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Transcript of the Joint Briefing by the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in the DRC, and Head of MONUSCO, Bintou Keita and the Minister of Communication and Media, Patrick Muyaya

19 June 2023, Kinshasa

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya] : This evening, through this exercise, we want to take stock of the discussions that the two parties have had, particularly after publication of resolution 2666 at the end of last year, which provided for the withdrawal of MONUSCO, but which the government wanted to focus on 4 main milestones and on which we are working, namely: the significant reduction of threats linked to armed groups thanks to a comprehensive approach; capacity building to respond to threats to the protection of civilians and effectively resolve inter-ethnic conflicts; implementation of the operational plan of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Rehabilitation and Stabilization Program and, finally, the organization of credible, transparent, inclusive, peaceful and fair elections within the constitutional deadlines.

Here, we need to put the issue in context, where there is the desire expressed by the President of the Republic. We were in New York in September 2020, with MONUSCO, and there was a given horizon after the expected elections, so in the coming months. But in the meantime, work is being done on both sides, because the services (i.e. the Army and the Government) are working closely with the UN Mission.

Madam Representative, I thank you for taking part in this accountability exercise, and I know that in a few days you will be in New York to do the same before the Security Council. But this isn't the first time you've done us the honor of taking questions from the media.

I would remind you that we are both live on national television, but also on Radio Okapi, which is also the joint work that has been done between the 2 parties. I think it was on December 30, 2021, that we talked about the work you are doing in the Democratic Republic of Congo. So I would like to welcome you to this live accountability exercise. It is not always easy, but fortunately you have experience of it, given your long career within the United Nations system.

And so this evening, we want to jointly take stock of how these topics are progressing. So I'd like to hand over to you for your introductory words, to enable us to give material to media professionals before we go into detail on specific questions.

The floor is yours, Madam Representative.



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Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: Your Excellency, Minister of Communication, thank you for giving me the opportunity once again to take part in this accountability exercise, particularly at this sensitive time, because when we met again in December 2021, we were in a completely different context from what we have today. And that is why it is important to communicate to everyone the fact that we are talking about a MONUSCO transition, but in reality we should be talking about a joint transition plan - and I stress **joint** - between the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo and the United Nations, including MONUSCO. I think it is important to understand these 3 elements.

There is also the fact that we often talk about MONUSCO's transition, as if MONUSCO were leaving. And so I think it is also important to show that since the Head of State's request on August 1, 2022, which was taken up by the government on November 15, 2022 in Kinshasa, then by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs in New York on December 7, 2022. Then, in a meeting here in Kinshasa once again, on January 6, 2023, presided over by the Head of State and several ministers, we engaged in a dialogue with the Congolese authorities, a dialogue that I consider to be entirely positive in the sense that we are seeing together what needs to be done to meet MONUSCO's request for an accelerated transition, and this is where there is always this nuance that needs to be brought in.

Be that as it may, I think that what is important is that you have reminded us of the important milestones for this dialogue which has been underway since last year with the Congolese authorities, and which is also the focus of attention by civil society and all the bi- and multilateral partners supporting the Democratic Republic of Congo.

And so I will not repeat them because the Minister has taken it upon himself to present these milestones to you. So the question I am often asked is, yes, but there were 18 milestones in the Joint Transition Plan, how come we are focusing on 4 milestones? And here, I'd like to explain that for the 2021 exercise, between July 2021 and September 2021, exactly on September 17, 2021 when the Prime Minister and I signed the Joint Transition Plan, it was absolutely essential to make a distinction between the minimum conditions that must be met for an exit from the United Nations part, called MONUSCO, and all the others, and that was milestones 1 to 5, and all the other milestones from 6 to 18, which call for a stronger partnership with agencies, funds and programs of the United Nations system, and with all the bi- and multilateral partners supporting the DRC.

So in practical terms, the government has said that since the population has asked for MONUSCO to leave, we are going to focus on minimum conditions which the minister has communicated to you.

So I think it is important to make this distinction.



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So does that mean all the other milestones are thrown away? Not at all. The government has told us that we are going to keep these other milestones, because they're important for all the fundamental aspects of support for the Congolese state, for the presence of the Congolese state throughout the national territory, and for what we call basic social services, the work done by the fund and program agencies. But there is also support for the provision of humanitarian assistance, and assistance to improve development at provincial and local level. And of course, there are all the aspects that come under what we call human rights monitoring, but also what we call Women, Peace and Security; Youth, Peace and Security, and so on. With cross-cutting communication on the systems that need to be addressed by everyone, all the partners, but first and foremost by the government's action program, which concerns improving the management of the country's abundant natural resources, and also creating jobs for young people, because one of the aspects we are working on as MONUSCO is the issue of armed groups, and part of the root causes of the fact that young people are recruited and take up arms is because there are no other alternatives. So it is all about creating alternatives in an environment that takes everyone into account.

So that is the transition phase. So when Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix came, he did 2 things that I thought were fundamental. He went to Ituri. And in Ituri, he went to visit Drodro, an IDP site. Why Ituri? At the moment, and for several months now, as the United Nations and also MONUSCO, we have been drawing attention to the fact that somewhere we are robbing Peter to pay Paul, or the other way round, when all resources are focused on the dynamics that now exist in North Kivu.

