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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 52 of Security Council resolution [2348 \(2017\)](#). It covers major developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the issuance of my report of 5 January ([S/2018/16](#)). The report describes progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO); provides an overview of political developments following my report of 15 February on the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement ([S/2018/128](#)); outlines progress in adjustments to the Mission's priorities, posture and presence, as well as its comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians; and provides information on the performance of MONUSCO uniformed personnel.

II. Major developments

A. Political situation

2. The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains tense, with continued differences among Congolese stakeholders regarding the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016, notably with respect to the holding of elections and confidence-building measures. Although the Government and the ruling Majorité présidentielle took encouraging steps in preparation for presidential and legislative elections scheduled for 23 December 2018, they made no significant efforts in the implementation of confidence-building measures, including the opening of political space. The opposition continued to call for the swift implementation of confidence-building measures to create conditions conducive to the holding of peaceful and credible elections. However, it remains divided over whether the President, Joseph Kabila, should be in office during the transition period. Divisions also persisted within opposition platforms. On 30 January, the Avenir du Congo party announced its withdrawal from the Rassemblement des forces politiques et sociales de la République démocratique du Congo acquises au changement (Rassemblement) subgroup known as the Group des sept, citing the platform's inability to coalesce behind a single presidential candidate. A subgroup of the Rassemblement, the Union pour la démocratie et le progrès social, remains beset



by a struggle between the mainstream party, led by the interim leader, Félix Tshisekedi, and the dissident wing of the party, under the moral authority of the Prime Minister, Bruno Tshibala. Struggling with internal divisions and facing difficulties in gathering popular support, opposition leaders have devoted greater efforts to mobilizing their supporters by rallying behind the calls of the Comité laïc de coordination (CLC) for nationwide protests to demand the full and swift implementation of the political agreement. The Government accused CLC and the Catholic Church of instigating acts of “insurrection” aimed at disrupting the electoral process, and national security forces continued to repress demonstrations.

3. On 22 February, the Minister of Justice, Alexis Thambwe Mwamba, signed two decrees granting release on parole to Huit Mulongo, the former Chief of Staff of the opposition leader Moïse Katumbi, and amnesty to 33 individuals who had been sentenced to prison for acts of insurrection and war and political offences. The President of the National Council for Monitoring the Agreement and the Electoral Process, Joseph Olenghankoy, indicated in the media that the decision had been taken in line with confidence-building measures envisaged under the political agreement of 31 December 2016. Some civil society representatives expressed some reservations, arguing that the release was not directly linked to the confidence-building measures.

4. On 25 February, CLC called for nationwide demonstrations, supported by opposition groups, to demand the swift implementation of the agreement of 31 December 2016. The Congolese National Police violently dispersed the protests, which resulted in the death of at least 2 persons in Kinshasa and Mbandaka (Équateur Province) and wounding of 47 and the arrest of 102 demonstrators. On 26 February, the Mbandaka garrison military tribunal tried, under flagrante delicto procedure, a police officer on charges of murder of a demonstrator in Mbandaka and sentenced him to life imprisonment. A police officer accused of using a non-lethal weapon in a disproportionate manner leading to the death of a demonstrator in Kinshasa was also arrested.

5. As political tensions mounted and international actors reacted to the situation, the Government hardened its tone and position vis-à-vis some segments of the international community. At a press conference on 26 January, Mr. Kabila stressed that the electoral process was a national matter conducted under the oversight of the Independent National Electoral Commission, reaffirmed the readiness of the Government to finance the process and warned of external interference that could undermine the sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In response to the decision of Belgium to redirect its aid for the Democratic Republic of the Congo from the Government to humanitarian and development partners pending progress in the electoral process and the opening of political space, the Congolese authorities indicated on 31 January that the Maison Schengen in Kinshasa had been ordered to cease its consular activities until further notice. Furthermore, on 5 February, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo decided to reduce the number of weekly Brussels Airlines flights to Kinshasa from seven to four, stated that it was closing its consulate in Antwerp and requested the Government of Belgium to close one of its consulates in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, possibly in Lubumbashi.

6. During the reporting period, individuals suspected of attempts to overthrow the Government were apprehended. On 29 January, Tanzanian authorities arrested a renegade colonel of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo — FARDC), John Tshibangu, while he transited through Dar es Salaam airport. He had appeared in propaganda videos in late January, allegedly in the border area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda, delivering a 45-day ultimatum for Mr. Kabila to leave power. He was transferred on 5 February to Kinshasa, where he awaits trial on charges of rebellion. Also on 5 February, Mr. Thambwe Mwamba

announced that Congolese rebel Freddy Libeba and an associate, Alexandre Mitshiabu, had been arrested by national security forces in the border area with the Central African Republic. Libeba is alleged to be an associate of renegade Colonel Tshibangu.

7. Although the political context remained fragile and important challenges persist, some progress was made towards the implementation of the electoral calendar. On 31 January, the Independent National Electoral Commission announced the completion of voter registration in Kasai Province. Countrywide, more than 46 million potential voters, 47 per cent of whom are women, have been registered. This marks the end of the update of the voter register in the 26 provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and a key milestone in the electoral process. On 24 January, MONUSCO organized an interactive session with donor countries for the Commission to explain the functioning of the voting machines expected to be used in the upcoming elections. The Commission has ordered hundreds of voting machines, to be delivered between the end of February and March, with a view to raising the population's awareness of the use of the machines. However, the use of voting machines remains controversial among Congolese political actors, given the tense political situation and technical questions that might arise with the use of the machines on a large scale. During the reporting period, MONUSCO finalized its electoral assistance concept note and operational plan. The Mission also assisted the Commission in adjusting its operational strategy with regard to the introduction of voting machines, in communication, awareness-raising and training efforts and in the timely delivery of electoral equipment to over 23,000 training centres or voting sites and over 90,000 polling stations. I have reported in further detail on the electoral process and the support being provided by MONUSCO and the United Nations Development Programme to the Commission in document [S/2018/128](#).

8. At the meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council held on 27 and 28 January in Addis Ababa, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, stated that recent tensions and violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo served as a reminder of the importance of implementing the agreement of 31 December 2016 with a view to holding elections on 23 December 2018. On 1 February, the Executive Secretary of the Southern African Development Community, Stergomena Lawrence Tax, visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo and held meetings with senior government officials, as well as with stakeholders involved in the electoral process, including MONUSCO. She called upon Congolese political actors and the population to play their part in ensuring a peaceful and credible electoral process, noting that electoral violence could have a negative impact on stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

9. MONUSCO continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. On 24 and 25 January 2018, the Mission facilitated a national youth forum of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for 70 participants on the promotion of peace. Participants called upon the Government to increase space for dialogue and involve the youth in decision-making processes related to elections.

10. On 14 February, in Kinshasa, the President of the Republic of the Congo, Denis Sassou Nguesso, the Chair of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and President of Angola, João Lourenço, and Mr. Kabila met to discuss issues of mutual interest, the situation in the Great Lakes region and the political and electoral processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In a communiqué issued after the meeting, the participants called for, inter alia, the full implementation of the Nairobi declarations of 12 December 2013 and the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework; urged Congolese stakeholders to exercise restraint and condemned any attempt to seize power by unconstitutional means; and indicated the readiness of the

Governments of Angola and the Republic of the Congo to support the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in overcoming the serious challenges in the electoral process. The President of Gabon and Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States, Ali Bongo Ondimba, and the President of Zimbabwe, Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa, met Mr. Kabila on 22 and on 27 and 28 February, respectively, to discuss the situation in the region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and issues of mutual interest.

11. In other political developments, on 20 February, Mr. Kabila appointed the Secretary-General of the ruling Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie (PPRD), Henri Mova Sakanyi, to the post of Vice Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, which had until then been held by Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. On 26 February, Mr. Ramazani Shadary was appointed Permanent Secretary of PPRD.

B. Economic developments

12. A downward economic trend persisted as inflation increased and the Congolese franc depreciated by more than 30 per cent in the past 12 months. On 9 January, the Ministry of Finance of the Democratic Republic of the Congo announced that \$489.2 million in revenue had been collected from the mining sector during the period from January to September 2017, an increase of more than 9 per cent over the same period in 2016.

13. On 27 January, Parliament adopted revisions to the 2002 Mining Code aimed at significantly increasing revenue from the mining sector. Large international mining companies operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo responded with criticism, cautioning that raising the cost of doing business could stifle investment. The Code is awaiting promulgation by Mr. Kabila.

C. Security situation

14. The security situation continued to deteriorate in many parts of the country. FARDC launched major operations against both foreign and Congolese armed groups in North Kivu and South Kivu. Despite those operations, armed group activity has not decreased and intercommunity tensions continue to fuel violence in the Kivu provinces. In the Kasai region, Kamuina Nsapu militias have stepped up their destabilizing activities following FARDC redeployments to the east of the country for military operations. Instability in the Central African Republic and in South Sudan continues to destabilize the northern border areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with refugee flows into the country.

15. The general security situation in the Grand Nord area of North Kivu remained volatile. Upon receiving reinforcements of troops and equipment from Haut-Lomami and the Kasai provinces, FARDC launched, under Operation Sukola I, a major offensive campaign against the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). On 8 and 10 January, suspected ADF elements attacked FARDC positions on the Mbau-Kamango axis. FARDC responded on 13 January with artillery fire in the Oicha area, taking control of two major ADF camps. In response to the operations, suspected ADF elements launched attacks on FARDC positions on 19 January, which resulted in the killing of 12 FARDC soldiers and 4 ADF elements. ADF launched further attacks against an FARDC camp near Mayi Moya on 21 January. On 24 January, suspected ADF elements attacked FARDC in Mapobu (10 km east of Oicha), killing 5 FARDC soldiers and wounding 36 others. MONUSCO provided support in evacuating the wounded. On 13 February, the FARDC spokesperson for Operation Sukola I, Captain Mak Hazukay Mongba, announced that FARDC had released several hostages from

ADF and taken control of a major camp of the armed group in Mwalika, about 80 km from Beni. In Lubero territory, Mai-Mai groups continued to attack FARDC positions and build a broader ethnic Nande Mai-Mai coalition. In late January, clashes between Mai-Mai groups intensified along ethnic lines, with Nande Mai-Mai groups such as Mai-Mai Mazembe, the Union des patriotes pour la libération du Congo and Mai-Mai Kilalo clashing with ethnic Nyanga Nduma défense du Congo-Rénové forces in western Lubero. The clashes resulted in the displacement of civilians.

16. Elsewhere in North Kivu, a Hutu Mai-Mai Nyatura faction, led by Mai-Mai John Love, attacked Yobora village (50 km north of Nyanzale) in Rutshuru territory and burned down 140 huts belonging to the Nande community, prompting the population to flee towards Kanyobagonga. In Masisi territory, tensions within the ethnic Hunde Mai-Mai groups, including the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain, led to the emergence of several splinter groups and an increase in threats to the civilian population.

17. On 12 February, FARDC and the Rwanda Defence Force clashed in the border area close to Virunga National Park, in Rutshuru territory, North Kivu. The Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda traded accusations of violation of territorial sovereignty, each claiming that the clashes occurred on its side of the border. Congolese and Rwandan authorities have requested the Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism to investigate the circumstances surrounding the incident. MONUSCO provided support to the investigations of the Mechanism. On 17 February, the Rwanda Defence Force announced that it had handed over the bodies of three Congolese soldiers killed during the clashes to FARDC.

18. In South Kivu, Mai-Mai Yakutumba and allied groups conducted major attacks against FARDC, notably on 5 January, when Mai-Mai elements attacked an FARDC position near Uvira, killing four FARDC soldiers and five national police officers. On 18 January, suspected Mai-Mai Yakutumba elements attacked an FARDC convoy carrying the newly appointed South Kivu commander for Operation Sukola II, General Philemon Yav, killing four FARDC soldiers. FARDC launched operations against Mai-Mai Yakutumba on 21 January and took control on 25 January of Kazimia, a stronghold of the armed group. On 25 January, a large group of Mai-Mai elements attacked an FARDC position in Mahembe (25 km west of Lulimba), forcing FARDC to retreat. On 27 January, suspected Mai-Mai elements clashed with FARDC in Kahoho (50 km south-west of Lulimba) and reportedly burned houses before retreating. On the same day, up to 70 suspected Mai-Mai elements ambushed a MONUSCO convoy at Kalonda II (25 km south of Lulimba), killing one Pakistani peacekeeper and wounding another. The violence in this region of South Kivu Province has resulted in the displacement of thousands of civilians, including over 8,000 who fled to Burundi and 1,200 to the United Republic of Tanzania. FARDC military operations forced several Mai-Mai Yakutumba elements to flee to Burundi. On 3 February, media reports indicated that the Government of Burundi had extradited 34 Mai-Mai Yakutumba elements to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. On 8 February, General Yav announced that FARDC operations had resulted in the death of 83 Mai-Mai Yakutumba elements and 6 FARDC soldiers and the capture of 120 Mai-Mai elements. He added that almost all the localities formerly under the control of the armed group had been recovered by FARDC, including the Ubwari Peninsula and the coastline of Lake Tanganyika from Kalemie to Uvira.

19. Elsewhere in South Kivu, in Shabunda territory, Mai-Mai Raia Mutomboki factions appeared to be expanding, attacking mining sites and looting population centres. From 17 to 19 January, in the Uvira area, FARDC repeatedly clashed with the Burundian Forces nationales de libération and associated Congolese Mai-Mai groups. On 23 January, a Banyamulenge landowner was killed by unknown assailants near Mutarule, increasing intercommunity tensions. This coincided with an increase

in insecurity on the Kamanyola-Uvira road amid tensions related to the presence of 2,499 Burundians from the Zebiya religious sect in Kamanyola.

20. In Tanganyika Province, the security situation deteriorated further owing to the expansion of Mai-Mai Yakutumba and its allies into the north of the province and the spillover effects of FARDC operations in South Kivu. On 2 January, Mai-Mai Hapa na Pale elements allied with Mai-Mai Yakutumba attacked an FARDC position near Lumumba (20 km south of Bendera), killing three FARDC soldiers. Subsequently, between 5 and 14 January, FARDC and the armed group repeatedly clashed in the area north of Kongolo, which resulted in the death of an unconfirmed number of soldiers, rebels and civilians. On 2 and 5 January, MONUSCO provided medical evacuation support to FARDC. Elsewhere, in Nyunzu and Kalemie territories, intercommunity tensions between the Luba and Twa continued, with militias on both sides remaining active.

21. In Haut-Katanga Province, there was continued spillover from Tanganyika Province, with the situation in Pweto continuing to cause concern as FARDC clashed with the Éléments militia group. On 14 January, there were reported clashes between Twa militias and the Éléments at Kabulembe (45 km south-east of Pweto), causing a deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Katama groupement (40 km north-east of Pweto), including displacements of the local population. By the end of January, Zambian officials stated that 14,283 Congolese had fled into Zambia.

