

Open VTC

- We would like to thank SRSG Zerrougui and Mr Usseni for their insightful briefings. They clearly attest to the usefulness of regular MONUSCO discussions, especially at this critical juncture of a worsened humanitarian situation and a quickly approaching deadline for further MONUSCO transitioning.
- We also want to seize this opportunity to make a couple of points:
 - a) First of all, we are **concerned** with the **overall humanitarian situation**. The report mentions an estimated 25.6 million people in need of assistance and 5.5 million individuals being internally displaced. It also refers to recent negative developments including displacement in Ituri, severe flooding across several eastern provinces, the re-emergence of the Ebola virus and the Covid-19 pandemic.

We could even add some more elements, including the ongoing measles- and cholera-epidemics which have unfortunately made even more victims than the combined death toll of the Ebola- and Covid-epidemics. Moreover, if not properly handled, the escalating violence in Ituri may degrade the humanitarian situation even further.

It is therefore essential, to fully support the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan and the new national Covid-19 Multisectoral Humanitarian Response Plan. In this regard, Belgium and its EU partners – including France - have taken the lead, as attested by our recent humanitarian flights to the DRC.

- b) Second, our short-term concerns should not blur the fact that we, collectively, need to keep working on a **realistic, conditions-based and progressive transfer of MONUSCO's tasks to the Congolese authorities in the years ahead**. In this regard, we note that several factors have impeded the development of a joint strategy and that detailed discussions with the government still need to start.

However, MONUSCO's exit-benchmarks are due by 20 October. We therefore welcome the report's *repeated* recommendations to deal with

this issue as a matter of national priority. The **national ownership of Security Sector Reform** and a vision on the implementation thereof will need to be at the heart the process.

Moreover, it remains essential that the MONUSCO/the *Force Intervention Brigade* (FIB) have the means and political willingness to complete their respective tasks. The recommendations of the **Cruz-report** should therefore be *fully* and *unabatedly* implemented.

- c) Third, the development of MONUSCO's progressive exit-strategy should go hand in hand with adequate attention to counter the root causes of conflict, including the **illegal exploitation of natural resources**. We therefore highly welcome Mr Usseni's interesting briefing of today and your further participation in the Arria on this topic which we'll organize on 15 July in cooperation with the DRC, the US and South Africa. The illegal exploitation of natural resources has been recognized as one of the main underlying causes and effects of conflict in the Great Lakes Region. In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the illegal exploitation of gold and coltan, i.a. has fuelled conflict for more than 20 years, involving a wide variety of national, regional and international state and non-state actors. We are also convinced that the ongoing development of a new UN regional strategy for the Great Lakes would constitute the appropriate opportunity for further and deeper exchanges on this topic.

Thank you

Gesloten VTC

- We want to thank SRSG Zerrougui for this closed briefing. We also have some further questions:
 1. The report focusses on some of the ongoing **political struggles** within the **DRC-coalition**. Nevertheless, the report also underlines that the DRC leadership have demonstrated their continued commitment to resolve differences *constructively*. We would therefore be very interested to hear the SRSG's analysis with regard to the future. I.e. is the constructive political momentum going to continue and what could this Council do to keep fostering it?
 2. We also wonder whether the SRSG could elaborate further on the reasons behind the delays in the **Force de Resistance Patriotique de l'Ituri (FRPI)'s peace- and demobilisation process**. Are those reasons entirely Covid-related? We would be interested to know when the demobilised FRPI-elements will be transferred from their actual pre-cantonment sites (in Azita and Gety) to the new sites which seem to have been ready for a while? In his previous report the SG had stressed the need to develop a national DDR policy framework. And the most recent

report, he calls on the Government to take into account the importance of such a national policy framework. What is the SRSG assessment of the main challenges and how does she see MONUSCO's role in this regard?

3. Finally, we take note of the clear recommendations of the report with regard to the outstanding implementation of the recommendations of the **Cruz-report**. In this regard, we wonder what exactly is still to be expected from this Council as well as from the respective troop- and policy-contributing countries.

- Thank you.

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