And then, during the visit of the Deputy Secretary General, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, we were challenged by the fact that we, internally, were using the term Petit Nord. I'll just say the territories of Nyiragongo, Rutshuru and Masisi. That is what we, in our internal terminology or jargon, call Petit Nord. Then, of course, there is the Grand Nord with Beni, Butembo, Lubero and so on. But the focus on "Petit Nord" is the situation of tension around the particular armed group M23 and the tensions between Rwanda and the DRC.

So he went there because there is one point we discussed with the authorities, and that is that in the context of the presence of the State throughout the territory in fact in the East of the DRC, the provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, it is not all the territories where we have the same needs. But there are territories where inter-ethnic conflicts and the atrocities committed by armed groups such as CODECO, Zaïre, the attacks and reprisals, mean that there is a huge displacement of populations who find themselves in what we call sites. And I insist on the word "site" because many people talk to us about displaced persons camps.

In fact, a camp is organized. And organizing a camp takes time, resources and access to land, which has to be donated, rented or bought by the authorities so that humanitarians can do their job. And that is one of the problems we see in the East, and particularly in North Kivu, around Goma, with the sites for displaced people. So in Drodro, there are a lot of displaced people. There are over 1,500,000. And he wanted to show that we absolutely must make a plea for an increase in the presence of the Congolese army and the Congolese national police, so that we, as MONUSCO, can -



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and he used an image that I really like, that is, he said, well, we are in a downward logic, but for all that, we need to have a bottom-up logic of State authority, of the presence of the security forces, the army and the national police force, and of course other related services that are associated with State authority, such as justice and administration. These are other services that are necessary, but he wanted to draw attention to this, and I think rightly so.

He then engaged the authorities at the highest level. We met with the Head of State, the Prime Minister and the government. And all the discussions, as I said, I considered to be positive, because we all agreed that, for MONUSCO to withdraw responsibly as an entity mandated by the Security Council with resolution 2666 of December 20, 2022, there must be a concomitant increase in the presence of national security forces.

And one line, I don't know how the media will pick it up, but in fact an important line for us, is the fact that wherever the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people who are directly under the responsibility of the peacekeepers, there absolutely must be a discussion to ensure that we don't create a vacuum with a departure and the form of departure. And here I have to thank the Head of State, because in his speech to the General Assembly in September 2021, he reiterated before the Secretary-General and other leaders of the United Nations system that: Of course, we are already in the logic of a departure that has been underway for a long time, but at the same time, we need to speed things up - and I stress the word speed up, because part of the population has actually asked for this departure to be carried out in a dignified, peaceful manner, in which everyone understands that you can't dismantle a Mission in a few hours. And that, I think, is an important message to get across to everyone. You can't dismantle a mission in a matter of hours.

And finally, the Deputy Secretary General, Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, was also here, because the Security Council, when it heard the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on December 9, 2022, during the presentation of the renewal of MONUSCO's mandate, said very clearly, this is what we expect in relation to the reconfiguration of the MONUSCO force.

So we are expecting a lot from the MONUSCO force, including the intervention brigade and the FARDC, i.e. the Congolese army, to make sure that we are really in a tempo of joint offensive operations as much as possible, and if not, unilateral operations, because the mandate also gives the UN force the possibility of unilateral operations.

And perhaps just to finish on the subject of the visit, the Council told us: we heard you MONUSCO and Congolese government and they put in our mandate 2666 two particular paragraphs. The first is paragraph 38, which says: there is an exercise to reassess the Joint Transition Plan. Go and complete it with the government, and make sure it is not just with the government, but also with civil society and all the partners, because everyone is concerned by this. That is the first aspect.



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The 2nd aspect is paragraph 44 of the resolution, i.e. of our 2666 mandate, which states that the Secretary-General of the United Nations is requested to provide the Security Council, by the end of July 2023, with a special report proposing options for reconfiguring the MONUSCO mission. And this is an exercise on which, well, we have listened to various stakeholders from the government, but also civil society and others, and so at the end of July, this report will be submitted. And there was an additional exercise attached to it, which was to say: what will be the configuration of the United Nations presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after MONUSCO?

So these are 2 exercises that may seem separate, but in fact they are all interrelated in relation to what the government's action program will be, which, if I've understood correctly, when the government was set up in April 2021, has an action program that runs until the end of 2023, of course. And we also have what I call the tempo to examine together what the government's next action program will be, after December 2023, so after the elections to achieve a symbiosis between the priorities that will be identified by the Congolese government and what the bi and multilateral partners, including the United Nations, will do to support the Democratic Republic of Congo.

So that is the framework I can give with regard to transition, reassessment of the Joint Transition Plan, departure of MONUSCO after the elections, because that is the horizon we have been given, and discussions on how to ensure we have an appropriate structure to meet the needs of the DRC post-MONUSCO.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: That is fine, but before we take questions from journalists, I would have liked to have a summary of your role in the various peace processes, in particular the Luanda and Nairobi processes, so that we can put all the issues on the table and have questions that will enable us to shed more light on them.

Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: Well, I know that some people know this, but perhaps not everyone. One Friday evening at 9:00 p.m., I received a phone call and was told: "Madame Keita, MONUSCO has to transport, has to pick up representatives of armed groups in different provinces, in the east of the DRC, and bring them to Goma, because the next day at 10:00 a.m., they have to be in Nairobi to take part in the Nairobi process. You can imagine the reaction of my colleagues when I called them in the middle of the night to tell them, here we are, we have to respond to a call from the government, and this is that call. So it is just to make you understand that we were there from the start with this call from the government.

So that is for Nairobi 1, we continued to accompany with Nairobi 2. When Nairobi 2 was to facilitate the tours in the East, in all the provinces, to meet the communities and the representatives of the armed groups and then we accompanied with Nairobi 3 and there, Nairobi 3 took place in Nairobi. And we are working alongside the facilitator and the joint secretariat of the Nairobi process between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Kenya, since Honorary President Uhuru Kenyatta is the facilitator of the Nairobi process.



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And so, in this context, it is not just - and here I insist, because many people see us as just people who provide logistical transport services, etc. - it is more than that. It is more than that. It is support with technical expertise in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, expertise in child protection, expertise in integrating women into the Nairobi process, and what I call lessons learned from previous exercises, how to engage not only armed groups and their representatives, but also communities, because this country has undertaken a very strong exercise endorsed by the Head of State in July 2021, which is the PDDRCS. So we have a framework for the country, and we have been committed to supporting this process from the outset, and we shall continue to do so.

The Luanda process was facilitated by President Joao Lourenço, under the aegis and at the request of his peers from the African Union, and clearly has a major objective: to ensure that the 2 countries, the DRC and Rwanda, continue to talk to each other to implement the Luanda roadmap. I think the first meeting was on July 6, 2022, which created the Luanda roadmap. Then there was the communiqué of November 23, 2022, which addressed the specific issue at the heart of tensions between the DRC and Rwanda, namely how to deal with the M23.

And in this communiqué, when you read it, you see that MONUSCO was asked on virtually every line to support and accompany the efforts of the East African Community's Regional Force, to accompany the ad hoc verification mechanism led by General Nasone, in other words from Angola, to accompany the Joint Verification Mechanism, and to ensure that there is good collaboration, cooperation so that the injunctions of all the mini-summits and summits that have taken place concerning the situation in the Petit Nord, Rutshuru, Masisi and Nyiragongo, can be met with a solution where the more than 900,000 internally displaced people can return to their homes. Because the situation we are seeing near Goma, etc., is absolutely terrible, and we need to make sure that as quickly as possible, we can effectively implement the Luanda communiqué of November 23 and the subsequent decisions of May 31, the Bujumbura summit, but also the meeting, the summit that took place on Saturday June 3 in Luanda, the summit of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: Thank you very much, Madam Representative, for this detailed information. Let me remind you that the context that led the President of the Republic to make the decision to ask for an acceleration of the departure was precisely because the Congolese people had demanded it. And as we are a government that listens, we could not but put ourselves in this perspective. But it has to be done in an organized, structured and civilized way. That is what we are working on, and we hope that within the given timeframe, we shall be able to complete the first phase, the withdrawal phase, and at the same time work on the structure that will take over some of the tasks performed by the current Mission. We have started our round of questions. I'd like us to be brief, clear and to the point.



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Question 1

Pitshou Mulumba/ Le Potentiel: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for taking the floor. I have just 2 concerns. The first is that, with regard to this plan, could you today, and I am talking about the government and MONUSCO, estimate how much longer it will take for this transition to be effective?

Mr. Minister, the opposition Martin Fayulu and his party are boycotting the electoral process, while demanding a transparent audit of the electoral file by a competent firm. However, this announcement comes at a time when CENI is already running out of time, with the convocation of the electorate already scheduled for June 25 to receive candidacies for the national deputation. What is the reaction of the government, which is also responsible for ensuring the inclusiveness of the elections?

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: Thanks for your questions. I believe that on the first question about time, the President of the Republic gave us a time horizon. And you heard earlier when we were talking about resolution 2666, which took that into account, we were on 18 milestones, we are back on 4 milestones which are the most, I was going to say, priority milestones because everything is a priority in what had to be done and on which we are working assiduously. And so we are going to stick to these terms, because we need to avoid fixation with MONUSCO. We are going to say in November 2023, we shall finish, if that is the case, so much the better. But if there are imponderables linked to the context or to the various tasks that have been agreed, then when the time comes, the two parties, who are in constant dialogue, will work to make it happen.

Here, the main thing is to achieve the objectives that have been defined, and we think we are heading in the right direction.

As for your second question, I'd like to reserve judgment. You know, when I talk about individuals, I tend to get a little political, which can sometimes lead to pointless controversy. But here you've even given the answer in your question, the main thing for us is that in 6 days, today is the 19th, we are going to call the electorate, we shall be able to file candidacies. I think that today, if you take a poll, the Congolese want to vote. We are not going to go back over the electoral process; unfortunately, we are reliving what we have experienced with the different processes. Remember 2006, 2011, 2018, we didn't want the voting machine. In the end, we loved the voting machine. We didn't want the file, but in the end, we took part in those elections.

We don't want to go into that kind of consideration. We consider that our job as a government is to ensure that we provide security and funding for the process, and that for the rest, it is up to CENI to see how it manages the stakeholders on the issues that concern them.