22. In Ituri Province, while the human rights abuses committed by the Force de résistance patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI) have decreased slightly, the militia remains the greatest source of insecurity. In January, there were reports of involvement of FRPI elements in the looting of villages, rape, and abduction, torture and ill-treatment of civilians. In Djugu territory, tensions persisted between the Hema and Lendu communities following an outbreak of intercommunal violence in December 2017. Between 12 and 30 January, Lendu youth armed with machetes killed four women and one man and wounded two women and four men from the Hema community. Hundreds of houses were burned down in the intercommunal violence. On 3 February, members of both communities clashed in the villages of Blukwa and Drodoro, leading to at least 25 deaths. On 20 February, in Djugu territory, Lendu youths reportedly killed four Hema civilians (two men and two girls) and one FARDC soldier and destroyed some 300 houses in the Tche area (16 km south of Blukwa). The violence has prompted significant population displacements within the province and towards neighbouring Uganda. Since early February, at least 32,000 people have been internally displaced to Bunia, including more than 20,000 sheltering at Bunia General Hospital and 12,000 sheltering with host families. An estimated 39,718 Congolese have also fled to Uganda since 1 January. On 12 February, the then Vice Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Mr. Ramazani Shadary, visited Bunia to assess the situation and explore, with local and provincial authorities, ways to address the mounting violence between the Hema and Lendu communities. FARDC and national police elements were also deployed in the affected areas to help to bring the situation under control. In Aru territory, instability persisted along the border with South Sudan. On 10 January, an hour-long exchange of fire occurred at Ndrimu between FARDC and suspected armed elements of the Armée de libération du peuple congolais, a residual armed group associated with the Kakwa community. The group has been largely dormant, and its strength is assessed to be fewer than 50 elements. On 22 January, in Aru territory, 10 former militia members of the Front des nationalistes et intégrationnistes (FNI) were arrested by national security forces on suspicion of involvement in a campaign to recruit young people to fight in South Sudan. FNI is a Lendu-based armed group that was very active during the Hema-Lendu conflict in 2000 and subsequently demobilized.

23. In Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé, the security situation was relatively calm, although conflicts in the Central African Republic and South Sudan have had a continued impact on the border areas. In January, in the area north of Duru, in Haut-Uélé Province, FARDC arrested armed elements from South Sudan, including one from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO) with over 1,300 ammunition rounds. In early January, in Buta, Bas-Uélé Province, FARDC detained Romaric Madango, an anti-balaka leader, and two of his associates after they had crossed into the province from the Central African Republic. They were subsequently transferred to Kinshasa and extradited on 22 February to the Central African Republic. Furthermore, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, there is a rise in the influx of Central African refugees who are living among host communities in very remote areas in Bondo territory, Bas-Uélé. There was also a spike in activities by suspected Lord's Resistance Army elements in the last two weeks of January. The activities included the abduction of five Central African refugees and multiple attacks on civilians in Ango, Bangadi, Bondo, Dungu and Faradje territories.

24. In the Kasai region, the security situation remains fragile, with reports of increased destabilizing activities of Kamuina Nsapu and other militia groups. In Kasai Central, Kamuina Nsapu elements attacked the airport in Kananga on 2 and 17 January, killing at least six FARDC soldiers. FARDC operations launched after the attacks resulted in mass displacement in villages up to 40 km east of Kananga. In Kasai Province, on 17 January, there were clashes between Kamuina Nsapu militia and FARDC in Kambamba, about 65 km north of Tshikapa, resulting in the killing of at least four Kamuina Nsapu militia members. Along the border of Mweka territory, in Kasai Province, and Demba territory, in Kasai Central Province, tensions remained between the Baluba and Bateke communities. On 29 and 30 January, a local Bateke chief allied with Kamuina Nsapu launched attacks in Kakenge village against rival Baluba communities and State agents, which resulted in at least 20 people killed and over 350 households displaced. Most of the victims were from the Bateke, Balulua and Baluba communities. Throughout January, there were clashes between ethnic Chokwe Bana Mura militia and Lubaphone populations and diamond miners in Kamonia territory, in Kasai Province, along the Angolan border.

D. Humanitarian situation

25. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is facing one of the world's most serious humanitarian crises, with 13.1 million persons in need of humanitarian assistance and protection across the country, double the numbers in 2017; this includes 2.2 million newly internally displaced, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons to 4.5 million, among the highest numbers in Africa. In addition, 670,000 persons have fled to neighbouring countries as refugees, including 39,718 who fled to Uganda in 2018 owing to rising violence in Ituri Province. Furthermore, around 7.7 million people face severe food insecurity throughout the country, a 30 per cent increase from 2017, with more than 2 million children being severely acutely malnourished and requiring urgent assistance. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is also affected by a severe cholera crisis due to people's limited access to clean water and sanitation, with over 3,000 suspected cases, including in the capital, Kinshasa. Humanitarian access to several areas remains a challenge, despite advocacy efforts with the Government.

