

Statement by Ms. Desanges Kabuo

Thank you very much. Thank you.

In terms of the impacts that particularly affect the prospects for peace and security in the DRC, I would like to say that, first of all, there are consequences related to sexual violence.

The first consequence... The first consequence is the psychological consequence. When I talk about psychological consequences, I see trauma. When a woman is traumatized -- when there is a victim or a survivor who is traumatized -- then, how, how will she deal... how will she deal with her family, how will she deal with her community? There she is underestimated. There, directly, one feels that they are being singled out. Everyone judges the survivor.

There are physical consequences. When I talk about the physical consequences, I really see the illnesses, the different diseases that the survivor contracts. For example, diseases, sexually transmitted infections, HIV-AIDS, fistula, prolapse, cervical cancer, there are mental disorders. And everything else I haven't even mentioned. When you are sick, how are you going to deal with the community? How do you deal with your family? How do you deal with them? I'm also talking about the children who are born from rape, who are a ticking time bomb. And by the way, I can add that this is in addition to the physical consequences, but it will also impact the social consequences, because the community... the community we live in, these children are given names: they call these children "snake children". How then can these children grow up properly? They are time bombs that society creates and our government continues to ignore. These children are going to be pushed aside. They are going to create their own group. And then, maybe one day they will want to take revenge on those who stigmatize them. In the end, whatever happens, it will also fall on us as their mothers -- as their mothers.

In terms of social consequences, there is the stigmatization of survivors in the community. That is, we are really rejected. We are rejected to our own fate. We are even afraid to participate in different meetings or to have a social life like others. You know, as they say, educating one woman is like educating a whole nation. Just as raping one woman -- using rape as a weapon of war -- is like raping a whole nation.

Really, there is no justice in our country. So how can we feel comfortable? When we arrest an executioner here at home, sometimes we find the executioner in the neighborhood a few days later wandering around. We are... we are now afraid to denounce evil. Sometimes you can see some families of survivors who prefer to deny and make amicable arrangements rather than to waste their time seeking justice that will never come. This is terrible.

So you understand that it affects the... it affects the return of peace because we live in a country where impunity reigns. But also, our own families, instead of supporting us when we have been victims, they reject us as if we were responsible for these atrocities, as if we were responsible for what happened to

us, as if we were responsible for the rapes and sexual violence that we experienced. They even reject our children. They call them by any name, it's not serious!

As for the economic consequences, I remind you that psychology always goes hand in hand with finances. When you are raped, when you have been raped, you no longer have hope in life. Sometimes our executioners rape us and they steal our belongings. How, then, are we going to live? How are we going to live? It's difficult to live. It's hard to live without savings.

So that's kind of what we're dealing with in these systems of organizing sexual violence, and it really impacts peace, and it really impacts the whole community.

First of all, I would like to say that MONUSCO's mission is peacekeeping in the Democratic Republic of Congo. That's their mission. That is your mission. So, MONUSCO has been with us for 20 years now! I was only 10 years old when MONUSCO arrived here in the Congo. The first piece of advice I can give to MONUSCO is to restore trust with the population, and especially with us, the victims of sexual violence, because we no longer trust MONUSCO. We know many cases of women who have been raped and abused by MONUSCO agents.

Everyone is talking about it. There is no trial, either. We know that... It is well known that these people or these MONUSCO agents return to their country afterwards. Sometimes they even leave their children born from rape and violence here with us. So finally, there is impunity for the militiamen who attack us and who rape us, but also there are the ... we see that there is ... really that there is impunity for MONUSCO as well! Because they also rape. We -- as victims of these atrocities -- we need justice and we need to be able to trust these people who are supposed to be... to be there to protect us. MONUSCO is there to protect us, because they come from abroad to protect us. And that's what... That's their mandate and their mission, I think. You have to listen to what we're asking you. You, as MONUSCO, you have to listen to what we, the survivors, are asking. It is not normal that, when villages continue to be attacked and raped for 20 years, under your eyes, therefore under the eyes of MONUSCO without your intervention. It is not normal! And there, it is terrible. And there, it hurts your heart. And then there, there you... you want us to get together to say how... how do you want to help us? Yes, okay. It's possible, and so first we have to make sure that there is... that we can trust you again, you as MONUSCO. So, establish a framework for dialogue with us, we survivors. That's the first thing.

Then, the advice I could still give you, me as a survivor, [is that] if you want a victim-centered approach, where the victim is at the center of all the debates, that's a good thing and we need that as well. So, MONUSCO needs to be able to launch programs that will facilitate the establishment of an international criminal court in the Congo to judge the perpetrators of crimes, as ... as proposed in the Mapping Report. You are... I know that you are really... At this stage, it is you who, at your level, have the opportunity to launch an international criminal court in the Congo. We need this, because this report is a much appreciated tool. And with this report, we know that we will be able to launch trials.

Another thing is that MONUSCO can work with us to register all the victims and to facilitate the implementation of reparations, if one day that happens. Because we don't know. Also, MONUSCO could help collect testimonies in a reliable database. We also want there to be more... more women to welcome us and dialogue with us, so that we feel more comfortable as survivors. We also want there to be more feminist peacekeepers, more women peacekeepers to fight sexual violence that MONUSCO is also doing.

So, we also want to work in association with teams that will be able to treat us and take care of us urgently with PEP kits. The PEP kits are a medicine that prevents HIV-AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, and in less than 72 hours, it allows us to eliminate everything that could happen.

That MONUSCO organizes sensitization workshops to explain to our communities that we are not... that they have no right to stigmatize us because it is not our fault. We were raped, it's not really our fault.

Let there also be a space for the child -- to fight against the stigmatization of these children resulting from rape. A space with either toys... A space where we can have psychosocial assistants. A space where there can be trainers in different trades to prepare their future. So it can be a space like the City of Joy in Bukavu, which will allow these children who have been raped to feel really comfortable and where they will no longer be stigmatized.

I also want to ask MONUSCO to have programs for the supervision of young people in order to fight against rape and sexual violence, because, with the context of war here at home, in which we live, young people will emulate what they have always experienced. If they don't have any activities, it will be a vicious circle, and society will be destroyed again and again.

I would also ask MONUSCO to have a professional training center for survivors of sexual violence. And at these centers, I would ask that it is a survivor herself who will be at the center of all activities.

Another thing: MONUSCO should think about those armed groups that are always in the forest, right next to our house and who put us in danger every day. Really, let MONUSCO think about these armed groups, who are in the highlands, who are in the forests... It's... it's a bit complicated here at home.

Let MONUSCO also think, finally, about the protection of human rights defenders, especially those who risk their lives every day working with us, the survivors of rape and sexual violence.

So, that's a bit of it. Thank you very much.