Here, it should be noted that it was announced a few days ago that enrolment would take place in Kwamouth. This means that there has been a positive evolution in the security situation. Because



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you're talking about the inclusivity of the elections, inclusivity also means allowing compatriots in other territories, such as Nyiragongo and Masisi, who can't or haven't been registered on the electoral rolls, to take part in these processes. Political calculations will have another time, because if we have to get to the bottom of what's being asked for, we are out of the electoral deadlines. It is dialogue we want, we are going through the back door, but let's call a spade by its name. Because if we have to redo the file, how do we redo the enrolment, that is what we are doing, and we shall have missed the deadline. I think that the most important thing for the Congolese is to be aware that the electoral process will enter a decisive phase on June 25, and that the various candidates should prepare for this date and, above all, provide content, because the Congolese are thirsty to hear each other's plans.

So I don't know about the first question, Madam, it wasn't addressed to you, but do you have a comment on it?

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: So maybe just because you said November and so on.... There is a legal context, MONUSCO's mandate is given on December 20 of each year, and it just so happens that this year, the renewal of the mandate will coincide, on December 20, with the day of the presidential and legislative elections, if I've got it right. But in reality, the mandate runs from January 1 to December 31. Because I've already started to hear, well, does December 20 stop everything etc.? I say go easy on the mandate, it runs until December 31, and the Head of State has made it very clear that we are already starting discussions, and as we have told you, we have already started so that 2024 will be the year of transition. That is how I understood it. Unless you understood it differently.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: Now, listen, it is clear that MONUSCO has to go at some point, but it has to go in a civilized way, and that is what we are working on.

Question 2

Pascal Mulegwa/ RFI: Thank you for your time. My first question goes to the Minister. Mr. Minister, if, despite the presence of 12,000 MONUSCO peacekeepers, civilians are being massacred in North Kivu as well as in Ituri, and sites for displaced persons attacked, as was the case at the Lala site in Djugu, is there not cause for concern? For example, that the worst could happen if the peacekeepers were to leave the country in a hurry, and return to the situation of the 2000s, for example, because the security forces, as Madame Bintou Keita said, are currently focused on the M23.

Ms. Keita, I followed Mr. Lacroix carefully. He says that the people he visited in the east told him to stay, because it is not time for MONUSCO to leave the territories. Do you have the impression of being pushed out in a hurry? Do you feel that MONUSCO still needs to stay, given the situation? And if you could also answer the questions of my colleague Martin Fayulu, who has announced his withdrawal from the electoral process, are there any concerns on the UN side?



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Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: So Pascal Mulegwa, for your first question, we need to look each other in the eye and give the right answers. As the lady said earlier, paraphrasing Jean-Pierre Lacroix, MONUSCO is going to withdraw, but we need to increase the pressure on our defense and security forces. I don't want to go back over what we have been saying here for several months. You know that there are training programs underway for both the police and the army. As you know, we are working on increasing the force's strength, notably with the programming law, because we want to recover the regal missions that are ours. And the President of the Republic was very determined in this respect.

But tell me, how do you react when you're a government, when the people who are supposed to be protected by MONUSCO rise up against it and when MONUSCO agents and vehicles are targeted? Don't forget that MONUSCO is here because there is an agreement. Don't forget that it is our responsibility as a government to provide security for MONUSCO, even if it comes to help us with security issues. So, in a context like that, should we remain inaudible? Although I wouldn't want to go into the question of the Force's effectiveness, there are things to be said, there are positive things, there has been some progress. Initially, MONUSCO was present in several provinces, but today we are present in three.

Of course, as long as the main task for which the Mission is here has not been achieved, namely the security and protection of civilians, there will always be something to complain about. But the context in which compatriots are speaking out and MONUSCO personnel are being targeted cannot be ignored. Secondly, let's face it, it is been 20 years, it is tiring, but we have to be able to assume our regalian role, and we are working on it. And so today, in the framework of the work we are doing with MONUSCO, we will finish with the withdrawal, but there will be a phase that will follow because there are still needs for which we will need the United Nations, and we consider that these are objectives that are within our reach, and we will achieve them. Madam Representative...

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: Very well, I think it is always better when it is the government itself that expresses itself on questions of this type, because it is well anchored in the regalian functions of the State, and I believe that here, the answer has been given.

Is now the right time? Is it not the right time?..... I think there are several perspectives that have been expressed, and all these perspectives co-exist in the same space and time, both in the East and here in Kinshasa. And I think the most important thing for us, as Mr. Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Deputy General Secretary, said, is that we have to work towards our own departure. Because our disappearance means we are good to go. And as the Minister also said, we used to be in 13 provinces, now we are only in 3. I think that was during the press conference or the general meeting with UN staff. It is evident that in a race, it is the last sprint that is the most challenging. So that is the logic behind what we are doing.



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But obviously, we are in a responsible dialogue and I believe we have to insist on that. Because that is going to determine the fact that the government takes its full responsibility and no longer needs MONUSCO's support for the areas where it will have to increase its power with the presence of the Congolese Army and the Congolese National Police.

