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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Council conclusions (9 December 2019)

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo adopted at the 3738th meeting of the Council on 9 December 2019.

Council conclusions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. The most recent elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) saw the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history, opening a window of opportunity for stability and sustainable and inclusive development in the DRC and the region as a whole. By mobilising in this way, the Congolese people clearly expressed their desire for change. Their legitimate expectations must be honoured.
2. The President of the Republic, Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo, has clearly expressed his wish for European Union (EU) support for and commitment to the DRC. The EU will continue to be a partner and key interlocutor of the DRC and recalls that its support for the Congolese people has never ceased. An open and frank political dialogue with the Congolese authorities, as well as with civil society representatives and political stakeholders, will allow the two parties to jointly establish reciprocal commitments that will guide the EU's support for the reform programme. On that basis, the EU will be able to work constructively in the DRC. It will regularly assess the development of this partnership.

3. The EU welcomes the first measures taken to ease political tension and to open up democratic space, and encourages the Congolese authorities to continue in their efforts, though major challenges remain. The EU notes with satisfaction the commitments made by the President to a national recovery based on respect for the rule of law, promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms (including gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls), combating impunity and corruption, and improving the security situation. The EU will continue to monitor the situation and remains ready to support institutional reforms in these areas. The persistently high number of violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, in addition to violence, including sexual violence, requires an appropriate judicial response.

4. The government led by Prime Minister Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba has taken President Tshisekedi's commitments and turned them into an ambitious reform programme. However, the authorities continue to face significant challenges, including in terms of governance, particularly the persistence of corruption, money laundering, infringements of property rights and misappropriation of public funds, and their impact on the mobilisation of the resources needed to achieve the country's development goals. Progress in these areas would help to alleviate social, economic and political tensions. In this regard, the EU stands ready to support the Congolese authorities and encourages them to involve all relevant stakeholders – including political parties and representatives of civil society, women and young people, religious organisations and the private sector – in the development and implementation of the reforms.

5. In order to consolidate democracy and ensure stability, and in anticipation of future elections, the EU calls for the reform of the institutions guaranteeing democracy and electoral procedures, in particular the Constitutional Court and the Independent National Electoral Commission, as part of an inclusive and credible process. It is essential to the consolidation of stability in the DRC that future elections be transparent and credible, and that everyone, including young people and women, participate in them.
6. The EU highlights the fundamental contribution made by civil society to social and political life in the DRC and the role that it must continue to play therein. The EU will remain committed to working alongside it.
7. The EU also recalls the central role of women in building peace to ensure the sustainability of the crisis resolution process, as highlighted by UN Security Council resolution 1325. The EU encourages the Congolese authorities to fulfil their commitments to national recovery by taking all measures necessary to ensure the equal participation of women, including survivors of sexual violence and internally displaced women, in efforts to maintain and promote peace and security. The EU encourages the Congolese authorities to enhance the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.

8. In the east of the country, particularly in North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri, the level of insecurity and instability, the absence of State authority in certain territories and the high number of human rights violations committed by armed groups, but also by agents of the State, remain cause for concern. Further efforts by the authorities are needed, particularly to combat armed groups. The EU encourages the Congolese authorities to continue the ‘disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration’ process in an inclusive and transparent manner, adapting it to the needs and context, going beyond purely military solutions, placing a strong emphasis on civil society, women and the socio-economic integration of the populace, and cooperating with the UN Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) and countries in the region. The EU will support them in these efforts.
9. The reform of the security sector, which is also vital, must be conducted in a constructive, realistic and gradual manner, in order to ensure the professionalisation and structural modernisation of the police, defence and justice sectors.
10. The EU will support the work of the Congolese authorities in these areas to promote peace, security, the rule of law and the return of the State throughout the country, stressing the need for real ownership of the reforms. The UN system, and in particular MONUSCO and the UN Joint Human Rights Office, play a key role in this support, and the EU welcomes their efforts.
11. The EU calls on the Congolese authorities to do more to combat impunity in order to bring the perpetrators of serious human rights violations to justice. This is essential in order to restore the population’s trust and win their support.

12. As it had promised in December 2018, the EU has carried out a review of the individual restrictive measures imposed on Congolese individuals. The EU has decided to revise them; it will further review these measures and stands ready to adjust them in line with developments in the DRC.
13. The efforts made by President Tshisekedi to enhance regional cooperation to ensure peace help secure stability and sustainable development. The EU will continue to support the DRC and its neighbours in order to promote regional integration and the implementation of reciprocal political commitments such as those already taken in the 2013 Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, or in other regional frameworks such as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region.
14. A part of the Congolese population remains particularly affected by the worrying humanitarian situation, which is characterised, amongst other things, by a severe food and nutrition crisis and some of the largest population displacements in the continent, brought about, in particular, by a highly volatile security situation in the east of the country. The ongoing threat of the spread of epidemics such as Ebola and measles is increasing the vulnerability of people in need of humanitarian aid. The EU will continue to support the DRC in this regard, through humanitarian action and the support it gives to health systems. In this respect, it welcomes the President's and the government's commitment to address the humanitarian situation and its root causes.

15. As with its support for the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, the EU intends to continue and develop its cooperation and close dialogue with the DRC on the fight against climate change, on the preservation of the environment and biodiversity, as well as on the sustainable and transparent management of natural resources, including the fight against their illegal exploitation and trafficking. These challenges provide opportunities for the Congolese people, too, particularly in terms of food security, the green economy and job creation.

16. Through reciprocal commitments, the EU will also support the measures taken by the authorities aimed at strengthening the macroeconomic framework and re-engaging with the International Monetary Fund, improving public financial management, fighting corruption and improving the business climate, including combating unfair competition and promoting corporate social responsibility, in order to facilitate European entrepreneurship and investment in a fair and sustainable way, so as to support the DRC's anti-poverty strategy and inclusive and sustainable growth.

17. The EU will continue to work closely with the United Nations, the African Union and the regional organisations and mechanisms of which the DRC is a member, the countries of the region and all its international partners to support peace-building, consolidate stability and support inclusive and sustainable development in the DRC.
