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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION
ON THE SITUATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The year 2005 and the early months of the current year were characterized mainly by the preparations aimed at concluding the transition period stipulated in the Comprehensive and Inclusive Agreement adopted in Pretoria, South Africa in December 2002, and endorsed by the Parties to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, South Africa in April 2003. Council will recall that the Agreement - the outcome of the internal component of the Lusaka Peace Agreement of July 1999 - had set the following objectives for the transition, namely: re-establish territorial integrity and state authority throughout the DRC; reconcile the Congolese people; restore peace and security in the country and organize credible, transparent and fair general elections with a view to establishing a new political order in Congo. The Agreement set up an International Transition Support Committee (ITSC) to assist the Congolese Parties in its implementation.

2. In pursuance of the Transition Constitution agreed by the Parties signatory to the Agreement, the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo issued a Decree on 30 June 2003 appointing members of the Government. The other transition institutions established by virtue of the Agreement were set up on 28 August 2003, namely: the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC); the National Human Rights Observatory; the High Authority for the Media; the Truth and Reconciliation and Commission, and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission. These institutions have the responsibility to ensure the impartiality and regularity of the elections that are supposed to round up the transition.

3. This report presents a brief account of the status of the transition and the elections preparatory process, the political and security implications of the imminent elections, the efforts deployed by the international community to create conducive conditions for the proper conduct of the elections, the challenges that are yet to be addressed to ensure that the elections take place in conditions spelt out by the transition Constitution and prepare the ground for a peaceful post-electoral period. The report also sheds light on the new regional environment in which the elections will be organized, the contribution of the African Union and of the region to the peace process and the transition.

II. STATUS OF THE TRANSITION AND THE ELECTIONS PREPARATORY PROCESS

4. Aware of the crucial role of the elections in a successful exit from the crisis in the DRC, the Security Council mandated the United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUC) to conduct an oversight of all the activities preparatory to, and in implementation of, the electoral process. To this end, MONUC provided the IEC with technical and logistics assistance, and support towards all its activities. It set up an elections unit with the task of planning the electoral activities and interfacing with the various players. The European Union similarly provided support towards the peace and transition process in general and the electoral process in particular whose required budget the EU funded to the tune of 80%.

5. Despite the various support, the transition in the DRC has been faced with countless difficulties. The political situation in the country and the objective conditions of the transition have not facilitated the process. The size of the country, the lack of records and communications infrastructure, the competing national, regional and international interests, as well as the nature of the compromise represented by the CIA and the transition Constitution are, among others, factors highly fraught with the potential to create friction among the stakeholders, and indeed derail the transition *per se*. The three years of the transition have thus been characterized by difficult cohabitation among the key moderators of the national institutions. This situation did not facilitate the implementation of the various components of the Comprehensive and Inclusive Agreement. There have often been considerable delays particularly in the enactment and adoption of the laws relating to elections.

6. These delays generated discontent in the people who looked forward to getting over with the lengthy transitions that the country had experienced in the past. For instance, the political parties signatories to the Agreement but which are non-members of the transition institutions held demonstration in Kinshasa on 10 and 14 January 2005 against the prospect of an extension of the transition beyond 30 June 2005. On this occasion, Etienne Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) declared that, come 30 June 2005, the current leadership should resign for having failed to discharge the responsibility entrusted to them by the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. The support accorded to that statement by the demonstrators who turned out in their numbers in the streets of the Capital, revealed to the international community the extremely fragile nature of the on-going transition process. It also helped the managers of the transition to become aware of the impatience of the people.

7. International Community mobilization and firmness helped to impose on all the players respect for the letter and spirit of the Agreement, especially with regard to the interpretation of the Constitutional provision on the duration of the transition period. Article 196 of the Constitution indeed stipulates that the duration of the transition shall be two years. This period may however be extended (for technical reasons) by six months, renewable only once.

8. This crisis however had the merit of speeding up the transition process. A seminar to appraise Government actions during the past two years was organized in Kinshasa from 10 to 23 June 2005. The decisions of the seminar covered the work programme of the four broad-based Commissions chaired by the Vice-Presidents of the Republic. On the Political, Defense and Security Commission in particular, the seminar decided, *inter alia*, that the electoral process should be pursued with a view to organizing the elections within the time frame set by the Constitution; that the integration of the armed force and the police should be accelerated, and that the foreign armed groups operating on the Congolese territory should be disarmed without delay.