On the second point, as you know, our role in the electoral process is limited. We have a role of good offices, which is to talk with all the parties involved, to listen to everyone. But to what end? To respect what I call the principles surrounding any electoral process in which the United Nations is involved in the role of good offices. And when I say inclusive, it has to do with the parameters of inclusiveness that we are looking at, and we should always endeavor to lay emphasis on those parameters. It could be women, young people, people with disabilities; it could be aspects of a territory. For example, we made a strong plea to the CENI to include internally displaced people, because this is part of the inclusive nature of an electoral process.

And I am pleased to know that CENI expects voters in Masisi and Rutshuru to be registered between July and September. The same goes for Kwamouth which has already been mentioned. That is the inclusive aspect we are talking about.

And then there is the peaceful nature of a peaceful process. Obviously, no one should have an interest in people losing their lives because of an electoral process. We can have heated debates, because everyone knows that an electoral process is hot. But it is got to be hot with debate, invective and so on, but no use of violence. Whether it is physical violence, violence with weapons or even violence on social media, that is something we have talked about; especially when said violence is exercised in relation to an ethnic group, a tribe or even women. What I'm hearing at the moment is that women in the political arena are concerned about attacks that they would like to see denounced by their own party, by those who have the moral authority to say no, stop. Violence in any form is absolutely unacceptable, no matter where it comes from. That is the soothing side.

Then there is the credibility and transparency aspect. Here too, there are parameters. The country itself has reformed its electoral law, and we have recognized that there have been advances in this reform of the electoral law, notably with regard to the participation of women. But there are still demands that are not necessarily being heard yet, and we think that this is where we need to push CENI in its communication and openness to ensure that when there are communications, when there are meetings, that the people who come feel listened to, that their ideas and proposals are considered.

When we talk about credibility, that has to do with what we do, when we are bound by law and even when we are not, to reassure everyone when we are in a climate of mistrust. And finally, I'm not going to answer your question directly. I'm going to deal with questions of principle, but our concern is to see, to follow up. Do we follow through on what we say, and do we follow through every day in our behavior, both in what we say and in what concerns the interactions between each other?



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Finally, and here I must congratulate CENI, a few months ago nobody gave a kopek - I'll use a term that is not at all trivial - to the fact that the electoral calendar that had been published would be respected. And for the time being, that timetable is being respected. So, the next question is how to ensure that there is awareness of different aspects to improve transparency.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: But I'd like to add something to the subject. For example, when we talk about auditing, do you know that the law does not provide for auditing, but these are good practices. And CENI discussed with the Francophonie for nearly two months and then finally, they said they couldn't make it. CENI called on national and international expertise, and then they said there was this or that.

But look, we had imperative deadlines that we are sticking to right up to the present day, and there are no longer any obstacles. For example, CENI stipulated that Parliament would be responsible for adopting the law on the distribution of seats, which has been done, the President of the Republic has promulgated it, and today we have really entered the most decisive phase.

But then, as I said recently, the opposition is on a mission to discredit the electoral process. I don't hear any comments from Ms. Bintou in her role as referee, but when we look back at our electoral processes since 2006, remember that in 2006, President Etienne Tshisekedi of the UDPS did not take part in the elections. In 2011, they did participate, but they didn't take their seats.

So today, we need to know that the essential thing is to open up a space for democratic debate, and in democratic debate there is no room for violence. And we mustn't avoid debate by going into schemes to say there is no file this... when we know that in the end you'll be there. You also can't be dictatorial in an authoritarian way and say that your candidates won't participate. And I thought I saw a tweet earlier saying the opposite from a member of the opposition. So as far as we are concerned, we are ready to debate the problems of the Congolese people, and we think our project is the best.

Question 3

Paul Lorgerie/ Reuters: Madam Special Representative, Mr. Minister, thank you for giving me the floor. Two questions mainly of a security nature. The first in the East, for both of you, and the second in the West. Today, on the border between Ituri and North Kivu, we have this group called ADF. We also have the FIB, the UPDF and, of course, the Congolese army. However, the ADF seem to be gaining territory. Some reports are beginning to emerge that the ADF have external support, notably from the Islamic State. Could you tell us more today, and perhaps confirm this link between the Islamic State, Somalia, Mozambique and the ADF?

Second question, Minister, there is one issue that is increasingly worrying the capital today, and that is the Mobondo question. So, very simply, who are they? Do you have any information on where these people are coming from, where this militia is coming from, what they are, what they want? Thank you very much.



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Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: The ADF, I think, for those who follow the briefing in the open sessions of the Security Council every quarter, the staff and I have not stopped saying, beware, ADF is absolutely a big threat to the DRC. And beyond the DRC, it is a threat to the region. And we have seen an increase in attacks with improvised explosive devices, increasingly sophisticated in terms of how they're made and so on. And we have also noticed that there are trainers coming from the very countries you mentioned who are, shall we say, training others in the use of IEDs.

We have also noted an increase in attacks on Congolese territory by the Islamic State, if I'm not mistaken, and this is a phenomenon that we have noted and communicated to the Security Council. And we also have information confirming not only recruitment in different countries, but also sources of funding that transit through different countries and reach the ADF. So I can't go into too much detail, because it gets a bit complicated after that. But I can tell you that we have excellent collaboration between MONUSCO, the National Intelligence Agency and the FARDC on this issue. And I hope that while we're dealing with the M23, we don't forget the ADF, which is also absolutely terrible in the atrocities it commits against the population.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya]: As the Representative said, there is no particular pattern we need today to prove that the ADF have publicly declared their allegiance to Daesh. In fact, several attacks have been claimed, and it is sprawling. You saw the attack that took place a few days ago in Uganda, where I believe it was also said to be the work of the ADF. But here, it is important to note that it is in the modus operandi because these are terrorists. Their aim is to carry out acts of terror for which they advertise heavily.

