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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 43 of Security Council resolution [2666 \(2022\)](#), covers developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 20 June 2023 to 20 September 2023. It describes progress and challenges in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

II. Political developments

2. Political dynamics were driven by continued preparations for the 2023 general elections, heightened political tensions, including over the perceived lack of transparency and inclusivity of the electoral process, as expressed by parts of the opposition, and ongoing regional efforts to address insecurity in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

3. Voter registration for Kwamouth (Mai-Ndombe), Rutshuru and Masisi (North Kivu) remained pending, owing to insecurity. On 30 June, declared presidential candidates Martin Fayulu, Augustin Matata Ponyo, Delly Sesanga and Moïse Katumbi – the latter represented by a third party – renewed their calls for an alternative external audit of the voter register during a meeting with the President of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Denis Kadima. Mr. Kadima rejected this option and instead encouraged all stakeholders to audit the voter lists, to be published one month before the beginning of the electoral campaign.

4. On 13 July, a member of the National Assembly and spokesperson for Moïse Katumbi's political party "Ensemble pour la République", Chérubin Okende, was found dead in Kinshasa, raising concerns from political actors about their security in the run-up to the elections. Mr. Katumbi denounced this as a politically motivated crime, while Congolese authorities committed to conducting a thorough investigation and sought technical support from international partners, including MONUSCO, which supports the investigation process.

5. On 11 August, the Independent National Electoral Commission published the provisional lists of candidates for the national legislative elections and the list of



political groupings. A total of 23,653 candidacies were declared admissible, 17 per cent of whom are women candidates, while 642 candidacies were found to be inadmissible. The former President, Joseph Kabila, and declared presidential candidate, Martin Fayulu, boycotted the submission of applications, calling first for the revision of the legal and institutional framework of the electoral process. The final list of candidates, which was due to be published on 5 September, remained pending. On 22 August, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced that in regions affected by significant customary and administrative border disputes, communal elections would be held only in provincial capitals, postponing communal elections for other parts of those regions to 2024. On 1 September, the Independent National Electoral Commission officially announced the holding of the presidential elections on 20 December; the application period opened on 9 September and will run until 8 October. As at 15 September, the Independent National Electoral Commission had received four candidacies.

6. On 15 September, the Parliament opened its ordinary session, devoted to budgetary matters, with a focus on security and election funding.

7. From 14 to 16 August, a round table, including various stakeholders, was held in Kinshasa to assess the state of siege that has been in place in Ituri and North Kivu Provinces since May 2021. The recommendations were transmitted to the President, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, to decide on the maintenance, requalification or lifting of the state of siege. On 8 September, the President chaired the meeting of the Council of Ministers, at which the Council adopted a draft ordinance authorizing the fifty-sixth extension of the state of siege, for a period of 15 days, starting on 15 September.

8. On 27 June, in Luanda, the quadripartite summit of the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), under the auspices of the African Union and with United Nations participation, adopted a comprehensive joint master plan and established a coordination working group to strengthen the coherence and coordination of existing peace initiatives regarding eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

9. On 30 June and 12 July, in Nairobi and in Goma (North Kivu Province), respectively, the facilitator of the Nairobi process led by EAC, the former President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, convened two meetings of the consultative technical team including, among others, MONUSCO and ministers of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, namely the Vice-Prime Minister for Defence, Jean-Pierre Bemba, and the Minister for Regional Cooperation, Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi. Participants discussed pre-cantonment arrangements for Mouvement du 23 mars (M23) as well as confidence-building measures and the need to revitalize the Nairobi process. On 23 August in Nairobi, the Chiefs of Defence of the East African Community regional force and its Force Commander, and on 25 August, also in Nairobi, EAC defence ministers, reviewed the report of the regional force evaluation mission, which took place from 3 to 8 July in North Kivu. On 5 September, the twenty-second Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State of the East African Community issued a communiqué announcing the renewal of the mandate and status-of-forces agreement of the regional force until 8 December 2023.

10. On 11 July, during an Extraordinary Summit, the Heads of State and Government of the Southern African Development Community approved the deployment of an SADC mission to eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo committed to supplementing the budget of the troops to be deployed. In the communiqué of the forty-third Ordinary Summit of SADC, held on 17 August, the Heads of State and

Government of the Southern African Development Community re-endorsed the decision to deploy the SADC mission and reiterated calls to enhance the coordination of peace initiatives in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Summit also marked the handover of the Presidency of SADC from the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Tshisekedi, to President of Angola, João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço.

III. Security situation

11. The security situation in North Kivu and Ituri remained volatile, with ongoing attacks against civilians reportedly conducted mainly by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which renewed its pledge of allegiance to the new Da'esh leadership on 9 August, and Coopérative pour le développement du Congo (CODECO). While the ceasefire between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and M23 continued to hold, clashes between M23 and other armed groups intensified. In South Kivu, the level of violence remained significantly lower compared with Ituri and North Kivu, although pockets of insecurity persisted mainly around mining sites.

12. The Wazalendo phenomenon continued to gain traction, with activities of various affiliated groups negatively affecting the protection of civilians, as well as the safety and security of MONUSCO peacekeepers. Armed groups used the term Wazalendo (“patriotic” in Kiswahili) to argue that their activities are in defence of the country against an alleged foreign aggression. Pressure groups, on the other hand, used the term to mobilize public pressure against the international presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular against MONUSCO and the EAC regional force.

