risks of electoral violence. With a view to mitigating the risk of violence in Beni and Butembo, North Kivu Province, where elections were postponed, the police component launched a 5-day training on electoral security for 200 police officers on 18 February.

48. During the period under review, the MONUSCO police component trained 2,832 police officers, including 257 female officers, on community policing, road traffic management, information gathering, preventing the excessive use of force during demonstrations and sexual and gender-based violence.

C. Comprehensive approach to protection of civilians

Mission-wide strategies

49. MONUSCO continued to implement targeted strategies to address the threat posed by ADF and FRPI. The Mission commenced revising its targeted strategy on ADF, with a view to improving early warning and response mechanisms as well as information-sharing and analysis. The finalization of modalities for three pre-cantonment sites of disarmed FRPI elements and for the meeting between the Governor of Ituri Province and the FRPI leadership on 22 January were an important step in the right direction. Another strategy under development is aimed at addressing the destabilizing activities of key armed groups and threats to the civilian population in the border areas of Maniema, South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces.

50. During the reporting period, the Mine Action Service destroyed 33 unexploded ordnances and installed 359 safes in Haut-Katanga, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika Provinces for the secure storage of 4,445 weapons.

51. In January, MONUSCO received 501 alerts from its community alert networks, 93 per cent of which resulted in a response from the Government, MONUSCO, or both. Alerts that did not trigger a response mostly emanated from remote areas or areas with limited State security coverage and capacity.

Field level responses

52. In North Kivu Province, suspected ADF attacks targeting civilians continued in Beni territory. In response to those protection threats, MONUSCO undertook intense patrolling and temporary deployments in the most vulnerable neighbourhoods of Beni city and surrounding villages. On 8 February, MONUSCO also undertook an offensive operation against ADF in the Mayangose jungle, on the north-eastern outskirts of Beni city, to repel the group from population centres and disrupt ADF supply lines. In addition, MONUSCO continued to support the police through the conduct of joint patrols in efforts to curb insecurity in the vulnerable neighbourhoods of Beni and Oicha town. In the southern part of the province, the destabilizing activities of Congolese armed groups, including the expansion of Mai-Mai NDC-R, remained the main source of protection concerns. In this regard, MONUSCO worked with local stakeholders to mitigate threats to the civilian population and encouraged the NDC-R to release children from its ranks.

53. In South Kivu, Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces, MONUSCO intensified efforts aimed at encouraging Mai-Mai Yakutumba and affiliated militias to surrender and disarm. MONUSCO continued to improve protection and early warning mechanisms in key areas. It also established and supported local protection committees in South Kivu and Maniema. In Maniema, the Mission deployed a series of joint assessment missions, resulting in the establishment of two new community alert networks.

54. With regard to CNRD elements, their dependants and other accompanying civilians, MONUSCO closely observed their movements through aerial reconnaissance; deployed joint assessment missions and standing combat deployments to deter aggression against civilian populations; coordinated with and provided advice to FARDC on the future course of action; and intensified activities aimed at encouraging the group to surrender and repatriate to Rwanda.

55. In Tanganyika Province, MONUSCO advocated for a deployment of FARDC troops to respond to Mai-Mai Fimbo Na Fimbo attacks against the civilian population south of Kalemie town, which resulted in the stabilization of the area and the return of internally displaced people in mid-January and secured the route between Kalemie and Kabwela to allow freedom of movement, including for humanitarian personnel. Community dialogue initiatives between Luba and Twa communities resulted in a request to MONUSCO by the leader of Mai-Mai Fimbo Na Fimbo, Shindano Bitonto, to facilitate his surrender with around 600 members of the group. Similar requests were subsequently received by MONUSCO from two factions associated with Mai-Mai Mondus.

56. In Djugu territory of Ituri Province, MONUSCO maintained troop deployments in two potential hotspots to protect the population and facilitate humanitarian access. Dialogue initiatives, involving traditional chiefs, women and youth representatives aimed at identifying root causes and developing mechanisms to resolve tensions between communities in neighbouring areas, were held in the 56 areas most affected by inter-community violence.

