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Office of the Spokesperson and Media Relations

## PRESS RELEASE

### **UN's Pakistani Peacekeepers to leave the Democratic Republic of the Congo after more than 20 years of service.**

**Kinshasa, April 25, 2024:** More than 20 years after their arrival in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations (UN) Peacekeepers from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan are preparing to leave the country. The contingent has constituted the bulk of the UN's troops deployed in South Kivu province and their important contributions to peace consolidation and security was recognized during a tribute ceremony today.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in the DRC and Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), Ms. Bintou Keita, MONUSCO's Force Commander a.i. Major General Khar Diouf, the South Kivu provincial minister of Infrastructures and representative of the interim governor, Mr. Cissa wa Numbe, the Government Delegate General in charge of liaison with MONUSCO, Ambassador Noel Mbemba, participated in the ceremony today in Kavumu, 32 km from Bukavu. The departure of the Pakistani contingent is part of MONUSCO's disengagement plan from the DRC, initiated in early January 2024.

Since 2003, when they were first deployed, more than 100 000 Pakistani Peacekeepers have served in South Kivu and 31 have died in the line of duty. For Pakistan that's the greatest number of Blue Helmets they have lost in the 46 Peacekeeping missions in the 29 countries where they have been deployed.

"I pay tribute to the immense contribution the troops from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have made to advancing peace and security in South Kivu. I honour the 31 Blue Helmets who have paid the ultimate price. Over the years, their sacrifice, professionalism, and commitment have helped protect millions of people in DRC", the head of MONUSCO said.

The Pakistani troops have been engaged in military operations aimed at protecting civilians and maintaining peace and security in South Kivu. In 2017, together with the Armed Forces of the DRC, the Pakistani contingent stopped a coalition of armed groups from taking over the city of Uvira. In 2018, they pushed back an offensive by armed groups in the Hauts Plateaux of Uvira, protecting more than 120 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Over the years, the Pakistani Peacekeepers have protected millions of IDPs, many of whom have established camps around their bases.

"MONUSCO is handing over the responsibility of ensuring security and the physical protection of civilians to the defence and security forces of DRC, who will continue to undertake this responsibility in close coordination with community and other local leaders. According to the disengagement plan, in parallel with the withdrawal of UN



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troops, the government will increase its presence in the areas the Mission is vacating at its request”, Ms Bintou Keita concludes.

Photographs and other digital content will be uploaded here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12oxH9lzETjvh7QUbNE9EN6AMMZcBAYqa>