

## **United Nations officials welcome the signing of an Action Plan to fight sexual violence by the Congolese National Police**

*Press Statement: For Immediate Release*

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Following months of consultations with the Congolese authorities, including with the Special Adviser to the President on Youth, Gender and Violence against Women, and intense advocacy from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the Congolese Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Security and Customary Affairs signed the Congolese National Police's (PNC) Action Plan on the fight against sexual violence on 05 November 2019.

This Action Plan represents a step forward in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence and a reaffirmation of the commitments made by President Tshisekedi and the new Government of the DRC, to prevent and address this scourge.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ms. Leila Zerrougui, praised the signature of the Action Plan and pledged MONUSCO's support to the Secretariat of the Commission that has been established to oversee the implementation. The progress on the implementation of the Action Plan will be tracked in the annual Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict Related Sexual Violence. "The signature of the Action Plan is particularly important at a time when MONUSCO is encouraging partners of the DRC to support the professionalization of security forces", said Special Representative Zerrougui.

The goal of the Action Plan is to eradicate sexual violence committed by PNC agents, as well as to contribute to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in the DRC, including through the fight against impunity and the protection of victims and witnesses. The Plan is based on six main priorities, namely: prevention, accountability, protection, capacity-building, communication, and monitoring and evaluation.

The PNC Action Plan reaffirms the engagement of the Government of the DRC to ensure that there can be no impunity for these grave crimes and stresses the responsibility of commanders to prevent and sanction sexual violence perpetrated by PNC elements.

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The United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, welcomed the signature of the Action Plan. “I commend President Tshisekedi and the new Government for continuing to prioritize the fight against sexual violence as a key pillar in their strategy to bring peace and stability to conflict-affected regions of the country, as outlined in the Joint Communiqué signed between the United Nations and the Government in 2013. “I particularly welcome the renewed commitment to prevent conflict-related sexual violence being perpetrated by members of the national police and call on the Government to provide an appropriate dedicated budget to effectively support the implementation of this Plan. I also encourage the national authorities to provide further support to the Special Police Unit for Women and Children (PSPEF). My Office, in coordination with MONUSCO and international partners, stands ready to provide technical support for its full and effective implementation as requested by the Government”, concluded Special Representative Patten.

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