



## **OVERVIEW OF SECURITY EFFORTS BY THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Security has been and remains a critical prerequisite for the peace and well-being of the Congolese people, as well as for the nation's political and economic development. Since the 2002 peace accords, DRC security forces have helped stabilize regions wracked by conflict, removing foreign forces and rebels from much of the country.

Efforts continue, in coordination with the United Nations and partner countries, to re-establish peace in some provinces, and to improve relations with our neighbors.

Meanwhile, the DRC is actively reforming its security sector, including the army and police. Training supported by the international community is facilitating the modernization of the DRC's security forces to ensure that they are strong, well equipped, professional and respectful of the rights of all.

### ***Ensuring Safe and Peaceful Upcoming Elections***

Improved security has been and remains an important foundation for the development of the DRC's democratic institutions. In addition to stating his commitment to uphold the Constitution, President Kabila called earlier this year for a national dialogue to encourage participation by all stakeholders and ensure a peaceful environment throughout this election period, which will culminate in 2016 with the presidential election.

As recently as this week, U.S. Under Secretary of State Sarah Sewall, during a visit to the DRC's capital Kinshasa, remarked on the need for this same type of "inclusive forum" that will allow the DRC's political and civic leaders to reach a consensus on the way forward to ensure safe and peaceful elections.

Under Secretary Sewall also commented on the progress the government has made in improving the nation's security, saying:

*[The DRC] has achieved hard-won although unfinished success against armed groups like the M23, and it has brought a measure of security to communities that had long afflicted by strife – even though much work remains to end the violence. The government also has taken initial steps to hold accountable the perpetrators of horrific atrocities against civilians – whether those perpetrators fight against the state or on its behalf.*

### ***Ending Sexual Violence***

The DRC has made great strides in tandem with the international community to stop sexual violence across its territory, as recognized in a recent UN report that noted a 33% decline in rapes attributable to armed men between 2013 and 2014. Some of the actions that the government has taken in recent years include:

- In March 2013, the DRC government signed a Joint Communiqué with the United Nations that outlined its priority areas in countering sexual violence.
- In July 2014, President Kabila appointed Jeanine Mabunda Lioko as his Personal Representative on Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment. Since Ms. Mabunda's appointment, which was hailed by the United Nations as a "new dawn," the DRC has strengthened efforts against sexual violence. Ms. Mabunda's focus on combating impunity has resulted in an increase of prosecutions and convictions of those charged with sexual violence crime, including within the country's security forces.
- Between July and December 2014, 135 cases were brought before the courts in the government's efforts to fight against impunity for perpetrators of sexual assault. These cases brought sexual violence charges against military and police personnel, including high-ranking officers in each force.
- The DRC government established an emergency hotline in November 2014 to respond to victims of sexual violence seeking medical or legal assistance.
- In March 2015, the FARDC took an important step forward in the fight against conflict-related sexual violence when Army commanders signed a landmark declaration to combat rape in war.
- Since January 2015, 197 FARDC soldiers have paid the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives in combat operations to neutralize armed groups responsible for sexual crimes in South Kivu and North Kivu provinces

### ***Combatting the FDLR***

The government and Armed Forces are determined to ensure the security and territorial integrity of the DRC. To this end, significant gains against remaining elements of the rebel group known as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) have been achieved in recent months:

- In an address earlier this year to the UN Security Council, Martin Kobler, then head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), said that the government and security forces are making great strides in reuniting the DRC. "Today, the country is unified. There is a clear, shared and celebrated Congolese identity. There is no longer war, nor is it in transition. It is a proud nation," he said.
- On August 4, the DRC government reported that less than 500 active elements of the FDLR remain in the country. The headcount was given by General Mushale Leon, commander of the third zone defense of the Armed Forces of the DRC (FARDC).
- On August 28, the DRC Minister for Foreign Affairs, Raymond Tshibanda, indicated in a meeting with the diplomatic corps that the number of FDLR elements left to be neutralized ranged between 400 and 500.

- A German court recently sentenced two Rwandan FDLR rebel leaders who had organized attacks on civilians in the country, a significant step toward ending impunity in the Great Lakes region.

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