

**Joint Statement on Behalf of A3+1 (Niger, South Africa and Tunisia) and  
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered by

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Nations

**Briefing on the Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

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Check Against Delivery

Excellencies,

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.

Before delivering this statement, let me begin by joining other delegations in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Leila Zerrougui for her briefing on MONUSCO activities. Furthermore, recognize and commend the fundamental role played by MONUSCO in addressing the perennial instability in the Eastern DRC and in the protection of civilians. Our delegations commend the role and leadership displayed by SRSZ Zerrougui on critical issues in the DRC and in MONUSCO discharging its mandate effectively. We would like to take this opportunity to also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report of 30 November 2020, prepared in accordance with paragraph 51 of Security Council resolution 2502 (2019).

Excellencies,

The A3+1 statement is structured around the following issues; the political situation, neighbourhood relations, security and humanitarian situation, UN-SADC cooperation as well as the phased and responsible drawdown of MONUSCO.

Our delegations note with concern the political tensions observed during the period under review. The A3+1 welcome the meeting held in the DRC by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat, between the coalitions led by President Felix Tshisekedi and that of former President Joseph Kabila, on the margins of his working visit on 2 and 3 December 2020. It is our hope that this initiative will contribute positively to finding a lasting solution in order to preserve peace and security in the country. Furthermore, we strongly support the call by the UNSG and urge all stakeholders to resolve their differences through dialogue in the greater interest of the people of the DRC.

Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are satisfied with implementation of the strategic approach to conflict resolution and peace-building in the DRC and the region. The virtual Summit among the Presidents of DRC, Angola, Rwanda and Uganda is indicative of the DRC and region's resolve to address the threat posed by armed groups in the Great Lakes sub-region. The trust and confidence building initiatives with neighbouring

countries demonstrate a continued commitment towards the full implementation of the Peace Security Cooperation Framework (PSC Framework) as observed in the recent bilateral cooperation held between the Governments of the DRC and Burundi. It is our view that the improving security situation in parts of the country is also due to these regional meetings.

Excellencies,

In relation to the security situation, it is pleasing to observe that the security situation is improving in the various regions of the DRC. However, the A3 plus 1 wish to reiterate their concern over the on-going indiscriminate attacks against civilians, security personnel, MONUSCO as well as the harassment and kidnapping of humanitarian aid workers by armed groups in the Eastern DRC. We condemn these attacks in the strongest terms and call on the authorities of the DRC to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The A3+1 welcomes MONUSCO's increased engagement and outreach to the local communities. We also commend the community-based Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) approach and framework. This ensures local communities play an integral role in conflict resolution and measures towards long term peace, stability and development. Such interventions by MONUSCO contribute positively to counter disinformation and reduce anti-MONUSCO sentiment. The military operations conducted by the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) as detailed in the paragraph 12 of the Secretary General's report are also a welcome development.

It is in this context that our delegations commend MONUSCO, the FIB and all the troop contributing countries for their efforts to stabilise the eastern DRC and protect civilians from the ongoing threat posed by armed militias and groups in the region. Niger, Tunisia, South Africa and the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines emphasize the importance of protecting civilians and urge for the coordination of deployments to avoid creating security gaps. It is our hope that the DRC will continue with efforts to finalize and implement a strategy aimed at addressing the peace and security challenges which include capacity building of the Defense and Security services.

Against this backdrop, our delegations underscore the importance of addressing the root causes of the conflict in the DRC, and encourage efforts to support the DRC government in terms of the DDR process, as well as the international support for broader peacebuilding in the relevant regions of the DRC. Furthermore, our delegations underscore the importance of developing and implementing comprehensive and coordinated Security Sector Governance and Reform program in the DRC that amongst other issues ensures women representation at all levels and recognizes the role of the youth in peacebuilding and recovery as articulated in UN resolution 2553 of 2020. 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 key driver of conflict and major source of revenue that sustains armed group activity in the East of the DRC.

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On humanitarian and health situation, our delegations reiterate our concerns about the volatile situation. Alongside the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, a worsening economic situation and the hazards of Climate Change have intensified harsh living conditions for many. Today, an estimated 21.8 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity, and 5.2 million remain internally displaced. We express concern at the increase in COVID-19 and call on sustained international support to the DRC authorities to mitigate the negative impact on the people of the DRC and the economy. Notwithstanding, we commend MONUSCO for the support provided to the DRC government in addressing the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease.

Excellencies,

Turning to Mission effectiveness, it is commendable that MONUSCO is increasing its operations in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic and is creating spaces for women and girls in the context of the WPS Agenda in the DRC. The A3 plus 1 is therefore satisfied with the integration of Female Engagement Teams (FET) in Major Units which has contributed to the improvement in the performance of the Force.

Our delegations continue to be concerned with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the overall Mission and its personnel. In this regard, we call for the safety and security of all personnel to be ensured as the Mission continues to discharge its mandate. We regret the loss of

lives of the six MONUSCO personnel from Malawi, Ukraine and Bangladesh that have died after contracting the virus and convey our condolences to their families.

The A3 + 1 continue to emphasise the utmost necessity of the full commitment of this Council to provide MONUSCO with all the necessary means to execute its mandate in close collaboration with the government of the DRC. The A3 +1 reiterates its considered view that a budget-driven, rushed exit of MONUSCO would be disastrous and undermine decades of investment in peacekeeping. We underscore that MONUSCO and its FIB should be adequately capacitated in accordance with the recommendation of the Cruz report to address the challenges with regard to the effectiveness of the entire UN Mission without compromising existing capacity including key force enablers.

Excellencies,

The A3 +1 supports SADC's long-standing commitment to assist the DRC to achieve sustainable peace, security and stability and are encouraged by the AU and UN cooperation and their undertaking to continue engagement in support of the consolidation of stability and democratic governance in the DRC. In this context, our delegations underscore the SADC Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit's appreciation and support to the UN as well as its pledged regional support to the development and implementation of a Joint Strategy on the Progressive and Phased Drawdown of MONUSCO in the DRC. We commend the completion of all negotiations to reconfigure FIB including the strengthening of FIB HQ by Staff Officers from non-FIB TCC as this will ensure the FIB operational effectiveness to conduct targeted operations against negative forces in the Eastern DRC and protection of civilians.

SADC continues to request the accelerated approval of all planned operational orders directed at conducting targeted operations against negative forces jointly with FARDC and or singlehandedly as the continued delays embolden armed groups attacks against the defenseless population in the Eastern DRC. The delays greatly erode the confidence of the DRC population on MONUSCO effectiveness to protect civilians.

In conclusion, the A3 +1 reaffirm our commitment to promoting and achieving an African Continent which is peaceful and prosperous, that contributes to a world that is just and equitable

through effective multilateralism at the sub-regional, regional and global level. It is for this reason, that our delegations support the SG's recommendation for the extension of MONUSCO's mandate for one year with its current authorized troop and police strength and strategic objectives, namely the protection of civilians and stabilization and the strengthening of State institutions as well as key governance and security sector reforms.

We look forward to further engagements on the future of MONUSCO bearing in mind that ultimately, all of our efforts should usher in a safe and secure DRC, capable of championing the development aspirations of all Congolese people.

I thank you.