

Statement of SRSG Martin Kobler to the Security Council

7 August 2014

Mr. President, distinguished members of the Security Council,

I would like to express my gratitude to the United Kingdom, as Council President during the month of August, for drawing the attention of the international community to the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is nearly five months since I last addressed you and one year since I took up the mantle of Special Representative to the DRC. Much has changed over these twelve months – developments which seemed hard to imagine in August 2013.

These developments were achieved not only by MONUSCO or the DRC alone. They are the result of a team effort. And that team was led by a master stateswoman, Special Envoy Mary Robinson. Without her, truly, I could not sit before you today with a positive balance sheet. Working hand in glove with this special 'Special Envoy' over the past year has been a professional and personal privilege. I deeply regret losing her as my partner in our joint endeavor to see a lasting peace in the Great Lakes region. But I look forward to working with her successor, Said Djinnit, a man well-versed in the intricacies of African politics.

In August 2013, the M23 was knocking on the gates of Goma. Daily reports of killings, rapes and displacement, causing suffering among the population. You had just condemned the bloody attacks by the ADF on Congolese citizens, which forced 66,000 Congolese to flee their homes. FDLR activity in eastern DRC was on the rise, with reports of attacks on Rwandan territory as well.

Today, through joint efforts of Congolese military forces and the UN Force, the M23 is no more.

- o Today, the FARDC – at great cost to its troops – has reduced the ADF to a shadow of its former self.
- o Today, almost 4,000 combatants from a variety of Congolese armed groups have surrendered.
- o And today, the FDLR appears to start to voluntarily disarm while almost 500.000 displaced persons have returned to their homes.

In August 2013, we could merely imagine an end to the M23 conflict, let alone agreement to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate fighters. But today, thanks to the declarations signed in Nairobi last December, this process is well underway. I applaud the efforts of the Government of the DRC to fulfill their Nairobi commitments – enacting the Amnesty law and providing ex-M23 combatants in Uganda and Rwanda the opportunity to apply for it. The implementation of the Nairobi Declarations remains however too slow. Ex-combatants and their families continue living in camps under difficult circumstances. The Nairobi Declarations clearly stipulate a reintegration on an individual basis under the DDR scheme. We therefore pay great attention to reports of the return of ex-M23 elements across the border outside the DDR process. I welcome and continue to encourage cooperation between the three Governments to bring this episode to a definite close.

Mr. President

Cooperation between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda is crucial to sustainable peace. The clashes of 11 and 12 June near Kibumba in which five FARDC soldiers died highlight the dangers of unclear borders. I salute the DRC and Rwanda for revitalizing their joint border commission which should lay out a viable roadmap to delineate this contentious border but was unfortunately put on ice at the emergence of the M23.

Mr. President, members of the Council

There can be no doubt that the security situation has vastly improved since this time last year. However, conflict persists, the situation is still fragile and not irreversible.

Early warning mechanisms are in place. Still, when a massacre of 33 people occurs such as in Mutarule on 3 June, we are often slow to react. It is true the National Police and Army were close to the place of the massacre and failed to intervene. But also MONUSCO troops were mere nine kilometers away, but did not leave the base. There must be accountability for inaction. I am joined today by the Force Commander, General Dos Santos Cruz. We share the same vision and personal friendship. The Force Commander and I visited Mutarule and I publically took responsibility and apologized to the communities. At the same time the UN commander of the Sange base who failed to act, has been relieved of his duties while an internal investigation is proceeding.

The incident brought to light the need for a paradigm shift in thought and action of UN forces. From reaction to prevention. From static to mobile. From a mindset of protection-by-presence to one of protection-by-action. Both the Force Commander

and I have instructed our teams – military and civilian – to follow one simple rule when lives are in danger: “Don’t ask, act!” I call on all Troop Contributing Countries to join in this robust peacekeeping approach and in this instruction to actively protect civilians.

Mr. President,

The first priority of the Mission has been to put an end to the FDLR.

Since 2002, over 11,000 FDLR combatants in the DRC were successfully disarmed, demobilized, repatriated and reintegrated into Rwandan society. The DRC estimates that some 1,500 combatants remain in country. That’s all – 1,500 combatants and their dependents. We are now at the endgame.

- It is time for those 1,500 to stop the fight.
- It is time for those sought by justice to be put before the appropriate tribunals.
- It is time for those that can go back to Rwanda to do so – and I welcome Rwanda’s readiness to accept those who go through the DDR process as it has done with thousands of ex-FDLR combatants before.

In January, I told the Council that military pressure would be necessary to lead to disarmament – it has. The FDLR declared its commitment to disarm – but let us admit, it has done so many times before.

It is the declared intention of the Congolese Government for the remnants of the FDLR to be resettled outside the DRC. On 27 May the Government of the DRC presented a plan of voluntary disarmament within a period of 22 days and

requested MONUSCO's logistical support. The plan foresaw the regroupement of FDLR combatants in two camps in North and South Kivu followed by a quick relocation to a provision camp in Kisangani outside the Kivus until a final solution is found. I made it the Mission's first priority. Overnight, my team mobilized flights, trucks, food, tents, water, mattresses, blankets, and prepared camps in North and South Kivu. Since then, 186 combatants and 430 dependents voluntarily disarmed. To date, we have provided security together with the FARDC, medical services, 46 special flights, and more than 20 tons of food.

A joint ministerial meeting of SADC and ICGLR on the 2nd of July in Luanda extended this timeline from 22 days to six months starting on July 2nd. The FDLR interpreted this decision as a call to stall the process. In addition, the perceived absence of military pressure has thrown the process into the freezer. Since July 2nd there was no movement to the provisional camp in Kisangani according to the plan of the government. It is telling that the week after the Luanda decision, the FDLR cancelled three meetings. Since then, the DRC, SADC and MONUSCO have undertaken many missions to convince the FDLR to move forward. Their leadership has largely ignored these delegations. It refuses to give the order to transfer the first groups out of preliminary camps, preventing any further disarmament. This is a serious signal of non-cooperation. Standing still means we are moving backwards. Experience however has shown that only a combination of political and military pressure has led to disarmament and demobilization. I am therefore grateful for the consensus among the SADC and ICGLR members states including the DRC, that the military option remains firmly on the table should the process continue to stall.

I am furthermore concerned about the security of those residing in the camps. The FARDC and MONUSCO do their best to provide a secure environment. However, the smaller the number of ex-combatants and their dependents in those regroupement camps, and the faster they move to more secure areas, the better.

The SADC-ICGLR Communiqué calls for a three-months review in October. This must be the moment for a serious assessment of the credibility of the disarmament process. This must also be the moment to decide whether to proceed further. I applaud Minister Tshibanda for setting up coordination meetings bringing together the Government of the DRC, the SADC, the ICGLR and MONUSCO. I am confident that the mini-Summit in Luanda next week will bring about the necessary decisions to move the process ahead.

Minister,

I am also extremely grateful for the close and constructive cooperation of you and the government of the DRC in bringing about a peaceful solution. I am also very grateful for the commitment of President Kabila to resort to joint military action should peaceful means fail. Together we must agree on criteria to assess the credibility of the current disarmament process and converge on a common course of action if it is deemed insufficient. I suggest the following criteria:

- Number and quality of surrendering combatants and their weapons
- Hand-over to international courts of those who are indicted
- Restoration of government authority over vacated areas.
- Immediate cessation of human rights violations
- Disengagement from illicit economic activities

- o Cessation of recruitment

Meanwhile, I suggest joint military actions against those FDLR factions not willing to disarm and act against those who continue to commit human rights violations.

In six months much can happen. The longer the process takes, the higher the risk that spoilers will enter the game. Rival armed groups may seek to replace FDLR in liberated areas. As the FDLR is at the center of local and regional conflict dynamics, delay of the process could set the ground for an escalation of conflict.

The end of the FDLR will be a turning point which will fundamentally alter the security situation in eastern DRC and the region. If we get this right, the gains will be evident. Peace, stability and prosperity in eastern DRC for the benefit of a population that has suffered so much. But if we get it wrong, the conflict will drag on. We must all commit all we have to making this work. My messages are the following:

To the FDLR: seize this last opportunity and move forward with this process. All combatants, including leaders, must disarm now. All human rights violations must stop now. Those who are indicted must face justice in international courts.

To the Congolese Government: This is also your process. We are here to support you every step of the way. But we look to you to bring all those involved – regional and international partners, and FDLR alike – into agreement on the way ahead.

To SADC/ICGLR: I want to express my deepest appreciation and support. Success depends on your sustained engagement and support. Do all you can to jointly

pressure the FDLR to engage; the three-month review must seriously assess the credibility of the disarmament process.

To regional actors: Use the Peace Security and Cooperation Framework and the good offices of Angolan President Dos Santos as chair of ICGLR to find sustainable compromises on the competing interests which have brought instability to the DRC for decades.