26. Humanitarian actors continue to scale up their operations, yet funding levels remain critically low. In 2017, the Humanitarian Response Plan called for \$812.6 million and was funded at 57 per cent only. The financial requirements have

doubled compared with 2017, with \$1.68 billion currently needed to meet the urgent needs of over 10 million people.

E. Human rights situation

27. MONUSCO documented 744 human rights violations in January 2018, a substantial increase over the average number of violations per month in 2017 (541 violations). About 78 per cent of those violations occurred in conflict-affected provinces, especially in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. State agents continue to be the main perpetrators, with 60 per cent of the violations, while armed groups were responsible for 40 per cent of human rights violations and abuses. There was a 27 per cent increase in the number of reported human rights abuses by armed groups and militias, confirming the spread and intensification of their activities, which fuelled inter-ethnic and intercommunity violence in Ituri (Hema/Lendu), North Kivu (Hutu/Nande), Kasai (Lulua/Chokwe) and Tanganyika (Twa/Luba). In January alone, 126 persons, including at least 18 women, were victims of extrajudicial or summary killings.

28. Increasing restrictions on political space continue to impede the establishment of an environment conducive to a credible, peaceful and transparent electoral process. That trend is illustrated by the 103 violations linked to restrictions on fundamental freedoms and political rights documented by MONUSCO in January, more than double the number recorded in January 2017 (47 violations). Those violations were committed mainly by State agents and principally target journalists, civil society activists and political opponents, who face harassment, threats and intimidation. As indicated in my report of 15 February on the implementation of the 31 December 2016 political agreement ([S/2018/128](#)), the demonstrations called for by CLC throughout the country on 21 January were violently repressed by national security forces, with at least 7 persons, including 2 women, killed, 47 wounded and 121 arrested, some of whom are facing trial. Moreover, MONUSCO staff were physically and verbally assaulted by national security forces while monitoring the situation.

29. On 1 February, the Minister of Human Rights, Marie-Ange Mushobekwa, established a joint commission of enquiry composed of representatives of the Ministries of Human Rights, Justice, and the Interior and Security, the National Human Rights Commission and civil society to investigate allegations of human rights violations committed on 31 December 2017 and 21 January 2018 and to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice. The commission conducted its investigations, including hearings from 9 to 21 February. MONUSCO, through the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, provided technical advice to the commission, notably on investigating human rights violations and protecting victims, witnesses and sources.

Sexual violence

30. In January, at least 44 women and 16 girls were victims of conflict-related sexual violence. While various Mai-Mai groups remained the main perpetrators of sexual violence against women, Kamuina Nsapu militiamen and FRPI elements increasingly targeted minor girls during their destabilizing activities. In January, State agents were responsible for sexual violence against 11 victims (7 women and 1 girl by FARDC soldiers and 2 women and 1 girl by national police elements).

Child protection

31. Through the monitoring and reporting mechanism on grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict, MONUSCO verified that, in January, at least 189 children had been affected by six grave violations against children in armed

conflict. At least 93 children had escaped or been separated from armed groups, including 72 from Kamuina Nsapu (33), Mai-Mai Mazembe (26) and Nyatura (13).

32. MONUSCO also documented the killing of 14 children, including 2 girls, and the maiming of 9 children, including 5 girls, by the Bana Mura militia and the Kamuina Nsapu. The Bana Mura militia killed seven children and the Kamuina Nsapu killed five children and wounded three others. Furthermore, MONUSCO documented attacks against four schools and three hospitals, mostly by Kamuina Nsapu and FARDC.

III. Deployment of the Mission and implementation of its mandate

A. Support for the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016

33. MONUSCO continued to impress upon the Congolese authorities the fact that the implementation of the confidence-building measures envisaged in the political agreement of 31 December 2016 remains a prerequisite for defusing political tensions. The Mission provided a regularly updated list of political prisoners to the Government and engaged the competent authorities on their release to de-escalate tensions and instil trust among political actors. MONUSCO continued its good offices role to help to advance the political process. My Deputy Special Representative David Gressly met with Mr. Tshibala and the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Léonard She Okitundu, on 20 and 23 January to exchange views on the political and electoral situation and encourage progress on the implementation of confidence-building measures. On 1 February, he travelled to Lualaba Province and held meetings with the Governor, during which he encouraged the Governor to, inter alia, open political space and uphold the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful demonstrations.

B. Comprehensive approach to protection of civilians

Mission-wide strategies

34. MONUSCO is adopting a comprehensive approach to the protection of civilians, bringing together conflict and political analysis, stabilization activities, human rights reporting, early warning capacities and military operations under a coordinated Mission-wide strategy. In line with that approach, MONUSCO is implementing a joint tailored strategy and operational plan, with a view to better coordinating MONUSCO actions in efforts to address the threat posed by FRPI. Discussions are also under way with the Congolese authorities for the establishment of an interministerial working group to develop a joint action plan to address the threat posed by FRPI. Furthermore, MONUSCO is finalizing a joint strategy to address the violence in the Grand Nord area of North Kivu.

