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Twenty-seventh report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1856 (2008), by which the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) until 31 December 2009. The report covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since my report of 21 November 2008 (S/2008/728), to 24 March 2009.

II. Major developments

2. Developments in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region during the reporting period significantly reshaped the political and military landscape in North Kivu. Concerted actions by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries presented opportunities for effectively addressing the issue of armed groups, one of the main causes of conflict in the eastern part of the country. I welcomed those positive developments during my visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda on 28 February and 1 March 2009. I noted, however, that the situation remains fragile and that much will need to be done, with United Nations support, to consolidate emerging gains in the east.

North Kivu

3. At the conclusion of the third meeting of the bilateral “Four plus Four” Commission, on 5 December 2008, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda announced their agreement on a joint military plan to address the continued presence of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. They also pledged to take concrete steps towards the restoration of full-fledged diplomatic relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. The Commission is a bilateral mechanism established in October 2008 by the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda aimed at normalizing relations between the neighbouring countries.



4. A month later, a rift emerged in the leadership of the Congrès national pour la défense du peuple (CNDP) when Bosco Ntaganda, then Chief of Staff of CNDP, announced that he had replaced Laurent Nkunda as leader of the group on 5 January. The International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant under seal for Mr. Ntaganda on 22 August 2006 for alleged crimes committed in Ituri in 2002 and 2003, which was unsealed on 28 April 2008. Following a period of uncertainty, on 16 January Mr. Ntaganda announced that CNDP and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo had reached an agreement on the immediate cessation of hostilities; the participation of CNDP in the operation against FDLR on the basis of the joint plan of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda; and the immediate integration of CNDP combatants into the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). On the same day, the Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais (PARECO) issued a statement on a cessation of hostilities, which was followed by similar statements by most other Congolese armed groups in North Kivu. On 22 January, Congolese authorities announced that Mr. Nkunda had been arrested in Rwanda.

5. On 26 January, FARDC initiated the accelerated integration of CNDP and other armed groups into its ranks. Some 5,800 CNDP (of a declared total of 7,000) and nearly 5,000 PARECO elements have been integrated into FARDC. In all, 665 Mayi-Mayi elements have regrouped at the Nyaleke training centre. Integrated CNDP, PARECO and other Mayi-Mayi elements were among the seven FARDC integrated brigades engaged in the joint operation against FDLR. However, the cohesion of the newly integrated units, which include more than 25,000 elements from FARDC, CNDP, PARECO and the Mayi-Mayi, remains fragile.

6. MONUC has provided support for the accelerated integration of CNDP and other armed groups into FARDC at the latter's request. A joint MONUC-FARDC task force has been established to that effect. In addition, MONUC plans to reactivate its basic training programme for newly integrated FARDC units, which is expected to commence at the Nyaleke and Luberizi regroupment sites in North Kivu as soon as the FARDC integrated units are ready to proceed.

7. On 4 February, CNDP issued a statement which reaffirmed the end of hostilities and announced the transformation of CNDP into a political movement. The statement called for the resumption of talks with the Government, the granting of amnesty for CNDP members and the establishment of a new ministry for internal security and intercommunity relations. Separately, at a meeting of the bilateral "Four plus Four" Commission held on 6 and 7 February, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda agreed to establish a technical team to elaborate the modalities for the extradition of Mr. Nkunda to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

8. The joint FARDC-Rwandan Defence Forces operation against FDLR began on 20 January, when an estimated 3,500 to 4,000 Rwandan Defence Forces (RDF) troops crossed the border north of Goma into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. General John Numbi, who is also Inspector General of the Congolese National Police, coordinated the joint operation, entitled "Umoja Wetu" ("Our Unity").

9. During the month-long joint operation, as many as seven FARDC integrated brigades and three RDF battalions proceeded along three main axes in North Kivu: Goma-Rutshuru-Ishasha, Rutshuru-Tongo-Pinga and Sake-Masisi-Hombo. The

operation, which was confined to North Kivu, was aimed at neutralizing FDLR, including through the targeting of its economic interests.

10. MONUC was not involved in the initial planning of the joint FARDC-RDF operation and did not participate in it. However, MONUC reached agreement with the joint forces that tactical-level operations would be reviewed by the Mission to ensure that the protection of civilians was a key element in any operation against FDLR. Accordingly, six MONUC military officers joined the FARDC-RDF joint operational planning and command structure in Goma. Despite that arrangement, MONUC had only limited access to information regarding many elements of the joint operation.

11. In addition, MONUC redeployed its military assets to the anticipated and actual areas of the joint operation against FDLR in North Kivu to ensure the protection of civilians. To that end, the Mission rapidly established a total of 43 bases, including 10 temporary operating bases, at strategic locations throughout the province. In accordance with its mandate, MONUC also provided logistical support to FARDC.

12. The start of the joint operation prompted the issuance, on 5 February, of a statement by the President of FDLR, Ignace Murwanashyaka, calling for direct political negotiations with Rwanda and a peaceful resolution of the conflict. In addition, many FDLR dependants were reportedly moved further west into more remote locations away from the border. From 30 January, clashes occurred between FDLR and the joint FARDC-RDF forces in the Nyabiondo area and across the southern Walikale and Masisi territories. In addition, some FDLR elements conducted reprisals against local populations in North Kivu. Ongoing investigations by MONUC indicate that FDLR elements may have perpetrated at least 75 arbitrary killings and 40 rape across the province since the launch of the joint operation on 20 January.

13. The joint operation succeeded in dislodging FDLR elements from most of their strongholds in Rutshuru, Lubero and Masisi territories and deprived FDLR of important sources of revenue from checkpoints and “market taxes”. The operation also resulted in the return of more than 6,000 Rwandans from the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the auspices of MONUC or the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), nearly four times the number repatriated during the whole of 2008. Of these, MONUC supported the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation of some 1,476 FDLR combatants and dependants, while approximately 4,500 Rwandans were repatriated by UNHCR.