57. In the Kasai region, to forestall potential post-electoral violence, MONUSCO held three large awareness-raising events on 3, 10 and 16 January, undertook daily joint patrols with national security forces in Kananga town and its outskirts and dispatched standing combat deployments to possible election hotspots in the region.

Following the elections on 30 December 2018, MONUSCO held discussions with local authorities and Kamuina Nsapu leaders with a view to encouraging the surrender of Kamuina Nsapu militias. The Mission also provided support and advice on the conduct of demobilization efforts, including by dispatching a technical mission to Kananga from 4 to 6 February. In Kasai Central, MONUSCO maintained a standing combat deployment in Kamako to support the resumption of humanitarian assistance and to facilitate the Mission's efforts to support inter-community dialogue.

D. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

58. MONUSCO processed the cases of a total of 116 individuals from foreign armed groups, as well as 30 Congolese combatants, and secured the release of 27 children. Of those 116 individuals, MONUSCO repatriated 12 former combatants and their dependants to Rwanda and 6 former combatants and their dependants to Burundi and referred 18 civilians to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In relation to foreign combatants, in January, MONUSCO met with the Rwanda Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, as well as FDLR ex-combatants and dependants repatriated from the three former assembly camps in Kanyobagonga, Kisangani and Walungu, and produced sensitization materials, which were subsequently broadcast in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to encourage the surrender of additional FDLR elements. MONUSCO also intensified sensitization activities related to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration targeting CNRD elements.

59. On 26 February, 57 former combatants of Mouvement du 23 mars and 10 of their dependants were repatriated from Uganda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

60. There were several spontaneous calls for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and related measures by armed group members during the reporting period, especially following the holding of elections. Against this backdrop, the new national authorities have expressed interest in working with the Mission to define an approach to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. The reasons for spontaneous expressions of support for demobilization by armed groups appear to vary from region to region, and the situation remains unpredictable. On 15 January, Kamuina Nsapu militiamen called for demobilization opportunities to be available locally in Kananga, Kasai Province. Subsequently, on 19 January, 265 Kamuina Nsapu elements handed over their weapons, adding to the 600 who had surrendered in September 2018 in Tshikula locality, Dibaya territory. In anticipation of further calls for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and related measures, MONUSCO dispatched a technical mission to Kananga on 29 January at the request of the Governor and met with senior representatives of Kamuina Nsapu.

61. MONUSCO expanded and reinforced its community violence reduction programme. In this regard, the Mission launched 14 new projects February to add to its 42 ongoing projects.

E. Stabilization

62. The technical secretariat of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, composed of the Mission's Stabilization Support Unit and the national stabilization and reconstruction programme, developed an 18-month community-based reintegration programme for the demobilization of FRPI armed group elements

in southern Irumu, Ituri Province, with financial support of \$3.7 million from the Stabilization Coherence Fund. The technical secretariat of the Support Strategy also extended its democratic dialogue project in Kitchanga, North Kivu Province, for an additional 12 months and the Stabilization Support Unit conducted preparatory work for the launch of a competitive selection process for an eighth stabilization project under the Support Strategy in Djugu, Ituri Province.

F. Progress in adjusting the Mission's priorities, posture and presence

63. MONUSCO continued to focus on providing support for the political process as well as its good offices following the holding of elections and the swearing-in of the new President. The Mission's operational focus remained on the implementation of tasks related to the protection of civilians, reducing threats posed by armed groups and assessing the human rights situation with a view to enhancing respect for human rights, opening political space and combating impunity.

64. Following the 30 December 2018 elections, the Mission scaled down all electoral field personnel and materials in February 2019, except in Beni, to ensure coordination on the postponed national and provincial legislative elections. A small capacity was also retained to provide technical support to residual electoral issues.

