

## Portrait of Richard KITENGE

How to start telling you about him? Well, perhaps by saying that when people see him coming, they immediately make way for him. After you Sir, I don't want to take three hundred kilos of muscles right in my face! Does that make you laugh? Not me; I am very serious. Believe me, the man is a black belt in karate but looks like a black belt in judo-karate-kung fu- tai boxing...a combination of all that. Wow, how can one manage to have such a nicely developed six-pack ... simultaneously cutting across? As for me, when I do five minutes of sit-ups I have the impression all my muscles are begging for mercy. One day, after experiencing some stretching caused by the weekly eight-kilometer walking exercises instituted by this man we call "Master" to "torture" the staff in Kinshasa, surprisingly, he told me I was supple, which made me smile the whole entire day.



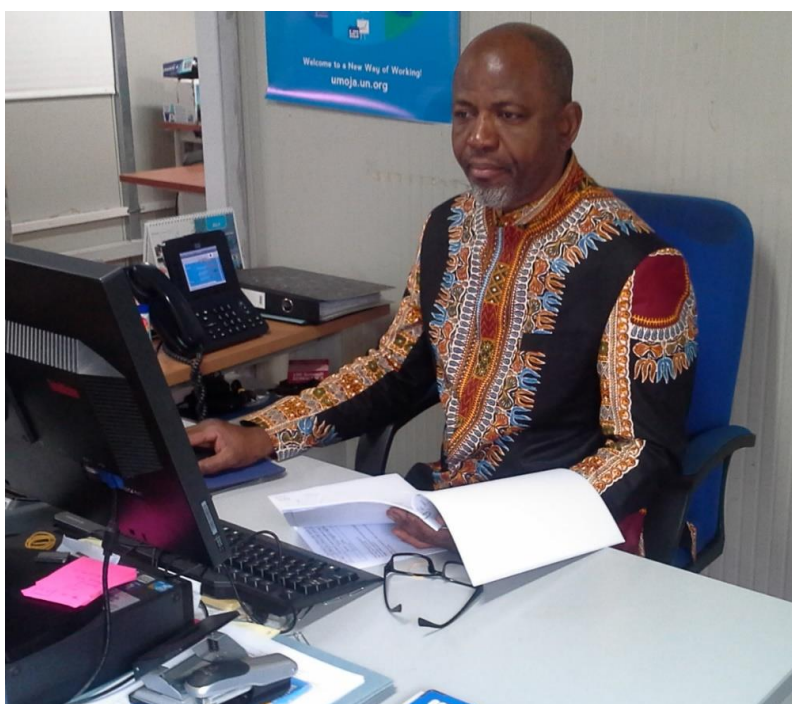
Well, let's proceed in an orderly way. Firstly, will you please describe your tasks within MONUSCO, besides ruling with an iron hand the recalcitrant who like to stay in bed late on Saturday? ***"I work for the Finance department. I am the one in charge of collecting the money owed to the Mission."*** Does it mean you deal with the recalcitrant? ***"More or less so, I follow up on MONUSCO's external clients: UN agencies, Embassies and others."*** I am learning from you, do all those institutions owe us money? Please let me have an idea, I'd better not trust anyone! Richard goes on to say ***"Besides my formal assignments, I give induction course to newcomers to the Mission. They are updated on many things: the rules of finance, the habits and customs in the country, the cultural and tourist sites..."***

Will you now explain how you joined the United Nations: was it your choice or by accident? ***"It was a bit a combination of both; in 2000, I applied for a job with MONUC. In June 2005, I received a call asking me to report to the Human Resources office for an announcement concerning me. I responded to the invitation and much to my surprise it was about a position with the Electoral Division. The Electoral***

***Division was just the springboard that led me to the Finance department in 2007 where I have been working until today."***

Let us now take a look at your education background which led you to the Mission? ***"After completing my secondary studies, I successfully studied Commercial and Financial Science and got a degree. My first job was with African Lux as an accountant in charge of paying goods and service providers. My next job was with SICOTRA /SOPEX as head of the commercial department. After it was closed, I set up an IT system office and Financial Messenger Agency. Currently, besides the job with MONUSCO, I carry on my training in the areas of criminology, human rights, micro credit and proposals drafting."*** If I may sum up, after working in the finance department, you would like to become a criminal investigator, respectful of Human Rights and would run your own business. Wait a moment, a private detective!! If you need an associate in future, I will be around.

My dear Richard, working for MONUSCO implies facing multi-cultural realities, which is not a bad thing per se. How do you live it? ***"I am Congolese; a multicultural environment shall in no way be a barrier. On the contrary, it is an environment where one learns a lot. In such an environment, marked by diversity, minds get open. I treat my colleagues the same way: men and women, Africans and others alike. I***



***always try to understand their reactions based on the only criteria: cultural differences. I love getting along with my entourage. I like to maintain my peace of mind in every situation."*** In this we are two!

It is indeed this very frame of mind in the face of the everyday events that appealed to my conscience to the extent of wishing to come up with a Portrait of Richard. One day, I turned up suddenly without warning at his office and started telling him the story about the money owed me by the Mission (travel subsistence fees to recoup...), without knowing it was part of his responsibility. He calmly drew a chair, asked me to sit beside him and took me through my MONUSCO account. And like Moses in front of the sea, we got over the obstacle. I did not impoverish the Mission by recouping my costs; recovering the funds was like a windfall. I guess this is one of the reasons why you would hear everyone calling him ***"Master"*** Richard, as someone always ready to offer his service.

This is what Doudou Serge Kabamba has to say about him: ***“I recall when Richard Kitengue joined the Finance department; he worked with me in processing reimbursement claims (F10 Claims). He was very quick in handling the claims. He is now an uncontested expert in the finance area. He is always calm, respectful of others and ready to serve. I am happy to have him as a colleague who has a good team spirit which helps build the climate of confidence and contributes to great achievements.”*** Almeida Lelo Kiseti lelokiseti goes further: ***“Richard is calm and ready to serve. He helped me a lot in my professional and social career. For me, he is a real role model and mentor. For all our clients who come to seek solutions to their problems, he stands as a reference.”***

Richard, you are a high profile sportsman, I guess you are also interested in the political and social life... How do you view the overall situation in DRC? ***“My country has a bright future. It will take some good will for DRC to take off. I travel a lot to many countries: France, Belgium, Spain, London and even African countries such as Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa....and I ask myself why my country is not thriving like other countries?”*** You have been working for the Mission since it was known as MONUC; do you think the UN has been doing much or...little in DRC? ***“I am under the impression that, from MONUC to MONUSCO, the Mission has gone through ups and downs. But one thing is certain, and that is without MONUSCO, Congo could have been more than a jungle.”***

Do you have other activities besides your job? ***“I am married and father of four children,”*** well, this is not an activity; ***“it is just to say that I have some work to do at home.”*** Oops... I should have waited for him to finish his sentence! ***“I like doing odd jobs and some laundry at home as well as clothes ironing.”*** Oh, you are a modern man! If I should recap, all the men I have interviewed thus far within MONUSCO are role models, and are in connection with their time. How is it that women’s workloads in houses have not



diminished? What about the big bobos sitting there without doing anything! We will then make a deal: you should continue to relieve the mental load of your household and carry them on your shoulders. Believe me; they are not called mental loads for nothing. They do weigh heavily. They exhaust women. Even in married couples that consider they are applying the egalitarian principle and sharing the household chores including child care in a bid to be equitable, the problem persists.

The concept of mental and emotive loads is related to all the non-visible tasks a person accomplishes to make life in their family easier. Taken separately, those tasks range from making appointments with the doctor, enrolling children for extra-curricular activities, running the family calendar, organizing weekly menus or list of errands and seem insignificant... It is the combination of all those tasks that weigh heavily on women. You know, when your spouse asks you what you want to eat, instead of responding "**whatever you cook will suit me**", give him just the name of the dish, anything, anything that crosses your mind, even "**steak with French fries** (my favorite meal) will do, as long as you can spare her some half-an-hour cogitation over what to cook. Early in the week, please fix the menu and note what you should do for the children. I would volunteer to crown such a person a king!

Sorry Richard, all these truths should have come out and the choice has been made on you. Let us resume from where we left it. "**I dedicate lot of time to sports activities. I am professor of Karate, a coach of Gym, Fitness and promotor of the MONUSCO's daily walking activities, each Saturday.**" Taking a close look at all this, one may conclude it is a very good thing to practice sports. The chap is sound as a rock, the type of man able to lift a car after having knocked down two wrestlers, indeed a very handsome chap!

Dear all, let me tell you one thing you may not be aware of. Whenever I interview a staff member for the "**Portrait of the month**", I ask him or her to conclude with something they hold extremely dearly which I may have forgotten to ask. In most cases the interviewees would say "**nothing to add.**" Unlike them, this is what Richard said: "hoyé, hoyé listen everybody: **I wholeheartedly encourage and commend the work done by your Division to provide us with the most reliable, fair, genuine and verifiable information. Long Live the Strategic Communication and Public Information Division.**" Alleluia, Amen! I would leave it there.

By Aïssatou Laba Touré

Translated by Alphonse Yulu Kabamba