35. MONUSCO is implementing the “protection through projection” concept, which requires a review of the locations of the Mission’s bases and rapidly deployable battalions, with a view to enabling the force to provide protection through its presence in areas where it is needed and to project into areas of emerging violence. MONUSCO closed seven bases, mainly in Ituri and Tanganyika Provinces, but maintained a mobile posture with the deployment of at least 12 standing combat deployments in the Kasai region, North Kivu, South Kivu and Tanganyika. In addition, MONUSCO engaged and strengthened local community protection mechanisms in areas affected

by the closure of forward bases with the aim of enabling those mechanisms to better mitigate conflicts and violence.

36. At the same time, MONUSCO continued to support explosive ordnance disposal operations, through the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, to ensure that areas are safe for the local population. In January alone, the Service conducted 73 explosive hazard management tasks in response to FARDC requests.

37. In line with the recommendations of the strategic review of MONUSCO, the Mission's justice and corrections sections readjusted their approaches and activities to support the protection of civilians, with an emphasis on supporting the investigation and prosecution of serious crimes through the prosecution support cells. That realignment also entailed focusing on supporting Congolese authorities in the management of high-risk prisoners and the protection of vulnerable groups in a number of prisons. Furthermore, a joint prison security task force of MONUSCO and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has been established in seven provinces, and an action plan is being implemented in close collaboration with national and provincial authorities to comprehensively address prison security challenges.

Field-level responses

38. In North Kivu Province, MONUSCO backed mediation efforts by provincial and local actors aimed at a peaceful resolution of conflicts, particularly between the Nande and the Hutu communities in Lubero and Rutshuru territories. As part of its efforts to address inter-ethnic tensions in the area, on 24 January MONUSCO, in collaboration with the provincial and local authorities, facilitated the return of the traditional chief of the Bwito chefferie to Kikuku (15 km north of Nyanzalé) in response to a request made by the local population.

39. In Beni territory, in response to the launch of military operations against ADF, MONUSCO strengthened its Community Alert Network system by engaging with 200 network members and local authorities on early warning and response issues. Improved situational awareness is also being achieved through the MONUSCO joint analysis, collection and early warning cell, an integrated unit in which military, police and civilians work together. Furthermore, joint missions bringing together relevant components of MONUSCO were deployed to Kasindi from 7 to 10 January and to Oicha on 5 February to help to strengthen local protection responses to the increased activities of ADF. MONUSCO continued to support 65 members of local protection committees, including 15 women, with training and mentoring in the Bulambo, Kirumba and Kanyobagonga areas.

40. In Ituri, in connection with the closure of four MONUSCO bases in Irumu and Mambasa territories, MONUSCO undertook outreach missions to the local communities in Bogoro, Bukiringi, Gety and Mambasa to explain the "protection through projection" concept and engage on how local security committees could take over from MONUSCO in protection of civilians matters. In Djugu territory, from 13 to 15 February, MONUSCO organized a structured dialogue between the Hema and Lendu communities to help to address issues causing intercommunity tensions and violence. Furthermore, MONUSCO encouraged FARDC to consider deploying troops to areas vulnerable to outbreaks of inter-ethnic tensions, such as Djugu, and dismantling illegal checkpoints. MONUSCO also engaged focal points of the community alert networks in Aru and Irumu territories on the "protection through projection" concept.

41. In South Kivu, in response to the rise in threats to the civilian population, MONUSCO completed a mapping of communities at risk and set up early warning

and response mechanisms accordingly. More precisely, MONUSCO conducted patrols, established two standing combat deployments and carried out three intercommunity mediation sessions in Fizi and Shabunda territories.

42. In Tanganyika, MONUSCO continued to support efforts by the provincial authorities and communities to set up the local dialogue forums to promote peaceful coexistence, and prevent and mitigate violence between the Luba and Twa communities. In February, the local authorities, civil society and MONUSCO established two local inter-ethnic dialogue committees in Lwizi and Mwanza groupements.

43. In Kasai Province, MONUSCO conducted patrols and established standing combat deployments, which helped to prevent the escalation of local tensions, instil some level of trust among the local population, many of whom are internally displaced persons or returnees, and ensure liaison with humanitarian actors. In Kasai Central, in Dibaya territory, MONUSCO also delivered, in Tshimbulu, training on human rights to FARDC and national police officers and to human rights activists, which contributed to promoting an environment conducive to the protection of civilians.

44. In the Uélé provinces, on 23 and 24 January, MONUSCO conducted assessment missions to Bangadi and Faradje to review the security situation along the border with South Sudan, following the continued influx of refugees from the Central African Republic and South Sudan into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. From 1 to 3 February, a joint assessment mission was deployed to Bitima (north of Duru) following the dispatch of the joint protection mission to Bangadi to assess the security situation in anticipation of the closure of the Mission's forward base in Bangadi.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration/disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration

45. From 1 January to 12 February, MONUSCO registered the surrender of 182 combatants from Congolese armed groups. Eighty-six of those combatants entered the national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme (PNDDR III). MONUSCO also continued to provide logistical support to the government-run reintegration camps under the national programme in Kamina and Kitona. In addition, 81 foreign combatants surrendered, along with 154 dependants, and all were repatriated by MONUSCO to Rwanda within the framework of the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement programme. In addition, MONUSCO continued to support 293 former combatants of the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), including 1 woman, and 1,073 dependants (8 men, 242 women, 419 boys and 404 girls) accommodated in the Kanyobagonga and Walungu camps, as well as the government-run camp in Kisangani. MONUSCO continues to explore individual solutions for the 355 SPLM/A-IO members under MONUSCO care in the Munigi camp, in the Goma area.

