



## **Statement of SRSG Martin Kobler to the Security Council**

### **Ensuring an irreversible peace**

**7 October 2015**

**Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,**

Antes que nada, quisiera darle mi más sincera enhorabuena a España por su actual presidencia del Consejo de Seguridad.

Mi mandato como Representante Especial del Secretario General en la República Democrática del Congo se acerca a su fin, y por ello, es un honor para mí por última vez:

- Presentar el informe del Secretario General e informarles sobre los últimos acontecimientos en la República Democrática del Congo;
- Presentar una visión global de lo que se ha conseguido y todo lo que queda por hacer.

Quisiera hoy abordar tres asuntos en particular:

- La situación doméstica y el proceso electoral
- La situación de seguridad en el Este, y
- El Diálogo Estratégico

*[I would like to first extend my heartfelt congratulations to Spain for its current leadership of the Security Council.]*

*As the end of my term as Special Representative of the Secretary General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo nears, it is an honor for the last time to:*

- *Introduce the report of the Secretary General and brief you on the latest developments in the DRC,*



- *Present a brief review of what's been accomplished and the tasks that remain at hand.*

*Today, I would like to focus on 3 subjects in particular:*

- *The domestic situation and the electoral process;*
- *The security situation in the East; and*
- *The strategic dialogue.]*

## **The Political Environment**

### **Mr. President,**

At the end of my more than two years in the DRC, I depart with a feeling of satisfaction and pride, but also with a sense that our mandate has not been fulfilled yet.

I cannot say with certainty whether the progress attained is sustainable or whether the specter of violence can erupt again and reverse what's been achieved so far.

The political situation in the DRC is increasingly marked by the electoral process. Political tensions are running high ahead of the 2016 elections. This will have an impact on the security situation, on the Strategic Dialogue and ultimately on the fulfillment of our mandate.

The conduct of peaceful, timely and credible elections in November 2016 would send a clear message to the world that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a nation that respects its constitution, a nation keen on a peaceful transition of power, a nation that will consolidate peace.

I am concerned by the increasing number of Human Rights Violations related to the electoral process, particularly violations of freedom of peaceful assembly. Reducing

political space ahead of the elections will undermine the credibility of the electoral process.

I urge the government of the DRC to take all necessary measures to ensure that the legislative and presidential elections slated for November 2016 are transparent, credible and inclusive.

I appeal to the authorities to decisively and immediately address open questions related to:

- The sequencing of the electoral calendar, while respecting the constitutional deadlines;
- The electoral budget;
- The update of the voter registry to include eligible individuals who turned 18 since the last elections of 2011.

Nothing should be done to impede the timely holding of legislative and presidential elections in November 2016 as foreseen by the Constitution.

MONUSCO will continue to play its good offices role in support of all political stakeholders and the people of the Congo.

### **The Human Rights Situation**

The Human Rights situation warrants our attention as well. On 29 September, the Human Rights Council in Geneva expressed its concerns regarding the state of human rights in the DRC; where more than 2,200 human rights violations affecting 5,400 victims have taken place this year so far. Half of these abuses were still committed by state agents. Despite repeated calls, there has been limited progress in bringing senior perpetrators to justice.

## The Security Situation

### Mr. President,

Concerning the situation in eastern DRC:

When I first arrived to the Congo in August 2013, Goma was still recovering from the M23 takeover. In August 2015, I flew into a newly-renovated airport in Goma with a major international airline. The slow return of investors is a sure sign of improving stability and security in the city. In some islands of stability in the East, the state has demonstrated its ability to enhance the presence of the army and police, while a justice system is being established and basic services delivered.

In some parts of the East, refugees are gradually returning home. However, the population remains wary of a fragile peace that still needs to be consolidated. As a consequence, many Congolese continue to call on us to protect them.

I am proud that the performance of the Force has improved over the last years. This is due to the relentless efforts of the Force Commander and his Deputy. Foot and night patrols are now routine activities.

Though preventive action is difficult to quantify, I have no doubt that our presence and our early-warning mechanisms regularly protect the most vulnerable populations.

In the last two years:

The M23 was militarily defeated. But military success alone is not durable. M23 ex-combatants still sojourn in camps in Rwanda and Uganda. All efforts of reintegration on the basis of the Nairobi declaration have not succeeded thus far. This is a time bomb that must be urgently defused.

The Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) has been weakened while the area of their activities has shrunk. Last month, I visited Kamango, a town not far from the



Ugandan border. For years, the town was terrorized by the ADF. Close to 120,000 people - 90 percent of its population - fled out of fear for their lives in 2013, turning Kamango into a ghost town. However, the brave combat of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC) and the deployment of UN peacekeeping Forces have resulted in the gradual return of 80,000 refugees since early 2014. I have seen a revitalized town center with a flourishing market and vibrant economic activity. And the one consistent message I heard repeatedly during my visits is that MONUSCO's presence remains critical.

But this is ultimately not sufficient. It is the State that is needed to provide protective, judicial, and administrative functions.

FARDC and police capacity is still limited in the territory due to a lack of resources and personnel. We are indeed looking forward to see the Congolese Forces taking over more and more of these crucial responsibilities from us and we will remain available to support such a progressive, even tentative transfer.

Further west in the Beni area, however, the population continues to experience the anguish of armed conflict. The 440 terror victims in one year alone speak a clear language. The ADF is far from being defeated.

I must admit that we should have done better. One victim is one too many. But still, through active patrolling and pro-active action, we have prevented numerous killings.

## **The FDLR issue**

### **Mr. President**

The existence of the FDLR remains one of the most important hindrances to peace in eastern DRC.

Nearly 12,000 FDLR have been repatriated over the past twelve years. But, the last mile is always the most difficult.

I welcome the criminal convictions and long prison terms recently handed down against two FDLR leaders by a court in Germany. I was particularly gratified by that court's designation of the FDLR as a terrorist organization. There is no question about it; still 1100 FDLR elements continue to carry out numerous acts of murder, rape, mutilation, and cruel treatment, among other crimes. They have been oppressing the residents of eastern Congo for years.

We must put an end to their reign of terror.

I welcome the joint declaration from Rwanda and DRC of 24 September to cooperate on the eradication of the FDLR. Neutralizing the FDLR in eastern Congo remains the single most important political/military objective.

### **Call for Cooperation**

#### **Mr. President**

The only efficient solutions to address the security situation are joint MONUSCO-FARDC operations.

In my last briefing to you, I urged President Kabila to give the green light for joint operations. Unfortunately, the green light has not yet been given. I again call on the President to instruct the FARDC to resume cooperation which produced so many positive results in the past.

- Only united we can ensure sustainable peace;
- Only united we can ensure that women and men attend to their fields;
- Only united we can ensure that children go to school.





## **A Responsible Exit Strategy**

**Mr. President,**

MONUSCO has to gradually withdraw and exit from the Congo. The United Nations' commitment to the people of the Congo however remains steadfast, as MONUSCO's exit strategy hinges on continued tangible progress on the ground.

We cannot, and must not, exit hastily.

The Strategic Dialogue between the United Nations and the Government is a forum specifically created to discuss and jointly agree on a progressive reduction of the mission in the context of a mutually agreed upon exit strategy. Regrettably, our most recent joint assessment revealed that the security situation has not improved or even deteriorated in 21 territories out of 28 territories affected by armed conflicts.

Based on SC Resolution 2211, I proposed to the Congolese government a three-phase process that will set in motion MONUSCO's exit strategy. Achieving our shared goal of a gradual withdrawal – without jeopardizing the gains already attained- will require further structured discussions between the Government and the United Nations and the broader international community. The Secretary-General has taken note of the Government's position in the context of the strategic dialogue and has indicated readiness to have a fresh look at the achievements presented by the Government.

I thank the Congolese government for its support, and its faith in MONUSCO. I am confident we will resolve the remaining problems in a constructive spirit.



## **Principled approach in support of the Congo**

**Mr. President,**

I remain convinced, now more than ever, that the United Nations' peacekeeping mission in the DRC is uniquely positioned to support the people and the Government of the Congo.

In addition to our ability to protect and stabilize the country, I am proud we remained faithful to a principled approach.

- An approach that did not shy away from human rights issues;
- An approach that did not seek expediency in our talks with the government, as we remain committed to a responsible and gradual exit strategy;
- An approach that promotes the Constitution above opportunistic political considerations.

## **Zero-Tolerance Policy**

**Mr. President,**

The United Nations' weight partly lies in the values that it upholds and defends on a daily basis.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse cases not only tarnish our reputation, but also add to the suffering and burden of the most vulnerable populations. They break that fundamental trust that people have in us.

To echo the Secretary General's zero-tolerance policy, I, along with the Force Commander and the Police Commissioner sensitized thousands of civilian and military peacekeepers.





Moving forward, prevention and accountability should become engrained in our modus operandi.

## **Ensuring Long-term Stability**

**Mr. President,**

The implementation of the Addis Ababa agreement needs to be invigorated. Key reforms in the security sector, police, justice and corrections are essential for the long-term stability of the DRC. Lack of good governance is one of the root causes of the conflict.

I commend SESG Said Djinnit for his worthwhile advocacy on behalf of the DRC and wish the Private Sector Investment Conference early next year plenty of success.

To bolster foreign direct investment, we must spare no efforts to ensure continued stability, security and rule of law. The engagement of the team of the special envoys has been crucial throughout my tenure. I thank all colleagues for their unwavering support.

At the end, allow me to mention one important topic beyond MONUSCO's mandate. This is my deep concern on the degradation of the environment and the deforestation of the Congolese rainforest. The DRC's natural resources are a blessing. The country's unique natural heritage must be preserved for future generations in Africa and the world.

## **Keeping our Promise**

**Mr. President,**

I wish to thank the Security Council for its unwavering support and for giving the DRC the attention it rightly deserves. I also want to express my gratitude to HQ colleagues in particular USG Herve Ladsous and his team for the continuous support and valuable guidance in difficult times. To Special Representative Leila Zerrougui

for her commitment and tireless efforts in getting children out of the hands of brutal armed groups. For Special Representative Zainab Bangura for her engagement and support to the Mission in stopping the scourge of sexual violence and ease the pain of thousands of women and girls victims in the Congo.

Allow me to also thank military, police and civilian colleagues in MONUSCO for working to fulfill our promise to the people of the Congo. The friendship of the team is the most rewarding experience in my professional life.

### **An Unfulfilled Mandate**

#### **Monsieur le Président, distingués membre du Conseil de sécurité,**

Durant ces deux dernières années, j'ai parcouru le Congo. Je cherchais activement à écouter tous les segments de la société pour vraiment comprendre et répondre aux attentes des habitants du pays.

J'ai rencontré des représentants des organisations de femmes et de jeunes, des villageois dans les marchés, d'anciens enfants-soldats et tant d'autres personnes dont les vies ont été changées à jamais par la guerre. Ils sont un rappel quotidien que des milliers de personnes comptent sur nous.

Nous avons le devoir et la responsabilité d'assurer la sécurité et la stabilité du Congo et faire en sorte que les progrès atteints jusqu'ici soient irréversibles.

Permettez-moi ici de saluer la persévérance et la résilience des Congolais qui ont été témoins des horreurs de la guerre, les femmes qui ont subi l'atrocité de la violence et les enfants qui ont perdu leur innocence aux mains de combattants brutaux.

- *Ils* sont la raison pour laquelle la MONUSCO reste ferme et appelle au respect des droits de l'homme;

- *Ils* sont la raison pour laquelle nous plaidons pour un retrait progressif, et non précipité, de la Force;
- *Ils* sont la raison pour laquelle nos civils, policiers et personnels militaires travaillent sans relâche pour la paix.

Au peuple Congolais, permettez-moi de vous remercier chaleureusement pour votre hospitalité et pour l'accueil que vous nous avez toujours réservé en tant qu'invités dans votre pays. Je suis plein d'admiration pour votre force et votre profonde aspiration à la paix et au progrès.

Les graines d'un Congo stable, sécurisé et résilient ont été déjà semées. Je suivrais votre parcours de loin dans l'espoir de voir cette semence fleurir et prospérer dans les années à venir.

C'était un honneur de vous servir.

***[Mr. President, Distinguished Members of the Security Council,***

*For the past two years, I have traveled throughout the country to talk and listen to the Congolese people. I actively sought to engage with all segments of society to truly understand and respond to people's expectations.*

*I met with the representatives of women's and youth organizations, villagers in markets, former child soldiers, and so many others whose lives have been forever altered by warfare. They are a daily reminder that thousands of people are depending on us.*

*We have a duty and a responsibility to ensure that the Congo is secure and stable, and that the progress that has been attained thus far will be irreversible.*

*Allow me here to salute the perseverance and resiliency of the Congolese who have witnessed the horrors of war, the women who have suffered the brunt of violence, and the children who have lost their innocence at the hand of brutal combatants.*

- *They are the reason why MONUSCO stands firm and calls for the respect of human rights;*
- *They are the reason why we advocate for a gradual, not a hasty drawdown of the Force;*



- *They are the reason why our civilian, police and military staff work tirelessly in the pursuit of peace.*

*To the people of the Congo, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the hospitality that you have extended us as guests in your country. I am in awe of your strength and profound aspiration to peace and progress.*

*The seeds of a stable, secure and resilient Congo have already been planted. I will be following your journey from afar in the hopes that we see them bloom in the years to come.*

*It was an honor to serve you.]*