



CP/ OSMR/2024

Office of the Spokesperson and Media Relations

PRESS RELEASE

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, calls on the M23 to immediately cease hostilities in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

Kinshasa, February 07, 2024: Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, called on the M23 to immediately cease its offensive in eastern DRC and to respect the Luanda Roadmap. He expressed his solidarity with the affected populations and reiterated MONUSCO's commitment to implementing its protection of civilian mandate.

Mr. Lacroix visited the eastern part of the country which included stops in Goma, Beni and Bukavu, from February 02 to 05. During his field visit, Mr. Lacroix met with provincial authorities, civil society representatives, MONUSCO civilian and uniformed personnel, and the South African Development Community (SADC)'s military leadership in the DRC (SAMIDRC). He discussed at length on security challenges, MONUSCO's gradual and responsible disengagement, and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. During his meeting with the SAMIDRC Force Commander, General Dyakopu Monwabisi, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations stressed the importance of joint coordination to support the Congolese national army in their fight against armed groups in eastern DRC.

"In Resolution 2717, the Security Council mandated MONUSCO to examine ways in which it could provide limited logistical and operational support to the SADC force (SAMIDRC). The Mission is currently exploring options for providing this support. Proposals will be made to the Security Council, which will decide on the nature of this support and its modalities", Mr. Lacroix explains.

In Kinshasa, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations had an audience with the Head of State, His Excellency Félix Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo on 6 February. He called for a rapid reinforcement of the presence and capacity of the Congolese defence and security forces in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, the three provinces that MONUSCO is due to leave as part of its disengagement from the country.

"It is essential that the transfer of responsibility for security and the protection of civilians takes place at the same time as MONUSCO withdraws from certain sensitive areas where peacekeepers ensure the physical safety of several hundred thousand civilians," the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations said.

Mr. Lacroix was accompanied by Ms. Catherine Pollard, Under-Secretary-General for Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, and Mr. Christian Saunders, Special Coordinator for Improving UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.