46. To complement disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts, MONUSCO continues to expand the community violence reduction programme. Currently, 37 projects are being implemented, with the majority targeting former combatants who have returned to their communities, in addition to marginalized youth. Projects include the prevention of recruitment into armed groups and the promotion of peace and peaceful cohabitation in the communities concerned.

Stabilization

47. MONUSCO continued to support the operationalization under the International Security and Stabilization Support Strategy of six targeted stabilization interventions, which focus on the root causes of conflicts in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu Provinces, with funding from the \$40 million Stabilization Coherence Fund. MONUSCO also supported advocacy efforts in Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu

Provinces to increase political engagement in the stabilization process through the development of compacts with provincial authorities and a democratic dialogue process, so as to address the main drivers of conflict and enhance political engagement from provincial and local authorities.

C. Progress in adjusting the Mission's priorities, posture and presence

48. MONUSCO continued to prioritize support for the political process, towards the holding of elections, and the protection of civilians. The Mission supported the Independent National Electoral Commission in completing the update of the voter register and engaged extensively with the Government with a view to opening political space, including by upholding the right to peaceful assembly and freedom of the press.

49. MONUSCO made some adjustments to its posture by redeploying an additional formed police unit from Goma to Kinshasa. The redeployment brings the total number of formed police units in Kinshasa to three, which enhances the Mission's ability to conduct robust patrolling in support of the protection of civilians and to protect United Nations personnel and premises in the city.

50. The Mission maintained its presence in the Kasai region, which witnessed flare-ups of violence in some areas during the reporting period. That presence is expected to remain until the conclusion of the electoral process but could evolve according to conflict dynamics and the humanitarian situation.

51. In the wake of the tragic attack on 7 December 2017 on a MONUSCO company operating base at Semuliki, in North Kivu, and the report of General Carlos Alberto dos Santos Cruz of 19 December 2017 on improving the security of United Nations peacekeepers, the Mission took a number of measures to enhance the security of its bases and the protection of peacekeepers. MONUSCO is undertaking a review of its footprint and the force's deployment, with a view to reconciling necessary measures to improve the security of peacekeepers, including appropriate medical evacuation support, with available resources.

52. On the civilian side, MONUSCO further streamlined its civilian footprint, including by closing its liaison office in Kampala, and restructured some critical functions, notably political and good offices support, in line with the recommendations of the strategic review of the Mission.

D. Assessment of performance of the Mission's uniformed personnel in protecting civilians

53. Two special investigation teams visited MONUSCO during the reporting period, to examine the circumstances surrounding the attack against the company operating base at Semuliki, North Kivu, which resulted in the death of 15 peacekeepers, and the response of the company operating base in Kamanyola to the clash on 15 September between Burundian asylum seekers and FARDC, which left 37 civilians dead. Both investigations identified a number of systemic performance issues to be addressed by the Secretariat, MONUSCO and troop-contributing countries.

54. MONUSCO finalized a review of the preparedness and security of its company operating bases during the reporting period and is taking steps to address internal weaknesses, as they have an impact on performance.

E. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

55. The United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse continues to be enforced among all categories of personnel in MONUSCO. All allegations have been assessed and reported in accordance with existing and applicable reporting and investigation procedures. In close collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and other partners, MONUSCO provided support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Mission also continues to strengthen and actively carry out preventive measures including training, risk assessment/monitoring visits, regular deterrent patrols and the implementation of a non-fraternization policy for uniformed personnel. MONUSCO engaged with communities at risk and supported the operationalization of the community-based complaint mechanisms and community awareness-raising programmes. Three projects totalling \$175,000 were approved under the trust fund established for assistance to victims and are being implemented in Munigi and Bujovo (in the Goma area), Sake (North Kivu) and Kavumu (South Kivu). In Kinshasa, North Kivu and South Kivu, the MONUSCO Conduct and Discipline Team organized an intensive awareness-raising campaign on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, which resulted in incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse being reported.

56. Quarterly meetings of the sexual exploitation and abuse task force continued, along with a dedicated meeting of MONUSCO leadership to address serious allegations of misconduct and review the Mission's internal capacities and resources in preventing allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Payments have been suspended for all members of troop- and police-contributing countries suspected of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the Mission is taking measures to repatriate implicated uniformed personnel as soon as their presence in the Mission area is no longer required for the purpose of completing investigations.

IV. Safety and security of United Nations personnel

57. As at 1 February, 32 security and safety-related incidents affecting United Nations staff, uniformed components, assets and operations, as well as international non-governmental organizations, had been reported. They include 19 crime-related incidents, 3 cases linked to civil unrest, 8 hazard-related cases and 2 incidents linked to armed conflict. MONUSCO assessed that its operations to neutralize armed groups did not have any impact on its staff members or installations.

