

Speech: Supporting Victims of Human Rights Abuses in DRC

Mr President, let me begin by thanking Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Leila Zerrougui and Executive Director of AFIA MAMA, Anny Tenga Modi, for their informative briefings this morning. I will focus my intervention on four issues: human rights, the political situation, the humanitarian situation and MONUSCO.

Mr President, helping survivors of sexual and gender-based violence is a UK priority in the DRC. We welcome the opportunity to hear from Ms Tenga Modi this morning, whose NGO does vital work to empower women, particularly those who are survivors of violence.

In this context, I would like to very briefly raise a project that UK Aid has funded in fifteen villages in the Ituri region, which is working to challenge the social acceptance of violence against women and girls. Over just two years, women's experience of domestic violence fell from 69% to 29%. And the percentage of men reporting that they had carried out domestic violence dropped from 68% to 24% in the same time period. These results show that sexual and gender-based violence can be tackled effectively, even in conflict-related settings.

The UK remains concerned that rape, including mass rape, continues to be used as a weapon of war by armed groups and state actors. The United Kingdom condemns all acts of sexual and gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence, and we call upon the new government to deliver on its promises to bring perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence and other human rights abuses to justice.

Mr President, several other delegations this morning have raised the situation in Yumbi. The United Kingdom is deeply concerned about the violence that took place in Yumbi territory in December 2018. The latest report from the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in DRC suggests that as many as 890 people were killed and thousands more displaced.

We echo the comments made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet. We condemn all such violence and the perpetrators of these abhorrent crimes must be imminently brought to justice swiftly. Our Embassy in the DRC has raised our concerns with government authorities in the region and with local UN representatives.

Mr President, the United Kingdom remains concerned at the reported discrepancies around the official results for the Presidential, Parliamentary and Provincial elections. Continued efforts for increased transparency and inclusive dialogue with all political parties remain vital as DRC's electoral process continues towards local election in late 2019 and 2020.

The Congolese people clearly voted for change. The United Kingdom will engage

with President Tshisekedi and his team to understand their plans for improving stability and prosperity in the DRC. A stable and prosperous DRC is vital for the Congolese people, for the region and for the rest of the international community.

Mr President, turning to the Ebola outbreak, the United Kingdom commends the response to date, particularly given the challenging environment in which humanitarian and medical are operating. We deplore recent attacks on Ebola treatment centres and those responding to the outbreak. We once again strongly urge all parties to the armed conflict to fully respect international law and ensure full, safe, immediate and unhindered access for humanitarian and medical personnel.

The Government of the DRC has just set out its Ebola response plan until the end of July. It is crucial that the international community steps up to support DRC and curb this outbreak as quickly as possible. The United Kingdom is making a significant contribution to this plan and urges others to do the same.

Finally, as we approach the renewal of the MONUSCO mandate, the United Kingdom agrees that now is the time for the Mission to re-focus on an exit strategy. It is incumbent upon us all to ensure a responsible and sustainable exit of MONUSCO. Therefore, a fully consultative strategic review of the Mission will need to be undertaken before the Council makes a decision on the shape of MONUSCO's exit.

Thank you, Mr President.