Ituri Province

13. Insecurity in Ituri province temporarily decreased following the agreement to end hostilities signed on 2 June by the leaders of CODECO, Mouvement d'autodéfense populaire de l'Ituri (MAPI), Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) and Front patriotique et intégrationniste du Congo (FPIC). A steep reduction in violence was observed in Djugu and Mahagi territories, but violence has resumed since, owing to the expansion of the most influential CODECO branch, Union des révolutionnaires pour la défense du peuple congolais (URPDC) into Mahagi and Aru territories. Moreover, violent ADF attacks in Mambasa and Irumu territories continued.

14. Between 20 June and 15 September, 212 security incidents were recorded in Ituri, compared with 287 during the previous reporting period: 247 civilians were killed, including at least 47 women and 12 children, and another 98 were injured, including at least 15 women and 10 children, which is a sharp decrease compared with the 643 civilians killed during the previous reporting period. ADF, which was allegedly responsible for the deaths of 111 civilians, concentrated its activity in Mambasa and Irumu territories following pressure from the joint operations by the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces in Irumu territory, as part of Operation Shujaa. On 20 August, ADF reportedly killed at least 30 civilians, including 10 women and 2 children around Samboko, in Irumu. In Djugu and Mahagi, 80 per cent of recorded incidents were attributed to CODECO and 20 per cent to Zaire.

15. In late June, clashes erupted in the area of Mwanga, Irumu territory, between two rival FPIC factions over control of the group and of mining sites, resulting in 10 civilians being killed, including 2 women and 1 child, and injuring 9 men. Despite the signature of an agreement to end land-related disputes by leaders of the Nande and Lese communities on 25 June, in Komanda, Irumu territory, the conflict escalated

further. As at 8 September, violence attributed to unidentified Mai-Mai groups and Chini ya Tuna in the area led to the killing of 22 civilians (including 12 women, 4 children), and to 11 others being injured (including 3 women and 5 children) while defending the interests of their respective communities.

North Kivu Province

16. In North Kivu, persistent insecurity was fuelled primarily by continuing ADF activity in Grand Nord and an intensification of clashes between M23 and other armed groups in Petit Nord. Between 20 June and 15 September, 372 security incidents were recorded, during which 131 civilians were killed, including at least 22 women and 18 children. A further 77 civilians, including at least 9 women and 17 children, were injured. Of the fatalities, 54 were attributed to M23, compared with 47 in the previous reporting period.

17. In various parts of Beni territory, ADF perpetrated violence against civilians, though at a lower degree of intensity compared with the previous reporting period, likely owing to the ramping up of joint offensive actions by the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces. Between 20 June and 15 September, 28 incidents, in which 14 civilians were killed, including 4 women, and 3 civilians were injured, including a woman, were attributed to ADF. In the Mwalika valley area, Congolese and Ugandan troops clashed with ADF on at least three occasions, including on 28 June, 9 July and 30 July, reportedly killing several ADF combatants.

18. Lubero territory and Butembo town continued to experience violence perpetrated by Mai-Mai groups, including extortion and abduction of civilians. Between 20 June and 15 September, 46 incidents were recorded, in which 19 civilians were killed, including 3 women and 3 children, with a further 8 civilians injured, including 3 women and 3 children.

19. In Petit Nord, the ceasefire between the Congolese armed forces and M23 largely held. Despite the requirements set out in the Luanda communiqué of 23 November 2022 to withdraw from all occupied areas, however, M23 reoccupied some previously vacated areas in Masisi, Rutshuru and Nyiragongo territories. The group's partial disengagement from some areas appeared tactical, facilitating its repositioning and retention of control over strategic locations. On two occasions, on 20 June and 19 July, M23 stopped MONUSCO convoys travelling to Rumangabo, Rutshuru territory, on reconnaissance missions as part of pre-cantonment planning. The convoys were denied passage and returned to Goma so as to avoid affecting the ceasefire.

20. Fighting between M23 and a coalition of other armed groups, notably Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and Nyatura groups, intensified in both Rutshuru and Masisi territories, resulting in 96 civilians being killed, including 16 women and 13 children (5 girls), and 47 civilians being injured, including 5 women and 8 children, while an estimated 2,675 civilians were displaced by the clashes.

21. On 30 August in Goma, in response to an unauthorized demonstration by the self-proclaimed Wazalendo religious-political group, Foi naturelle judaïque messianique vers les nations (FNJMN), calling for the departure of MONUSCO by 31 December 2023 and threatening to attack MONUSCO and certain United Nations agencies, clashes between the Congolese defence and security forces and demonstrators led to at least 49 civilians being killed, 56 civilians wounded, and 158 civilians arrested, according to the government authorities. In response to these events, on 5 September, the Military Court of North Kivu opened a trial for alleged crimes against humanity, murder, destruction of property and violating orders, among other charges. MONUSCO is monitoring these trials to ensure due process and will provide support, if so requested.

22. Tensions between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda continued to increase, with each side accusing the other of preparing an attack on their territory. On 27 July, a Congolese soldier reportedly exchanged fire with a Rwanda Defence Forces soldier in Rutagara, near Goma by the border with Rwanda, reportedly killing the Rwandan soldier.

South Kivu Province

23. Pockets of insecurity persisted in parts of South Kivu. The province remained vulnerable to a potential M23 spillover, which, coupled with increased Twigwaneho activities, could overstretch the response capacities of the Congolese armed forces. Between 20 June and 15 September, 188 security incidents were recorded, in which 54 civilians were killed, including at least 19 women and 5 children, and 35 were injured, including 3 women and 4 children.

24. Attacks by Burundian armed groups, namely, Forces nationales de libération (FNL) and Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED Tabara), decreased in Mwenga territory, with an ongoing presence of Congolese and Burundian armed forces. In Kalehe territory but also spilling over into Kabare and Walungu territories, Raia Mutomboki groups, acting under the Wazalendo banner, continued to commit exactions, robberies and other human rights abuses.