But the truth is that the joint operations carried out with the UPDF have led to progress, particularly in the respective strongholds where he was present. All the sites that were identified as havens and training centers having been destroyed. When terrorists are attacked and cornered, they retaliate and it is on the population that they unleash their fury. So it is a threat that is well taken into account, and one that the government is continuing to work on. Collaboration with the Ugandan army continues, because unfortunately, these are terrorist groups that can operate, sometimes in isolation. It is always a bit difficult to track them down, but the aim is to defeat the ADF. The governments are convinced of this, and we're going to continue working on it, including with MONUSCO, because we always have to be able to exchange information at that level.

On your second question, first of all, I'd like to point out that the situation in Kwamouth has evolved positively. I've had further discussions with government colleagues. Before this exercise, the situation was calm, rural activities had resumed, people were going to church and school, and traffic had resumed. In fact, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Interior, had visited the area, and there are obviously still threats, particularly on the outskirts of Kinshasa, where the army and police are deployed to put an end to the situation.



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The Mobondo, as reported, are members of local communities. A land conflict, a conflict of customary essence, which has taken on the proportions it has today, and which everyone deplors. But I don't want to pre-empt the work being done, notably by the Military Auditorate, which will be able to talk about this when the time comes. You'll recall that we have already had a special briefing on this issue with the Deputy Minister of the Interior, who was specifically in charge of follow-up. And in the coming days, because we're talking about organizing a forum with the different communities to see how we can provide a political response, a social response, a humanitarian response to the situation, we shall be able to come back here to go into a little more detail on these subjects which are still being dealt with by the security forces.

Question 4

Félix Matuidi/Journalist : Thank you for your time. I have two questions. The first concerns Ms. Bintou Keita. If MONUSCO were to return to the Congo, in what format and with what ambition? And has MONUSCO learned from its mistakes in the DRC?

As far as the government spokesman is concerned, it has been 1 year and some days since M23's occupation of Bunagana. The question now is this: do we have to wait for the arrival of SADC troops for this locality to be returned to the DRC?

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya] : No, not at all. As you know, we are dealing with very sensitive issues here. And you have seen that the Deputy Prime Minister/Minister of Defense has been on the spot, particularly in the context of the latest meetings in Bujumbura and Luanda. And we talked about Rumangabo. Visits to the site are planned. I don't want to anticipate the conclusions of what was said. You may find out later this week. But we are making progress, and when the time comes we'll be announcing it. Here, we don't want to go out of our way to tell stories or say things. Here, we're working to find long-term solutions to a long-standing problem. Here, the government is working so that all the areas that were under M23 administration can be returned to the local authorities. And that is the dynamic we're in. We'll let you know in the next few days. Madam Representative is here, she may not be able to go into other details because there are issues that still require some level of confidentiality, but we are working closely with MONUSCO on these subjects too.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: I'd just like to make it clear that the situation in the Petit Nord, as I defined it, is quite clear. We have this formal request from the Congolese government to support the pre-cantonment of the M23. And it is in this context that we're collaborating with all the forces, including the FARDC, to organize the necessary visits to take stock of the situation, and where we stand with Rumangabo, in fact. So that is all I can say on the subject.

Now I really, really hope that once we have left, we won't have to come back. I think that, as I said, we have to work on our own disappearance. But it has to be an effective disappearance. I was very



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sad when I arrived in March 2021 and they explained to me that we had left the Kasai and had to come back promptly in 2016-2017, because of the Kamuina-Nsapu phenomenon.

So for us, in the working philosophy of operations, once we're gone, we're gone because the authority is in charge and the authority can manage what there is to manage. So, you're talking about evaluation in terms of "did we learn from our mistakes", etc... Any human endeavor can be improved. And I'm the first as Head of Mission to say yes to things we see and know we need to improve, and we have what we call regular reviews with all collaborators, not just on the ground here but also with our headquarters, and other partners to make sure that on our performance and it is both the performance of the Force but also the performance of the civilian side that we have a good implementation of the mandate in the means that are ours. Because it is not always that we have all the means, I insist on that. But in any case, regular assessments are made and lessons are learned.

In fact, one of the lessons learned - and I take no credit for this - is that my predecessors worked with Congolese experts on the lessons learned from past disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs, and now we have this magnificent program - and I stress this - called the PDDRCS, which needs to be implemented in the form in which it was conceived, with this immediate community engagement, alongside the capacity building of the FARDC and the PNC. We also need to disarm and demobilize armed groups in order to remove weapons from communities. And here I can say that I appreciate the African Union's frontline initiative to silence arms on the African continent. And so, I will copy from the African continent and paste it on the eastern DRC.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya] : And in the PDDRCS program, a lot of progress has been made in the construction of certain sites. Deputy Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Bemba is following the issue on a daily basis. **We'll take Jacques Muluba's question, but end with Jacques-Yves Molima from Radio Okapi. It would be a crime not to give the floor to the Mission's Radio Station.**

Question 5

Jacques Muluba/ RTGA : Thank you. My question goes to Madame Keita. Madame, long before Monsieur Lacroix, there were ambassadors from member countries of the Security Council who had stayed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They went to the East and saw what was happening. But on their return, they advocated a political solution to the war raging in the East. Secondly, if I may refer to a senior UN official who said that the weapons used by the M23 were very sophisticated compared to what you know.

So thank you very much. The question is quite simple. If we take all these elements into account, you're advocating a political solution, whereas the Congolese government has refused to engage in dialogue, to sit down with the M23 to discuss the security issue. So the question is quite simple: why is MONUSCO now pro-M23, or why do you give the



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impression of supporting or in some way endorsing the views of the M23? Is it because the local populations are asking you to leave that you're acting this way, or what's the real reason? Thank you.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: Yes, I think there are so many assumptions. It is a question with drawers, with what I call judgments that have already been made, qualifications that have been made.

I'd just like to remind you once again that there is a very fine framework in this country called the P-DDRCS. And the PDDRCS, you follow all our communications say very clearly and it is in our mandate, it is what we want to implement where there is neither amnesty nor automatic reintegration into the Security Forces, first point. Secondly, with regard to the collusion you mentioned with the M23, I can assure you that from the outset, we have had direct attacks from the M23. So how can we go from these direct attacks by the M23 on us and the environment to thinking that we have another framework with the M23? Personally, I don't understand and I don't see the rationality in that. But that is my perception.

Then, on the visit of the Security Council which took place from March 9 to 12. I accompanied the delegation. Clearly, there are two processes governing the situation in the east, and particularly in North Kivu. We have the Luanda process and the Nairobi process. So, when we talk about the implementation of these processes, we're not going to throw them away. They were implemented by Heads of State who are wise men and who said, here's how we're going to support them, and the special treatment with the November 23 communication I told you about and the November 23 Luanda communiqué show how the M23 issue should be handled. I'm not going to go into that again. There are 8 or 9 points, if my memory serves me correctly, on how we should go about it. And all the other meetings that took place afterwards simply reiterated the question of.: 1. a ceasefire which was put in place for March 7, just during the same period when the Security Council delegation was visiting the country, and which in fact began to be put in place more or less around March 12, 13 if I'm not mistaken, and which, year in, year out, is holding. There are at least direct confrontations between the M23 and the Congolese army.

There are other types of attacks between the M23 and other groups on the ground. But progress has been made, and I think that is how I'll put it, despite everything. Decisions have been taken regarding the civil administration, which is to integrate the areas where the M23 used to be. So, personally, I take note of everything you've said, but I wonder about the rationality of some of these judgments.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya] : I'm going to reassure you because you mentioned the communiqué of November 23, 2022. And when you read it, it clearly says: Cessation of hostilities, and in particular of M23 attacks against the FARDC and MONUSCO.



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So, here I come back to the terrorist nature of the M23 and, moreover, you have seen that on the judicial front we have made progress because the M23 is attacking the blue helmets. I'm not a lawyer, but I believe that this is one of the crimes that are prohibited, and we hope that the justice system will crack down, and crack down hard, precisely to avoid the repetition of these types of confrontations. Let's take the last question from Jacques-Yves Molima of Radio Okapi, a UN radio station. In the transition, if I inherit you, I don't know what I'll do with you. You'll be RTNC 3, 4, 5. But it will be a good subject, because we'd still like Radio Okapi to continue its work.

Question 6

Jacques Molima/Radio Okapi : Thank you very much, Minister. My question is exactly for you. We're talking about the security situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo. We know that EAC troops are on the ground. Soon, the SADC could also be there. These troops, according to the agreements with the Congolese government, should occupy the positions left by the M23 and allow the population to move around. We're working for the population. But since then, we can still see the M23 barriers in Bunagana, for example. What is the government doing? Is this part of the country out of control because there are still barriers, and the population can't get through? And we don't know anything. That is the first question.

The second question, coming back to the departure of MONUSCO, concerns us, as you said. In one of your tweets a few days ago, you wrote that in 6 months we could leave. Perhaps there are now arrangements with the government? The common would like to understand how long it is going to be? Those in Aru, in Mahagi? 6 months, a year?

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya] : Listen, I'm going to reassure you right away because you're talking about a tweet. You need to look at the tweets I personally made. We must avoid becoming fixated on dates. Because, as you know, it was June 23 and everything stops. I'll spare you the chapters we have experienced in the past with the different processes.

Here, there is a given horizon. We suppose that those who are talking about 6 months, for example, are right to say so, because they believe that if the elections are held on December 20, Madame explained to us on December 31 that it would take a year. We can say it is over. You see. But here, when the President of the Republic gives this timeframe, because the work to be done is quite complex and is carried out through experts' meetings, ministerial meetings, high-level meetings that even involve the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix. So these are highly sensitive issues.

