

Speech by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve,
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

at the United Nations Security Council

MONUSCO - Briefing

New York, 18 March 2019

Mr President,

First of all, we would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Ms Tenga Modi for their briefing of this morning. Their briefing and the Secretary-General's latest report on MONUSCO provide us with a good overview of the current situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr President,

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

Firstly: my first message concerns the political situation.

- We welcome the statements by the new President in support of the changes aspired to by the Congolese people . We encourage all political actors in DRC to take concrete measures to bring about these profound changes in the political space, in line with the first steps taken, such as the release of certain political prisoners. In the European and bilateral context, we welcome recent developments, which demonstrate a real willingness to deepen our relationship.

- However, we must not forget that the electoral process is not yet complete, as elections have yet to be held in Beni, Butembo and Yumbi. In the meantime, the formation of a new government is still pending.
- There are numerous reports of widespread corruption in the context of the recent senatorial elections, despite the fact that the highest judicial authorities in DRC had issued specific warnings.
- In this context, President Tshisekedi has decided to address the situation. As guarantor of the institutions, we call upon him to restore institutional order and the rule of law, and to launch a credible fight against the corruption that threatens the country's governance. The consolidation of strong, competent and impartial national institutions must allow for the strengthening of the legitimacy of the State, the prevention of future institutional crises and the establishment of a lasting culture of democratic change.

Secondly: my second message concerns the pacification of the DRC and the restoration of State authority.

- In this regard, we hope particular attention will be paid to the persistent violence and attacks against civilians, which continue to plunge the Congolese population into one of the worst humanitarian disasters in the world. We recall the unprecedented level of violence of the recent inter-community attacks in Yumbi, which left several hundred people dead and thousands displaced in a few days in December 2018. This violence, which according to the United Nations could constitute crimes against humanity, would not have been possible if the authority of the State had been present in this area. The persistent fighting between armed groups in Masisi

Territory, the deadly attacks by the ADF in Beni Territory and the recent fighting in Minembwe are all dramatic situations which require strong and urgent measures.

- The restoration of State authority is essential for the pacification of the territory, the resolution of the root causes of conflict, and the security of the population. It is also essential for purposes of development and the rule of law for the benefit of the Congolese people.

Thirdly: my third message concerns MONUSCO.

The future of MONUSCO must be built on a genuine exit strategy, which itself should be based on benchmarks clearly identified by an independent strategic review. Such a strategy must be based on the ability and real willingness of the new Congolese authorities to themselves take on the tasks which are currently carried out by MONUSCO. In the meantime, the protection of civilians – be it in the military, health or human rights context - must remain the cornerstone on which MONUSCO is based.

Belgium is convinced that an interim mandate which is *limited* in time would enable us to deepen our reflection on these benchmarks while avoiding the risk of remaining immobilised in a changing context.

Finally, we must remain attentive to the regional framework and its evolution. Our focus of today on the future of MONUSCO should not divert us from the fact that the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region are closely intertwined. As the problems are often shared, so are the solutions. In this regard, we welcome the opportunity which this Council will have in the coming weeks to discuss the latest developments in the region.

Thank you for your attention.