IV. Human rights situation

25. Ahead of the general elections, the reporting period was marked by new reported incidents of intimidation and violence targeting political opposition figures, civil society actors, human rights defenders and journalists. In June and July, a member of the political opposition reported being subjected to a house search without a warrant, and another reported threats that he would be arrested. On 20 June, the President of Mouvement Lumumbiste Progressiste, Franck Diongo, was arrested. On 17 August, the trial of a special adviser to Mr. Katumbi, Solomon Idi Kalonda, began following his arrest on 30 May. Mr. Kalonda is accused of inciting military personnel to commit acts contrary to the law and their duties, disclosure of secret defence documents to a foreign power and treason. Between June and August, MONUSCO documented 54 violations of human rights in relation to restrictions of civic space, with 73 victims (including at least 3 women), including human rights defenders, civil society members and journalists. During the reporting period, the Mission, through the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, also documented three cases of hate speech that met the threshold set out in the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

26. MONUSCO documented an increase in human rights violations and abuses between June and August 2023, with 1,443 violations and abuses (as opposed to 1,274 between March and May 2023), affecting 1,809 victims. The vast majority, 85 per cent, of these violations and abuses were committed in conflict-affected provinces. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for 67 per cent of those abuses. Mai-Mai factions continued to be responsible for most of the abuses (311), followed by ADF (132), M23 (111), Nyatura factions (92), Twa militias (74), CODECO (64), Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (60), Raia Mutomboki (12), FDLR (9) and Zaire (6), among others. During the reporting period, at least 180 civilians (including 43 women and 45 children) were victims of summary killings attributed to armed groups, notably ADF, CODECO and M23, a substantial decrease from the 830 victims recorded between March and May, which could be linked to ongoing military operations in Grand Nord and Ituri, as well as a decrease in offensive activity by M23.

V. Humanitarian situation

27. Protracted armed violence perpetrated by armed groups continued to exacerbate humanitarian challenges and generated population displacements. As at 1 August, the number of internally displaced persons in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu amounted to 5.4 million, out of a total of 6.1 million displaced persons throughout the country. As at 11 September, the 2023 humanitarian response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, budgeted at \$2.25 billion, was only funded at 34 per cent, despite the system-wide humanitarian scale-up announced on 16 June.

28. As at 23 August, 35,074 suspected cases of cholera had been reported across the country, with 23,332 cases recorded in North Kivu. The three-month operational plan for the system-wide scale-up launched in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu in June is focused on addressing food scarcity and protecting vulnerable and conflict-affected populations, including from gender-based violence and communicable diseases. In July 2023, 1.39 million people, out of the targeted 5.46 million, received assistance. From 28 August to 1 September, the Emergency Director Group engaged with Congolese authorities and humanitarian partners to advocate additional donor support and recommended extending the system-wide scale-up, which was eventually extended on 14 September until the end of December 2023.

29. In North Kivu, 24 security incidents against humanitarian actors were recorded in July alone, bringing the total number of security incidents against humanitarian actors in 2023 to 168. Physical obstacles also affected humanitarian access, including restrictions of movement for some humanitarian actors in non-State-controlled areas. On 21 July, citing security concerns, the President ordered the strengthening of control with respect to international non-governmental organizations operating in the country and created an interministerial commission composed of the Ministers of Planning, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Justice to prepare a report regarding the situation of international non-governmental organizations. On 8 August, the interministerial commission announced its intention to review existing agreements between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and international non-governmental organizations.

VI. Protection of civilians

A. Mission strategies and political processes

30. In line with the Action for Peacekeeping principles and the updated Policy on the Protection of Civilians in United Nations Peacekeeping, MONUSCO continued its protection efforts, pursuing its good offices, dialogue facilitation at the national, provincial and local levels, physical protection through agile deterrence and interposition, and the creation of a protective environment, including efforts to strengthen the rule of law and accountability. As part of the transition process, MONUSCO prepared a comprehensive analysis and mapping of protection hotspots, capacities and gaps to be shared with the Government, so as to inform the gradual handover of protection tasks to national authorities. In order to increase the Mission's readiness and effectiveness, MONUSCO also updated core guidance on the protection of civilians seeking shelter at the Mission's premises, the administration of community liaison assistants and on early warning and response.

31. The Mission continued to ensure compliance with the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces, in the context of its support to the Congolese defence and security forces. Between 20 June and 10 September, 95 risk assessments were conducted, including 68 on

transport, 4 on logistics, 3 on training and 9 on other activities. The challenges identified are related to the timely receipt of information necessary to conduct effective due diligence, the apparent use of certain foreign security actors by the Congolese defence and security forces and reports of collaboration between these forces and armed groups, including in the context of the establishment of a new reserve force to support the Congolese armed forces.

B. Field-level responses

32. In Ituri, on five occasions between 22 July and 10 September, the timely intervention of MONUSCO thwarted attempted and ongoing attacks on civilians, including displaced populations, by CODECO assailants in Djugu territory. A standing combat deployment was dispatched to Idohu, Irumu territory, from 20 June to 12 July, along the road between Komanda and Eringeti to protect civilians from ADF violence.

33. On 20 July, the new Joint Operations and Coordination Centre for MONUSCO and the Congolese armed forces, established in Bunia, Ituri, to improve information-sharing and increase timely responses to alerts, began to perform its functions. On 14 July, MONUSCO completed the rehabilitation of a critical bridge in Bambu, which enabled the resumption of traffic along the road between Iga-Barrière and Mongbwalu.

34. In Grand Nord, North Kivu, MONUSCO continued its domination patrols along the road between Beni town, Eringeti and Bwana-Sura to protect civilians from ADF combatants fleeing northward and westward under pressure from the joint operations of the Congolese and Ugandan armed forces. Since 22 June, together with the national security forces, the Mission has been conducting nighttime patrols in Beni town, following a surge in banditry.

35. In Petit Nord, North Kivu, MONUSCO maintained protective presences, conducting area domination patrols and long-range missions. In collaboration with Congolese authorities and security forces, the Mission helped to ensure safe passage of displaced people and establish humanitarian corridors. In order to reduce the acute risks of sexual violence in displacement sites, the Mission also increased its joint patrols with the Congolese armed forces, in coordination with Congolese authorities, the United Nations Population Fund and humanitarian actors.

36. In South Kivu, MONUSCO provided physical protection to an estimated 2,740 displaced persons in Mikenge, Mwenga territory, and conducted long-range patrols to deter violence against civilians across the province and enable the Mission's engagement with vulnerable communities. In the Ruzizi plain and highlands of Uvira and Fizi territories, the Mission contributed to lowering tensions between farmers and herders through support for the establishment of local protection committees. MONUSCO also supported provincial authorities in the creation and operationalization of local-level Consultative Commissions for the Resolution of Customary Conflicts.

37. Between 20 June and 11 September, the MONUSCO Community Alert Network system received 746 alerts from North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri. National security forces, MONUSCO and humanitarian actors responded to 59 per cent of alerts.

38. Between 20 June and 11 September, MONUSCO, through the Mine Action Service, conducted 159 spot tasks in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, destroying 536 explosive remnants of war, 12,411 rounds of small arms ammunition and seven other explosive items. During the same period, MONUSCO oversaw the holding of 635 educational sessions on explosive ordnance risk, which benefited 28,064 civilians

(including 13,158 women and girls) in Mambasa and Djugu territories in Ituri, and in Beni, Lubero, Rutshuru and Masisi territories in North Kivu. Daily explosive ordnance awareness episodes were broadcast over Radio Okapi in Kiswahili, French and Kinande.

VII. Stabilization and strengthening of State institutions

A. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and stabilization

39. MONUSCO, together with the United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, continued to support the implementation of the national Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme, including through regular provincial coordination meetings to address coherence and coordination issues. MONUSCO also facilitated regular exchanges among stabilization actors in South Kivu, which resulted in strengthened coherence between the United Nations system and local and international non-governmental organizations.

40. Between 20 June and 10 September, MONUSCO provided disarmament and reintegration support to 20 Congolese male ex-combatants. The Mission also facilitated the repatriation of 11 Rwandan ex-combatants and one Burundian ex-combatant (all men) with 14 dependants (8 men, 6 women) at transit sites, as part of its ongoing disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement efforts.

41. On 28 August, pilot community-based reinsertion projects for ex-combatants were launched in Ituri and implemented by the International Organization for Migration and local partners. These projects target 2,000 beneficiaries per province, 31 per cent of whom are women. The projects were designed by MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, in close cooperation with the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme and other local, provincial and national actors so as to facilitate the insertion of ex-combatants into the workforce, strengthen women's empowerment and promote community dialogue, while reducing community-level violence.

42. On 20 July, the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme operational plan for North Kivu was adopted. The adoption marked the finalization of all three provincial operational plans in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and should enable the Programme to launch a funding appeal based on identified needs. In Tanganyika, MONUSCO supported the Programme to develop a system for information, counselling and referral services in order to deliver integrated services to Programme beneficiaries and serve as a monitoring tool. The system will be owned and operated by the Programme and implemented in collaboration with provincial authorities, with a view to supporting partnerships with service providers and to identifying referral opportunities for ex-combatants.

B. Security sector reform

43. MONUSCO continued to provide its good offices and technical assistance in support of national efforts to address key security sector governance challenges and advance institutional reforms. Between 26 June and 7 July, the Congolese armed forces, with the support of MONUSCO, carried out an internal evaluation of the army reform plan (2008–2025), which revealed an implementation rate of 45.5 per cent, due to a lack of national ownership and insufficient financial resources. On 5 and 6 July, MONUSCO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and

Réseau pour la réforme du secteur de la sécurité et justice supported a high-level awareness-raising workshop organized by the Congolese National Police in Kinshasa, with the participation of 60 high-ranked police officers, including 5 women, regarding legal texts pertaining to the five-year police reform action plan (2020–2024).

44. On 9 July, MONUSCO organized a meeting with 26 female senior army and police officers to discuss challenges related to hiring, promoting and retaining women in uniform, as well as retirement policies. As at 11 September, a total of 2,700 women were employed into the armed forces, with a national recruitment drive ongoing that is aimed at integrating 3,000 women by 2024.

45. On 3 July, to strengthen parliamentary oversight and the financial sustainability of the security sector, a civil society alliance, Alliance citoyenne pour la gouvernance sécuritaire, in collaboration with MONUSCO and UNDP, facilitated a capacity-building workshop in Kinshasa for 50 members of the National Assembly and of the Senate's defence and security commissions, including 9 women, to ensure that public interests are considered in the defence budgeting process.

46. Through the Mine Action Service, MONUSCO trained 30 armourers (including 2 women) of the Congolese armed forces in Bunia, Ituri, in weapons and ammunition management. In addition, the Mine Action Service installed and handed over 14 containers that had been converted into mobile armouries for the armed forces and the Congolese National Police in South Kivu and provided the recipients with training on the safe handling and storage of weapons.

