
Open VTC

- I would like to thank SRSG Zerrougui for this briefing. At the outset of MONUSCO's mandate renewal negotiations, this meeting is particularly timely and relevant.
- I also want to seize this opportunity to make three points:

First of all, Belgium welcomes the Joint Strategy of the SG and the DRC on the Progressive and Phased Drawdown. Its vision needs to be adequately integrated in **MONUSCO's new mandate**. We strongly support the proposal for the *Protection of Civilians* (PoC) to remain at the core of the mission. This requires a comprehensive approach well beyond military operations, including civil society engagement, community reconciliation and continued monitoring and reporting on human rights issues, i.a. Such an approach also includes the further stabilisation of state institutions – through an increased focus on *Security Sector Reform* (SSR) and *Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration* (DDR). As such, MONUSCO's new mandate should fully reflect President Tshisekedi's new priorities in this regard. As the gradual reconfiguration begins to unfold in Kasai and Tanganyika, we cannot stress enough the importance of the benchmarks. The desired *end-state* – not an *end-date* – should determine drawdown.

Second - and related - I want to emphasize the intrinsic link between peace & security, development and human rights, as does the Joint Strategy. A sustainable transition is only viable if the root causes of conflict and humanitarian challenges are addressed within the framework of the so-called triple Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus.

- **This requires true partnership between the DRC authorities and the international community:** The success of our joints efforts to assure DRC authorities' capacities to assure the afore mentioned end-state is key. The European Union's backing of the DRC's government in its determination to continue the security, defence and justice reforms is but one example. And Belgium and its European partners welcome

an even bigger involvement of the International Financial Institutions (IFI's). Not only in the context of peacebuilding but also in terms of their expertise-sharing in terms of governance and transparency.

- **It requires shared vision, reflected in clear benchmarks.** We therefore welcome the DRC leadership in the transition process. And we further encourage progress. The quicker *joint* benchmarks are elaborated, the sooner new partnerships in terms of capacity-building might be concluded. Moreover, adequate DRC absorption-capacity and governance remain absolutely key.
- **It will require full commitment to the One-UN approach:**
A clear delineation between the future roles and competences of the MONUSCO and the UNCT in the transition process should therefore be sought. This is a process which we could already initiate now. I also want to underline here the autonomy of the UNCT when they benefit from core-funding as is the case, and even more so in view of the Belgian contribution to the UN development system.

Finally, we underscore – once more –the importance of the regional context. Numerous problems MONUSCO's is dealing with are regional in nature. These include the presence of foreign proxies on DRC soil, the illegal exploitation and traffic of natural resources and several humanitarian problems. It is encouraging that the soon to be released UN Great Lakes Region Strategy prioritizes preventive diplomacy initiatives, including, when necessary, joint action between the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the SRSG for MONUSCO. The Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy will need to consider relevant aspects of the MONUSCO review processes to ensure unity of purpose and alignment of action by the United Nations in the region.

Thank you

Closed consultations

- As you know, Belgium is firmly attached to a strong **human rights chapter** in MONUSCO's mandate. In this regard, I would be interested to know how its current mandate could be strengthened – also to be fully in line with President Tshisekedi's political priorities in this context. I would also like to know which further projects will be rolled out in order to champion transitional justice in the DRC.
- With regard to the so-called "Protection through Projection", the joint strategy stresses – rightly so – the importance of **early warning capacities** of the mission. What has worked best? And what lessons should we take for the areas where the mission will leave? Do we risk losing important early warning capacity?

- MONUSCO's last progress report continues to refer to the **increased political tensions** within the presidential coalition. In this context, I would be interested to hear your assessment on the FARDC and the DRC security apparatus. Has this apparatus also been affected and/or paralyzed by political tensions?
- Finally, with regard to the **Force Intervention Brigade (FIB)** we have taken note of the SADC Extraordinary Organ Troika Summit accepting the proposal by the United Nations to realign the current Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) troops strength to create the headroom for the Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs), and generate two QRFs from the SADC Troops Contributing Countries. We also read in the progress report that there seems to be a temporary shortage of staff officers – both at the FIB HQ (and at the MONUSCO HQ). I would therefore be very interested to hear your assessment of the Cruz Report implementation.

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