14. The FARDC-RDF operation concluded on 25 February with the beginning of the departure from North Kivu of RDF troops. The authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have since confirmed that four RDF staff officers will remain in Goma to finalize, with their FARDC counterparts, the necessary reporting documents on the joint operation.

15. Following the departure of the RDF forces, MONUC has assisted FARDC, at its request, in the planning of follow-up operations against FDLR. The joint FARDC-MONUC operation, “Kimia II”, is aimed at protecting civilians and pursuing the neutralization of FDLR by preventing it from reoccupying former positions and cutting its lines of economic sustenance. MONUC is also providing

logistical and fire support to FARDC in the context of that operation and is aiming to ensure that all FARDC units involved in those operations abide by international humanitarian law and prioritize the protection of civilians.

16. At the national level, some Government ministers and political parties members of the Alliance pour la majorité présidentielle (AMP) welcomed the joint operation with Rwanda. Others, including members of AMP, criticized the secrecy in which the joint plan was developed, as well as the operation itself. On 22 January, the Speaker of the National Assembly, Vital Kamerhe, issued a public statement expressing concern regarding the President's decision to allow RDF troops into the Democratic Republic of the Congo to conduct the joint operation without prior notification of the Parliament. Several Congolese newspapers and civil society organizations also denounced the RDF presence as having the potential to "Balkanize" the country. There were no major reactions in the Kivus.

South Kivu

17. Overall, the situation remained calm in South Kivu during the reporting period. In the Hauts Plateaux region, MONUC assisted the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in negotiating with the leadership of the Forces républicaines fédéralistes (FRF) the release of two Congolese officials, a provincial minister and an Amani programme senior manager, who had been abducted by the armed group at Kamombo on 22 January. The two men were released on 20 February.

18. The continued presence of FDLR in key areas remained a source of concern. The joint FARDC-RDF operation against FDLR was not extended to South Kivu. FDLR elements are present in Mwenga territory and control the area both militarily and economically. FDLR also controls the mines and collects taxes from civilians in the territory.

Orientale province

19. On 14 December 2008, FARDC, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) launched a joint operation, entitled "Lightning Thunder", against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Ugandan and Congolese officials have announced that the joint operation, which involved 1,186 UPDF and 3,496 FARDC troops deployed in Haut Uélé, was effective in destroying several LRA bases, cutting off food and ammunition supplies and disrupting the movement's command-and-control structure.

20. MONUC did not participate in the joint FARDC-UPDF-SPLA operation against LRA, which was officially completed on 15 March. However, in accordance with its mandate the Mission provided logistical support to FARDC, including airlifting and sustainment of FARDC troops in the area. MONUC also reinforced its military presence in Dungu, Haut Uélé, to 422 troops, including a detachment of special forces. In addition, MONUC advocated for the need to respect the principles of international humanitarian law and initiated engineering work on the Dungu-Duru axis. Specific training activities were also conducted for the Congolese National Police in Dungu.

21. Despite those reported achievements, the joint operation has not been assessed as having attained the objective of destroying the LRA command-and-control

structures or capturing the LRA leadership. LRA is believed to have split into 7 to 10 groups, each numbering approximately 100 fighters, which have dispersed into the surrounding area, including the Central African Republic and Southern Sudan, or moved southward into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. LRA elements have exacted brutal reprisals against the population in their wake, in particular in the triangle of Doruma, Dungu and Faradje towns in Haut Uélé. Reports indicate that more than 700 people have been killed and many hundreds of others, primarily children, have been abducted since the start of the joint operations. As a result of those attacks, 180,000 people have fled their homes and more than 16,000 Congolese have sought refuge in Southern Sudan.

22. In Ituri, the situation remained volatile in November, with the launch of several attacks against FARDC by the Front de résistance patriotique d'Ituri (FRPI) in Irumu territory. In December, FARDC, supported by MONUC, was able to reoccupy some of the villages which had been captured by FRPI, although new clashes between FRPI and FARDC were reported in mid-February.

Humanitarian situation

23. As of January, there were an estimated 1.4 million displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mainly concentrated in the Kivus and Orientale province. In North Kivu, an estimated 707,000 persons are still displaced, although some 350,000 have returned to stabilized areas in the Kivus. However, clashes between FARDC and FDLR have also led to new displacements. Since February, harassment of and attacks on humanitarian workers by armed groups, particularly in North Kivu, have escalated, and civilians remain vulnerable as a result of increased insecurity and abuses committed by armed groups and undisciplined FARDC elements. There have also been reports of reprisals by FDLR in North Kivu against the population.

24. Humanitarian needs remained substantial throughout the country, including in the relatively stable western provinces, where food insecurity continues to affect more than 70 per cent of the population. The 2009 Humanitarian Action Plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which assessed the most urgent humanitarian needs at \$831 million, has thus far received only \$159 million in funding from Member States, with an additional \$140 million in pledges to respond to priority needs.

Economic and financial situation

25. The socio-economic and financial situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has worsened significantly. Externally, the decline in global commodity markets was followed by a sharp rise in food prices. This resulted in a dramatic drop in activities in the national mining sector. Internally, the security situation in the eastern part of the country compelled the Government to make an unforeseen additional allocation of budgetary resources for military activities. Over a one-year period, inflation reached more than 38 per cent, while the Congolese franc depreciated by nearly 50 per cent. The foreign reserves of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which stood at over \$148 million in November 2008, fell to less than \$33 million in mid-February 2009. Early in March, the World Bank agreed to provide an emergency grant of \$100 million to the Government to cover immediate costs associated with the delivery of basic social services.

Activities of the Parliament

26. The Parliament adopted the 2009 national budget during an extraordinary session held between 15 December 2008 and 14 January 2009. The \$4.9 billion budget represents a 64 per cent increase in comparison with the previous year. However, Government revenues are projected to drop by up to 70 per cent, which will have a significant and adverse impact on the implementation of the 2009 budget.

