

**Joint Statement on Behalf of A3 (Niger, Kenya and Tunisia) and Saint  
Vincent and the Grenadines**

Delivered by

**H.E. Mr. Aougui Niandou**

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Niger to the  
United Nations

**The Situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

United Nations Security Council

March 30th, 2021

New York

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I have the honor to make this statement on behalf of the A3 +1, namely Tunisia, Kenya, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Niger.

We thank SRSB and Head of MONUSCO Ms. Bintou Keita and civil society representative Ms. Sandrine Lusumba, Coordinator of SOFEPADI, for their insightful briefings on the situation in the DRC.

We would like also to take the opportunity of this briefing to reiterate our congratulations and best wishes to Ms. Keita on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the DRC, and Head of MONUSCO.

We would like also to pay tribute to the outgoing Special Representative, Mrs. Leila Zerrougui, for her exceptional dedication and contribution to the cause of peace, through the mission at the head of MONUSCO.

**Madam President,**

Our delegations commend the leading role played by MONUSCO in the effective implementation of its mandate and salute the commitment and courage of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

We reiterate our strong condemnation of the attacks perpetrated by armed groups against humanitarian convoys, and deeply regret the appalling attack of February 22, 2021, in which the Ambassador of the Republic of Italy to the DRC, his close protection officer, and a member of WFP tragically lost their lives.

We reiterate our sincere condolences and sympathy to their families and support the Secretary General's appeal to the national authorities of the DRC to promptly investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of these heinous acts.

**Madam President,**

The recent political developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, marked by the advent of a new government coalition, followed by the election of a new bureau of the National Assembly on January 5, and the appointment of a new Prime Minister on February 14, 2021, make us more optimistic than ever. We remain hopeful that a new government will address the real problems of the people through the implementation of a sustainable governance program that will improve their living conditions, restore peace and security, and relaunch the country's economic and social development process.

Our delegations are equally encouraged by the willingness of the majority of political actors and civil society organizations to continue to engage in dialogue.

In terms of security, we deplore the deterioration of the situation in the east of the country and the increase in human rights violations and abuses, due to the multiplication of attacks against civilians, as well as the increase in inter-community tensions, which have caused dozens of deaths, particularly in Ituri and North Kivu.

The A3+1 encourages the authorities to continue their internal investigations in order to put an end to these practices, which target women and children in particular. We commend MONUSCO for its technical, financial, and logistical support to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the fight against impunity and the prosecution of those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, as well as other human rights violations.

In this regard, we welcome the continuation of the work of the Military Garrison Tribunal and its decision against Chief Maimai, Charlequin, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison, as well as the payment of compensatory damages, for murder, rape, torture, sexual slavery and enforced disappearance.

### **Madam President**

On the humanitarian front, we are deeply concerned about the increase in the number of people in need of protection and humanitarian assistance from 15.6 million in 2020 to 19.6 million in 2021.

The dire humanitarian situation is further exacerbated by the surge in violence in the eastern provinces—and the emergence of a new outbreak of the Ebola virus disease in North Kivu, although confirmed cases remain limited to 14, including 6 deaths.

In this regard, we commend the efforts of the United Nations, whose allocation of a \$4 million fund to fight the disease, has facilitated vaccination and the reopening of schools, which had remained closed since December due to the spread of the covid-19 pandemic.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo is one of the world's largest hunger crises with over 21 million people acutely food insecure, 5 million of which are children who are acutely malnourished. We therefore call on the international community to renew their support to the country in line with national needs and priorities.

We also call on the national authorities to do everything possible to facilitate both the access and the delivery of humanitarian aid, the security of which remains a source of concern.

In terms of protection of civilians, we encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to redouble its coordination efforts with MONUSCO in implementation of the zoned strategy to address peace and security challenges.

We maintain that strengthening community-based approaches and the early warning system for threats against civilians would contribute positively to security and counter misinformation and anti-MONUSCO sentiment.

Our delegations also emphasize the need for the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to increase its efforts to implement its strategic approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding at the national and regional levels.

We are satisfied with the progress made regarding the role of women in public life, and we support President Tshisekedi's commitment during his message to the Nation on 6 December 2020, to invest more in fighting discrimination against women as well as, sexual and gender-based violence and impunity; and we welcome MONUSCO's efforts to improve the involvement of women in the peace and conflict management processes.

**Madam President,**

The confidence-building initiatives with the countries of the region demonstrate a continued commitment to the effective implementation of the Peace and Security Cooperation Framework (PSC). In this regard, we welcome the agreement of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo with the SADC countries for the deployment of operational forces in the fight against armed groups.

We encourage enhanced information sharing through established mechanisms such as the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre and the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanisms within the ICGLR in addition to other bilateral security cooperation agreements in the joint fight against armed groups.

We take note of the joint defense and security meeting in Kigali of Rwandan and DRC national security officials on strengthening bilateral cooperation in the joint fight against armed groups, culminating in a joint communiqué announcing an action plan for peace in the eastern DRC and the region, and the meeting held on February 18 by President Tshisékédi with Ugandan officials are also very encouraging initiatives.

The direct effect of illegal exploitation of natural resources continues to lay a heavy burden on the security and stability of eastern DRC - depriving the state of the productive use of natural resources towards socio-economic development. The strengthening of close and dynamic regional cooperation, the implementation by all actors of the provisions of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement to combat armed groups and all forms of trafficking in the eastern DRC including through implementing tools such as regional certification mechanisms, harmonization of national legislations, establishing regional databases of mineral flows and the formalization of the artisanal mining sector remains essential. This strengthened regional cooperation is particularly vital for addressing the illegal exploitation and trade of natural resources which is intricately connected to the activities of armed groups in the country.

Regarding MONUSCO's exit strategy, we note the commitments made by President Tshisekedi to establish a structure that will be responsible for the new national framework for disarmament, demobilization and community reintegration and stabilization (DDRC-S), as well as the joint working group in charge of implementing the exit strategy and the gradual transfer of MONUSCO's tasks for a responsible withdrawal.

However, we insist on the need to take into account the structural aspects of the security problems, in order to quickly make the necessary arrangements, within the framework of

the transition plan, for a successful withdrawal of MONUSCO, as is the case in Kasai, where the military and civilian components will be definitively withdrawn next June.

In conclusion, Madam President, we support MONUSCO in its efforts to provide security for the civilian population, as well as its good offices in favor of peacebuilding, through national ownership of initiatives to help strengthen state institutions.

**Thank you madam President**