65. Regarding the posture of MONUSCO uniformed components, significant progress was made in achieving full operational capacity and providing protection by the Mission's five rapidly deployable battalions, primarily through short-term deployments to areas where threats to civilians are high. In Kalemie, Tanganyika Province, the Indonesian contingent has been fully equipped and operational since 31 January. The Moroccan rapidly deployable battalion in Kasai Province is awaiting a final delivery of outstanding equipment.

66. The Mission's police component continued to maintain one formed police unit on standby in Goma in order to respond rapidly to security incidents, if required. Furthermore, the Mission maintained the deployment of: one formed police unit in Beni, which was supported by two additional formed police unit platoons; three formed police units in Kinshasa; one formed police unit in Lubumbashi; and one formed police unit in Kisangani.

67. The Mission continued to support the Government and key national stakeholders in strengthening good governance of the security sector, including through support to the development of the new five-year action plan for the national police.

G. Assessment of performance of the Mission's uniformed personnel to protect civilians

68. With a view to ensuring the effective implementation of the Mission's mandate to protect civilians, the leadership of MONUSCO conducted field visits to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the troops, in accordance with the operational readiness assurance and performance improvement policy. During the reporting period, 11 units were inspected and evaluated against several criteria, including their support to mandate implementation, aspects related to command and control, training and discipline and the sustainability of logistical capacity and medical support. Of the 11 inspected units, 9 were assessed to have displayed satisfactory operational readiness and performance in implementing their mandated tasks with regard to the protection of civilians and one unit was identified as requiring further improvement. One assessment report has yet to be finalized. To improve operational standards, the

force leadership has instituted various training, operational and logistical measures to enhance the capability of contingents for effective and efficient mandate implementation. Emphasis has also been placed on training related to the planning and conduct of joint offensive operations.

H. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

69. MONUSCO continued to enforce the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse among all personnel, in close collaboration with relevant partners. As part of the sexual exploitation and abuse prevention efforts, mass sensitization activities targeting local authorities, security forces, students and youth and women's groups were held. In addition, three projects funded by the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse were successfully implemented. The projects provided vocational skills training to 250 vulnerable women and girls, including 17 victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, in Sake and Bujovu in North Kivu Province and Kavumu in South Kivu Province.

70. MONUSCO also undertook efforts to further strengthen existing community-based complaint networks, with a view to effectively addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse and providing a safe reporting mechanism for the local population. One new allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse recorded against a member of a MONUSCO military contingent during the reporting period was referred to the concerned contributing country for investigation. The presumed victim was referred to the United Nations Population Fund for support and assistance.

I. Gender considerations in mandate implementation

71. Based on the provisional results, nationwide, 52 women are taking up seats in the National Assembly and 72 in provincial assemblies. In addition, in Beni, Bukavu, Bunia, Butembo, Goma, Kinshasa and Lubumbashi, MONUSCO trained 265 journalists on fair and non-sexist coverage of elections. From 25 January to 2 February, MONUSCO advocated, along with 74 customary chiefs in Bukavu, Goma, Kananga, Kinshasa and Mbanza-Ngungu, for the co-optation of their fellow female customary chiefs into the provincial assemblies, in line with relevant provisions of the electoral law, which call for rotation based on ethnic origin and gender. The customary chiefs signed a letter of intent committing themselves to the co-optation of female chiefs, and, as a result, the number of female customary chiefs doubled in the electoral cycle.

J. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

72. From 1 January to 22 February, 109 incidents related to security and safety affecting United Nations staff, uniformed personnel, assets and operations were recorded throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They comprised 55 crime-related incidents, 38 hazard-related incidents, 12 cases of civil unrest and 4 cases related to armed conflict.

K. Financial aspects

73. The General Assembly, by its resolution [72/293](#), appropriated the amount of \$1,114.6 million for the maintenance of the Mission for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. As at 26 February, unpaid assessed contributions to the special account for MONUSCO amounted to \$347.6 million. The total outstanding assessed

contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at the same date amounted to \$3,081.3 million.

