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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 51 of Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#), covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 26 November 2019 to 16 March 2020. It covers progress made 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 26 November 2019 ([S/2019/905](#)); provides an overview of political developments, including progress towards the strengthening of State institutions, key governance and security reforms; and outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence, as well as on the pursuit of its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians. The report also provides information on progress made towards the progressive transfer of tasks to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations country team and other relevant stakeholders; cooperation among regional security forces, and information on police and force generation and the implementation of the measures taken to improve the Mission's performance.

II. Political developments

2. The coalition Government between the Cap pour le changement and the Front commun pour le Congo remained relatively stable and took pragmatic actions, resulting in, notably, the timely approval of the 2020 State budget. Nevertheless, a number of high-profile public statements continued to signal underlying tensions. While some political actors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo accused neighbouring countries of plans to undermine national unity, President Félix Tshisekedi continued to be actively engaged in efforts to improve the political climate in the Great Lakes Region.

3. Political processes continued to function in accordance with the Constitution. With the establishment of the remaining bureaus and standing committees before the closure of the ordinary legislative session on 15 December 2019, the National Assembly and Senate concluded their setting-up period a year after the elections. In the Assembly, the Front commun pour le Congo platform secured the presidency of



six committees, while the Cap pour le changement and Lamuka will chair one each. With the exception of some demonstrations, opposition actors were relatively free to express their opinions. On 4 February, opposition leaders Moïse Katumbi and Jean-Pierre Bemba reached a consensus on sharing the role of opposition spokesperson in the National Assembly on a rotating basis, beginning with Mr. Katumbi for the first two years.

4. An important milestone was reached when the National Assembly and the Senate adopted the finance law of 2020, which was promulgated by Mr. Tshisekedi on 31 December. The initial \$10 billion budget proposal was increased to \$11 billion to implement the Government programme, which reflects the vision of Mr. Tshisekedi. However, the final budget approved by the Assembly was reduced to \$8.2 billion after the Ministry of Finance issued a note, on 17 February, in which it was estimated that the country could collect only \$5.4 billion in internal revenues, as opposed to the \$8.1 billion stated in the 2020 finance law.

5. Officials of the Cap pour le changement and the Front commun pour le Congo repeatedly reiterated their commitment to maintaining cohesion within the coalition. From 25 to 28 November, the Front commun pour le Congo held a retreat, following which the former President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, urged that the Cap pour le changement-Front commun coalition be strengthened. From 27 to 29 December, a two-day governmental retreat was organized, during which Mr. Tshisekedi underscored the need to clarify misunderstandings among members of the coalition.

6. Notwithstanding the above-mentioned efforts, tensions between the coalition partners persisted. During his visit to London in January, Mr. Tshisekedi reiterated his prerogative to dissolve the National Assembly and dismiss ministers, should his policies be obstructed. On 21 January, the President of the National Assembly, Jeanine Mabunda, stated that, under the Constitution, the prerogative of the President to dissolve the National Assembly was limited to situations of persistent crisis between the Government and the Assembly, which, she assessed, did not reflect the current situation. She added that attempting to dissolve the National Assembly in the absence of a persistent crisis could prompt a trial for high treason.

7. At the provincial level, most legislative assemblies adopted their 2020 budgets before the closure of their second ordinary sessions, in December. Nevertheless, tensions flared within the provincial institutions in Haut Lomami, Ituri, Kongo Central and Sankuru Provinces, where impeachment procedures were initiated by the Provincial Assemblies against their respective Governors. In response, the Government convened an interministerial commission on 14 January, attended by the Governors, Vice-Governors and provincial assembly Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the provinces in question. Meanwhile, the Constitutional Court ruled on the case of the deposed Governor of Ituri, Jean Bamanisa Saïdi, reinstating him on procedural grounds.

8. The reporting period was also marked by the resurgence of the so-called “balkanization” discourse by several political and civil society actors, referring to supposed plans to divide the country. Among those alleging the existence of such plans were Lamuka co-leaders Adolphe Muzito and Martin Fayulu and the influential religious leader Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo. Neighbouring countries dismissed the allegations. Mr. Tshisekedi and government members underlined the imperative of maintaining national unity and the need for a peaceful public debate to avoid further aggravation of intercommunal tensions.

9. Two senior figures from the national security services, both under international sanctions, were subject to proceedings by Congolese authorities during the reporting period. On 12 February, the former head of the National Intelligence Agency, Kaley

Mutond, was banned from travelling outside the country. On 27 February, General Delphin Kahimbi was suspended from his position as the chief of military intelligence of the armed forces (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC)). He passed away the following day.

10. Mr. Tshisekedi continued his efforts to improve relations in the Great Lakes Region. He participated in the third and fourth Quadripartite Summits on 20 and 21 February, respectively, along with the Presidents of Angola, Rwanda and Uganda. The summits resulted in the adoption of tangible measures to improve bilateral relations between Rwanda and Uganda, including the mutual release of prisoners and renewed commitments to ruling out support to foreign armed groups. On 20 February, Mr. Tshisekedi announced that the tenth Regional Oversight Mechanism of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region, which was to be held in Kinshasa, had been postponed.

