



PR/OSMR/300713

Press Release

MONUSCO Deploys to Support Security Zone in Goma - Sake Area

Kinshasa, 30 July 2013 – In North Kivu, MONUSCO considers any individuals who are not members of the national security forces and who carries a firearm in Goma and its northern suburbs an imminent threat to civilians and will disarm them in order to enforce a security zone to protect the densely populated area of Goma and Sake.

Over one million civilians live in the relatively small area of Goma and Sake, and along the road that connects them where amongst others the Mugunga IDP camps, temporary home to close to 70,000 people displaced by the conflict, are situated.

Since mid-May, this area has seen repeated attacks by the M23 against FARDC positions in an apparent attempt to advance on Goma and Sake. In these attacks, the latest of which started on 14 July, the M23 has used indiscriminate and indirect fire, including by heavy weapons, resulting in civilian casualties. The M23 has also targeted UN installations with its fire. The security zone will push these indirect fire threats out of range of Goma. The security zone may be expanded and repeated elsewhere, where it is needed.

In light of the high risk to the civilian population in the Goma – Sake area, MONUSCO will support the FARDC in establishing a security zone in Goma and its northern suburbs (see accompanying map). Any individuals in this area who are not members of the national security forces will be given 48 hours as of 4pm (Goma time) on Tuesday 30 July to hand in their weapon to a MONUSCO base and join the DDR/RR process. After 4pm on Thursday 1 August, they will be considered an imminent threat of physical violence to civilians and MONUSCO will take all necessary measures to disarm them, including by the use of force in accordance with its mandate and rules of engagement.

“I congratulate the FARDC on its actions over the past weeks”, says MONUSCO Force Commander Lt. Gen. Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz. “However, Goma and Sake remain very vulnerable and we need to make sure that negative elements do not continue to pose a risk to civilians in this area”.

“We continue to call on all parties to find a political solution to the current conflict as foreseen in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the D.R. Congo and the region”, says Moustapha Soumaré, acting Head of MONUSCO. “In the meantime, we will do everything in our power to protect civilians against the threat posed by any armed groups”.

The operation to enforce the security zone will for the first time involve elements of the MONUSCO Force Intervention Brigade in an operation together with its North Kivu Brigade.