27. During the extraordinary session, both houses of Parliament took a number of initiatives aimed at reinforcing their oversight role. The Senate held hearings with several ministers on matters pertaining to their respective areas of responsibility. In particular, it drew the attention of the Minister of the Interior to the arrest and detention of persons, mostly from Equateur province, accused of attempting to destabilize national institutions, and requested that they be tried fairly. The National Assembly, for its part, stressed the need for the Government to rapidly complete the review of mining contracts initiated in June 2007.

28. Two laws on the structure and functioning of the High Audiovisual and Communications Council and on the boundaries of territorial subdivisions within the provinces, which will be critical for the conduct of the local elections, were expected to be adopted during the ordinary session of Parliament, which began on 15 March 2009. However, a number of other important pieces of legislation on the judicial architecture and the institutional framework in support of democracy, decentralization and elections remained pending on the agenda of the National Assembly and the Senate during the reporting period.

29. In a separate development, the Governor of Equateur province resigned after a motion of no confidence was adopted by the Provincial Assembly following the National Assembly's recommendation that he be tried on charges of corruption.

30. The regular session of Parliament was boycotted by AMP representatives because of the tensions resulting from the 22 January statement by the Speaker of the National Assembly on the joint military operations of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. On 19 March, it was agreed that the issue of the Speaker's resignation would be raised under the agenda at the next plenary session of the National Assembly.

Activities of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General

31. Following the Extraordinary Summit of the leaders of the Great Lakes region, held on 7 November 2008, at which it was agreed that my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Olusegun Obasanjo, and his co-facilitator, Benjamin Mkapa, would focus on bringing about a comprehensive peace in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and address the root causes of the conflict there, on 8 December the co-facilitation launched a dialogue between the Government and CNDP in Nairobi. That dialogue served as a useful confidence-building mechanism between the parties and paved the way for subsequent discussions in Goma.

32. On 27 and 28 February 2009, my Special Envoy met with the delegations of the Government and CNDP, who shared with him for his review a draft peace agreement between the two sides. Following further bilateral discussions, talks on the agreements, under the auspices of the co-facilitators, commenced in Goma on 18 March.

33. The talks led to the signing of an agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and CNDP in Goma on 23 March 2009. The agreement, which was co-signed by the co-facilitators as witnesses, foresees a range of actions related to the conversion of CNDP into a political party and the release of political prisoners. It also specifies mechanisms to facilitate local and national reconciliation, including the creation of a community policing mechanism. There are also commitments to reform the police and the army and secure the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. At the signing ceremony, similar agreements were signed between the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and representatives of various remaining armed groups in North and South Kivu.

34. At the regional level, my Special Envoy has focused on strengthening cooperation between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the period following the Nairobi summit, my Special Envoy held various rounds of consultations with leaders in Angola, Burundi, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia on how best to improve the political and security climate in the Great Lakes region. Those consultations, and my Special Envoy's regular interaction with President Kabila and President Kagame, have contributed to the improvement in bilateral relations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda. As indicated above, both countries have conducted joint operations against FDLR and are strengthening their cooperation through the bilateral "Four plus Four" Commission.

III. MONUC mandate implementation

Technical assessment mission

35. In its resolution 1856 (2008), the Security Council requested me to present recommendations on the progressive handover of tasks from MONUC to the United Nations country team and bilateral and multilateral partners, as far as the western part of the country is concerned, with a view to reinforcing the action of United Nations peacebuilding mechanisms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in order to permit MONUC to concentrate its efforts on the eastern part of the country; to inform the Security Council on the development of a strategic workplan; and to provide recommendations on how to address challenges facing the Mission's disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation programme and its support for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts in view of the evolving political and security situation on the ground.

36. In this context, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet led a multidisciplinary technical assessment mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 23 February to 6 March 2009. Participants included representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Safety and Security, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, and, in situ, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR.

37. The technical assessment mission visited field offices in Goma, Bukavu, Mbuji Mayi, Kananga, Mbandaka, Dungu, Bunia and Beni. Participants received detailed briefings from MONUC and the United Nations country team, and consulted a wide spectrum of national and international stakeholders, including the Prime Minister, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of the Budget, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Gender, the President of the Independent Electoral Commission (in his dual capacity as President of the Commission and Coordinator of the Amani programme), the Inspector General of the Police and Coordinator of Operation Umoja Wetu, the Ugandan military command of Operation Lightning Thunder, the managing body of the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, the Government entity responsible for the integration of the army, the European Union Mission of Assistance for Security Sector Reform (EUSEC), representatives of the diplomatic community, representatives of international humanitarian non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, a representative of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, representatives of Congolese civil society and local authorities.

Development of a strategic workplan

38. As requested by the Council, the technical assessment mission and MONUC initiated work on the development of a strategic workplan with appropriate benchmarks to measure and track progress on the implementation of activities mandated by the Security Council in paragraphs 3 and 4 of resolution 1856 (2008).

39. The assessment of the mission was that the benchmarks outlined in the report of the Secretary-General of November 2007 (S/2007/671) remain broadly valid. In addition, the mission began work on the development of a more detailed series of benchmarks and priority actions for MONUC that will support their achievement with specific reference to paragraphs 3 and 4 of resolution 1856 (2008) in the light of evolving developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The strategic workplan will take into account the gradual concentration of the Mission's efforts in the eastern part of the country and the progressive handover of certain mandated civilian tasks to the United Nations country team and other partners, based on the recommendations outlined below.

Recommendations on the progressive handover of tasks in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

40. The technical assessment mission determined that, while both the eastern and the western parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo face problems created by the absence of effective State institutions and authority, the challenges in the east are more acute owing to the prevailing armed conflict. In the west, provincial authorities generally lack effective capacity, and institutions are unstable, under-resourced and underfunded. For the purposes of the technical assessment mission, the western provinces were defined as Equateur, Bandundu, Kasai Occidental, Kasai Oriental and Bas-Congo.

41. The assessment of the technical assessment mission was that the current resources of the United Nations country team were limited in terms of both personnel and programmes in the west, and that the country team and other partners would not be in position to take over all of the tasks carried out by MONUC. The

mission also noted that the activities of MONUC in the western provinces include tasks which should be assumed by the Government or the private sector but which, owing to the lack of capacity, are still being performed by MONUC.

42. Nevertheless, in close consultation with MONUC and the country team, it was determined that a carefully planned and managed transition would allow for a drawdown of MONUC presences in the west over the next 6- to 24-month period. The possibilities for scaling up the programmes and the presence of the United Nations country team and international partners in the west would depend both on donor interest in funding the programmes and on how the country team manages to identify ways of focusing or expanding some of its programmable resources in the west. It will also be necessary to calibrate the progressive transfer of the military, police and civilian resources of MONUC on the basis of Mission support for the local elections, which are scheduled to be held before the end of 2009..

43. The assessment of the technical assessment mission was that, while the potential for instability remained in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were no major security threats posed by armed groups. This would allow for the rapid scaling down of the few remaining military elements of MONUC. However, it was recommended that sufficient United Nations police/formed police unit capacity be maintained to allow for the mentoring, training and coaching of the Congolese National Police to continue, particularly in view of the increase in criminal activities as a result of the dire socio-economic situation. MONUC staffing levels in the west will also gradually decrease, while staffing levels of relevant members of the United Nations country team should increase in those provinces as the handover process gains momentum, in line with the constraints mentioned above.

44. The technical assessment mission also determined that, in the absence of safe and internationally certified national air carriers, the overwhelming access-related problems resulting from the lack of infrastructure and the integrated nature of the Mission, MONUC will need to continue providing some logistical support and security to the country team after the drawdown from the west, particularly in areas affected by civil unrest or serious criminal activities. It is therefore recommended that, after the drawdown from the western provinces of MONUC static military and police capacities, a mobile military/police response capacity, concentrated in hubs, should remain to protect United Nations personnel and property.

45. It was decided that an overarching United Nations strategy should be developed for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, bringing together the focus on peacekeeping tasks in the east and peace consolidation and peacebuilding in the west. The strategy would identify coordination mechanisms with authorities and partners and cooperation modalities for the United Nations country team and MONUC to support stabilization and peacebuilding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elaborate the details and modalities of handover from MONUC to the country team and other partners to ensure a smooth transition.

46. It is also essential that, throughout its operation, MONUC retain adequate leverage and brokering potential across the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The technical assessment mission therefore recommended that a small residual MONUC presence be maintained in the west for the transition phase. This should consist of small, multidisciplinary joint teams in specific provinces (possibly in the areas of political affairs, civil affairs, human rights, public information, the rule of law,

security sector reform and elections), which would work on peace consolidation issues closely with provincial authorities and the United Nations country team and would be co-located with the country team, where feasible. The teams should be flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances and would provide the requisite support to allow the country team the time needed to define and scale up its presence, while ensuring integrated peace consolidation support to the west.

47. The technical assessment mission determined that in Kinshasa, MONUC must retain military, police and civilian staff for its headquarters in order to interact with the central institutions and the donor community so as to be able to continue providing political advocacy, advice and technical assistance on national issues. In addition, MONUC should continue to play a lead coordination role countrywide in those critical areas to strengthen the unity of message and purpose, avoid duplication, forge partnerships where possible and maximize the impact of resources.

Recommendations on MONUC efforts in the area of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration

48. In its resolution 1856 (2008), the Security Council requested me to include in my report a comprehensive assessment of MONUC disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration programmes and, in close coordination with my Special Envoy, to make recommendations on possible adjustments to increase their effectiveness, resourcing and coordination with the MONUC military component.

49. Over the years, disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration has been characterized by a slow trickle of foreign armed groups from Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda who have agreed to voluntarily disarm, demobilize and repatriate to their countries of origin. To date, 11,140 foreign combatants and 7,060 dependants have returned to their countries of origin. The Burundi caseload is almost finished, while the outstanding caseload of Ugandan armed groups, including those from LRA and the Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda, is relatively small. Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda is therefore the main focus of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is estimated that some 5,000 to 6,000 FDLR combatants remain in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

50. The assessment of the technical assessment mission was that MONUC should continue to build on the momentum created with respect to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration by the FARDC-RDF joint operation. That experience demonstrated that the combination of military pressure and disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration operations including information campaigns on voluntary repatriation, liaison and evacuation/extraction exercises can bear fruit. The long-standing belief that most FDLR and associated personnel would prefer to return to Rwanda once the grip of the hardcore leadership has loosened was also reinforced.

51. In order to decisively address the issue of the remaining foreign armed group elements, the technical assessment mission recommended that MONUC develop a multidisciplinary campaign plan, covering MONUC military, disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration, public information, political affairs and joint mission analysis cell components. As future needs arise,

surge Mission support arrangements to facilitate the influx of repatriated persons should also be activated. Concerted efforts to target key FDLR leaders, as well as attempts to arrest the diaspora FDLR leaders in Europe, the United States of America and other third countries would also be important complementary measures.

52. With the assistance of MONUC, planning for the second phase of the national programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration continued during the reporting period. With a budget of \$75 million and a planned end date of December 2009, the national programme is expected to process some 98,703 FARDC soldiers and combatants. Of those, some 35,000 are expected to opt for demobilization. Plans have also been made under the programme to establish reintegration programmes for about 75,700 combatants, including some 40,000 who were demobilized during the first phase but have not yet been reintegrated. The programme further foresees specific assistance to an estimated 8,000 children and 10,000 women associated with armed groups.

53. The assessment of the technical assessment mission was that the situation regarding the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Congolese armed groups is highly complex owing to the existence of three parallel disarmament, demobilization and reintegration-related processes: (a) the accelerated integration of Congolese armed groups into FARDC, which itself presents new risks and challenges in the context of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; (b) a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration framework under the Amani programme that targets some 99,000 combatants, including 20,000 in the eastern part of the country; and (c) the national programme for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration itself.

54. In the light of those facts, and given the MONUC mandate, the technical assessment mission recommended that the Mission continue to play a key role in facilitating coordination on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration policies and structures under Congolese leadership. In this connection, it will be important to ensure that eligible combatants participating in the accelerated integration process and the Amani programme process are given a meaningful choice between integration into FARDC or disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The technical assessment mission also recommended that the managing body of the national programme become operational as soon as possible in the eastern part of the country and that it be encouraged to begin providing reinsertion benefits to the 40,000 demobilized combatants from the first phase. In addition, it is important that community reintegration opportunities under the Amani umbrella, which are to be coordinated by UNDP, become available as soon as possible. It is also vital that UNICEF be closely involved in the process of identifying children in armed groups and facilitating their release and reintegration. In the long run, the fighting in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must cease, and a military reform plan should be implemented in order to create an enabling environment for successful and credible disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

MONUC military and police reconfiguration

55. In the light of the situation in the Kivus and the challenges in the LRA-affected areas, the technical assessment mission also developed recommendations on the reconfiguration of the MONUC military component. The mission validated

the force's current focus on FDLR in the Kivus. At the same time, it determined that it was necessary to redirect some MONUC military efforts to Haut Uélé in support of FARDC operations against LRA following the departure of UPDF. The technical assessment mission recommended, in close consultation with MONUC, that the Mission downsize its military presence in areas of low-level violence, such as the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Katanga, and redeploy those assets in order to scale up in the Kivus and Haut Uélé.

56. The reconfiguration envisages the redeployment of one of the two battalions from the west to the Ituri brigade to enhance operations in Haut Uélé. Similarly, the Benin battalion will be consolidated in northern Katanga to support operations in the Kivus, as required. The majority of the military observers will be redeployed from both the west and Katanga to the Kivu and Ituri brigades to conduct liaison-related tasks, and could, after some training, supplement the joint protection teams.

57. MONUC forces in those areas will conduct more mobile operations to secure major population sites and key axes, maintain situational awareness and proactively and rapidly concentrate troops and assets in areas of potential volatility. Operational depth and flexibility in the conduct of operations will be ensured by the maintenance of two operational force reserves. MONUC has designated one of them from within existing resources and, with the arrival of the additional military capabilities authorized by the Security Council in resolution 1843 (2008), it will designate a second operational reserve to cater for the need for rapid reinforcement throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo as necessary.

58. The assessment of the technical assessment mission was that the deployment of MONUC forces in small operating bases limits the effectiveness of the Mission's military response. The technical assessment mission recommended that the force's posture be consolidated and reoriented to allow for a more mobile and robust presence in key areas of threat, concentrated specifically in the Kivus and Haut Uélé. The importance of local translators for the military was noted by the mission, which recommended that units should have embedded with them at least one active interpreter to facilitate information gathering and exchange, including the transmission of protection concerns from local populations.

59. Concerning the deployment of the two additional special forces companies foreseen in resolution 1843 (2008), the technical assessment mission determined the need to establish a special forces task force that would prioritize, plan and control specific operations aimed at disrupting the military capability of illegal armed groups — a task that may be beyond the normal capabilities of regular infantry units. Such special operations should be directed and coordinated by the force headquarters, in consultation with the Mission leadership.

60. MONUC is also reconfiguring its police deployment to meet mandated requirements. The Indian formed police unit based in Lubumbashi has been relocated to Goma, and two formed police unit platoons from Bangladesh and Senegal in the Kasais are to be positioned in Rutshuru and Masisi alongside elements of the Congolese National Police. The two additional formed police units authorized by the Security Council in resolution 1843 (2008) are expected to be deployed to Bunia and Bukavu, respectively. The technical assessment mission also recommended the use of local translators to enhance the work of the foreign police units.

Protection of civilians

61. In its resolution 1856 (2008), the Security Council established the protection of civilians as the first priority of MONUC. In pursuit of that priority, and in addition to the military tasks outlined above, MONUC developed the concept of joint protection teams to enhance and improve the implementation of the Mission's mandate. The joint protection teams, which include political affairs, civil affairs, disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement or reintegration, human rights and child protection staff, have been tasked with a number of protection-related activities, including helping MONUC forces foster and improve communications with local authorities and communities to maximize information-sharing, enhance early warning and offer protection advice where necessary. The teams also analyse local political and social dynamics in order to improve the effectiveness of protection interventions. During the reporting period, 10 multidisciplinary joint protection teams were deployed to the main conflict-affected areas in North Kivu.

62. During the reporting period, recommendations by joint protection teams led to the creation of MONUC-protected corridors, where over 5,000 civilians from the area of Kashebere were evacuated pre-emptively in anticipation of an attack against FDLR by the FARDC-RDF coalition forces, as well as to the MONUC-facilitated deployment of FARDC to Pinga for protection purposes. The technical assessment mission fully endorsed that innovative approach and supported the continuation and expansion of the joint protection teams to complement and enhance the military effort with respect to the protection of civilians.

Child protection

63. The situation of children affected by armed conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to be of critical concern, particularly in the Kivus and Orientale province. Children are present in the ranks of FARDC and in integrated and non-integrated CNDP brigades. Confirmed reports indicate that children have also been systematically recruited and used by FDLR, the Front nationaliste et intégrationniste, LRA and Mayi-Mayi groups, including PARECO. Many of those groups have been responsible for the killing and maiming of children, rape and other grave sexual violence.

64. At the same time, the recent accelerated integration of CNDP and other armed groups into FARDC presented a unique opportunity to identify and release children. In an ongoing process, MONUC has identified, separated and handed over 880 children (839 boys and 41 girls) from the armed groups, including 433 children from PARECO, 141 from CNDP and the remainder from various Mayi-Mayi elements and FARDC units.

65. The technical assessment mission underlined the need for MONUC to continue to use its political leverage to advocate for the release of children at all times and to ensure that children are not being integrated into armed forces, for parties to adopt specific measures to prevent child recruitment and for continuous access for monitoring and verification to ensure that children are not being re-recruited. The mission noted with concern continued reports of grave human rights violations by FARDC units, and recommended that that be taken into consideration by MONUC prior to providing support to specific FARDC units.

Human rights

66. The human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the reporting period continued to be cause for serious concern. Armed groups, including LRA and FDLR, committed grave human rights abuses, mainly arbitrary executions, rape and the abduction of civilians. Members of the security forces, in particular FARDC and the Congolese National Police, were also responsible for a large number of serious human rights violations, in particular arbitrary executions, rape and torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. In addition, members of the intelligence services, both civil and military, were implicated in politically motivated human rights violations, such as arbitrary arrests and detention, enforced disappearances, torture and extortion. Human rights defenders, journalists and politicians were often the victims of arbitrary arrest, harassment, threats and intimidation by police, other security forces and local authorities.

67. Despite some cases of prosecution of low-ranking officials responsible for human rights violations, the fight against impunity at higher levels of the police and military hierarchies remains a major challenge and a contributing factor to the dire human rights situation in the country. The integration into FARDC of CNDP officers accused of war crimes, in particular Bosco Ntaganda, is a matter of grave concern.

68. In view of the deteriorating human rights situation in both the western and eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the lack of significant progress in key national reform efforts, such as security sector reform and the fight against impunity, the increasing number of politically motivated human rights violations and the forthcoming electoral period, the technical assessment mission recommended that MONUC maintain a countrywide human rights monitoring presence. The mission also concluded that efforts to assist the authorities in promoting and protecting human rights should be significantly stepped up. Priority should be accorded to the establishment of an independent national human rights commission and to assisting the Congolese authorities in devising and implementing a transitional justice strategy based on the recommendations of the OHCHR-led mapping exercise, which is due to end in June 2009.

Sexual and gender-based violence

69. Sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued unabated during the reporting period. Some 1,100 rapes were reported each month, with an average of 36 persons raped every day. Depending on the area, between 35 and 50 per cent of the victims were aged between 10 and 17 years; more than 10 per cent were younger than 10 years of age. Armed perpetrators, members of armed groups and elements of FARDC and the Congolese National Police were responsible for 81 per cent of reported cases in conflict zones and 24 per cent in non-conflict areas. The majority of cases were reported in North and South Kivu.

70. Under the auspices of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict, and on the basis of extensive consultations with MONUC and partner agencies, a comprehensive strategy on combating sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been developed to provide a platform and framework for action and to strengthen prevention and protection and the response to sexual violence. The strategy is aimed at supporting the efforts of the United Nations system and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to combat sexual violence and ensure complementarities with ongoing processes and

initiatives, including the reform of the security sector and the security and stabilization support strategy.

Local elections

71. The Independent Electoral Commission, in close collaboration with MONUC and the UNDP project to support the electoral process, has continued to prepare for the update of the voter register that is required for the local elections. The Commission has made progress in the initial preparations in accordance with its operational plan, and conducted a five-day pilot project from 13 to 17 March in order to verify and test the equipment and operational procedures. Voter registration must be conducted by the end of the second quarter of 2009 in order for the local elections to be held before the end of 2009.

72. Important challenges remain. While the legal framework for the local elections is largely in place, the law establishing an authoritative list of the territorial entities, which will become the electoral constituencies, has yet to be adopted by the Parliament. The resource constraints faced by the Commission and, in particular, the constraints on the availability of Government funds owing to the worse-than-foreseen economic and financial situation, are also major obstacles.

73. In meetings with the technical assessment mission, several Government counterparts, including the Prime Minister, reiterated the importance of holding local elections. In another positive development, on 23 March the Vice-Minister of the Budget confirmed that \$10 million would be disbursed over the coming months in view of the Government's larger recommitment to meeting its total financial obligation of \$31 million.

74. Failure to move ahead with the process could lead to the local elections being postponed for several years. From a technical perspective, if such elections are not held in 2009, it will be very difficult to hold them before the general elections planned for 2011. The alternative of conducting joint national and local elections is not operationally feasible.

United Nations security and stabilization support strategy

75. The implementation of the United Nations security and stabilization support strategy for the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has gained momentum as a result of the positive security developments in North Kivu since early 2009. As areas previously occupied by armed groups have come under Government control, there has been an acceleration and expansion in terms of infrastructure rehabilitation work and the deployment of State representatives to key locations.

76. In February, the Prime Minister requested the support of the international community in developing a stabilization and reconstruction plan based on the ongoing Amani programme and the security and stabilization support strategy, with wider geographical scope and incorporating the new priorities that have emerged since the beginning of the year. In the light of the Prime Minister's initiative, the strategy has been revised and updated, with the support of relevant line ministries, the United Nations system and international partners.

77. The technical assessment mission endorsed the revised strategy and recommended that MONUC continue to take full advantage of the changing

dynamic in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to secure the delivery of peace dividends. The mission nevertheless recommended that, as support for the integration of FARDC continues, effective vetting processes be put in place to ensure that children are separated from combatants and that key positions in the army and police are not occupied by individuals who have been responsible for serious human rights violations. In addition, the mission agreed with MONUC that the strategy will need to be supported by adequate and harmonized coordination, funding and implementation structures to ensure an effective response, in view of the fluid and rapidly changing political and security environment.

78. During the reporting period, infrastructure work began on the rehabilitation of six priority axes, namely, Rutshuru-Ishasha, Sake-Masisi, Bukavu-Shabunda, Bukavu-Hombo, Fizi-Minembwe and Bunia-Boga. The initiative, funded by various international partners, is based on a labour-intensive scheme, which is expected to have generated nearly 100,000 days of employment by the time the rehabilitation activities are finalized. In addition, 343 members of the Congolese National Police out of the 500 elements trained by the United Nations police were deployed during the reporting period along the two priority axes of Rutshuru-Ishasha and Sake-Masisi. Preparations also began for the deployment to Shabunda and Minembwe in South Kivu and Kitchanga and areas previously occupied by CNDP and FDLR in North Kivu of 1,500 elements of the rapid intervention police, some of whom are already pre-positioned in Goma and Shabunda.

Security sector reform

79. There have been some positive developments since the February 2008 round table on security sector reform, including the completion of a census of and the establishment of a payment system for FARDC. The first battalion of the rapid reaction force has been trained by South Africa. In addition, on 4 February 2009, the new Minister of Defence issued a revised FARDC reform plan. The objectives of the reform effort are to ensure the proper instruction and training of FARDC elements, guarantee the well-being of those elements and their dependants and ensure the acquisition of relevant equipment and materials for FARDC in keeping with the aims outlined in article 187 of the Constitution. The plan foresees a total of 145,000 troops, which will ensure military capacities at three levels: cover, rapid reaction and principal defence forces. The plan identifies three phases of implementation, with the first aimed at securing the implementation of major reform elements between 2009 and 2011.

80. On police reform, working sessions were held by the ministerial-level police reform steering committee and its executive secretariat, made up of eight working groups and comprising representatives from the Congolese National Police, civil society organizations, the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) and the United Nations police. This has made possible the elaboration of important elements needed to trigger an effective police reform process.

81. The technical assessment mission welcomed the revised FARDC reform plan, noting that it provides a promising framework in the absence of a more comprehensive security sector reform strategy. The mission also welcomed the establishment of the coordination office for MONUC on security sector reform, which includes observers from EUSEC, EUPOL and the International Organization for Migration. The mission noted, however, that there has been a marked absence of

progress on security sector reform, largely as a result of the deterioration in the security situation in the eastern part of the country. The mission also noted that in the absence of a coordinated framework which articulates a national vision for security sector reform, ongoing bilateral initiatives have yielded limited results on that critical issue.

82. The technical assessment mission also noted that the multiplicity of actors engaging in the area of security sector reform, while laudable, has effectively led to the proliferation of bilateral relations between the Government and international partners, which has resulted in not only a duplication of international efforts, but a reduction in efficiency and concrete gains. In view of the lack of coordination in that sector and the urgent need to make progress, the mission recommended that MONUC seek to secure agreement at the highest levels of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to the development, in consultation with international partners, of a comprehensive security sector reform strategy. The mission also urged the creation of an overarching mechanism through which the international community could engage with the Government in that regard. To that end, it recommended that MONUC expand the membership of the security sector reform working group to include other bilateral partners, including South Africa, Angola and others.

83. During field visits undertaken by the technical assessment mission, national and international interlocutors pressed for the urgent ramping up of training for both FARDC and the Congolese National Police. Progress in building up their respective capabilities constitutes the key security benchmark that will determine the MONUC exit strategy. That process will go hand in hand with completing the reintegration of former armed groups, consolidating State authority throughout the country and restoring effective Government control. Handing over responsibility for security to credible, trained FARDC personnel and Congolese police will also significantly improve the protection of civilians.

84. Concerning the police, the technical assessment mission recommended that MONUC continue to engage with the country's international security sector reform partners in order to build police capacities through technical training, developing special police services, such as border control, as well as with respect to the preparation of a police census to establish a baseline regarding the overall strength of the police and a police vetting process.

85. In view of the volatile situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the fact that FARDC units earmarked for training had to be redeployed, no progress was achieved in the implementation of the MONUC training programme for FARDC during the reporting period. Nonetheless, a number of officers were trained at Luberizi in December 2008, and train-the-trainers courses for FARDC instructors were held in January 2009 in Luberizi and Nyaleke. The technical assessment mission recommended that the military and police training provided by MONUC contribute to and be informed by the implementation of a wider security sector reform strategy.

Rule of law

86. During the reporting period, MONUC followed up on the first meeting of the High Judicial Council, which was held in December 2008, by supporting its efforts to finalize the countrywide census of magistrates and courts. In addition, planning is

ongoing for the establishment of a judicial training institute to support the development of training programmes for new and current magistrates. MONUC is also providing technical advice to the High Judicial Council and the Ministry of Justice on the development of procedures for the recruitment of magistrates and other judicial personnel.

87. During the reporting period, there were some signs of progress with respect to military justice, including the first prosecutions of elements of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Republican Guard and the decision by a military court to award reparations to be paid by the State to rape victims for unlawful acts committed by elements of FARDC. Further, the conviction of former Mayi-Mayi leader Kyungu Mutanga, alias Gédéon, before the military court of Kipushi, and the court's decision to order the State to pay damages to victims, are encouraging indications that efforts to strengthen the capacity of military justice are bearing fruit.

88. However, little progress was made with respect to reforming and improving the corrections system, owing to the lack of a national administrative structure, major security gaps and limited management capacity. Prison conditions are deplorable: insufficient food for prisoners, an absence of health care, outdated prison laws and regulations, and severe shortcomings in terms of infrastructure, operations and training. No budget has been allocated to cover operational costs, including basic food and medical needs. In this context, modest achievements have been made on a project-specific basis, including the start of the renovation of the Ndolo military prison in Kinshasa and the training of its staff. In addition, several agricultural projects aimed at providing sustainable food for prisons were launched during the reporting period.