9. The acceleration of the transition process was particularly notable in the preparations for the elections. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), in conformity with the Comprehensive Agreement, came up with an observation that it was impossible to hold the elections before 30 June 2005, that is, at the expiry of the two years. It therefore submitted to Parliament a request for six months extension of the transition, as well as a draft roadmap for the electoral process. In line with that

request which was endorsed by Parliament, the first extension ended on 31 December 2005; while the second and final constitutional extension of the transition will expire on 30 June 2006.

10. Implementation of the new electoral process calendar commenced with the launch on 20 June 2005 of the voter identification and registration exercise. This operation resulted in the registration of over 25 million voters. In the constitutional referendum, which took place on 18 and 19 December 2005, there were over 84% Yes Votes for the Constitution of the 3rd Republic, a result confirmed by the Supreme Court on 3 February, 2006. The President of the Republic promulgated the Constitution on 18 February, 2006, in a ceremony graced, among other personalities, by the Current Chairman of the African Union, President Denis Sassou-Nguesso, and President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa.

11. Additionally, the two Chambers of Parliament on 9 March 2006 enacted the electoral law adopted on 18 February 2006. Following the enactment, the IEC on the same day published a provisional calendar for the elections which called for the list of candidatures for the legislative and presidential elections to be deposited between 10 and 23 March 2006, and stipulated that the first round of the presidential election and the legislative elections will take place on 18 June 2006. Thereafter, at the request of several political parties, the deadline for the submission of candidatures was pushed forward to midnight of 2 April 2006. As at that deadline, 73 candidates had been registered by the IEC for the presidential elections (including the candidates sponsored by the political parties and independent candidates) and nearly 10,000 candidates for the legislative elections vying for 500 seats. All the "significant" political parties with the exception of the UDPS filed their candidatures for one or both of the two elections. After consideration of the files of candidates and appeals by the Supreme Court, 33 candidates, four of whom were women, were retained for the presidential elections, and 9,633 for the legislative elections. On 30 April 2006, the IEC published a definitive timetable for the elections, which fixed 30 July 2006 for round one of the presidential elections and the legislative elections. The electoral campaign will commence on June 29 2006 and come to an end on 28 July 2006.

III. POLITICAL AND SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS

12. The progress made in preparations for the elections have convinced the Congolese political stakeholders about the fact that there is no going back on holding the elections during the current year. The prospects presented by this situation have created some kind of agitation in the political players, and this could negatively affect the serenity required for the successful management, both of the elections and the post electoral period.

13. It should be noted here that the UDPS had called on its supporters not to register for the elections nor to vote during the Constitutional Referendum. Following the endorsement of the Constitution by the Congolese people, that party changed its stance announcing that it would thenceforth participate in all the elections, provided among other conditions, that the registration stations would be reopened to enable its supporters to register, and that it is represented in the IEC and the HAM. With the refusal of the IEC to reopen the registration offices "for logistical reasons and constraints of time", the UDPS on 11 March 2005 attempted to organize "a peaceful

march” in order to deliver to MONUC a message on “the need to give the electoral process an inclusive character”. The march was disrupted by the police. Despite the repeated appeals addressed to the UDPS by several African personalities including the AU Current Chairperson as well as international figures such as the United Nations Secretary General and many European leaders, the UDPS maintained that unless all its demands were met, it would not join in the electoral process.

14. On the eve of the promulgation of the electoral law, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) of Vice-President Azarias Ruberwa threatened to boycott the rest of the process and to quit the transition institutions, unless its demands regarding electoral constituencies were met. Prior to the establishment of the institutions emanating from the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, this old rebel movement, now a political party, demarcated the areas under its control, and during negotiation on the electoral law in parliament, it unsuccessfully defended the demarcation. However, it stood by its "demands" following the promulgation of the electoral law. The Interior Minister did not accede to the request on the grounds that there had been an irregularity in the procedure adopted for its submission. However, the President of the Republic subsequently offered to resolve the problem and the RCD rejoined the process, and presented candidates for the two elections slated for 30 July 2006.

15. The Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) of Vice-President Jean Pierre Mbemba, for its part, was rocked by deep internal problems. Accused of “fractionalism”, Olivier Kamitatu, Speaker of National Assembly (representing a faction of the MLC) was expelled from the party which went on to ask the President of the Republic to relieve him of his duties. The President of the Republic tabled the issue before the Supreme Court seeking the latter’s opinion on the constitutionality of the request. Following a favourable decision by the Court, the MLC appointed Thomas Luhaka, Member of Parliament and the new Executive Secretary of the Party, to replace Mr. Kamitatu. Mr. Luhaka tried to occupy the position by force on 2 March 2006 in company of his militants and police officers. Mr. Kamitatu subsequently went along with the decision of the Court and has since created his own political party.