V. Financial aspects

58. The General Assembly, in its resolution [71/301](#), appropriated the amount of \$1,141.8 million for the maintenance of MONUSCO for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. As at 28 February, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for MONUSCO amounted to \$151.8 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to \$2,403.4 million.

VI. Observations

59. Overcoming the political crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains challenging. Delays in the implementation of the political agreement of 31 December 2016 continue to weaken confidence among Congolese stakeholders and to fuel tensions around the political transition and the electoral process. The

deterioration of the security situation in recent months, particularly in the Kivu provinces, has caused additional population displacements. A collective effort by the Government and regional and international partners is urgently required to help to reverse those trends, which risk undermining stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region as a whole.

60. I remain concerned by the lack of constructive engagement by some opposition leaders in the political and electoral processes. It is of utmost importance that all Congolese political stakeholders seize the opportunity provided by the political agreement of 31 December 2016 and seek consensus on how to ensure a credible electoral process and democratic transfer of power.

61. I am nevertheless encouraged by the progress made by the Independent National Electoral Commission towards the completion of voter registration. I welcome the steps taken by the Government to establish the legal framework required for the holding of elections on 23 December 2018. MONUSCO has demonstrated its commitment to that goal through the provision of essential technical and logistical support for the elections, including the transportation of electoral materials and Commission personnel in accordance with the electoral calendar. The implementation of the electoral calendar will require continued, strong synergy between the Commission, MONUSCO and the Government at all levels. I call for the swift enactment of the revised electoral law and other relevant legislation to ensure that all timelines are met. In this regard, I encourage the Government to continue to provide the Commission, in a timely and consistent manner, with the required funding to complete the electoral process. I also call upon international partners and the Commission to urgently conclude discussions on the revised *Projet d'appui au cycle électoral au Congo basket fund*.

62. It is imperative that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo do its utmost to ensure respect for the fundamental freedoms and political rights enshrined in the Constitution and the country's international obligations. I am deeply concerned that the Government has made no significant progress on the implementation of the vital confidence-building measures to which it committed in the agreement of 31 December 2016. I am particularly disturbed by the violent repression of peaceful demonstrations on 31 December 2017 and 21 January 2018 and urge the Government to ensure that national security forces show restraint and abide by the law when dealing with public demonstrations. I call upon the Government to swiftly investigate reports of human rights violations by members of the security forces and take effective measures to address impunity.

63. To effectively carry out its mandate, MONUSCO requires the full commitment and engagement of the Government and the security forces. The pattern of restrictions placed on national MONUSCO human rights monitors and United Nations police patrols by the security forces is unacceptable. I appeal to the Congolese authorities to ensure that MONUSCO is given the freedom of movement vital to the implementation of its mandate to protect civilians and monitor, document and report on the human rights situation.

64. The humanitarian situation in the country remains of grave concern. I am disturbed by reports alleging that hundreds of thousands of Congolese citizens in the east have fled their homes in the context of FARDC military operations against armed groups in the region. Resources are limited, and funding gaps must be immediately addressed to enable an urgent response to the increase in displacements and other critical humanitarian needs. I call upon the Government to do its utmost to ensure a safe and secure environment for the population and to allow unfettered access to people in need of assistance.

65. I am outraged by the continued attacks on United Nations peacekeepers. I call upon the Government to bring those responsible to justice. The sacrifice made by these brave soldiers shall not be in vain, and MONUSCO will continue to work with the Congolese authorities to address the grave security challenges facing the country.

66. In follow-up to the special investigations into the Semuliki and Kamayola incidents, I will make every effort to ensure that concrete measures are taken to prevent the recurrence of such incidents and ensure that the MONUSCO force is optimally configured, equipped and trained.

67. The continued deployment of MONUSCO, including the Intervention Brigade, remains essential to support the political and electoral processes, protect civilians and help the Government and people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to overcome the grave political and security challenges facing the country at this critical juncture. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of MONUSCO, taking into account the recommendations made in my special report on the strategic review of MONUSCO (S/2017/826), for a period of one year, until 31 March 2019, with its current authorized troop and police ceiling. While I am mindful of the financial constraints that Member States face and the need for the United Nations to make the best use of the resources placed at its disposal, I encourage Member States to ensure that MONUSCO is sufficiently resourced and equipped to effectively carry out its mandate during this extremely delicate period and will continue to ensure that the United Nations makes the best use of the resources placed at its disposal.

68. I commend my former Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Maman Sambo Sidikou, whose assignment concluded in January, for his dedication and leadership. I am deeply grateful to MONUSCO personnel, the United Nations country team and troop- and police-contributing countries for their dedication to the cause of peace in a highly challenging environment. I also wish to thank the African Union, donor countries and regional and multilateral organizations and non-governmental organizations for their continued support to the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

69. Finally, I want to welcome my new Special Representative, Leila Zerrougui, and wish her success as she works together with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese people, the United Nations country team and regional and international partners in addressing the challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo.