



## Security Council briefing on the DRC, 20 February 2024

Malta Statement delivered by Ms. Francesca Gatt

Deputy Permanent Representative of Malta to the United Nations, New York

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Thank you, President, and thank you SRSG Keita for your comprehensive briefing.

I also thank France for calling today's meeting in light of the escalating conflict in the eastern DRC.

Malta unequivocally condemns the offensive by the M23, as well as any external support and military presence. We decisively reaffirm the imperative to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

We are alarmed that recent military escalations have resulted in increased casualties and displacements, heightening the risk of an open regional conflict. Notwithstanding the country's natural wealth in resources, the DRC remains extremely vulnerable to predatory attacks. This situation has reached deplorable levels.



The country is witnessing immense humanitarian needs, and the largest number of internally displaced people on the continent. Over 25 million persons require assistance, with women and children being the most disproportionately affected.

We condemn all violations of international humanitarian law, abuses of human rights, and increasing sexual and gender-based violence. We remind parties of their obligations under international law, and to ensure rapid, safe, and unimpeded humanitarian access.

Activities by more than 100 armed groups underscore the urgent need to cease all support to these groups and compel them to lay down their weapons.

Malta has repeatedly supported regional diplomatic initiatives towards de-escalation and addressing the root causes of the conflict through proper mediation. It is imperative that these mediation efforts resume, urging the conflicting parties to address relevant grievances and to restore the path towards peace and stability.



MONUSCO, the United Nations, and the rest of the international community have steadfastly supported the DRC. The recent violent protests and attacks targeting UN personnel and premises, as well as diplomatic missions, are also the consequence of disinformation and misinformation campaigns.

Malta strongly condemns these attacks, and calls for thorough investigations to hold those responsible accountable. We fully support the invaluable work by the UN on the ground and the extraordinary work carried out by its staff.

President

With an escalating conflict in North Kivu, MONUSCO's anticipated withdrawal from South Kivu in less than two months is a difficult scenario that we need to address.

We are increasingly worried about the safety and security of peacekeepers considering M23's direct attacks. Progressive disengagement remains contingent upon the situation on the ground, and the capacity of Congolese forces to step in and protect the civilian population.



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To conclude, President, we call for de-escalation and for regional countries to contribute and prevent a regional conflagration.

I thank you.