Here, we have given an answer to our people, who want MONUSCO to leave, and to ourselves, because we believe that we are going to resume, we are working to resume, our regalian role. But at the same time, we have to give a message to the international community, which has mobilized through MONUSCO to support our people. Even if we're not always happy with what's been done, there was at least this international solidarity expressed within this framework. This is why, for the



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President of the Republic and for the Government, the exit must be a civilized and structured one. Because beyond everything, there will still be needs that can be covered by United Nations agencies. These are all issues we are discussing. So, here we have to look at the exit perspective, the evolution of the plan and the rest will be determined as and when we make progress, especially as there are other tasks devolved to the Mission. As far as Radio Okapi is concerned, we'll be having a conversation, a special conversation.

To come back to the first part of your question. The Deputy Prime Minister, Jean-Pierre Bemba, went down there. He had meetings. I told you earlier that I wouldn't want to go into the details of issues that are still being dealt with, and which may be extremely sensitive, but that is precisely because we, the Government, are the first to share these concerns. We had a difficulty with the Regional Force and we expressed it. And you saw that Kenya replaced General Nyanga, who was there, because we noted this form of connivance between the M23 and the Regional Force. This is clear. There are documented images. I'm speaking in the presence of the Representative. And we, as a government, felt that this was not the case. But later, because we are members of a community, when there are problems, we have to address them. You saw Mr. Matouk come here to Kinshasa. The Secretary General of the EAC, the East African Community.

You saw the Secretary General come here to meet the Congolese authorities, as we were to have discussions. And the President of the Republic, during the meeting he had precisely because he is the current Chairman of SADC, raised the issue because it is out of the question to keep the Democratic Republic of Congo in this situation which, ultimately, benefits no one because there are prospects for development. SADC, EAC, we all want to make savings to facilitate exchanges between populations. At the Bujumbura meeting, the government conceded an extra three months because the EAC wants to make up for its mistake. We'll see what happens. But in any case, the necessary steps have been taken so that we can move forward on concrete issues.

As far as the SADC force is concerned, I think there is a meeting scheduled for the 23rd in Luanda, where my Foreign Affairs colleague will be taking part, to ensure that all these SADC, regional force and MONUSCO initiatives are implemented. I don't know if you'll be involved in the meeting? So that we can discuss how things are working on the ground. Here, the main objective is the return of peace, the return of Congolese populations to their regions of origin, because they have to vote and because we need peace to continue our efforts to develop and rebuild our country. And so, on this subject, we will obviously come back to it in more in-depth exercises, as we do, as soon as we have sufficient elements to back them up.

I think, Madam Representative, that was a bit long, but it was necessary to do this accountability exercise. It is always important to share your opinion. I'd like to hand over to you for your closing remarks for this evening.

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: For me the final word is that every day I go to bed



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thinking about the people I see in the East, regularly on my rounds, who are mutilated, who are traumatized and who have enormous expectations in terms of what MONUSCO can do, but also what the international community can do and what the Government can do.

So, in this vision of women, young people and children, the question is: what is the action that, as quickly as possible, will put an end to all the suffering we are seeing? And for me, it is restoration, it is achieving peace, a peace that allows for coexistence and national cohesion, as well as national solidarity.

I'm going to surprise you because on May 17, I was in Kalehe on a Wednesday and when I came back, I came back on a certain Saturday to Kinshasa and people asked me, we saw you in the East. Where were you? I told them I was in Kalehe. Minister, you can believe me if you like. People asked me where is Kalehe and what happened in Kalehe? So, finding connectivity between the center and the East on a daily basis, that is a challenge I see and I say to myself that we have to make sure that neither those in Ituri feel abandoned, because that is what we often hear. Neither those in South Kivu, nor those in North Kivu. And I think we're now seeing a lot of initiatives, a lot of efforts and a lot of authorities moving to the East. And I think we need to continue because the population really needs to feel that.

Minister of Communication and Media [Patrick Muyaya] : And because we're talking about this part of the country, today the Prime Minister, Head of Government, launched the preparatory work for the round table on the reclassification of the state of siege. The Prime Minister himself, who was also in Kalehe, was in this part of the country a few days ago to assess the situation and see how the Government is responding to everything that is happening. Obviously, these problems date back several years. That is why we're putting a lot of energy into wrapping up this issue of the war in the East, because it is the main problem. Today, when you go to the sites of displaced people, the camps of displaced people, there are questions that are difficult, in particular all that we hear about sexual violence.

Incidentally, the Deputy Prime Minister for Defense has set up a commission of inquiry because we have read reports on this subject. I spoke with Governor Ndimba this afternoon, who has even set up a police outpost around the site to try and monitor all this bad behavior. But here, the idea is to say that we must support the Government's action for the rapid return of peace to this part of the country. I think that the return of peace, the resolution of this question of aggression, will enable us to settle the immediate cause while waiting to tackle the other causes, which obviously require strong action from the Government, and we are working on this.

That is all, Madam Representative. Thank you for taking part in this exercise. I hope that we have provided clear answers, firstly in terms of the partnership that exists between the Government and MONUSCO. Obviously, there may be points of disagreement, but here together, we have agreed on the essentials of what the exit plan should be, and what MONUSCO's role in the various peace



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processes should be. We have explained them here, and we can of course come back shortly with further details if required. I hope you'll be available, or Khassim Diagne, MONUSCO's representative in Goma, your deputy, who has already taken part in this exercise, will also be able to come back and give you the right information. Good evening and thank you for being part of us!

Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [Ms. Bintou Keita]: Thank you Minister and good evening to everyone!