IV. Observations

74. The holding of elections and the peaceful transfer of power, marked by the swearing-in of Félix Tshisekedi as President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a significant turning point in the country's history and in the implementation of the 31 December 2016 Agreement. I welcome the fact that candidates contesting the election results resorted to legal means and that the security situation in the country has remained largely calm.

75. I welcome the support provided by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, SADC and international partners during the electoral process, and I urge them to remain engaged in the post-electoral period with a view to consolidating stability and democratic governance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also encourage the Congolese authorities and regional partners to take steps to reinforce cooperation and good neighbourly relations among the countries of the Great Lakes region, including in the fight against armed groups and the pursuit of economic integration.

76. I am encouraged by the early indications from President Tshisekedi regarding his priorities, including respect for and promotion of human rights, the need to foster socioeconomic development, root out corruption, address the scourge of armed groups, initiate meaningful security sector reforms and reinforce good relations throughout the region. The new Government, once formed, will need time to define its agenda and determine how best the United Nations and other external partners can support the realization of its key objectives. In that regard, the United Nations looks forward to working closely with President Tshisekedi and his team to chart a clear and responsible path forward for the consolidation, drawdown and exit of MONUSCO.

77. I also take note of the encouraging signs emanating from several armed groups, particularly militias in the Kasai region, regarding their willingness to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate into society following the electoral process. The latest developments in the Kasai region present a unique window of opportunity to sustainably address the problem of armed groups in that part of the country. Similar opportunities exist in Tanganyika and Ituri Provinces, where the process of disarming FRPI is well under way. I call on the relevant authorities to seize those opportunities, to encourage and facilitate community reintegration and to seek accountability for violations where they may have occurred.

78. At the same time, I remain concerned by the high rate of human rights violations and inter-ethnic violence in North Kivu Province, the Kasai region and Tanganyika Province, as well as the recent violence that occurred in Yumbi, Mai-Ndombe Province. The continuing ADF attacks in North Kivu also remain a source of deep concern. Given the persistently dire humanitarian situation in parts of the country, I renew my call on donors to honour their commitments in order to close the humanitarian funding gap as quickly as possible.

79. I once again commend the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its efforts and leadership in confronting the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in Beni territory. The United Nations system, including WHO and its partners, remain committed to helping the Government treat the victims of the disease and prevent further contamination, with a view to fully eradicating the epidemic.

80. Political developments since the elections have taken a largely positive turn and the security situation, although fragile, remains calm. It is clear that the continued deployment of MONUSCO, including the Intervention Brigade, remains essential to support the political process, protect civilians and assist the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in addressing the remaining political and security challenges facing the country. At the same time, now that a peaceful transfer of the executive power through elections has been achieved, I believe that MONUSCO should initiate the process of consolidation envisaged in my special report on the strategic review of MONUSCO (S/2017/826), even if unforeseen developments, such as the appetite of certain armed groups to disarm and the Government's desire to cooperate with the Mission on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and other issues, suggest that a less significant downsizing than initially foreseen may be necessary.

81. The United Nations remains committed to working with the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to consolidate the considerable gains made to date and lay the foundations for lasting stability and development. I therefore recommend that the Security Council renew the mandate of MONUSCO for a period of one year, until 31 March 2020, with a focus on supporting a peaceful transition at all levels of government, continuing to implement a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians and human rights and strengthening regional cooperation, particularly on the issue of foreign armed groups. I would also recommend that the Mission's presence be adjusted to reflect these priorities through a reduction of its footprint in the western provinces where protection challenges are less acute, particularly in the aftermath of the elections. In the same vein, I propose to reduce the current strength of MONUSCO uniformed personnel by 1,600 military personnel, 35 individual police officers and 1 formed police unit. I also propose a 30 per cent reduction in the number of military observers. However, should the Security Council deem it necessary to maintain MONUSCO at its current troop and police levels, it would be imperative that the commensurate resources be made available to enable the Mission to fulfil its mandated tasks.

82. Finally, I thank my Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, for her steadfast leadership and dedication, and all personnel of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, as well as the troop- and police-contributing countries, for their commitment to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also commend the efforts of the regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

