



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2021)0085

Situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the assassination of the Italian ambassador Luca Attanasio and his entourage

European Parliament resolution of 11 March 2021 on the situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the assassination of the Italian ambassador Luca Attanasio and his entourage (2021/2577(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), notably that of 18 January 2018¹ of the same title and that of 17 September 2020 on the case of Dr Denis Mukwege in the DRC²,
- having regard to the statement by spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General of 22 February 2021 on the DRC,
- having regard to the statement of 20 May 2020 by the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on the security situation in Ituri,
- having regard to UN Security Council resolutions, in particular Resolution 2463 of 29 March 2019 on the extension of the mandate of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) until 20 December 2019,
- having regard to Council Decision (CFSP) 2020/2033 of 10 December 2020 amending Decision 2010/788/CFSP concerning restrictive measures against the DRC³,
- having regard to the measures laid down in UN Security Council Resolution 2528 of 25 June 2020 on the renewal of measures on the arms embargo against the DRC imposed by Security Council resolution 2293 (2016) until 1 July 2021 and the extension of the mandate of the Group of Experts established pursuant to Resolution 1533 (2004) until 1 August 2021, which renewed until 1 July 2021 a series of sanctions such as an arms embargo on armed groups in the DRC, a travel ban on individuals and an asset freeze on individuals and entities designated by the Sanctions Committee,

¹ OJ C 458, 19.12.2018, p. 52.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0234.

³ OJ L 419, 11.12.2020, p. 30.

- having regard to the UN Report of August 2010 of the Mapping Exercise documenting the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed within the territory of the DRC between March 1993 and June 2003,
 - having regard to the report from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and MONUSCO of 6 July 2020 entitled ‘violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the Allied Democratic Forces armed group and by members of the defense and security forces in Beni territory, North Kivu province and Irumu and Mambasa territories, Ituri province, between 1 January 2019 and 31 January 2020’,
 - having regard to Regulation (EU) 2017/821 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 laying down supply chain due diligence obligations for Union importers of tin, tantalum and tungsten, their ores, and gold originating from conflict-affected and high-risk areas (Conflict Minerals Regulation)¹,
 - having regard to the Partnership Agreement of 23 June 2000 between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States of the one part, and the European Community and its Member States, of the other part (the Cotonou Agreement)²,
 - having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which was adopted on 27 June 1981 and entered into force on 21 October 1986,
 - having regard to the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was adopted on 18 February 2006,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the Charter of the United Nations,
 - having regard to Rule 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas on 22 February 2021 Luca Attanasio, Italian ambassador to the DRC, his driver Mustapha Milambo, and Vittorio Iacovacci, an Italian military police officer, were killed by gunmen during an attack on their convoy; whereas the ambassador and his staff were travelling in a UN vehicle from Goma to visit a UN World Food Programme (WFP) school project in Rutshuru; whereas the route was on a road previously designated safe for travel without a security team;
- B. whereas park rangers from Virunga National Park attempted to save the lives of the ambassador and his entourage; whereas rangers themselves work under the constant threat of kidnapping and killings by rebel groups; whereas six rangers were killed and a seventh injured in an attack in January 2021 in Nyamitwitwi; whereas 12 rangers and five civilians were killed in an ambush in April 2020;
- C. whereas the grave security situation in eastern DRC continues to deteriorate, in particular on the border between Ituri, South Kivu and North Kivu; whereas approximately 120 armed groups, including the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of

¹ OJ L 130, 19.5.2017, p. 1.

² OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.

Rwanda, the Allied Democratic Forces, and the Nduma-Defence of Congo-Rénové, operate in the region, vying for access to and control of natural resources, including minerals, and have been responsible for kidnappings, killings, torture and sexual violence;