89. The assessment of the technical assessment mission was that, as the handover of justice sector capacity-building to the United Nations country team and international partners moves forward in the western provinces, it will be important for MONUC to maintain a strong justice sector presence in Kinshasa to support key national institutions as a result of the critical link between security in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the capacity and stability of national justice institutions in Kinshasa. With regard to the corrections sector, because of the unique capacity of MONUC to deploy co-located international corrections experts and advisers to prisons that suffer from a critical lack of State authority and infrastructure, the handover of such activities to the United Nations country team and international partners is not feasible. The mission therefore recommended that seconded corrections staff should be withdrawn — to the extent that conditions allow — when the national authorities have the capacity to assume minimum security levels and operational duties, on the basis of a regular assessment of the security situation and adherence to minimum humanitarian and human rights standards, on a province-by-province basis.

MONUC concept of operations and rules of engagement

90. As requested by the Security Council in its resolution 1856 (2008), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and MONUC revised the MONUC concept of operations and the rules of engagement for the military component of the Mission with the aim of bringing those critical documents fully into line with the provisions of the new Mission mandate. Both revised strategic guidance documents were validated by the technical assessment mission.

91. The revised concept of operations provides the Mission's military component with clear strategic objectives and end states based on the priority to protect civilians. The revised concept of operations also takes into account new realities on the ground and the concentration of the MONUC military effort in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The rules of engagement were also extensively reviewed and some aspects amended, including provisions regarding fire support, air-to-ground engagements, preventing collateral damage and levels of authorization for the use of specific weapons systems. The aim of the revision was to make clarifications and to remove restrictive clauses on the terms for the use of force during the conduct of military operations, as outlined in the concept of operations.

IV. Observations

92. Recent developments in the Kivus and Ituri present major opportunities, as well as risks. Because of the political determination of the Governments of the region, solutions are being found for issues that have remained unresolved for years. The leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda have shown political courage and flexibility in their quest for answers to the problems that have long mired the region in conflict. There is now a real possibility of fully implementing the main objectives set out in the Nairobi communiqué of 9 November 2007 and the statements of commitment of the Goma Conference of 23 January 2008. The integration of CNDP and other groups into FARDC and the efforts under way to end the lethal presence of FDLR provide a unique prospect for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I commend the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda for their accomplishments, and I encourage the international community to fully support their efforts. However, the situation remains fluid and volatile, and sustained engagement will be required to ensure that emerging gains are consolidated.

93. Despite the progress registered so far, both the integration process and the operations against FDLR still face significant hurdles. Those initiatives have yet to be completed and will require sustained political commitment, adequate financial resources and effective military capacities if they are to succeed. I am especially concerned that the current economic crisis, which has hit the Democratic Republic of the Congo hard, not impede the integration process or create further instability within the armed forces. I urge the Government to ensure that the security forces, including the newly integrated CNDP elements, who must be properly trained and vetted to ensure that they are not associated with human rights violations, receive their salaries and allowances on a regular and timely basis. I also call on the international community to assist the Government in weathering the current economic crisis, which poses a considerable threat to the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

94. I also encourage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the provincial authorities in the Kivus and local communities to find lasting Congolese responses to other, as yet unresolved, issues, such as land tenure, refugee returns, community reconciliation and political accommodation. Both my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region are mindful of those concerns and are working with the Government and local authorities to promote durable solutions. We should

recognize, however, that these issues are of long-standing concern and will not all be resolved quickly. It is essential, therefore, that local structures be reinforced to manage and adjudicate those potential sources of conflict. Transparent local elections could be a major step in that direction.

95. MONUC is working closely with the Office of the Prime Minister to push ahead with the implementation of the United Nations security and stabilization support strategy for the eastern part of the country. I call upon the donor countries and organizations to continue and expand their support for this strategy so as to enable the people of that region to begin to see the fruits of peace and to accelerate the return of effective State authority throughout that region.

96. In its resolution 1856 (2008), the Security Council reiterated the priority of protecting civilians at risk by authorizing the use of all necessary means against any of the parties engaged in the conflict. With a view to achieving that goal, the Mission is continuing to search for more effective ways to ensure civilian protection. This requires a more systematic approach to pre-empting violence through better information-gathering and analysis. The joint protection teams are an example of such an approach. This must be backed up by the flexible, mobile and, when necessary, robust use of military assets. I therefore call on troop-contributing countries to ensure that their contingents are willing and able to act in such a manner to help deter attacks on civilians in line with the force rules of engagement.

97. While MONUC has succeeded in protecting numerous civilians, its capacities are overstretched. Therefore, I once again call on Council members and troop-contributing countries with the necessary capabilities to come forward without further delay in order to generate the outstanding capabilities authorized by the Council in resolution 1843 (2008), in particular with respect to urgently needed air and intelligence assets, as well as the 200 military trainers. Although the prospects for lasting peace in the Kivus have improved considerably since my previous report to the Council, there is a pressing need to mobilize those additional capacities for MONUC in order to help consolidate and build on the gains made in recent weeks.

98. The shift in focus and the preparation of the drawdown will require the constant engagement of the Congolese authorities. In that context, the reform of the security sector must be an overriding priority. Without a thorough transformation of the military and the police, including rigorous vetting of security personnel, allied to the rebuilding of the justice system, the prospects for lasting peace and stability will be greatly diminished, even after the current armed confrontations in the Kivus and Haut Uélé have been brought to an end. I therefore urge the Government and its partner countries to accelerate the progression of security sector reform.

99. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to all MONUC civilian, military and police personnel, who, under the leadership of my Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Alan Doss, have continued to show determination and selfless dedication under very difficult conditions in support of the Congolese people during a critical period in their history. I would also like to express my gratitude to my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Olesegun Obasanjo, and to the United Nations country team and the humanitarian community, who are toiling to save lives under extremely difficult conditions. My continued appreciation goes to the countries contributing troops to MONUC and to their uniformed personnel, as well as to donor countries and multilateral and non-governmental organizations that are providing much-needed support during the ongoing crisis in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere in the country.