

**2021 Seoul UN Peacekeeping Ministerial meeting
Session IV on Safety and Security and Protection**

**SRSB Bintou Keita, MONUSCO
8 December 2021**

Mr. Lacroix, Chair of this session,

Your Excellency, Mr. Knapen, Foreign Minister of the Netherlands,

**Your Excellency, Ms. Thomas-Greenfield, Permanent Representative of the
United States to the United Nations,**

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this session.

High level of risk to the safety and security of peacekeepers

- Allow me to thank you for the continuous commitment that your countries have shown in support of MONUSCO and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in a security environment that remains complex and volatile.
- We cannot think of the safety of peacekeepers without looking into the ways we implement our protection of civilians (POC) mandate. Our efforts to protect both civilians and our own personnel are mutually reinforcing. When we deliver on the protection of populations, we are more secure. We

gain the trust of communities, and we can implement our mandate more effectively.

- In April, there was a wave of demonstrations against the deteriorating security situation in the province of North Kivu, with some demonstrators claiming that national authorities and UN were not fulfilling their mandate to protect civilians. Security incidents targeted national security forces and UN personnel and vehicles, impacting the ability of UN actors to implement their mandates. These developments demonstrate the close link between the security of civilian populations and our own.
- The link between protection of civilians and the security of peacekeepers is evident in other contexts. In Mali, the stalled political process has allowed threats to both civilians and peacekeepers to proliferate. Attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) have compounded equipment shortfalls by damaging armored personnel carriers and mine-protected vehicles, which have not been sufficiently replaced.
- There are also hopeful developments, however. In the Central African Republic, the landmark prosecution last year of 28 individuals responsible for the killing of 75 civilians and 10 peacekeepers underlines how efforts to bring to justice those who attack civilians and to establish accountability for attacks against peacekeepers go hand in hand.

An inseparable link with the implementation of our protection mandate

- Beyond adequate unit requirements and equipment, we must enhance situational awareness. Through community engagement, including the

deployment of engagement teams and an increased number of female peacekeepers, we obtain information on protection threats and demonstrate that our presence is valuable.

- Together with UN Headquarters and Member States, we continue to adopt a more mobile and flexible deployment and enhance our peacekeeping intelligence architecture and early warning and response systems. We are improving the conditions of service and ensuring the protection of uniformed personnel, including addressing emerging threats to our personnel posed by IEDs and improving medical support.

Action for Peacekeeping

- These actions are emblematic of ‘Action for Peacekeeping’, which is a blueprint for collective action to promote the protection of civilians and the safety and security of peacekeepers.
- We must pursue **political solutions** to tackle the root causes of conflict from which threats emanate. **Improving performance** is key to ensuring we are adapted to confront and defuse threats.
- Lastly, leveraging **partnerships** remains essential. The Transition Plan for MONUSCO’s progressive and phased drawdown, developed jointly with the Congolese Government, is centered on an end state that envisions reducing the threat posed by armed groups that are currently targeting civilians and UN personnel alike. Achieving the benchmarks contained therein will require us to deepen partnerships within the UN system, with Member States, and with international financial institutions.

Conclusion

- Honoring the memory of fallen peacekeepers and civilian victims of conflict requires us to seek political solutions with greater energy and creativity. It requires us to further enhance our robust posture and ensure that peacekeepers have adequate means, training, equipment, and mindsets to match an evolving threat. It requires us to be ambitious in the scale and scope of our partnerships.
- I thank Member States for the pledges made in support to UN peacekeeping, to meet our most urgent and important needs. They are essential to the protection, safety and security of our peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo.