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Head of MONUSCO concludes tour of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, consulting with partners on the joint Government-MONUSCO transition process

KINSHASA, 2 August 2023, – The Special Representative of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, has concluded a two-week mission in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where she consulted with provincial governments and communities on priority actions needed for a smooth yet accelerated transition process.

The tour began in Goma on 11 July and then moved to Bukavu, Uvira, Bunia and finally concluded in Beni. Ms Keita met with the Governors of North Kivu, South Kivu and then Ituri provinces, as well as territorial and municipal administration authorities, civil society, and non-governmental organizations. The field trip also included visits to MONUSCO bases, internally displaced persons sites, including Lala, which suffered an attack in mid-June, resulting in 46 deaths.

The Special Representative's mission to the field comes in the context of the development of a special report by the UN Secretary-General as stipulated in resolution 2666 of 20 December 2022. In the resolution, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide options for adapting MONUSCO's configuration of its civilian, police and military components in the DRC and the United Nations' future configuration in the DRC beyond MONUSCO's current mandate once the joint review of the Transition Plan for MONUSCO is concluded and no later than July 2023. The options should take into consideration MONUSCO's role with respect to the East Africa Community (EAC) Regional Force and other existing international, regional, and bilateral initiatives in support of the DRC.

“The last mile in peace operations is the hardest. By listening to the people, we are committed to protecting, and consulting with close partners working in the field, we can ensure a responsible drawdown,” said Ms Keita.

In September 2021, a joint transition plan was adopted by the Government of the DRC and MONUSCO and by June 2022, the Mission had reduced its field of operation for United Nations Peacekeepers to three provinces from six in 2020. However, following the request by His Excellency President Felix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo that MONUSCO draw down after the elections in December 2023, the organization has accelerated the pace of its transition process.



In the three provinces where it is still present, the Mission has identified 13 priority territories out of the country's 145 territories, where insecurity is high causing significant challenges to the protection of civilians and requiring sustained attention jointly by the national security forces and MONUSCO troops. In Djugu territory alone, MONUSCO currently provides physical protection to more than 100,000 internally displaced persons through its four Temporary Operating Bases in Bayoo, Fataki, Rhoo and Gina and Standing Combat Deployments (SCD) in Drodro and Amee.

“2024 is the year of transition, where the Mission will increasingly transfer its responsibilities including in terms of protection of civilians to the Government of the DRC,” said Ms Keita. “We are working with authorities to ensure that national capacities will address the minimum-security requirements to allow for a responsible drawdown in areas where MONUSCO currently protects civilians. We are also leveraging the expertise and resources of the United Nations agencies, funds, and programmes to intensify their efforts in accompanying the Government to implement national plans in support of development and humanitarian needs.”

MONUSCO as part of its protection of civilians mandate also continues to support the DRC government in its efforts to strengthen its justice system, the capacity and presence of the national police and the implementation of its Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme as well as Security Sector Reform.

Insecurity places a heavy burden on women and girls and Ms Keita engaged actively with their representatives and leaders at every stop on her tour. In 2022, MONUSCO documented nearly 700 cases of conflict-related sexual violence affecting women and girls, but many in incidents remain undocumented and the numbers are likely to be much higher. Women candidates in the upcoming elections also shared their concerns about the harassment and threats they face regularly.

“As a grandmother and mother, I am committed to amplifying the voices of women and to recognizing the immense contributions Congolese women have made to resolving conflicts in their communities,” said Ms Keita. “I am also encouraged to see the enthusiasm of women candidates in the upcoming elections. MONUSCO is committed to gender parity in all aspects of public life.”