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Office of the Spokesperson and Media Relations

## PRESS RELEASE

### **MONUSCO strengthens its civilian protection efforts in Ituri in response to escalating violence**

**Kinshasa, February 12, 2025** – During the night of Monday, February 10, to Tuesday, February 11, a brutal attack by the CODECO armed group devastated Ituri province. In response to this tragedy, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) immediately intensified its efforts to protect civilians.

CODECO's modus operandi—favoring the use of bladed weapons during attacks—delays alert times, making rapid intervention more challenging. Peacekeepers were deployed as quickly as possible and exchanged fire with the assailants, who had unfortunately already killed more than 80 civilians, set homes ablaze, and spread panic among the population in Djugu territory.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in the DRC and Head of MONUSCO, Ms. Bintou Keita, strongly condemns this heinous attack, extends her condolences to the families of the victims, and wishes a speedy recovery to the injured. MONUSCO reminds all parties that deliberate attacks against civilian populations may constitute war crimes.

This attack is part of a long cycle of reprisals, following the February 9 attack by the Zaire militia in Arr village (Djugu territory), which left five dead—an act that Ms. Keita also firmly condemns.

To prevent further violence and restore security, MONUSCO deployed reinforced patrols to Djaiba, including its displaced persons site, to deter new incursions and reassure traumatized communities. On Tuesday, February 11, MONUSCO established two temporary operational bases in the villages of Lodha and Aar, deep in Djugu territory, to prevent the escalation of intercommunal violence and protect civilians.

Alongside the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC), MONUSCO has been securing displaced persons sites in Ituri for several years. However, it is important to emphasize that this security cannot be fully effective without the contribution of all concerned communities.

Ms. Bintou Keita calls on everyone's sense of responsibility and humanity to put an end to this new wave of violence. In this regard, the Head of MONUSCO reiterates her call for an immediate cessation of all armed group violence against civilians and urges CODECO and Zaire armed groups, in particular, to honor their commitments made through dialogue processes. She further invites them to join the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery, and Stabilization Program (PDDRCS) in good faith and participate constructively in the development of their communities.