

Portrait of Aziz SOUT



Aziz is a Moroccan deployed in MONUSCO as project leader, chiefly in the field of construction since March 2013. His work within the Engineering Section involves managing and carrying out construction projects to provide the facilities and infrastructure needed to house civilian and military personnel. He describes his personal trajectory as follows: **« After completing my education in electronics in 1995, I worked at Maroc Telecom, the national telecommunications company, as an intern. Then I joined the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) in 1997, as national staff. I was responsible for the proper functioning of all electronic equipment as well as generators. »**

Mr. Sarrany Bodian, Field Operations Manager, is Aziz's second supervisor. In proposing him as candidate for the "Portrait of the Month", Sarrany asked us to use his e-PAS comments to the Section management, which read as follows: **« May I suggest that after completion of that, you request from Mission Support a special recognition of Aziz's leadership and outstanding output to all of our projects. He stands out as a very reliable professional and an example to all of us for the quality of his deliverables, and the respect for timeframe, thanks to his notable dedication to the commitment he makes. »**

His efforts and contribution to our projects is really commendable.

If I say Aziz's work is much appreciated, that's an understatement. Here is what his service leader OIC Field Engineering Officer ADISA Alani has to say about him: ***"Aziz is one of the best site Engineers I have in Kinshasa. He is very efficient and always ready to face new challenges. I really have confidence in him. So when the relocation of UNPOL from MHQ to ONATRA came up, I had to move him from UTEX II to ONATRA to construct offices for UNPOL and the excellent job was done within three weeks. The same thing happened when the redeployment of URUGBATT to FNMA came up with instructions from Goma that this was to be completed within two weeks. I sent the staff member to FNMA and the job was completed within the time frame. Not only did Aziz accomplish the assigned work but he also encouraged discipline in his supervisees to overcome any job related challenges to get the job done. He always aims at completing the tasks before the deadlines. He has been able to complete all the projects assigned to him within the time frames, and this includes the relocation of PX and Gym from ONATRA***

to UTEX II, the construction of the new Town Hall at UTEX II, and the construction of new premises for Radio OKAPI."

Now, let's hear from Farzana Darsot, of the Board of Inquiry section, who, too, has nothing but praise for him: ***"Aziz is someone you can at any time rely on unconditionally; he is always ready to help. He is a meticulous man; a great worker who takes his job very seriously and is always ready to meet the challenges that come along with his work. He is quite sensitive and maintains good relationships with the Congolese, especially those who work with him. In short, Aziz is the rare bird you need to have beside you."*** A handsome bird, indeed - one whom you turn around to look at when you come across him. If there is any doubt, check out the proof in the above photo!

As all of Aziz's colleagues wanted to give their testimony, and I, being for freedom of speech, will take our final witness, Sharon Rebello. Sharon one of his female colleagues, and echoing Farzana's judgment, she says: ***"Aziz always keeps the right attitude in his work. He understands that life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it. These two qualities make him a man of exceptional professional ability. Whatever the circumstances, he is always present and attentive to the needs of others."*** Well, it just so happens that I, too, have some needs: a larger office with three glazed windows overlooking the river; air-conditioning that feels like being at the North Pole; a waxed floor and an inside toilet; could you provide that? But I know, even as I ask, that I can't have that, because I understand that at the United Nations, one has to live as an ascetic! But still I must say our offices look a bit dull...

Do you mind if we now speak of your presence in the DRC? How do you think the DRC will evolve in light of the challenges facing this country? ***"The instability in the DR Congo should not be the concern of only this country; it also affects the African continent and the whole world. Without peace and security, we cannot talk about stability. The country and its people have great potential, which will enable them to forge the way towards the development / progress of the continent. The Congolese people are a resilient people - especially in the face of adversity; they know how to improvise and have developed extraordinary survival skills. The Congo has come a long way, in my opinion; after 16 years of mission in this country, I realize that there is still much to be done to put an end to this unjustifiable suffering. With a little political will, a good leadership and a sincere dialogue, the Congo's future can indeed be bright. The Congolese people, by consolidating national unity and through exchanges of ideas, can find solutions to their problems."*** Hey, Aziz, are you sure you are in the right Section? For what I just heard here is a keen political analysis. So if you ask me, I'll say you have done enough in terms infrastructure construction, and it is time that you asked for a transfer to the Political Affairs Division, because I think you largely deserve a place there. Well, I was only kidding... So go on please: ***"No country in the world can really hope to move forward without meeting the basic needs of its citizens: clean water, food security, decent housing, avoiding deaths from easily preventable, curable diseases (malaria / malnutrition), access to health care for everyone, employment and education for all, security guarantees, and implementation of good laws."*** Give me a little breathing time, my dear, because I can't take in so much information at once, and so I will digest and cogitate for a night and then get back to you.

Here I am back again; you can continue: « *The Congo has the second largest tropical rainforest in the world. Nations around the world need to realize they are interdependent and form part of a large community, the human family. Actions in one distant part of the world can directly impact the other parts. The existence of all of us depends on the preservation of this vast ecological laboratory.* » Pinch me, I'm dreaming! Have men become intelligent all of a sudden or is he the only one? Well, I am just teasing you here...In fact, I am an activist working with the league of beaten husbands, and this goes to tell you about my amount of masculism (that is the opposite of feminism – Hey, do I really have to explain everything to you, as if I didn't already have enough trouble looking up in the dictionary all these new words from Aziz?)

Now, dear Aziz, would you tell me, and in simple words please, what you think of the work and presence of the United Nations her in the DRC?

"With limited human resources and infrastructure, the largest peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO faces several challenges. It conducts robust military operations while being committed to zero tolerance regarding impunity for perpetrators of acts of violence; it works for the



promotion of women's rights and defends the rights of vulnerable people while devoting much of its effort to capacity building for the national police and army as well as the judicial system; it encourages initiatives for dialogue, while helping to build the capacity of State institutions, supporting political/institutional reforms and conducting advocacy in support of displaced populations...Some may say the mission is not doing enough but I do think it is doing a lot and doing it well." What about the multiculturalism within the Mission? Is it a good thing? « *I would say that working in a multicultural environment has enriched me. I have learned and continue to learn from different people, even the most underprivileged. I am satisfied with this experience which brings a lot to my personal fulfilment and growth."*

Dear Aziz, could you tell us about yourself, your family and what you like to do for fun? « *I am married and the father of four beautiful children. In my spare time, I enjoy performing gymnastics and I am proud to be able to help my colleagues especially by providing them with guidance on their physical fitness. I also like listening to music, and cooking as well.* » That's well and good; nowadays all men say they know

how to cook. Even if this remains to be verified, at least they are no longer ashamed to say openly. Hey, sisters, don't hesitate any more: leave them in the kitchen and go quietly get an aperitif and, with your feet up on the coffee table, watch the TV news show! Looks like that question "***What are we having for dinner, my dear?***" is one we will be hearing from women from now on.

Now let's look at the gender issue. First of all, what does it mean for you? "***Progress and development will come much faster if we respect women and involve them in all areas of life: political, economic or social. In my dreams about the Congo, women have their rightful place, working with men for the advent of a stable and prosperous country.***" I have nothing to say; he has said it all.

What is your dream regarding the DRC? "***Let the Congolese people have confidence in their army and police, and let the justice system be restored so that people can freely go about their activities without fear or persecution, as in any large democracy. My most cherished dream is that the basic needs of every Congolese will be satisfied so that everyone can live in dignity. My firm conviction is that with a minimum of political will and a leadership elected by the people, the Congo can recover and regain its rightful place among the community of Nations. Change is inevitable. This is also my dream and my prayer.***"

What memories will you keep of the DRC when you eventually leave the country? "***I will keep many beautiful memories and many lessons learned from the DR Congo ...***" Here he becomes a bit enigmatic, his mind drifts off and his eyes darken. Let me be clear, Aziz, I am not trying to push anyone towards the exit. What I mean is that we will all have to pack up and leave one of these days, for the simple reason that the mission is not meant to stay here forever. He is enamored with his job, this guy!

Aziz, as far as we are concerned, we will retain of you the image of a man who has a good head on his shoulders, with a healthy mind in a fit body.

By Aïssatou Laba Touré

Translated by Tom Tshibangu