



**KINGDOM OF BELGIUM**

Intervention of Colonel Marc Bouthe  
Military Advisor at the  
Permanent Representation of Belgium to the UN  
at  
the MONUSCO T/PCC meeting with Security Council  
New York, 06/12/2022, 15h00

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In 2022, thirteen blue helmets lost their lives in DRC. Belgium expresses **deep condolences** to the families of the victims, and to the troop contributing countries.

I would also like to state our full support and sincere **appreciation for SRSB Bintu Keita**. Your briefings in this forum are candid and insightful.

**We are in a very different place than during last year's TCC meeting ahead of the mandate renewal.** Once more, the Great Lakes region is at a crossroads. In the last months, the improving regional dynamics were overshadowed by strong tensions between Rwanda and DRC against the backdrop of the resurgence of the M23 armed group.

Frustrations among the population that neither the local authorities nor the mission were able to protect them from violence, exacerbated existing anti-MONUSCO feelings. On the one hand, we have to acknowledge and take into account in our decisions the genuine frustration among the population about the Mission. On the other hand, as TCC, it is also our duty to fight the disinformation and manipulations that took place notably last summer. Because we owe this to our troops on the ground.

Through the mandate renewal, the Security Council must **send a signal**, both to the authorities and to the populations, that we listen to their criticisms and that we take them into account. The Resolution and UN-wide communication should express clearly that the MONUSCO does not have the intention or the goal to stay in the DRC indefinitely. The mission and the host state should review the Transition Plan with a view to **maintaining a significant UN presence through an accelerated transfer of tasks from the Mission to the UN Country team**.

We must **avoid** that a precipitated replacement of the Mission would lead to a **security vacuum** that gives free rein to armed groups.

Protection of Civilians must remain the top priority of **MONUSCO**.

Yes, POC consists of three components – physical protection, dialogue and engagement, and building a protective environment - and all three are important (for Monusco).

Yes, communicating better is every bit important.

But strategic communication alone will not rebuild the legitimacy of the mission. The Congolese people expect MONUSCO to give her physical protection. The mission's legitimacy stems from a mission-wide robust posture that provides physical protection through projection and presence.

This is a necessary condition to create a virtuous circle that will restore the people's confidence in the action of MONUSCO and the UN.

Madam SRSG, I would also like to ask a few **questions**:

- How would you describe the level of compliance by all parties to the ceasefire that went into force on Friday Nov 25<sup>th</sup> following the Mini Summit in Luanda? Has MONUSCO investigated the incident – a clear violation of the ceasefire - in the town of Kishishe in North Kivu on Tuesday Nov 29<sup>th</sup>? Who and what instigated the killings? What are the facts?
- You shared with us in your last meeting your feeling that extra Quick Reaction Forces would be useful. What is the thinking around this at this point?
- Accountability is a two way street: accountability of and for peacekeepers. I'm grateful for the updates the SG report provides on accountability for attacks against peacekeepers. Could you also update us on the accountability efforts and state of play in the investigations into the killings of civilians at the Kasindi border on July 31<sup>st</sup>? The SG report refers to alleged violations by third countries in the conduct of joint operations with the FARDC in the DRC. Which accountability measures have been taken by the nations to ensure compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law and accountability for violations?
- Could you also update us on filling the capability gaps that you identified in our last meeting: heavy artillery, signals, attack helicopters, EID disposal capabilities?
- What is the current level of coordination from other forces in DRC, such as the EAC regional force, with MONUSCO?

Thank you