VIII. Women and peace and security

47. MONUSCO continued to advocate women's participation in the 2023 elections in a context of heightened insecurity for female electoral candidates. Between 24 June and 7 July in Ituri and South Kivu, the Mission organized five workshops, with 221 participants from the Government and civil society, including 205 potential female candidates, to identify the challenges women face during electoral campaigns. Ituri and South Kivu saw an increase in female candidates on the provisional lists, compared with the 2018 elections.

48. In Bunia, Ituri, on 24 June and on 12 and 13 September, MONUSCO organized two workshops to enhance women's political participation. The two events gathered 111 women, including at least 25 candidates for the upcoming election. As a result, the civil society organization Collectif des femmes de l'Ituri prepared a strategy to increase the rate of women's participation in the electoral process. At the closing of the registration phase for the national legislative elections, women accounted for 3,995 of valid candidacies (17 per cent), an increase by 6 per cent compared with the 2018 elections. Nevertheless, women only comprise 10 per cent of independent candidates, despite the decision of the Independent National Electoral Commission to waive registration fees for women candidates. Negative communication around the elections, the resistance of political party leaders in terms of considering women candidates, and persisting harassment and insecurity are among the factors identified as being faced by women candidates.

IX. Integrated United Nations activities

A. 2023 electoral process

49. MONUSCO and the United Nations country team continued to provide support for the holding of free, fair, inclusive and transparent elections, including good offices

to defuse tensions and facilitate capacity-building for electoral stakeholders through an integrated United Nations electoral task force.

50. From 10 to 25 July in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, MONUSCO and UNDP provided financial and technical support to the Congolese National Police for an outreach activity on the role of the security forces in the electoral process. On 8 August, MONUSCO and UNDP launched a three-week training course for 60 police officers, including 3 women, on intelligence management and the prevention of electoral violence. The MONUSCO police component also developed a training on armoured vehicle manoeuvres for crowd management to strengthen the operational capacities and human rights compliance of the Congolese National Police.

51. MONUSCO also provided its good offices to promote the safe political participation of women, youth and Indigenous People, the adoption of the draft law against tribalism, racism and xenophobia in parliament and initiatives against hate speech, political intolerance and gender-based violence, as well as the good governance of electoral funds and electoral observation by civil society and political parties to enhance transparency, credibility and accountability. On 23 August, in Kinshasa, the Independent National Electoral Commission inaugurated the *Maison des élections*, a facility aimed at enhancing accessibility and interactions with electoral stakeholders, funded by UNDP under the electoral support programme.

B. Support to the judicial system and fight against impunity

52. MONUSCO and UNDP continued to support legislative reforms in the justice sector through the Joint Justice Reform Support Programme. On 18 July, the three-month training course for the 2,500 newly appointed magistrates (2,327 civilian and 173 military), 31 per cent of whom are women, started in Kinshasa, ahead of their deployment to the 26 provinces.

53. MONUSCO continued to provide technical, logistical and financial support to the military justice system to fight impunity. From June to August, MONUSCO supported three joint investigation teams in Ituri (1) and South Kivu (2), as well as seven mobile courts in Katanga (1), Kwilu (1), Ituri (1), North Kivu (1), South Kivu (1) and Tanganyika (2), facilitating the interviewing in six sites of 139 victims, including 65 women and 5 minors, providing them with judicial protection measures. The efforts resulted in the convictions of 29 Congolese soldiers, 4 Congolese police officers, 162 members of armed groups and 15 civilians, including on charges of genocide, violation of physical integrity, attempted murder and other serious human rights violations. In the context of the attack from 11 to 12 June on Lala internally displaced persons site in Djugu territory, allegedly perpetrated by CODECO elements, arrest warrants were issued on 16 June against 25 suspects, however, to date, no arrests have been made. A prosecutorial investigation mission to Lala was initiated on 14 September.

54. On 24 and 25 July, MONUSCO also supported the finalization of the by-laws and rules of procedure of the provincial truth, justice and reconciliation commission in Kasai Central and provided technical support to the Government for the establishment of a reparations scheme for victims of gross human rights violations, including conflict-related sexual violence. On 8 July, the President nominated the administrators of the national reparations fund established by a decree on 5 May. On 11 August, the Government adopted a draft decree stipulating that 11 per cent of mining royalties must be paid into the national fund for reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and other crimes against human peace and security.

55. In order to support the safety and security of the prison system, MONUSCO contributed to improving the security infrastructure of the high-risk block in Kabare,

Ndolo and Luzumu prisons, provided security equipment and supported the establishment of strategic communication networks to link prisons with national and provincial authorities. On 28 and 29 June, MONUSCO further contributed to capacity-building for 101 personnel, including 33 women, to implement the prison deradicalization strategy of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

C. Child protection

56. MONUSCO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) continued to monitor and report on grave violations of children's rights. Between 20 June and 31 August, the Mission verified 417 grave violations perpetrated against 319 children (230 boys and 89 girls), including 185 children who were recruited and used (153 boys and 32 girls). The Congolese security forces were reportedly responsible for 16 violations, including 13 cases of killing and maiming and two cases of sexual violence.

57. Between 20 June and 11 September, at the invitation of the Congolese armed forces, MONUSCO and UNICEF jointly conducted age-verification assessments of 78 candidates (including 7 female candidates) for recruitment into the armed forces, 19 of whom were confirmed to be children (15 boys, 4 girls) and were excluded from the recruitment process.

