

Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, at the UNSC
Debate on the Democratic Republic of Congo on
18th May 2011)

Thank you, Mr. President,

1. I would like to thank the French Presidency of the Security Council for organizing this timely debate. I would also like to thank Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Minister Tshibanda for their comprehensive briefings. The issues that they have raised and the approach they have suggested should guide us in today's deliberations. We hope today's debate would determine contours of international community's approach to sustain the progress made so far in DRC.

Mr. President,

2. First of all, I would like join others in expressing our deepest regret for the tragic crash of MONUSCO-contracted airplane on April 4, 2011 in Kinshasa that resulted in loss of life of 33 passengers and crew that included UN staff. We express our heartfelt condolences to those who lost their loved ones, colleagues and friends.

Mr. President,

3. The Democratic Republic of Congo is witnessing a critical period in its history. The progress achieved so far in restoring peace and stability needs to be consolidated by entrenching democratic values, focusing on improving security and rule of law and adopting policies conducive for overall economic development of the country. The challenges are indeed difficult but not insurmountable.

4. Holding of credible elections this year would go a long way in sustaining stability in the country. We hope that elections will be held according to the time table in a free and fair manner. The Commission Electorale Nationale Independante (CENI) has already started work on voter registration, consultations with opposition parties and code of conduct. The civil society, media and NGOs should support CENI in creating awareness among the population.

5. India, as the largest democracy in the world, strongly believes in the importance of creating effective representative democratic institutions to address the problems of

the society. The international community, including the UN and MONUSCO, should help the DRC authorities in holding free and fair elections.

Mr. President,

6. Long-term peace and stability cannot be sustained without security and this can only be ensured with effective enforcement of rule of law. Today, most part of DRC except eastern region is free from conflict that the country witnessed during the civil war. The presence of armed groups in eastern provinces of Kivu, Maniema and Katanga poses a serious threat to the existence of the State authorities and they capacity to protect civilians. Unabated acts of violence by elements of armed groups such as Forces Democratiques de Liberation du Rwanda (FDLR), Forces Nationales de Liberation (FNL) and Mayi-Mayi Yakutumba are a matter of serious concern. The situation has been further aggravated by acts of human right violations and sexual violence by elements of Force Armes de la Republique Democratique du Congo (FARDC). The involvement of various armed groups including some elements of security forces in illegal mining is also worrisome. Furthermore, the menace of Lord Resistance Army (LRA) is not just limited to Orientale province but is affecting the whole region. We are also gravely concerned with the precarious humanitarian situation.

7. Focus should, therefore, be on effective disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of various armed groups. The success achieved so far in DDR process should be sustained and issues of impunity dealt with. We are glad to note that the reforms in security, police and justice sector starting from training and sensitization to human rights issues, effective prosecution and expeditious judicial process are, indeed, priority for the government.

8. Security and law & order issues are intrinsically linked to economic development. It is now time for the international community to look beyond peacekeeping and help the DRC authorities in peace building efforts, including investments in agriculture, infrastructure and industries for overall economic development.

Mr. President,

9. MONUSCO peacekeepers have been doing the most commendable work in the most difficult circumstances. The soldier to population and soldier to land area ratios are extremely low in eastern DRC where MONUSCO is largely deployed. There is an urgent need for this Council to address the issues of resource gap for MONUSCO because security, rule of law, institution building and effective governance are processes that will have to be pursued simultaneously by this Mission. An integrated approach incorporating these objectives requires cooperation of all stakeholders and provision of adequate resources by the international community.

Mr. President,

10. India has had a long association with the DRC as one of the major troop contributing countries over the last five decades. Our first presence in the country dates

as far back as March 1961 during the Katanga province crisis. Currently, our contribution to MONUSCO stands at 4,318 troops. Keeping in mind the resource gap in MONUSCO, we extended the service of our six utility helicopters till April this year. We continue to extend services of four combat helicopters beyond the committed period.

11. Indian contingent has made significant contributions in the humanitarian and development activities in eastern DRC, including building and rehabilitating community centers and vocational training schools, as well as setting up laboratories for IT training and building markets. In the course of its involvement in peacekeeping operations in Congo, 36 of our soldiers have made supreme sacrifice.

Mr. President,

12. In addition to its contribution to MONUSCO, India has also cooperated with the government of DRC in development programmes. We have a line of credit worth US\$ 318.5 million for projects like power generation, railways, rural water supply and supply of buses. We have also offered to set up an IT center of Excellence and three learning stations under Hole-in-the-wall computer education project in DRC. India offers 60 training slots for short and medium term technical courses and 10 slots for longer-term professional courses. The two countries are cooperating in building of low cost houses. India remains committed to play its part in support of the government of DRC in strengthening and capacity building of its national institutions, both in security and civilian areas.

Thank you.

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