

Joint Statement on Behalf of A3+1

Niger, South Africa and Tunisia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Delivered by

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Open VTC on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

United Nations Security Council

October 6th, 2020

New York

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Madame President,

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the A3 +1 members of the Council namely, Niger, South Africa and Tunisia + St Vincent and the Grenadines.

We would like to thank you for convening this important and timely meeting on the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We would also like to thank and commend the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on the situation in the DRC and the activities of United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MONUSCO, Ms Leila Zerrougui for her comprehensive briefing.

Madame President,

Today, we wish to focus our intervention on the political processes in the DRC; security and humanitarian situation; regional processes; as well as support for MONUSCO and the DRC.

Madame President, the prevailing political situation in the country provides a rare opportunity to build a long-term stable future and a unified country. In this regard, the unity of the current establishment is paramount to address the myriad of challenges that the country is facing. Against this backdrop, our delegations commend the continued efforts by the Congolese to resolve their political differences in a peaceful manner. We are also pleased with the on-going constructive dialogue aimed at resolving political tensions as reflected in the public commitment and reaffirmations to the coalition by President Felix Tshisekedi and former President Joseph Kabila. This is vital for lasting peace and national reconciliation.

On the security front, we remain deeply concerned by the on-going instability and insecurity as a result of belligerent actions by armed groups in North Kivu which continues to draw due attention, particularly as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) carry on attacks on civilians, the DRC Armed Forces (FARDC) as well as MONUSCO. Similarly, in South Kivu wherein the redeployment of the FARDC to other areas in the east has created a security vacuum leading to active recruitment by some armed groups. This illustrates the need to put in place sustainable and enduring security measures in affected areas. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the progress registered in the peace agreements between the Government of the DRC and armed groups in Ituri Province. However, we are concerned that the delay in the implementation of the demobilisation and reintegration process, partly due to COVID-19 pandemic, could impact the situation negatively.

It is within the above-mentioned context that the A3+1 underscore the centrality of the PSC Framework as a long-term solution to create stability in the Eastern DRC. We note the consolidated Force presence in Ituri Province to respond to militia violence and in Beni territory to address the threat posed by the ADF. In this regard, we emphasize the importance of the full support for MONUSCO's role in stabilizing the Eastern DRC and recognize the efforts of the FIB in addressing the threat posed by the armed groups. The FIB requires the continued support of the Council in this regard and needs to be fully capacitated to remain effective in addressing

the threat on the civilian population in the Eastern DRC, despite the enormous expectations and complexity of its task.

Although some progress has been witnessed in the stabilisation and strengthening of state institutions, we remain concerned by the prospect of a hastened and rushed drawdown of MONUSCO. It is our view that the drawdown of MONUSCO should be occasioned on the elaborate plan aimed at improving the capacity of the state to deliver while MONUSCO reduces its presence in the country. The plan should include completed SSR and DDR processes, fully functional state institutions such as immigration and border control, improved police and army and a strengthened judiciary. Lastly, any drawdown of MONUSCO should be based on the positive evolution of the situation on the ground for the handover of MONUSCO tasks to the DRC Government.

Madame President,

Turning to the regional cooperation efforts, the A3 + 1 reiterate the importance of fostering strong and effective regional relations and cooperation as reflected in the DRC Government's campaign to 'build bridges and not walls'. In this respect, we are satisfied by the continuing efforts adopted by the Government of the DRC to engage regional partners to address common threats to the region. For the period under review, we are welcome the meeting between President Tshisekedi and President Denis Sassou-Nguesso as well as the cooperation agreement signed between the DRC and Angola on security and public order in bordering areas. Furthermore, we continue to support SADC's longstanding commitment to assist the DRC to achieve sustainable peace, security and stability. In this respect, we are pleased with the deployment of a technical mission by SADC, in September 2020, which resulted in the adoption of a phased approach to the demarcation of the affected border.

The A3+1 also commends the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region for their efforts alongside MONUSCO as a commitment to assist the DRC to achieve sustainable peace, security and stability.

Madame President,

The A3 +1 remains concerned with the current humanitarian situation. The slowdown in reported new cases of the COVID-19 pandemic is a welcome development but the socio-economic impact of the pandemic continues to be a concern. In this regard, the A3+1 commend the on-going swift response and decisive efforts undertaken by the DRC, MONUSCO, other UN Agencies, the African Union and the World Health Organisation.

Our delegations welcome the multi-sectoral response plan to the Ebola outbreak which aims to strengthen the effectiveness of the health response which has put pressure on basic social services and mainly affected women and children. It is our hope that major challenges such as

the insufficient funding and lack of decentralised access to testing and treatment will be addressed timeously with the assistance of the international community.

The A3+1 remains deeply concerned about the extreme levels of hunger in the country, with the latest IPC analysis revealing that over 21 million people are experiencing a crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity. We also reiterate our concerns about the high levels of displacement in the Eastern parts of the country, as a result of clashes between armed groups, intercommunal violence and excessive rainfall and flooding.

Our delegations call on sustained international support to the DRC authorities to mitigate the negative impact of these humanitarian challenges on the people of the DRC and the economy. We reiterate the need for flexible financial arrangements to bolster the development efforts within the country in line with national priorities, and in accordance with the aims of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The A3+1 also calls for further efforts by regional and international partners to tackle illicit extraction and trade of mineral resources which remain a major source of revenue that sustains armed group activity in the East of the DRC.

Madame President,

As I conclude my remarks on behalf of the A3 + 1, we commend the efforts and commitments by the UN, MONUSCO, Troop Contributing Countries, the DRC Government and international partners on their efforts to stabilize the DRC and protect civilians from ongoing threats despite the prevailing challenges. Our delegations thus reiterate calls to the international community and partners to mobilize the necessary resources to support the DRC in its efforts to strengthen its institutions as well as to advance the SSR and DDR processes.

The A3 + 1 are of the firm view that it is imperative for the international community through the AU, the UN and international partners to continue to maintain solidarity with the people of the DRC and provide the necessary political, financial and other support to build on the gains made thus far.