D. Gender and sexual violence in conflict

58. From June to August, the number of documented cases of conflict-related sexual violence increased, affecting at least 199 women. Such cases likely continue to be underreported, however, owing to access and security challenges for MONUSCO and the fear of reprisals and stigma among victims. Armed groups were allegedly responsible for incidents affecting 171 women. Mai-Mai factions perpetrated most of the alleged abuses (101), followed by Twa militiamen (25), ADF (16), Raia Mutomboki (16), M23 (6), FDLR (2), Mai-Mai Mazembe (2), Nyatura, Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain and Zaire (1 each). The Congolese armed forces were allegedly responsible for incidents of sexual violence involving 25 women and the Congolese National Police for incidents of sexual violence involving three women. The provinces with the highest number of victims of sexual violence, committed by all parties, were Tanganyika (112 victims), followed by South Kivu (34 victims), Ituri (29 victims), North Kivu (17 victims) and Maniema (seven victims). MONUSCO documented 67 survivors of conflict-related sexual violence living in several camps for internally displaced persons in Nyiragongo territory, North Kivu, shedding light on a concerning prevalence of gang rape and sexual violence. In response, on 6 July, the Mission led a female engagement dialogue in Kanyaruchinya camp to improve the protection of civilians, including displaced populations. Following the engagement of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team, on 7 June, the Military Prosecutor of North Kivu opened a file to investigate conflict-related sexual violence targeting internally displaced persons in and around the Goma area.

59. From 9 to 17 June, the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo to engage with the Government, provincial authorities and Congolese armed forces, as well as with civil society, donors and survivors of sexual violence, in a visit that drew attention to the dramatic surge in sexual violence targeting displaced women and girls and around camps for internally displaced persons. On 15 June, the Special Representative,

together with MONUSCO and the Congolese authorities, participated in a ceremony to commemorate the 10-year anniversary of the signature of the joint communiqué on the prevention and elimination of conflict-related sexual violence and to accelerate the operationalization of the task force to implement the joint communiqué. In Goma, on 12 July, my Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bintou Keita, engaged with Ms. Patten and the facilitator of the Nairobi process, the former President of Kenya, Mr. Kenyatta, and all three later held a meeting with women human rights advocates, giving new impulse to consultations on the creation of a multisectoral assistance structure. The structure aims to provide judicial, medical and psychological support and economic empowerment to women survivors of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation in 17 conflict-affected territories in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In a communiqué issued on 13 July, the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict network expressed concerns over reports of about 1,000 locations in Goma, North Kivu, where displaced women and girls are forced to engage in survival sex, including in 145 brothels, 67 of which are in sites for internally displaced persons, located in Karisimbi and Goma.

X. Exit strategy

60. MONUSCO continued its technical engagements with the Congolese authorities on the revision of the 2021 joint transition plan, focusing on key benchmarks that would create the minimum-security conditions for the responsible withdrawal of MONUSCO. On 22 June in Kinshasa, MONUSCO and the Ministry of Planning concluded a two-day workshop gathering 50 national and provincial civil society representatives from Kinshasa, Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, including 18 women, which helped to develop a common understanding of the draft revised transition plan adopted at the technical level and gathered recommendations for its implementation at the national and provincial levels.

61. On 17 August, the Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo met with the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Francophonie, Christophe Lutundula Apala Pen'apala, and with the President, Mr. Tshisekedi on 26 August to discuss the accelerated transition of MONUSCO while working jointly to avoid gaps in the protection of civilians once the Mission withdraws. On 1 September, Mr. Lutundula Apala Pen'apala sent a letter to the President of the Security Council, outlining a request for MONUSCO to start its withdrawal process at the end of 2023 (S/2023/648). On 14 September, the revised joint transition plan was endorsed by the Minister of Planning.

A. Implementation of priority actions

62. From 11 to 29 July, the Special Representative in the Democratic Republic of the visited North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri to discuss challenges and priorities for the accelerated transition of MONUSCO, as requested by the Government, and options for adapting the Mission's configuration and that of the United Nations beyond the current mandate of MONUSCO. The delegation interacted with a wide range of civil society, local, provincial and regional stakeholders, provincial integrated transition teams, the United Nations country team and international actors, and identified recommendations to advance planning for the implementation of the revised joint transition plan.

63. On 16 and 17 August, MONUSCO organized territorial consultations in Uvira, South Kivu, with the provincial government and civil society representatives to discuss the Mission's transition process with a focus on Uvira, Fizi and Mwenga

territories. The consultations served to gather recommendations on hotspots, priority actions and resource mobilization gaps to be filled by State institutions, civil society, local communities and the United Nations system, to ensure an eventual responsible withdrawal of MONUSCO from South Kivu.

B. Update on integration and resource mobilization

64. Preparations remained under way for a comprehensive mapping exercise reviewing all 2022–2023 interventions of MONUSCO and the United Nations country team to assess the strategic and programmatic scope of the United Nations, so as to identify current and future capacity gaps and inform resource mobilization efforts ahead of the Mission’s responsible withdrawal.

XI. Mission effectiveness

A. Mission performance (military, police and civilian personnel)

Military component

65. As at 11 September, the military component of MONUSCO had deployed 12,548 troops, 6.2 per cent of whom were women, and 506 United Nations military experts on mission, 25 per cent of whom were women, of an authorized strength of 13,500 troops and 660 United Nations military experts on mission. From 21 June to 11 September, MONUSCO established 12 standing combat deployments and conducted 4,643 day patrols, 3,535 night patrols, 586 long-range patrols and missions, 303 joint patrols, 831 escorts and 6 aerial reconnaissance operations.

66. In line with its Action for Peacekeeping Plus commitments, MONUSCO conducted evaluations of 30 military units: 10 infantry units, 5 aviation units, 2 Sector Headquarters units, 3 engineering units, 1 explosive ordinance disposal unit, 1 aeromedical evacuation unit, 1 medical level III unit, 1 medical level II unit, 1 signal unit, 1 special force unit, 1 military police unit, 1 water treatment plant unit and 2 intelligence units. All units met the required standards.

67. The number of engagement teams increased to 16, representing 2.3 per cent of the total strength of the force. The operational effectiveness inspection for all the military units, except sector headquarters, medical and military police units, was based on the military unit evaluation tool developed by the Office of Military Affairs. The inspection for sector headquarters, medical and military police units remained under way during the reporting period. Engagement teams conducted 35 targeted patrols and 63 activities, including civil-military cooperation and outreach, compared with 75 activities during the previous reporting period.

68. The percentage of women among MONUSCO military staff officers and military observers remained at 25 per cent, as in the previous reporting period. Contingent female participation further decreased, however, from 6.2 per cent to 5.9 per cent compared with the previous reporting period.

69. From 21 to 26 July, a United Nations high-level panel investigated the circumstances surrounding the MONUSCO response to the 12 June attack on the Lala internally displaced persons camp in Ituri in order to provide recommendations to strengthen both the prevention and reaction to such incidents by both civilian and military components.

Police component

70. As at 11 September, MONUSCO police component had deployed 1,582 personnel from 31 contributing countries: 1,229 formed police personnel, including 211 female personnel, and 353 individual police personnel, including 101 female officers, out of an authorized strength of 1,410 formed police unit personnel and 591 individual police officers. Formed police units achieved 2,818 quick response interventions, 276 escorts, 1,803 patrols, 936 joint patrols with individual police officers, 41 joint patrols with Congolese National Police and 109 patrols around camps for internally displaced persons.

71. A total 318 individual police officers took part in periodic performance assessments, including 62 women. The overall performance rating of individual police officers dropped by 9 percentage points compared with the previous reporting period, to 71 per cent, a decrease which was attributed to a high turnover. In order to improve the overall performance, individual police officers benefited from in-mission training sessions on presentation skills (27 officers, including 3 women), gender awareness and child protection (66 officers, including 34 female officers) and safety and security (16 officers, including 7 female officers), as well as training on performance management for supervisors (18 officers, including 3 women).

72. Formed police units benefited from a total of 24 operational readiness inspections, 1,188 scenario-based training sessions and 126 scenario-based training inspections. The performance of all eight formed police units was satisfactory. Compliance with logistical requirements of all units was verified against the 2020 statement of unit requirements; performance improvement plans were developed to address the remaining gaps so as to improve operational and logistics capacity, including through better maintenance of existing equipment and the acquisition of new equipment.

Civilian component

73. As at 11 September, 2,130 civilian personnel (21.2 per cent women), including 299 United Nations Volunteers (48.5 per cent women) and 51 government-provided personnel, were serving with MONUSCO.

Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System

74. MONUSCO continued to implement the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System to guide and improve mandate implementation. The combination of data visuals generated by the system, including maps of protection activities around camps for internally displaced persons and documented security incidents, strengthened the Mission's response capacities within the framework of established early warning mechanisms and community alert networks. Data generated against the Mission's results framework in the Comprehensive Planning and Performance Assessment System also informed options for the reconfiguration of MONUSCO, and the future configuration of the presence of the United Nations system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, notably through the development of a transition dashboard that provides data on indicators and planned results at the national, provincial and territorial levels.

B. Strategic communications

75. MONUSCO continued to be targeted by misinformation and disinformation campaigns through a network of social media accounts using satirical images and hashtags, accusing MONUSCO of failing to protect civilians. During the reporting

period, on social media, the negative sentiment hovered around 30 per cent. MONUSCO produced biweekly reports on misinformation and disinformation, intensified its presence on social networks to debunk false accusations, held five press conferences and had 15 monthly interactions with journalists, while 350 stories on MONUSCO were published by international and national media outlets in French and English.

C. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

76. From 1 June to 15 September, MONUSCO recorded 11 new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse that had occurred between 2005 and 2023 and involved 8 military and 3 civilian personnel. Among those allegations, 2 were found to be unsubstantiated and 9 are pending investigation by the relevant troop-contributing countries or by the United Nations. The Mission ensured that all 12 victims, as well as their 10 children alleged to be born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse, subject to paternity claims, were supported and received medical and psychosocial support in a timely manner and in accordance with the victim assistance protocols established with service providers, including UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund.

77. In coordination with the Office of the Victims' Right Advocate, two National Investigation Officers and one paternity and child support team from the South African National Defence Force carried out in situ investigations and collected DNA samples from 25 mothers and 30 children in Goma, Bukavu, Beni and Bunia. Their findings will serve to facilitate claims of paternity and child support involving South African contingent members. From 8 to 10 August, the Mission supported the visit of the Victims' Rights Advocate, Jane Connors, who exchanged views with Congolese authorities on ways to strengthen the assistance provided by the United Nations and its partners, including access to justice for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel, and promote the rights of victims.

78. In line with the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, MONUSCO continued to enhance its preventive efforts through outreach and training activities and engagement with local communities and humanitarian organizations. The Mission also recorded 15 new allegations of other serious misconduct, of which 4 were attributed to the military, 1 to United Nations police and 10 to civilian personnel. Allegations concerning fraud and/or theft (4), misuse of office/position (2), prohibited conduct (2), illegal trafficking of prohibited goods (2) and other allegations concerning acts that could cause reputational damage to the United Nations (3) were under investigation.

XII. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

79. The reporting period was marked by several attacks and threats against United Nations personnel and premises. On 26 June, armed individuals fired shots at a MONUSCO helicopter near Kitchanga, North Kivu, which managed to safely land at Goma airport. In July, five incidents of stone-pelting against MONUSCO vehicles were reported in Goma. On 31 July, the Integrated Security Workforce Quick Reaction Team intervened during a violent demonstration at the Kanyaruchinya camp for internally displaced persons in North Kivu and safely extracted the United Nations staff on site. On 30 June and on 2 August, the self-proclaimed Wazalendo religious-political group, Foi naturelle judaïque messianique vers les nations, mobilized large protests outside MONUSCO logistical offices in Goma, calling for the Mission's departure by 31 December 2023 and threatening to attack MONUSCO and certain

United Nations agencies. On 30 August, MONUSCO activated an integrated security plan in Goma in response to the events described in paragraph 21 above.

80. Security and safety incidents decreased from 152 during the previous reporting period to 108 cases. These incidents affected 53 United Nations personnel, including 3 women. They included 2 armed conflict cases, 88 crime-related incidents, 36 civil unrest cases and 49 cases of hazards. In North Kivu, MONUSCO continued to maintain the mitigation measures implemented following the large-scale anti-MONUSCO demonstrations in July 2022, including restrictions on movement and the use of unmarked vehicles.

81. In June, one Mai-Mai member detained in Beni prison admitted having participated in the attack against MONUSCO Butembo base in July 2022 and indicated that other suspects held in detention were also involved. On 17 July, the military prosecutor requested that MONUSCO share evidence in that regard. MONUSCO continued to monitor the weekly appeal hearing before the High Military Court at Ndolo prison in Kinshasa of the 50 people convicted in the trial of the murders of the two United Nations experts in Kasai Central Province in 2017.

XIII. Observations

82. The commitment of the Independent National Electoral Commission to ensure a free, fair, inclusive and transparent electoral process, including the participation of women, is welcome. I reiterate the readiness of the United Nations to provide its good offices, technical and limited logistical support pursuant to its mandate, to support the elections. Reports of human rights violations, incidents of intimidation and hate speech, especially targeting women involved in politics, the political opposition, human rights defenders and journalists are deeply concerning. I urge the authorities to ensure those responsible are held accountable and encourage the expeditious adoption of the draft law against tribalism, racism and xenophobia.

83. I remain deeply concerned about the deterioration of the security situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the activities of militias and armed groups. The unspeakable acts of violence perpetrated by ADF, CODECO, M23, FDLR, Zaire and Mai-Mai armed groups against civilians must stop and perpetrators must be brought to justice. I reiterate my calls upon all Congolese and foreign armed groups to unconditionally lay down their weapons. I encourage the Government to uphold the principle of non-integration of armed group ex-combatants into the armed forces and to mobilize the adequate resources, together with bilateral partners, to support the implementation of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme.

84. I deplore the heavy loss of lives following the events of 30 August in Goma and convey my sincere condolences to the authorities and Congolese people and wish a prompt recovery to the injured. I commend the Government's announcement of a thorough investigation and reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to support this process, including to ensure respect for human rights.

85. I am deeply concerned by the scale and severity of the humanitarian crisis affecting the country, particularly in Ituri and North Kivu, including the dramatic surge in sexual and gender-based violence in and around camps for internally displaced persons. I condemn attacks against humanitarian workers and impediments to humanitarian access and call for increased engagement of donors to support the 2023 humanitarian response plan, which remains chronically underfunded.

86. I am encouraged by the holding of the ceasefire between M23 and the Congolese armed forces but concerned by increased clashes between M23 and other armed

groups. I strongly condemn the continued illegal occupation by M23 of territories in North Kivu and reiterate my call upon the group to fully withdraw from occupied areas and comply with the decisions of the Luanda communiqué of 23 November 2022. MONUSCO remains determined to leverage its capabilities in support of the Luanda and Nairobi processes.

87. I welcome ongoing efforts to harmonize and coordinate existing peace initiatives to address the situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and reiterate the commitment of the United Nations to support regional actors in their efforts. I commend the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the continuous efforts of the facilitator of the Nairobi process, the former President of Kenya, Mr. Kenyatta, to advance the Nairobi process, and I urge all stakeholders to constructively engage so as to facilitate the fourth round of consultations. I applaud the facilitator's commitment in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and I confirm the readiness of the United Nations to assist in this endeavour. I further commend the continued diplomatic efforts of the President of Angola, Mr. Lourenço, in support of the Luanda process and as the new Chairperson of SADC. Noting the renewal of the mandate of the EAC regional force and plans to deploy the SADC mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I stress the need for coordination among all troops deployed on the ground, including with MONUSCO, so as to enable the efficient protection of civilians and ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers.

88. I am encouraged by the continuous engagement of the Congolese authorities to revise the joint transition plan for MONUSCO, including the endorsement on 14 September of the joint transition plan at the level of the Ministry of Planning. As outlined in my report on options for adapting the configuration of MONUSCO and the future United Nations configuration in the Democratic Republic of the Congo beyond the current mandate of the Mission (S/2023/574), the transition of MONUSCO is, first and foremost, a transfer of its core responsibilities to the Congolese State. I reiterate the unwavering determination of the United Nations to accelerate the pace of the Mission's transition in line with the wishes of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The United Nations is committed to working closely with the Congolese authorities to finalize the revised joint transition plan for MONUSCO, which must remain guided by measures to ensure a responsible withdrawal of the Mission in tandem with the extension of State authority in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

89. I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative for her determined leadership and persistent efforts. I also wish to convey my deepest gratitude to all MONUSCO personnel, members of the United Nations system, troop- and police-contributing countries and the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region for their constant efforts towards lasting peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