Finally to the international community: Open your doors to offer a final destination to ex-combatants unable or unwilling to return to Rwanda. Offer a peaceful future for their children and the children of the region.

Mr. President,

We have rapidly climbed a steep slope towards stabilization in eastern DRC. I welcome the National DDR Plan, finalized in July as a critical step in stabilizing the East. As it becomes operational, more and more combatants may trade their swords for ploughshares. But reintegration programs of ex-combatants have a price tag. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that donors quickly support the Government's plan.

With the expulsions of various armed groups from areas in North Kivu, Islands of Stability have begun to emerge from a sea of volatility. State Authority is gradually returning.

Nearly 1000 national police have either returned or were deployed for the first time. And with them has come an improvement of security in some areas and a return of

the displaced. I encourage the Government of the DRC to prioritize the return of Congolese police and civil servants to consolidate these gains.

In tiny Pinga, for example, since expelling Cheka in December, life has significantly improved. A steady return of civilians saw an increase in population from 5,000 to 17,000. Remarkably, the communities formerly allied to warring groups have begun a process of reconciliation.

In the markets, as travel throughout the province has become easier, goods like clothes, shoes, books, medicines, beauty products and electronics are increasingly available. Similarly, as farmers are able to safely work their fields and traders bring more goods to market, prices of foodstuffs have fallen 20, 30 up to 50 per cent. A mother in Rutshuru buying staples for her family – a plate of beans, a tin of rice, a heap of cassava leaves, a kilo of fish – would see her bill drop 25%.

However, gains remain fragile as splinter groups and remnant armed groups continue to harass the civilian populations and remain involved in criminal activities including the illicit exploitation of natural resources, smuggling, and illegal taxation.

Mr. President,

At the national level, elections dominate the political discourse. Through good offices I aimed at reconciling differences. Only through inclusive dialogue can we hope to set the foundation for a free, fair and credible electoral process, whose outcome will contribute to more, not less, stability.

It is important that the opposition is given space to express itself. MONUSCO's electoral incidents task force is closely monitoring the situation in particular the arrest of Member of Parliament Ewanga.

It is important that electoral decisions are based on the Congolese constitution which aimed at creating a durable foundation for a new Republic and to prevent a return to undemocratic practices of the past.

The publication in May of an electoral calendar for local elections is a good first step. I understand the Government's budgetary and legislative constraints to publishing a global calendar. But donors are clear: a roadmap through 2016 with adequate financial commitment by the DRC Government is a prerequisite for their support.

Security sector reform has gotten a bad rap in the DRC. But behind this imposing name lies a simple aim: to make people feel safe to live their lives, to go to school, to work or to market, to raise a family without fear – and to trust that their police and military are there to protect them. The reform of the security sector is also the condition for an exit of MONUSCO from the country. Only an efficient Rapid Reaction Force can replace MONUSCO's intervention brigade.

Progress is still slow. Nonetheless, I welcome recent Government participation in the SSR task force and its readiness to work together to define standards and to develop a roadmap for moving forward. I have confidence that MONUSCO's newly reinforced SSR Unit will build on these developments.

However I regret to inform the Council that the transfer of demining activities to UNMAS, in its capacity as a member of the UN Country Team specialized in demining has not received adequate financial support and will cease the implementation of its mandated tasks.

M. le Président,

Me voici en fonction depuis un an. Je suis heureux d'observer certains progrès. Un progrès tangible. Un nombre de groupes armés a été renvoyé aux livres d'histoire. D'autres suivront. De surcroît, un nombre croissant de congolaises et de congolais peuvent envisager un avenir meilleur. Néanmoins, ces développements positifs ne constituent que le début de l'instauration d'une paix durable dans la région des Grand Lacs. Tous ensemble, nous y travaillons chaque jour.

Permettez-moi de remercier. Ce progrès est entre autres le résultat d'un engagement quotidien et d'une détermination sans faille de l'ensemble du personnel des Nations Unies en RDC. En particulier je souhaiterais souligner l'importance et exprimer mon immense reconnaissance pour le travail délicat et pas toujours visible des Assistants de Liaison aux Communautés. Ces collègues nationaux sont le lien organique entre la Force de la MONUSCO et les populations qu'elle protège.

M. le Président et distingués membres du Conseil de Sécurité, vous aussi je vous remercie. Votre soutien décisif et résolu, nous rassure et permet d'avancer avec confiance et énergie vers la réalisation du mandat que vous nous avez confié.