

Intervention of H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytsverve,  
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

at the United Nations Security Council

**Briefing and consultations on the DRC**

New York, 11 January 2019

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Mr President,

Firstly, we wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ms Leila Zerrougui, the representative of the Independent National Electoral Commission, and the representatives of the African Union (AU) Election Observation Missions and the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) for their briefings this morning.

Mr President,

Today, we want to focus our intervention on three main messages:

**Firstly: Belgium supports and will continue to support the Congolese people.**

Since November 2016 and the Saint Sylvester Agreement of 31 December 2016, all the Congolese people, from the Atlantic coast to the Virungas, Gbadolite, and Lubumbashi, have been awaiting the organisation of inclusive, transparent, credible and peaceful elections.

These elections were vital for the DRC. Indeed, they constitute a key step not only in the process of building peace, security and sustainable and inclusive

development in the DRC, but also in the entire region. They were announced as a historic opportunity for the peaceful transfer of power for the first time ever in the country's history.

Despite the many shortfalls which tainted the inclusive, equitable and transparent nature of the presidential, legislative and provincial elections of 30 December, the massive participation of the Congolese people in these elections showed how much the Congolese people want to be heard - including in Beni and Butembo where the elections were postponed. We hail the democratic commitment of the Congolese, who voted in a peaceful atmosphere. This voice of an entire people must be heard and respected.

**Secondly: Mr President,**

**We have seen the provisional results announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission on 10 January 2019. Together, with our international partners, we are awaiting answers to the questions raised by an opposition party and civil society with regard to the count. Therefore, electoral transparency is crucial.**

A step has been taken with the announcement of the provisional results, and it is now up to Congolese stakeholders and the region, which followed the electoral process closely, to pronounce and indicate whether the result announced is faithful to what was observed and whether the compilation process was organised correctly.

We hail the work carried out by the regional organisations' observation missions, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union and Congolese civil society. Belgium joined in the many calls, in particular by the

electoral observation mission of the African Union, and the President of the Commission of the AU, for the official results to comply with the vote of the Congolese people.

In this context, we have noted the declaration of 10 January by the CENCO, which accompanied the electoral process via the large-scale deployment of observers throughout the country that "the data collected by their observation mission from polling offices and counts do not correspond to data from the CENI".

This message is a cause for concern. In order to guarantee that the democratic choice of the Congolese people is respected, a discussion based on facts and figures is required. Transparency may provide answers to the questions raised by some and, at the same time, ease people's minds and prevent violence.

Thus, we encourage the CENCO to share its observations and figures. Also, with regard to the CENI, it must publish the results by polling office, as well as the reports from each local results' compilation centre, and, ideally, provide neutral observers with access to the central server in accordance with electoral law. The stakeholders also have the chance to request a recount of the votes. We suggest that the national missions and the AU and SADC continue their observation during this crucial phase.

We also regret that the process took place in a closed climate, which does not favour transparency. During the campaign, we heard the call for greater openness, and it is a pity that this has still not been taken into account.

We are seriously concerned about the persistent cuts in the Internet and other communication methods, as well as the decision by the Congolese

authorities to withdraw the reporting authorisation which had been granted to the Special Envoy of Radio France Internationale (RFI).

The United Nations Security Council must remain attentive. Attentive to the outstanding Congolese population which, in a peaceful and determined manner, continues to want to have its voice heard in order to demand its right to vote and a better future. We are also attentive to organisations from civil society and those among them which, since the beginning, have accompanied the electoral process, such as the CENCO, a crucial player in the Saint Sylvester Agreements of 2016, which provided the framework in which the much-awaited elections were held. Lastly, we must continue to be attentive to countries in the region which, through their political commitment, have expressed their wish to preserve peace and regional stability, and which may require our support in the coming days and months.

The current situation is tense and there is a palpable atmosphere of dissent. Belgium joins the call of the Secretary-General and the President of the African Union to the main players to abstain from acts of violence and settle any electoral disputes through the institutional mechanisms set up in accordance with the Constitution of the DRC and relevant electoral laws.

**Thirdly:**

**Mr President,**

**Today's briefings should not overlook the other challenges which the Congolese people continue to face and which are partly listed in the last report of the Secretary-General concerning MONUSCO,** whether with regard to the fight against armed groups, the many humanitarian challenges, the public health challenges such as Ebola, or Cholera, and the

fight against the illegal extraction of natural resources. There are many challenges and Belgium remains committed to the Congolese people.

MONUSCO has been mandated to ensure the protection of civilians and support the implementation of the Agreement of 31 December 2016 and the electoral process. We encourage MONUSCO to play this role in full in a changing climate. During this very politically tense phase, with an increase in the number of armed groups, we must all be aware of our responsibility - as members of this Council - in ensuring that MONUSCO is able to play the role that has been bestowed on it in full and with great ease.

I thank you for your attention.