11. Mr. Tshisekedi also attended the thirty-third Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, on 9 and 10 February, at which he was elected First Vice-President of the body for 2020, to be followed by his ascension to the Presidency, in 2021. On 18 December 2019, Mr. Tshisekedi attended the extraordinary Summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), during which he signed the revised ECCAS treaty and other documents related to the institutional reform of the organization.

12. The Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued to engage with donors and multilateral institutions successfully, including by agreeing to a six-month staff-monitored programme with the International Monetary Fund on 16 December 2019. Under the programme, the Government committed itself to, among other actions, taking steps to improve good governance in the mining sector; ensuring the publication of new contracts in the mining, hydrocarbon and forestry sectors; publishing the financial and functional audits of State-owned enterprises, with support from the World Bank; and implementing all measures required by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative validation process.

13. Regarding the political participation of women, during his State of the Nation address on 13 December, Mr. Tshisekedi underlined the importance of increasing the inclusion of women in the country's institutions and praised the leadership of Ms. Mabunda in that regard. Of the eight newly elected standing committees of the National Assembly, two will be chaired by women.

14. During the reporting period, the Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Head of MONUSCO, Leila Zerrougui, pursued her good offices across the political spectrum, with a focus on the implementation of the Mission's new mandate pursuant to Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#). The engagement included the opening of strategic discussions for the development of a transition strategy that would set out priorities for the Mission's eventual exit. During her meetings with the President, the Prime Minister and political leaders of the governing coalition and the opposition, the Special Representative underscored the need for all stakeholders to work earnestly towards the preservation of the current state of political stability. In the context of the new mandate, she also visited Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces on 10 and 11 February, where she met with provincial Governors and representatives of civil society to discuss how the presence of the United Nations could help to stabilize the Kasai region and accelerate economic development.

III. Security situation

North Kivu Province

15. The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) remained a serious threat in Beni territory, North Kivu Province, and, increasingly, in neighbouring Ituri Province. Following several days of heavy clashes, on 9 January, FARDC succeeded in capturing the so-called Madina camp of ADF, located in the triangle area between Beni, Erengeti and Semuliki. ADF subsequently scattered into smaller units, but retained its ability to inflict deadly attacks, killing at least 300 civilians, including 92 women and 12 children, as well as more than 40 FARDC soldiers during the reporting period. Unlike previous attacks, which were concentrated along the Beni-Erengeti road axis, many incidents since the operation against Madina camp occurred in the border area between North Kivu and Ituri Provinces. The presence of State security forces and MONUSCO in those remote areas was initially limited, but has been reinforced through additional patrolling while two temporary bases are being established.

16. The rise in attacks against civilians resulted in strong sentiments among some members of the local population against MONUSCO and the Congolese authorities, with demonstrators violently protesting the Mission's perceived lack of effective action in preventing attacks by ADF. On 25 November 2019, the MONUSCO Boikene office, in Beni town, was looted and destroyed by a hostile crowd. No MONUSCO personnel were injured in the incident. Protests against the Mission continued throughout November and December throughout North Kivu Province and in particular the Beni and Butembo areas, with the protesters demanding its departure. In response, MONUSCO increased its outreach to civil society and community representatives. In addition, the Mission's leadership engaged political leaders, including Mr. Tshisekedi, and addressed the country's Security Council to enhance cooperation between MONUSCO and FARDC and jointly improve the protection of civilians in the Beni area.

17. In Masisi and Rutshuru territories, violent clashes among various armed groups persisted against the backdrop of limited FARDC operations against some of them. The activities of the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové remained a concern over the past three months as the group further expanded its area of control through a series of alliances. Frequent clashes occurred between the Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové, the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain, the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda and Nyatura groups. At least 43 civilians were killed in those clashes. The Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda also killed 16 civilians in reprisal attacks. FARDC initiated a series of negotiations with armed groups, leading to the surrender of more than 500 combatants. No details were communicated on the modalities of the demobilization process.

South Kivu Province

18. The situation in South Kivu remained volatile owing to the concurrent presence of intercommunal conflict and foreign armed groups. FARDC launched operations against the Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie in Kalehe territory on 26 November 2019. Combatants from the Conseil national and their dependants dispersed in response, with 600 dependants seeking shelter near a MONUSCO temporary base. In December, FARDC transferred some 362 Conseil national foreign combatants and 1,471 dependants to Rwanda.

19. In Fizi and Uvira territories, violence continued in the high and middle plateau area between Banyamulenge groups on one side and Babembe, Bafulero and Banyindu on the other. However, the level of violence was lower than during the second half of 2019. As at 31 January, MONUSCO deployed three temporary bases

to Mikenge, Bijombo and Kipupu, which provided protection to 3,720 individuals from all communities. The Mission's presence also helped to alleviate humanitarian concerns. For example, MONUSCO systematically accompanied internally displaced persons to their fields and to local markets and provided security for humanitarian agencies to carry out their activities.

Ituri Province

20. The situation in Ituri deteriorated as a result of the movement of dispersed ADF members from the Beni area into Irumu and Mambasa territories and subsequent attacks against civilians. It is estimated that some 250,000 civilians have been displaced since the beginning of 2020 owing to that development. Separately, in Djugu and Mahagi territories, armed assailants continued to target civilians and State security forces. Although the number of incidents showed a downward trend, at least 39 civilians, including 6 women and 3 children, were killed during the reporting period. MONUSCO supported the Ituri Provincial Government in carrying out initiatives in favour of peaceful coexistence between the Alur and Lendu communities in the affected area. On 21 February, a group of assailants withdrew by agreement from villages in Mahagi territory that they had occupied for months. A joint verification team, composed of Alur and Lendu community leaders, witnessed the withdrawal, which was a prerequisite for the continuation of the intercommunal peace process held under the auspices of the provincial authorities, with MONUSCO support.

21. Further progress was made in the negotiations between the Government and the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI). An important milestone was reached on 10 January, when the Council of Ministers endorsed the peace agreement. On 28 February, the Government and FRPI ceremonially signed the peace agreement, bringing to end two decades of violent conflict in Irumu territory. Previously, there had been growing concerns regarding the actions of rogue FRPI members, who had reportedly been committing exactions against civilians, stressing the urgency of successfully concluding the demobilization process after months of the pre-cantonment of more than 1,200 FRPI combatants.

Maniema and Tanganyika Provinces

22. While the overall situation was relatively stable in both provinces, some specific areas saw a deterioration in the security situation. In Maniema, clashes between local armed groups and FARDC triggered civilian displacement and illustrated the continued fragility of the security situation in Salamabila town and surrounding areas. On 24 February, FARDC launched military operations against the Mai-Mai Malaika militia which had threatened to take over Salamabila. In Tanganyika Province, the root causes of intercommunal conflict between the Twa and Bantu communities, such as limited access to land, power struggles at the village level and long-standing patterns of discrimination, remained unresolved. Since the beginning of 2020, nearly 70 persons have killed in armed clashes, triggering the displacement of more than 40,000 civilians. On 9 March, a MONUSCO patrol was attacked by unidentified assailants some 50 km west of Bendera, resulting in two damaged vehicles. Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale also remained a concern because 8 members of the armed group and 14 FARDC soldiers were killed in clashes during the reporting period. MONUSCO deployed two temporary bases to help to stabilize the area, which facilitated the surrender of nine Mai-Mai leaders, who have since worked with local authorities to persuade remaining combatants to surrender.

Kasai, Kasai Central, Kwilu, Mai-Ndombe and Sankuru Provinces

23. The security situation in Kasai, Kasai Central, Kwilu, Mai-Ndombe and Sankuru Provinces was largely stable, even though the limited presence of State institutions continued to remain a risk factor for a potential re-emergence of violence. The Kasai Provinces continued to show a positive trend, as militia group activity has mostly ceased. The development is conducive to the envisaged withdrawal of MONUSCO peacekeepers from that area.

IV. Human rights situation

24. In 2019, MONUSCO documented 6,545 human rights violations and abuses across the country, a decrease of four per cent compared with 2018 and a reversal of the upward trend of the previous two years. The decrease was mainly a result of a significant reduction in violations linked to restrictions on democratic space. The number of violations attributable to State agents decreased by 15 per cent, while abuses by armed groups and militias increased by 14 per cent, in particular in Maniema, North Kivu and South Kivu. Extrajudicial killings and summary executions increased to 1,459 cases, including those of 324 women and 114 children. Armed groups were responsible for the majority of the killings.

25. The persistence of sexual and gender-based violence remained a serious concern. In 2019, 1,409 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were documented, of which 955 were attributed to armed groups. FARDC was implicated in 383 of those incidents, which represents a 76 per cent increase compared with the previous year. The deployment of troops to residential areas, without consistent remuneration and inadequate measures to protect the population from exactions, was among the factors contributing to the increase.

26. In January 2020, a United Nations report on inter-ethnic tensions in Ituri between September 2018 and September 2019 documented the killing of 393 persons and the rape of 101 women and girls, most of them from the Hema community, at the hand of armed assailants. The killing of 27 individuals and the rape of 41 women and girls by FARDC soldiers was also recorded. MONUSCO took action on subsequent recommendations, notably to continue to support local reconciliation efforts by the authorities, as well as effective investigations and prosecutions by civil and military justice authorities of those responsible for human rights violations.

27. From 22 to 27 January 2020, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights visited Kinshasa and Bunia. She noted that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had a window of opportunity for positive change, in particular with regard to the protection and promotion of human rights. She also stressed the need for transitional justice and the importance of combating impunity, noting that her office would continue to support the Government in its efforts to carry out its human rights commitments.

V. Humanitarian situation

28. An estimated 15.6 million individuals, or nearly one of five Congolese, remained in need of protection and humanitarian assistance. Insecurity, limited social services and structural deficiencies were among the factors deepening the complexity of the humanitarian crisis and continued to generate food insecurity and malnutrition. The country also continued to have one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons globally, with the total population of internally displaced persons reaching more than five million internally displaced persons at the end of 2019.

Insecurity continued to be the main cause of internal population movements, with nearly one million more persons displaced in 2019 and an additional 250,000 displaced in Ituri Province alone since the beginning of 2020. At the same time, the country was host to some 538,000 refugees from Burundi, the Central African Republic, Rwanda and South Sudan.

29. The humanitarian response plan for 2020, which targets 8.1 million persons, is focused on five priority areas, namely, population movements, food security, malnutrition, epidemics and protection. Notwithstanding efforts to reach all people in need, humanitarian actors continued to experience complex challenges related to access. Insecurity and challenges linked to physical and administrative constraints, as well as the inability of populations to obtain access essential services, were among the main factors limiting humanitarian access.

30. Epidemics compounded the complexity of the humanitarian situation. The total number of Ebola virus disease cases since the beginning of the outbreak stood at approximately 3,444, with some 2,264 deaths. There was a pronounced downward trend in the number of cases in past months, and on 3 March, the last Ebola patient was discharged from treatment, with the Ebola response entering a period of vigilant monitoring. MONUSCO continued to provide security for the Ebola response teams, including through the operation of a temporary base in Biakato and the provision of escorts and static guard duties, as well as logistics support.

31. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is currently experiencing the worst measles epidemic in its history, with nearly 320,000 cases and more than 6,000 deaths, mostly of children, recorded between January 2019 and January 2020. The number of cholera cases also remained very high. As at 26 January, 2,651 suspected cases were reported, including 43 deaths since the beginning of 2020. While the cholera trend has not increased compared with 2018, it has remained well above the epidemic threshold. Malaria continued to be an important health threat, with nearly 16.5 million cases and some 17,000 deaths recorded in 2019.

VI. Comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians

A. Political strategies

32. In line with Action for Peacekeeping priorities, MONUSCO continued its political engagement with government officials with a view to facilitating political solutions to conflicts throughout the country. That engagement included support offered by the Mission to the Government on the FRPI peace agreement signed on 28 February. To help to increase the sustainability of the agreement, MONUSCO, through the Stabilization Coherence Fund, offered an 18-month programme to reintegrate 900 former FRPI combatants into civilian life and support a further 500 individuals in the communities concerned. Separately, in response to the precarious security situation in Beni territory in North Kivu, MONUSCO intensified efforts to develop a joint counter-ADF strategy with the Government. Meanwhile, the Mission held meetings with civil society and political representatives at the Kinshasa, Goma and Beni levels to address malicious misinformation about its peacekeepers.

33. In addition, the Mission supported various dialogue and mediation efforts led by civil society actors and authorities at the local level. In South Kivu, the Mission facilitated a two-day workshop, with 20 representatives of armed groups and 70 community members affected by the conflict in the high plateaus of Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira territories. While the representatives of armed groups and community members agreed on the need to stop hostilities, further consultations were still needed to implement the cessation of hostilities. In Tanganyika Province, following a new

escalation in the conflict between Twa and Bantu communities in late January 2020, MONUSCO engaged key stakeholders to ease tensions and held consultations with members of the Provincial Assembly and various local authorities.

B. Robust posture and whole-of-force approach

34. The pursuit of tailored and context-specific approaches to the protection of civilians is a key component of Action for Peacekeeping. During the reporting period, the force conducted more than 26,000 patrols and 31 temporary deployments, through the establishment of 12 new standing combat deployments, for a total of 26, as well as and five temporary operating bases. The deployments have helped to contain violence and create a conducive environment for efforts to address the underlying drivers of conflict and provide protection to affected populations.

35. In North Kivu Province, an Action Plan for Beni aimed at operationalizing the Mission's counter-ADF Strategy was developed and harmonized with ongoing efforts to produce a Joint Operations Order with FARDC and the national police. In response to the movement of ADF into new areas, MONUSCO is also establishing two new temporary bases to deter further attacks, while FARDC shifted units towards the west to continue to track ADF combatants. As part of overall efforts to shift from static to dynamic deployments, MONUSCO handed over its Semuliki base to FARDC and will provide logistics support by air for the FARDC troops stationed there while road conditions are being improved.

36. In South Kivu, MONUSCO established proactive force deployments to create space for civilian-led dialogue. Actions included the provision of security in Nyunzu, which enabled community engagement efforts and the promotion of meetings with local leaders. In Ituri Province, MONUSCO maintained its standing combat deployments in Djugu territory in view of continuing internal displacement.

37. In Tanganyika Province, MONUSCO responded to an outbreak of violence between the Twa and other communities, interposing peacekeepers between the two factions in order to reduce tensions. Thanks to the stable security situation in the Kasai Provinces, the force will be able to withdrawn from the region in the coming months and be replaced by a formed police unit and additional individual police officers.

C. United Nations police and activities related to the protection of civilians

38. In response to the violence in the Beni area, MONUSCO redeployed one platoon of a formed police unit from Bukavu to Beni to reinforce capacities for the protection of civilians, United Nations personnel and facilities. The units will undertake joint patrols with the national police to support its responses to alerts, while also contributing to capacity-building efforts with the national police in areas such as crowd control management.

39. The Mission's civilian component continued to support local protection and early warning mechanisms. Six teams, composed of force, police and civilian personnel, were established to champion a whole-of-mission approach in the operationalization of protection mechanisms at the field level. The capacities of local early warning mechanisms in North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika and Kasai Provinces were enhanced through joint initiatives with local actors. Overall, four workshops on threat analysis and community protection plans were held with local authorities and civil society organizations, in addition to 15 joint assessment missions

held with local authorities, security forces and civil society organizations to analyse conflict dynamics and protection concerns in key areas. In Oicha, North Kivu Province, the Mission reinforced the capacities of local protection committees and improved the coordination of responses to protection alerts between MONUSCO and FARDC officers.

VII. Support for the strengthening of State institutions, key governance and security reforms

A. Stabilization and conflict resolution

40. The Stabilization Coherence Fund remained an important instrument for MONUSCO to help to address the root causes of conflict, in partnership with the Government, the United Nations country team and civil society organizations. To this end, the Mission supported the linking of community-based peacebuilding mechanisms with national and provincial authorities, with particular attention paid to the needs of women and young people. For example, to help to address conflicts related to transhumance in the Ruzizi Plain area of South Kivu Province, local-level structures were established to develop community action plans, which were complemented with an advocacy mechanism in Kinshasa to support their implementation at the national level. A total of \$20 million of programming is expected to be rolled out by the Stabilization Coherence Fund in 2020.

41. In North Kivu Province, limited State authority, illegal mining, intercommunal conflicts and the continued exclusion of women and young people from political and economic decision-making were identified as underlying causes of insecurity. The Mission conducted outreach and advocacy that led to the creation of an inclusive intercommunity dialogue framework to enhance engagement with civil society actors, including women's groups, discourage at-risk young people from joining armed groups and reduce intercommunal tensions. In South Kivu, MONUSCO worked with women leaders representing five ethnic groups from the Fizi, Mwenga and Uvira areas to define common messages of intercommunal unity and peace.

B. Security and justice sector reform

42. MONUSCO pursued a cross-pillar approach to security sector reform, leveraging its good offices and technical expertise to support the national authorities on how best to tackle conflict drivers and pursue long-term institutional transformation. The Mission continued to coordinate security sector assistance through regular meetings with national authorities and international partners, focused on sequencing sector-wide interventions to strengthen governance and the delivery of security services. The Mission also identified possible entry points for enhanced cooperation with the European Union and the World Bank in a bid to create conditions conducive to the sustainable transfer of security responsibilities to the Congolese authorities. The reactivation of the Groupe thématique sectoriel Armée on 24 December 2019 created a welcome window of opportunity to advance priority army reforms for the 2019–2023 period, through coordination between international partners and the Ministry of Defence.

43. MONUSCO continued to partner with the Collège des Hautes Etudes de Stratégie et de Défense and the Ecole Supérieure d'Administration Militaire to enhance knowledge on security sector reform and international human rights standards among military staff. On 29 and 30 January, the Mission supported the organization of an exercise on the protection of civilians in armed conflict for 33

FARDC and national police officers. MONUSCO also facilitated weekly dialogue sessions with the General Staff of FARDC. At the request of the Congolese army, the Mission is now exploring the possibility of replicating similar sessions across several provinces, together with national military academies and staff colleges. Nevertheless, institutional challenges persisted, including with regard to standards and practices for recruitment into the armed forces and police.

44. The situation in Congolese prisons remained alarming. In 2019, at least 1,131 persons escaped from detention centres across the country and 149 persons died in detention, owing mainly to overcrowding, insufficient access to health care, malnutrition and ill-treatment. To reduce overcrowding in prisons, the Mission worked with authorities to conduct a review of the legality of detentions with a view to releasing arbitrarily detained inmates.

45. Supporting civilian and military justice authorities in the fight against impunity remained a priority task. In 2019, approximately 133 FARDC soldiers, 113 national police and 59 members of armed groups were convicted for human rights violations and abuses. On 19 November 2019, armed group leader Masudi Alimasi Kokodikoko was convicted for crimes against humanity committed in South Kivu in 2018 and was sentenced to life imprisonment. In Kasai Oriental, a military court convicted a high-ranking FARDC officer for the rape of a 14-year-old girl. The Mission also supported judicial authorities in their investigations of the attacks against Ebola Response Teams and facilities. However, some high-ranking active officers in the security forces, with credible allegations of violations of human rights law against them, have not yet been investigated.

46. During the reporting period, MONUSCO supported key reform initiatives aimed at strengthening the professionalism and accountability of national law enforcement institutions, through a combination of strategic advice and logistical and technical assistance. To increase public confidence in the police, the Mission worked closely with the national police to ensure higher levels of accountability across the institution. Other capacity-building activities covered forensic investigation techniques, programmatic support for the implementation of the three-year action plan of the national police against sexual violence and a shift towards community-oriented policing. The United Nations police continued to assist the national police in the demilitarization of public order management, adherence to the principles of democratic policing and respect for human rights.

47. MONUSCO engaged with the Defence and Security Commission of the National Assembly to advocate for the adoption and implementation of security sector-specific legislation, including the draft law on the control of small arms and light weapons. In the same vein, the Mine Action Service continued to work with the national authorities on the implementation and monitoring of the national mine action strategy and the national action plan for the control and management of small arms and light weapons. With regard to capacity-building, 178 members of Congolese security services were provided with weapons and ammunition management training during the reporting period.

C. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

48. MONUSCO continued its engagement with the Government to promote a coherent national approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Over the reporting period, several government entities, including FARDC and some ministries, undertook separate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration initiatives at the provincial level. The expansion of such initiatives reflects a growing recognition by the Congolese authorities that effective disarmament, demobilization

and reintegration is a key component of tackling the threat posed by armed groups. Such recognition was reiterated during technical and high-level meetings of the Chiefs of Intelligence and Security Services of the Great Lakes countries. Against this backdrop, MONUSCO continued its high-level advocacy with the Congolese authorities for the development of a national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policy framework that would bring greater coherence to these initiatives.

49. At the technical level, the Mission supported the interprovincial commission for North and South Kivu in developing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community reinsertion programmes. During the reporting period, MONUSCO demobilized 66 Congolese former combatants. A total of 72 children associated with the armed forces or armed groups were received and handed over to child protection partners, to be reunited with their families eventually. Of the 28 foreign former combatants and 23 dependants processed, 50 individuals were repatriated to Rwanda and 1 to Burundi. The Mission also developed eight community violence reduction projects to support the upcoming FRPI demobilization process.

VIII. Child protection

50. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, MONUSCO verified 122 grave violations against children from December 2019 to January 2020. During that period, at least 82 children (12 girls and 70 boys) escaped or were separated from armed groups, while 3 children (1 girl and 2 boys) were reportedly killed and 7 children (2 girls and 5 boys) were reportedly maimed in crossfire during military operations.

51. The Mission's efforts to negotiate the release of children from armed groups continued to be successful. In December 2019, the Mission engaged with Mai-Mai Makanaki and Mai-Mai Apa Na Pale in Tanganyika Province, resulting in unilateral declarations and the adoption of road maps by those armed groups to end child recruitment. To date, a total of 29 armed groups and militias have signed such commitments.

IX. Women and peace and security

52. MONUSCO continued to strengthen women's political participation, including through the provision of support to national institutions. Strategic discussions on women and peace and security with the Provincial Division of Gender Affairs in North Kivu led to the revitalization of the Pôle d'action en genre et élections, a framework through which female politicians and candidates are able to discuss women's specific concerns and priorities. Furthermore, MONUSCO, in collaboration with members of provincial assemblies, former provincial female ministers, leaders of civil society organizations and the former national Minister of Gender, launched an innovative capacity-building programme that provides female politicians with political messaging skills and journalists with gender-responsive reporting know-how. Thus far, 50 aspiring female politicians and 100 journalists have benefited from the programme.

53. A total of 70 national police and FARDC officers and 100 members of civil society organizations participated in a MONUSCO programme to combat sexual violence and exploitation, as part of the Mission's overall effort to promote a gender-sensitive approach to the protection of civilians. Participants committed themselves to involving more female staff members in protection patrols, security assessment missions and other outreach initiatives, as well as enhancing interaction with women and incorporating their specific concerns into their strategies.

54. During her visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in December 2019, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, along with the Minister of Interior, Justice and Defence, launched a national police plan against sexual violence. During that visit, an addendum to the existing joint communiqué was signed with the Prime Minister, updating the commitments of the Government to combating conflict-related sexual violence.

X. Exit strategy

55. The Mission's leadership engaged with the President, the Prime Minister and other members of the Government on the importance of a comprehensive dialogue to articulate the joint strategy requested by the Security Council in resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#), in particular the need to identify a set of measurable benchmarks to facilitate the progressive transition process. The Mission reiterated its readiness to provide its good offices to foster a broad political consensus, as well as to strengthen core State functions and support the implementation of key security, governance and development reforms that would enable the responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO. Furthermore, MONUSCO and the United Nations country team have established an integrated transition team to coordinate the transition planning process with a view to ensuring that the transition safeguards stabilization gains and guarantees that peacebuilding priorities are adequately addressed by a reconfigured United Nations footprint, in close collaboration with key national and international stakeholders.

56. On 30 December 2019, the Government signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, covering the period between 2020 and 2024, reaching an important milestone. The framework, which is closely aligned with the Government's recently finalized national strategic development plan, constitutes the common response of the United Nations system to national priorities. MONUSCO is closely involved in the operationalization of the Framework and is developing joint work plans with counterparts in the United Nations country team.

57. The prospect of renewed eligibility of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for Peacebuilding Fund support has galvanized joint programming efforts between members of the United Nations country team and MONUSCO. The focus of the efforts is currently the Kasai and Kasai Central Provinces, from which MONUSCO plans to withdraw its troops this year, and Tanganyika. In addition, the Mission is engaging with national and international stakeholders, as well as United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, to define the third phase of the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy, as requested by the Security Council. MONUSCO and the United Nations Development Programme are in the process of developing a holistic joint rule of law programme aimed at reinforcing the criminal justice system and strengthening mechanisms for land conflict resolution.

XI. Mission effectiveness

A. Performance assessment and measures to improve force generation and police generation

58. In line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments, the MONUSCO force component continued to take active measures to ensure a high level of peacekeeping performance. During the reporting period, a total of 13 force units were evaluated. The performance of seven of these units was found to be excellent, while the performance of five was assessed as satisfactory. One unit was assessed as needing

improvement. The main performance gaps were environmental action plans, perimeter defence, anti-riot capabilities, anti-ambush preparedness, medical evacuation and mortar drills. MONUSCO is taking internal training measures to address the issues, while improved performance in those areas will also be assessed during pre-deployment verification visits, as part of the rotation processes of the units involved.

59. The police component of the Mission evaluated its six formed police units, which were all rated satisfactory. To ensure the effective protection of civilians by enhancing the mobility of formed police units with additional contingent-owned equipment, the Mission's police component is conducting a Statement of Unit Requirements review for each unit. The main objective of the new Statement of Unit Requirements is to equip each formed police unit with an appropriate number of armoured personnel carriers, crowd control gear and unmanned aerial systems with night vision, to be used for search and rescue, intelligence gathering and the observation of camp perimeters during the night.

60. Performance evaluations for all individual police officers were used to identify and address performance gaps. As a result of these evaluations, the MONUSCO police component conducted training sessions for a total of 68 individual police officers on safety and security, stress management and leadership management for command staff. The evaluation process resulted in the redeployment of 60 individual police officers to better take into account their respective competencies. In addition, to support and enhance the operational and technical capacities of the national police in Beni, individual police officers with skill sets in intelligence, crowd control, forensics and investigation were deployed to the area.

61. MONUSCO also conducted a review of current engineering resources, with a view to increasing their effectiveness in improving tactical mobility through the rehabilitation of strategic road axes. In the review, it was proposed that Force Engineers resources be focused on the critical Beni area in order to enable swifter protection responses and increase the reach of Ebola response teams. An important milestone was reached with the achievement of the initial operational capability of the unmanned aerial system in Beni, which has begun to deliver valuable images for the intelligence-driven protection of civilian interventions. The Mission also continued to optimize its medical support arrangements to reduce the response time in life-saving interventions.

62. In response to the independent assessment report on the protection of civilians in Beni and Mambasa territories, which was presented to the Security Council on 20 January, MONUSCO has begun to work on implementing the report's recommendations. To enable MONUSCO to carry out protection of civilians tasks and targeted operations more effectively, including in a jungle environment, the Intervention Brigade's capabilities at the headquarters level will be strengthened and new intelligence assets deployed, along with a reconfiguration at the troop level, which will include the introduction of three company-sized rapid reaction units in place of one of the currently deployed battalions. Meanwhile, MONUSCO has already increased its engagement with the Congolese authorities and security forces towards a joint counter-ADF strategy and initiated the establishment of a 24/7 joint operations and intelligence centre at the Beni field office, as well as taken actions to reinforce community outreach and early warning mechanisms.

B. Gender parity

63. During the period under review, women represented 50 per cent of newly recruited staff. As a result, the ratio of female staff increased, from 30 per cent on

30 November 2019 to 32 per cent as at 29 February 2020. To further promote the recruitment and retention of female talent, five focus group discussions were held with women from various staff categories to identify factors that contribute to an enabling work environment. The outcomes of the discussions, which were focused on recruitment processes, professional development, workplace environment and living conditions, will help to inform the guidelines for the Mission's gender parity strategy.

C. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

64. Three allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse, two involving military contingent members and one an international staff, were received between 1 December 2019 and 29 February 2020. The allegations were referred to the concerned troop-contributing countries and the Office of Internal Oversight Services, respectively, for investigation. A total of 23 other allegations of misconduct were reported, which are also under investigation. MONUSCO continued to implement robust preventive measures against all forms of misconduct, including through active actions to promote the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. The activities were focused on the training of personnel, risk assessments of military bases and deterrent patrols by military police to enforce existing curfews and out-of-bounds areas.

XII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

65. Ensuring the safety and security of United Nations personnel and facilities remained a priority, in line with Action for Peacekeeping commitments. During the reporting period, a total of 215 incidents against United Nations personnel and facilities were recorded, including 11 incidents related to armed conflict, 81 related to crime, 59 related to civil unrest and 59 to hazards. Of the personnel affected, 39 were international staff (28 men and 11 women) and 74 national staff members (69 men and 5 women). This represents a significant increase compared with the previous reporting period, driven to a large extent by anti-MONUSCO protests in North Kivu Province in November and December 2019. During the reporting period, 22 incidents that had a direct impact on the Ebola response were recorded, including the killing of three public health employees in Biakato.

66. MONUSCO continued to support military justice authorities in addressing criminal accountability for attacks on peacekeepers. In this context, the Mission provided technical and logistical assistance for investigations into the attacks against Ebola Emergency Response Teams and treatment centres, as well as into the attack on the MONUSCO Boikene compound in Beni on 25 November 2019, for which at least 40 individuals have now been detained or are under investigation. In addition, to mitigate the risks posed by explosive hazards to United Nations personnel, the Mine Action Service delivered explosive hazard awareness training for 181 United Nations personnel.

XIII. Observations

67. The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained stable since the 2018 elections. I call upon all stakeholders to continue to take advantage of this window of opportunity and forge ahead with the governance, security, and socioeconomic reforms required to sustain long-term stabilization and achieve sustainable development across the country. The adoption of the 2020 State budget was an important milestone in this regard and an example of successful

collaboration between the coalition partners represented in the Government. The continued commitment of all actors to a political process that upholds and strengthens the Constitution and a dialogue based on values of tolerance and respect remain critical for the effective implementation of the Government's programme and to further increase public trust in the country's institutions.

68. While the majority of the provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are stable, I remain deeply concerned by continuing violence in parts of North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri. I have followed the situation in the Beni area particularly closely since my visit there in September 2019 and am disturbed by the continuing ability of ADF to commit appalling acts of violence against civilians. The elimination of the threat posed by armed groups will require a comprehensive approach at the national and regional levels. In this regard, I welcome Mr. Tshisekedi's commitment to cooperating more closely with MONUSCO and reaffirm the readiness of the Mission to work with the Government to develop a comprehensive strategy to jointly address ADF and other armed groups. I commend the determination of the Congolese security forces in the conduct of their operations against armed groups, which MONUSCO will continue to support, including through targeted offensive operations, while also working with the armed forces to help to reduce the impact of such operations on the civilian population. Given the worrying increase in sexual and gender-based violence reported for 2019, it is crucial that such measures ensure the protection of women and girls from all potential predators, including those within the armed forces and the police.

69. I am disturbed by the rise of malicious acts committed against United Nations personnel and property and Ebola virus disease response teams. It has become increasingly clear that such incidents are fuelled by the dissemination of harmful misinformation and facilitated with planning and financing from actors with a vested interest in a state of insecurity. In this context, I welcome the judicial proceedings initiated against those responsible for the looting of the MONUSCO Boikene office in Beni. I do, however, remain concerned by the recent resurgence of misinformation campaigns against the United Nations.

70. I also remain deeply concerned by the humanitarian crises in the country. Given the increase in the number of persons in need of assistance, including as a result of internal displacement owing to violent conflict, I call upon the international community to do more to fully resource the humanitarian response. While welcoming the recent milestone of releasing the last Ebola patient from treatment, which has been achieved thanks to the tireless efforts of the Government and the support of the World Health Organization, MONUSCO, the United Nations Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator and other partners, I call upon all stakeholders to remain fully engaged and vigilant until we can be sure that the disease has been eradicated completely. In the same vein, I reiterate my condemnation of any form of violence against those involved in the response effort against the Ebola virus.

71. In this overall context, MONUSCO will continue to play a positive and constructive role in support of the people and Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as mandated in Security Council resolution [2502 \(2019\)](#). The Mission will continue to pursue the protection of civilians through a comprehensive approach, concentrating on the six provinces where the force is currently deployed, while intensifying its efforts to assist the Congolese authorities in assuming their primary responsibility to protect the civilian population. The planned drawdown of the force footprint from the Kasai and Tanganyika Provinces will offer opportunities to focus on peacebuilding and development priorities in those areas. In this context, I welcome the collaboration between MONUSCO, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the World Bank to support stabilization projects in parts of the country where the Mission is beginning to reduce its military footprint.

72. I remain committed to enhancing the ability of MONUSCO to deliver on its protection of civilians mandate and am grateful to Lieutenant General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz for his independent assessment of the subject. I concur with the findings and recommendations of his report, which was presented to the Security Council in January, and count on the full cooperation and support of Member States in their implementation. I am confident that the proposed adjustments to the MONUSCO force and police, including the enhancement and reconfiguration of the Intervention Brigade, will contribute to a significant improvement in the Mission's performance in the protection of civilians and the neutralisation of armed groups.

73. MONUSCO has begun consultations with the Government on a strategic dialogue to ensure that the drawdown and exit are carefully sequenced, conditions-based and undertaken in accordance with agreed benchmarks. Strategic dialogue is vital to enabling a responsible exit of MONUSCO that sustains the stability gains of the past two decades. In this regard, I urge the Government to approach the process as a matter of national priority and articulate clear positions informed by the interests of the Congolese people. During the transition process, MONUSCO will focus on the creation of an enabling environment for the Government to strengthen its core functions with the support of the United Nations country team and other partners and support the Government's vision for the future of the country. To this end, MONUSCO stands ready to provide its good offices, strategic advice and technical assistance to the Congolese authorities.

74. Jointly addressing the remaining drivers of conflict, including those within the security sector itself, while redoubling efforts to demobilize armed groups and define the minimum conditions for the sustainable transfer of security responsibilities, will be key components of the transition process. I reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to supporting the Government, in coordination with key international and bilateral partners, in defining widely accepted and time-bound security sector reform benchmarks.

75. I commend Mr. Tshisekedi for his continued prioritization of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and welcome flexible approaches to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants at the provincial level. The peace agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and FRPI, which was supported by MONUSCO, was an important development in this regard. However, I am concerned by the lack of clarity on predictable demobilization pathways, which could dissuade further voluntary requests for demobilization. It is also remains critical to ensure accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence and that protection for women, girls and boys is fully factored into the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes. A national policy framework that builds on provincial efforts while providing overall guidance remains key to the sustainable return of former combatants to peaceful civilian life. I encourage Mr. Tshisekedi to appoint a senior disarmament, demobilization and reintegration coordinator to help to advance those efforts.

76. Regional cooperation remains essential to the long-term stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend Mr. Tshisekedi for his efforts to improve the political climate in the Great Lakes Region. In support of the efforts, I have asked the Special Representative and the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes to leverage the Peace and Security Cooperation Framework to help to further unite the region around a common vision for peace and security, including through the promotion of non-military measures for voluntary disarmament and by undercutting the recruitment and supply lines of foreign armed groups. I also encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo to play an active role in the implementation of the ECCAS reform, which is expected to reinforce the role of that entity in the prevention and peaceful resolution of crises and conflicts in Central Africa.

77. Lastly, I wish to thank the Special Representative for her steadfast leadership and dedication, as well as all MONUSCO personnel, the United Nations country team and the countries contributing troops and police for their commitment to the stabilization of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I also commend regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral partners and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