- D. whereas the violence in eastern DRC claimed more than 2 000 victims in 2020; whereas the violence has increased even more since the beginning of 2021; whereas civilians, of whom the majority are women and children, are targets of the repeated violence, which resulted in the deaths of more than 150 people between 11 December 2020 and 10 January 2021; whereas within the first two months of 2021, more than 100 people were kidnapped and many others were injured; whereas medical infrastructure and natural resources were destroyed, and houses were reportedly set on fire; whereas the humanitarian consequences of this violence are a cause for concern; whereas, to date, the UN has registered more than 67 000 displaced persons;
- E. whereas, according to the Kivu Security Tracker, 152 civilian killings, 61 kidnappings for ransom and 34 cases of abduction have been reported in both North and South Kivu since 1 January 2021;
- F. whereas on 12 March 2017, armed men executed two UN investigators – Zaida Catalán, a Swede, Michael Sharp, an American – and their interpreter Beitu Tshintela while they were documenting human rights abuses in the central Kasai region of the DRC;
- G. whereas the DRC has one of the highest rates of internal displacement in the world; whereas more than five million people have been uprooted due to insecurity within the country's borders; whereas many women and children live in precarious conditions, sleeping outside or in overcrowded public spaces and being exposed to the risk of harassment, assault or sexual exploitation; whereas displaced populations often receive no basic life-saving services and are at risk of malnutrition and disease; whereas as of 4 February 2021, an Ebola outbreak has been declared in North Kivu province;
- H. whereas the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported increasing numbers of kidnappings and attacks on aid workers and convoys, which have forced humanitarian organisations to postpone the delivery of aid and suspend their activities; whereas members of civil society, including activists, journalists and human rights defenders, continue to face harassment, intimidation and attacks; whereas many of them risk their lives to defend the freedoms of association and expression;
- I. whereas MONUSCO's mandate expires on 20 December 2021 and whereas the DRC sanctions regime established under UN Resolution 1533 expires on 1 July 2021; whereas the number of troops and budget allocated to MONUSCO continue to be reduced;
- J. whereas in December 2020, the EU renewed the targeted sanctions in place against eleven DRC officials responsible for human rights abuses;
- K. whereas the UN Mapping Exercise Report published in 2010 documented 617 corroborated serious human rights violations in eastern DRC between 1993 and 2003; whereas the report detailed a series of recommendations, which have largely not been implemented; whereas impunity remains a serious problem;

1. Condemns in the strongest terms the killing of Luca Attanasio, Moustapha Milambo and Vittorio Iacovacci, expressing its deepest sympathy to the families of the victims, the Government of Italy and to WFP national staff; deplores the loss of life and killings of innocent civilians;
2. Calls for a thorough, independent and transparent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the murders to be conducted; welcomes the President Tshisekedi's commitment to launching an inquiry and urges the DRC Government and provincial leaders to cooperate fully with the Italian authorities and the United Nations;
3. Stresses that it is the primary responsibility of the DRC Government to ensure security in its territory and protect its populations while maintaining respect for the rule of law, human rights and international humanitarian law, including protection from crimes against humanity and war crimes;
4. Firmly insists that the DRC authorities must step up their efforts to end armed attacks on civilians and that they must thoroughly, independently, effectively and impartially investigate all killings and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials;
5. Strongly condemns the serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed by local militias in eastern DRC; urges the DRC Government to establish a mechanism for justice and accountability for those responsible for the human rights violations documented in the UN Mapping Exercise Report, as well as for other crimes committed in the DRC that are considered serious under international law and international humanitarian law;
6. Urges President Félix Tshisekedi to uphold his commitment to ensuring that those responsible for the murders of UN investigators Zaida Catalán and Michael Sharp and their interpreter Betu Tshintela are held accountable, and calls for full transparency in this investigation;
7. Is concerned by the persistence of serious human rights abuses and international humanitarian law violations against civilians in eastern DRC, including summary executions, sexual and gender-based violence, and the large-scale recruitment and use of children by armed groups. as well as the killing of civilians by members of the DRC security forces; stresses that these acts could constitute war crimes under international law; deplores the continual threat of violence experienced by the local population, humanitarian and development workers, international organisations, the diplomatic community, and human rights defenders operating in eastern DRC;
8. Is extremely concerned at the continuing levels of impunity in the country; notes that the failure to address impunity for those committing human rights violations only perpetuates further abuses; urges the DRC authorities to swiftly bring to justice the perpetrators of the attack of 22 February 2021 and to take serious steps towards achieving transitional justice;
9. Reiterates its call for the recommendations of the UN Mapping Exercise Report to be taken forward, notably the recommendation on creating specialised mixed chambers in DRC courts to allow for cooperation between the DRC judiciary and the international community on prosecuting human rights abuses; calls for the strengthening of the national justice sector as a whole in order to prosecute crimes that have caused serious

human rights violations;

10. Condemns the human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law committed by security and defence forces; urges the DRC authorities to remove from their positions security force officers and other executive branch officials who have been reported by the UN and DRC and international human rights organisations as having been implicated in serious human rights violations; calls for the creation of a formal vetting mechanism as part of the broader security sector reform efforts, in order to ensure that the most suitable candidates are hired and that security forces act in a manner consistent with international human rights and international humanitarian law standards; calls on the authorities to end all support by security force officers and political leaders to armed groups and ensure that those responsible for such support are held accountable in fair trials;
11. Calls on the DRC Government to adopt a zero-tolerance approach to collaboration between political leaders, the armed forces and the police, and armed groups;
12. Calls on the DRC authorities to urgently set up an effective demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programme and strategy for dealing with armed groups, with long-term support to prevent former fighters from returning; urges the DRC authorities to provide critical humanitarian assistance to hundreds of demobilised fighters currently stationed in DDR camps with hardly any food supplies and no access to adequate medical care;
13. Stresses the determination of MONUSCO to continue to do its utmost to ensure the protection of civilians in accordance with its mandate and to support national efforts to consolidate peace and stability in the country; notes that its role should be reaffirmed through a clear mandate in which benchmarks related to the security situation must be reached before its possible withdrawal from the region;
14. Recalls that the violence in eastern DRC is strongly linked to the raw material trade; emphasises that any business, individual or state or state-related actor contributing to the perpetration of such crimes must be brought to justice; welcomes the entry into force of the Conflict Minerals Regulation in January 2021; stresses that this regulation maintains the DRC on the list of countries considered conflict-affected and high-risk; notes that the biggest challenge remains artisanal gold, the management of which is a source of instability in the region; stresses the urgent need for further action on mandatory due diligence and responsible business conduct by businesses operating in conflict zones;
15. Stresses the need to undertake further efforts to cut off financing for armed groups involved in destabilising activities through the illicit trade of natural resources, including gold or wildlife products;
16. Expresses its deep concerns over the security and humanitarian situation, especially the recent surge in the number of internally displaced persons in the DRC, which continues to severely affect the civilian population; recalls its deep concern regarding the ongoing military activities of foreign and domestic armed groups and the smuggling of DRC natural resources; calls for all international investors, including China, to fully comply with international law, standards and best practices in responsible mining;

17. Condemns the killings of Virunga Park ecoguards during the attacks carried out in 2020; urges the DRC Government to disarm rebels and restore security in the park region;
18. Welcomes the UN Security Council publication of 14 January 2021 entitled ‘United Nations Strategy for Peace Consolidation, Conflict Prevention and Conflict Resolution in the Great Lakes region’; urges the parties involved to continue cross-border cooperation, including through the UN Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, to address the violence, human rights abuses and impunity in eastern DRC;
19. Calls on the DRC Government to ensure better governance at all levels of the state and society, including public finance and the fight against corruption; calls for the EU sanction mechanism be used to fight against corruption; stresses the importance of organising a credible electoral process in 2023 and to guarantee sustainable security in eastern DRC;
20. Calls on the VP/HR, the EU delegation to and the EU missions in the DRC to increase the visibility of their support to human rights defenders at risk in the DRC using all available tools (i.e. political, diplomatic and financial), as a protective measure to provide recognition for their human rights work and acknowledge their important role as human rights defenders fighting for stability and peace in the region, and where appropriate, to facilitate the issuing of emergencies visas, and provide temporary shelter in the Member States;
21. Calls on the European Union to step up funding for the DRC in order to address the severe underfunding of the UN agencies working with local authorities and communities to protect civilians;
22. Strongly underlines the need for cross-border cooperation in the African Great Lakes region and the establishment of a regional strategy by neighbouring countries to address the violence and human rights abuses in the DRC; calls for the common security and defence policy mission in the African Great Lakes region to contribute to the stabilisation of the security conditions and the improvement of the humanitarian situation;
23. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the ACP-EU Council of Ministers and Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the President, Prime Minister and Parliament of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the African Union and its institutions.