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Office of the Spokesperson and Media Relations

PRESS RELEASE

MONUSCO base transfer is first handover to DRC Armed Forces in context of disengagement from South Kivu

Bunyakiri, 19 April 2024 – The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) today handed over the Bunyakiri base to the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), the first transfer to military authorities in the context of the Mission's disengagement from South Kivu province.

The Director for Mission Support, Mr. Ebrima Ceesay representing the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bintou Keita, MONUSCO's Force Commander a.i. Major General Khar Diouf, the Governor of South Kivu a.i., Mr Marc Malago Kashekere and a delegation of national and provincial representatives from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) participated in the ceremony.

"We are honoured to mark this historic moment as Bunyakiri becomes the first base to be handed over to the Armed Forces of the DRC, as part of our orderly, responsible and phased withdrawal from South Kivu," said Major General Khar Diouf. "This signifies a pivotal step in our disengagement efforts and reflects the Congolese army's commitment to simultaneously strengthening its presence as MONUSCO's withdraws from South Kivu."

In 2004, MONUC as MONUSCO was known at the time first established a foothold in Bunyakiri, located at about 80 km from the city of Bukavu, with a Mobile Operating Base to protect civilians against human rights violations caused by a range of armed groups. As insecurity persisted the United Nations (UN) Peacekeeping presence expanded to a fully-fledged Permanent Operating Base in 2016.



Over the past two decades, the presence of the MONUSCO Force attracted communities, which settled around the base and the town of Bunyakiri is now estimated to have about 10 000 residents.

The UN peacekeepers have protected civilians by conducting operations and regular patrols, supporting community dialogues and engagement initiatives. With this base handover, the DRC's Armed Forces will fully take over the responsibility of ensuring security and protecting civilians in the area.

This base hand over follows the transfer of the Kamanyola base to the Congolese National Police on 28 February 2024. The withdrawal of MONUSCO's troops from South Kivu was approved by the DRC government in a joint memorandum signed on 21 November 2023.

MONUSCO's withdrawal from South Kivu province is not synonymous with the United Nations leaving the DRC. Rather, it is a reconfiguration of the UN's presence in support of the people and government of the DRC. After MONUSCO's departure, the UN agencies, funds, and programmes will continue to provide support in accordance with their respective mandates. Responsibility for the protection of civilians and security will lie exclusively with the Congolese government.