

**S/2017/565:**

**Report of the Secretary-General:**

**On the United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO)**

Date: 30 June 2017

Period: 17 May- 30 June 2017

**MANDATE**

Pursuant to Security Council Resolutions [2348 \(2017\)](#), [2293 \(2016\)](#), [2277 \(2016\)](#), [2211 \(2015\)](#), [2198 \(2015\)](#), [2147 \(2014\)](#), [2136 \(2014\)](#) and [2098 \(2013\)](#), the Security Council calls on all stakeholders in the DRC to lay down their arms and adopt a collaborative and consensual approach to the full implementation of the [31 December peace agreement](#). This entails intensifying efforts to ensure all signatories of the agreement are included in its implementation, and the swift organisation of credible, free, transparent and peaceful elections by December 2017. Expressing concern about increasing human rights violation in the DRC, the Security Council also urges the Congolese authorities to carry judicial proceedings so as to bring the perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and combat impunity.

**GENERAL ANALYSIS**

This report covers political and security developments in the DRC from 17 May 2017 to 30 June 2017. First, it expresses concern over the “slow and incomplete” implementation of the political agreement (para. 2). Specifically, it is alarmed at the continued hostility between President Kabila’s Majorité Présidentielle and the Rassemblement opposition platform. Elections represent a second concern for the Secretary-General. While the current positive developments in voter registration are welcomed, the Secretary-General further encourages the International National Electoral Commission to issue the long-awaited electoral calendar and calls on the national Congolese authorities to promptly implement confidence-building measures aimed at creating an environment conducive to elections. Concerning the security situation, the Secretary-General expresses major concerns about the increasing violence and threat to civilians in the DRC. The report revealed MONUSCO documented 1,444 human rights violations committed from March to May, in comparison with 888 violations recorded in January and February (para. 39). Such increase in violence is concerning as it exacerbates intercommunal tensions and divisions. Moreover, political opponents and civil society activists were reported to be the

main victims of attacks on freedom of peaceful assembly, of opposition and expression, illustrating a clear shrinking of democratic space throughout the country (para. 40).

Of the 66 paragraphs in the report, 10 (15 percent) of them include reference to women and gender, with the majority of references to women's vulnerability. First, the report highlights women were victims of human rights violations. It also underscores that 74 women and girls were reported to have been victims of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) during the period under review (para. 46). Moreover, 12 allegations of perpetration of acts of SEA were recorded. On the other hand, the report mentions important gender-sensitive disarmament and reinsertion efforts on the part of MONUSCO. Specifically, it highlights that MONUSCO provided vocational training to 917 former combatants, 13 of whom were female (para. 35). This latest development is very encouraging as including gender analysis in SSR/DDR planning and implementation helps ensure that reintegration opportunities do not further entrench harmful gender stereotypes and gender-based discrimination or violate women's human rights. [Significant barriers to women's representation and participation](#) in political and security processes remain, due, in part to a lack of political will, financing, and implementation of relevant gender equality policy frameworks.

## **GENDER ANALYSIS**

### **Protection**

The report fails to provide the necessary recommendations on protection strategies, policies and actions to incorporate a gender perspective at all levels of MONUSCO's implementation. First, the report underscores women continue to be victims of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). However, the report falls short of providing comprehensive recommendations on how to protect Congolese women for SGBV. In this regard, reinstating funding for stand-alone and multi-sectoral SGBV services, which include medical, psychosocial, judicial, socio-economic and prevention activities, is key. Moreover, the report fails to acknowledge the specific challenges displaced women face, such as increased risk of human rights abuses, harassment and discrimination, but also restricted access to resources, education, decision-making and medical treatment. Nor does it mention women victims from human trafficking, forced prostitution and sexual slavery. In this regard, the Congolese government ought to implement existing international laws prohibiting human trafficking and provide greater support to victims.

### **Prevention**

Participation of women in electoral process is another important way of achieving feminist peace and prevent conflict from escalation. As women are known to disproportionately suffer from electoral violence, they therefore should have a role in preventing electoral instability to spiral in all-out violence. While the report warns that political tensions could reignite and the electoral process could experience further delays if the political process continues to be hampered by inflexibility and grandstanding, it fails to mention the need for greater representation of women in mechanisms for conflict prevention. Sitting at the important nexus of power and influence, the electoral process can spark violence very quickly.

### **Participation**

While [Resolution 2348](#) explicitly calls for women's representation and participation *at all stages* of the electoral process, the present report does not discuss any efforts to boost women's political participation. Moreover, it does not mention the involvement of civil society in the implementation of the 31 December political agreement. Positive developments concerning women's voter registration are however to be highlighted. Indeed, in our analysis of the Secretary-General report [S/2017/435](#), we underscored the need for specific figures on women's registration to be included in the Secretary-General's future reports. The present report's announcement that "over 28 million potential voters had been registered [...] in which the proportion of women is 48 per cent" is thus a positive step forward (para. 7). Figures on women's voter registration are indeed key to monitor women's electoral participation and ensure women's voices are being heard. Moreover, mentioning of women's participation in the Congolese economy is to be highlighted as well. In fact, in May 2017, Prime Minister Bruno Tshibala, pledged to stabilise the country's economic situation and create employment opportunities, especially for women and youth. While these are encouraging signs, women's economic empowerment in the DRC must be more strongly advocated for.

### **Relief and Recovery/ Implementation**

The report also mentions women in the context of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and importantly underscores that efforts are ongoing to broaden assistance and support to victims, including through training programmes for personnel, risk assessment of bases and camps, military police deterrent patrol and enforcement of strict curfew and out-of-bound regimes. MONUSCO has made progress in adjusting its priorities with respect to supporting the implementation of the political agreement in the DRC. However, its implementation is still hampered by the [UN's recent budget cuts](#) of peacekeeping missions. In fact, the multi-partner basket support fund for the elections managed by UNDP remains funded at the level of only 6 percent (para. 8) while OCHA's

Humanitarian Response Plan is funded at slightly less than 20 percent of what it ought to be (para. 50). To move forward, financial support must be a core component of any international support provided to advance negotiations in the DRC.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Protection**

The report should include information about MONUSCO's efforts to support relevant actors, including missions, governments, civil society members or UN country offices in protecting women during the current unstable transitional period in the DRC, at a moment when women are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations. Moreover, as the UN and its partners work to implement the political agreement of 31 December 2016, they must ensure a gender analysis is integrated into all areas of action and that recommendations pay particular attention to promoting and protecting women's human rights, including the deployment of women's protection advisers (WPAs). Reporting should include information on the Government's efforts to address SGBV, including the implementation of [a national strategy to combat SGBV](#).

### **Prevention**

In the report, the focus on conflict prevention remains lacking. In the present context, spontaneous, popular protests could escalate as a result of the socio-economic situation and the growing disconnect between decision makers and their political constituencies. The most effective way to prevent such instability from occurring would be for MONUSCO to develop more inclusive conflict prevention mechanisms and recognise women as constructive participants in designing and implementing disarmament strategies and early-warning mechanisms. A systematic collection of information about sexual and gender-based violence in the DRC is also required. In this regard, the 2015 [Women's Situation Room \(WSR\)](#) in Nigeria, which aimed to create an early warning and early response mechanism for electoral violence surrounding the 2015 general election, is a good practice that can be reiterated by the UN Secretary-General in the context of the DRC.

### **Participation**

While the international community is well aware of Congolese women's abilities as political actors, the existing power dynamic still makes it difficult for their voices to be heard – or taken seriously – in the current political transition. Women's formal involvement in the upcoming electoral process in the DRC, as per the 31 December Agreement, can act as a platform for women's increased political inclusion, and help advance gender justice in the DRC. Women should not stay on the sidelines of this historic

shift in Congolese politics. As put forward by [Resolution 2348](#), the Secretary-General should reiterate its call to the Government of the DRC and its national partners, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), to push for the full participation of women, including as members of civil society, at all stage of the electoral process, in order to ensure a transparent and credible electoral process. Moreover, MONUSCO ought to support the attendance and meaningful participation of civil society organisations during this critical time to ensure a gender lens in the prioritisation, coordination, development and implementation of policies and programmes.

### **Relief and Recovery/ Implementation**

The current difficult budgetary situation endangers the implementation of MONUSCO. MONUSCO is the UN's largest and most expensive peacekeeping operation and needs extensive funding reflecting a clear vision for a more effective mission, or a more peaceful DRC. Moreover, budget cuts will affect the funding for gender advisor. The presence of gender advisors on mediation teams is key to ensure that an analysis of the differentiated impact of conflict on women, women's role in addressing the situation and outline ongoing barriers to their participation is included.