16. Furthermore, the publication of the definitive calendar for the elections fixing the dates after 30 June 2006 (the Constitutional deadline), gave rise to intense controversy both in Kinshasa and in some provinces of the country. Several political players and religious associations condemned the Chairperson of the IEC accusing him of acting beyond his authority by “unilaterally fixing the dates of the election at 30 July without reference to the signatories to the Comprehensive Agreement”. The condemnation first launched by the President of the Congolese National Episcopal Conference (CENCO) at a press conference held on 1 May 2006, was echoed and amplified by many political stakeholders including the 11 presidential candidates. The latter called for the resignation of the Chairperson of the IEC. Maintaining that after 30 June 2006 (expiry of the transition according to Article 196 of the Transition Constitution) all the transition institutions will be “illegal and illegitimate”; they called on the President of the Republic to convene the signatories to the Comprehensive Agreement for consultation and appraisal of the transition process as well as the elections preparatory process and to take a decision on the need for, and the form and modalities of the new extension of the transition and, if need be, agree on fresh dates for the elections. They further argued that this measure was the only one that could usher in credible elections accepted by everyone and ensure the stability of

the country during and after the elections. It is against this background of protest and defiance of the IEC that the UDPS, through the President of its National Committee, demanded immediate consultation and, in a statement, proposed the African Union as mediator.

17. Other political players accused those in support of the idea of immediate consultation of being merely agitators who do not want to face the elections. Pointing to Article 222 of the already-promulgated Constitution of the 3rd republic (which stipulates that the transition institutions shall remain operational until the establishment of the institutions emanating from the elections), they expressed the view that the IEC President had acted within his powers. Without formally rejecting the idea of consultation among the Congolese political stakeholders at an appropriate time, ITSC and its DRC partners in the peace process rallied behind the principle of holding the elections according to the timetable published by the IEC.

18. The situation prevailing in some political parties and religious organizations had more or less direct impact on the security situation in the country. Dissidents from the 83rd brigade of the armed forces of the Republic of Congo (FARDC) conducted armed operations in the Rutshuru region in North Kivu in January 2006. Several localities occupied for a while before were retaken by the FARDC with the support of MONUC. Most of the dissidents have since returned to their units and the situation has more or less returned to normalcy. However, the joint MONUC/FARDC operations carried out on a regular basis by virtue of MONUC's mandate against foreign-armed groups were often followed by reprisal actions against the civilian populations.

19. In North Katanga (South-East of the country) where mainly the Mai-Mai (armed militia) have for several months engaged in acts of harassment and looting against civilians as well as in serious human rights violations and illegal exploitation of natural resources, the situation has been as worrying as that prevailing in the Kivus. MONUC on 3 May 2006 published the conclusions of an Inquiry into human rights violations perpetrated in North Katanga province. The Inquiry revealed that "troops of the FARDC 63rd brigade and Mai-Mai groups had systematically indulged in human rights violations". Hope has however been rekindled in this province since 12 May with the surrender of Major Gédéon with over 150 of his men, the most feared militia commander in the region. Gédéon, who gave himself up to the MONUC forces based in the Province, made a commitment to rejoin the DDR process and to cooperate with the actors concerned in the restoration of security to Katanga. MONUC handed him over to the Congolese authorities on 16 May 2006.

20. The massacre of 8 blue helmets of the MONUC Guatemalan contingent in the Garamba Park on 23 January 2006 by unknown persons is an indication of the persistent insecurity in the Eastern province despite the success of the joint FARDC/MONUC operations regularly mounted against foreign armed groups in that region. Moreover, elements of the Congolese Revolutionary Movement (MRC), created in June 2005, consisting of fighters from different Ituri militias have intensified attacks against FARDC positions in several localities around Bunia. The attacks are intended to reestablish the access routes cut by the joint FARDC/MONUC operations in late 2005, routes through which arms and trafficked products were transported.

IV. EFFORTS DEPLOYED BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO CREATE CONDUCTIVE CONDITIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF THE ELECTIONS

21. The resurgence of the activities of armed groups in Katanga, the Kivus and in Ituri on the eve of the general elections, constitute a threat not only to the ongoing electoral process but also to peace and stability in the DRC. As a result of this threat, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General announced on 23 January 2006 that MONUC and FARDC forces would deploy in the Ituri region as well in the Kivus by mid-February to establish peace and security in the East of the DRC. Joint robust operations have since been mounted simultaneously in the North and South Kivus as well as in Ituri with the objective of hunting down elements of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and elements of the MRC and forcing them to rejoin the DDR process.

22. On 27 December 2005, the United Nations requested the European Union to provide forces to, among other things, back MONUC in providing security for the elections in Congo. Subsequently, the European Union had, in this regard, fielded a fact-finding mission in the DRC in early February to study the request presented by the United Nations in concert with the Congolese authorities. The Defence Ministers of EU Member States met in Vienna to, among other things, examine the possible implications of the issue. The Ministers in particular wanted an official request made by the Congolese government to the EU Commission prior to approval of the United Nations request; an evaluation of the security risks to the country in general as well as the areas of operation of the force in particular; a definition of a clear mandate for the European force; and that the area of operation of the force should be limited to Kinshasa and subsequently its environs; the definition of the duration of intervention by the force.

23. Consultations among Member States to set up the European force yielded the following outcomes: Germany, France, Spain, Poland, Finland, Italy, Britain, Austria, Greece, Belgium, Hungary and Sweden would constitute the European force. Germany and France would contribute troops to the tune of 500 men out of the overall force strength of 1,500. This figure was subsequently increased to 1,850, 850 of which would be contributed by France. As part of these preparations, Mr. Javier Solana, the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy paid a visit to Kinshasa on 18 March 2006 to study together with the Congolese authorities the political issues relating to the engagement of the Force. He presented an account of his mission to European Foreign Affairs Ministers on 20 March 2006. On that occasion, Mr. Solana indicated that the Congolese authorities had agreed to the deployment of a European intervention Force in their country during and after the elections; that Germany would be responsible for the strategic command of the operations and would make available to the Force its Postdam HQ; the Force HQ in Kinshasa would be under French Command, and that the pre-deployment hardware and reserve personnel would be located in an African country neighbouring the DRC. Contacted on this issue, the Gabonese authorities agreed to their country hosting the reserve personnel of the European Force.

24. In response to the United Nations 28 March 2006 request, the Austrian Foreign Minister expressed the readiness of the EU to deploy a force in support of MONUC during the elections period. The Minister however made it clear that such a force should not substitute itself for MONUC and FARDC.

25. Following EU response, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1671 (2006) of 25 April 2006 which, by virtue of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, authorized “for a period expiring four months counting from the date of the first round of the presidential elections and the parliamentary elections, the deployment of the European Force (Eufor DRC) in the DRC”. That Resolution indicated that “Eufor DRC shall comprise advance elements located in Kinshasa, and other elements with appropriate capacity kept in reserve outside DRC... Eufor DRC shall be authorized to take all the measures necessary, within the limits of its resources and capacities, to carry out the following duties in accordance with the agreement to be concluded between the EU and the United Nations: “provide support to MONUC to stabilize the situation where MONUC is faced with serious difficulties in discharging its mandate within the limits of its present capacities; contribute to the protection of civilians exposed to imminent threats of physical violence in the areas where the force shall be deployed, without prejudice to the responsibility of the government of the DRC; contribute to the protection of the Kinshasa airport; ensure security and free movement of the personnel and the protection of the Eufor DRC installations; and conduct limited operations with a view of removing individuals from danger”.

V. SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YET TO BE ADDRESSED TO ENSURE THE SUCCESS OF ELECTIONS AND PREPARE FOR POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION

26. The major difficulties of the lack of electoral tradition and the immensity of the country which has no real communication infrastructure are compounded by numerous other factors relating in particular to the recent history of the country, the multiplicity of political parties (with nearly 300 recognized political parties), the impatience and high expectations of the people, and the competing stakes and interests.

27. Although the Congolese people and the international community would want the elections to be “inclusive”, they will take place without the participation of the UDPS, the traditional opposition political party and a key player in the country’s democratic process. This party has a long tradition of political struggle and contributed in large measure to the ongoing democratic process. Its ranks are made of determined militants, who should be taken into consideration before, during and after the elections.

28. The front-runners in the presidential election are both former fighters in the war, which ravaged the country, and current partners in the transition with conflicting rather than peaceful relationships. There is the need to strive to get them to accept a code of conduct for the smooth conduct of the electoral campaign, prelude to the acceptance of all the results emanating from the voting by all and sundry.

29. The inadequate integration of former combatants into one homogenous national armed forces; the meager resources available to the FARDC brigades that have already been established, (trained and integrated); the poor training and

equipment of the security forces; the persistent activities of the local militias and the low degree of reunification of the country - all these are challenges which the authorities that will emanate from the elections have to face.

30. The positive impact of the confidence-building mechanisms established by the countries of the region (the joint verification mechanisms between the DRC and Rwanda, the Tripartite + 1, between the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda) and the preparatory process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region have to be backed by formal diplomatic relations which should be encouraged between the countries of the region.

31. The continued presence in the East of the DRC of negative forces opposed to the governments of neighbouring countries and the threats posed by these forces to the Congolese civilians are exacerbated by the numerous threats to the electoral process. On this score, there is reason to applaud the recent developments in the DRC–Rwanda relations.

32. Another major challenge is the persistent impunity which continues to be a source of concern to the international community and which, in the long run, will likely serve as encouragement for the numerous criminals and human rights violators in the DRC, a country which, within a space of less than ten years, lost nearly 4 million men as a result of the direct and indirect impacts of the war. Some of the authors of these crimes, on whom international sanctions had been imposed and who are being sought after by the United Nations are still on the run. The arrest and transfer to the International Criminal Court of Thomas Lubanga, former leader of the Union of Congolese patriots (UPC) and author of many crimes against civilians in Ituri, should however be noted. The arrest and imprisonment in Germany of Ignace Murwanashyaka, President of the FDLR and the surrender and hand over of Major Gédéon to the Congolese authorities constitute further crucial steps in the fight against impunity.

VI. A REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT INCREASINGLY CONDUCTIVE TO THE ONGOING PROCESS IN THE DRC

33. The combined effort of the international community and those of the leaders of the countries of the region, which promote consultation for development as against confrontation which led to the recurrent conflicts in the region, have created an increasingly regional environment conducive to the ongoing process in each of the countries of the Great Lakes Region. Many initiatives are worth mentioning in this regard.

34. The process of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region initiated by OAU/AU and the United Nations, and conducted under their auspices with the support of the international community is about to climax into a number of conclusions crucial to the countries of the region. On 20 November 2004, the Heads of State and Government of the 11 Member States of the process, at their first summit, signed the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region. In that Declaration, the Heads of State made a commitment to, among other things, work resiliently together to build a stable, safe and developed region while strictly complying with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. After Dar-Es-Salaam, the process will, with the adoption of a Pact on

Security, Stability and Development in the region, culminate in the second Summit, which will take place in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2006. This document, which will bring together the 11 member countries of the process, is the outcome of lengthy negotiations between the parties during which the stakeholders progressively improved their relations.

35. The regional mechanisms put in place with the support of the international community have similarly contributed to the restoration of trust and confidence in the relations between the countries of the region. The representatives of the Congolese and Rwandese Governments signed in New York, on 22 September 2004, under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union, the Terms of Reference of the Joint Verification Mechanism (JVM). This mechanism, which is a technical organ, is made up of Experts from the two governments, United Nations and the African Union and has the responsibility to address issues of security along the border between DRC and Rwanda. It comprises a Joint Verification Commission (JVC) and Joint Verification Teams (JVTs). The JVC has the responsibility to examine the report of the JVTs, come up with recommendations for the attention of the Heads of State, the United Nations Secretary General and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. It is made up of top leaders of the parties as well as representatives of the United Nations and the African Union. The JVTs, for their part, are made up of civilian and military liaison officers of the parties, MONUC and the African Union.

36. The Tripartite consisting of the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda, is a forum for discussion and interaction on the security problems facing the three countries. It was established with the facilitation of the United States Government and meets rotationally in the three countries. It however held its 11th session in New York, on 16 September 2005. On that occasion, Burundi was admitted as the fourth member of the group which has since become Tripartite + 1. It held its last meeting under this nomenclature in Bujumbura from 20 to 21 April 2006. This Regional Verification Mechanism has already made progress with the adoption of legal, political and military measures against the armed groups operating in the Great Lakes Region, among other achievements. The Parties have also agreed on additional measures including legal proceedings against, extradition of, and financial restrictions on the leaders of the armed groups as well as their prohibition from transiting and residing in the Tripartite + 1 space. The parties further made a commitment to suspend all assistance to, and initiate proceedings to bring to justice, all leaders of the FDLR, ADF/NALU and FNL as well as all other militias active in the region.

VII. CONTRIBUTION OF THE AFRICAN UNION AND SUB- REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS TO THE ONGOING PROCESS IN THE DRC

37. As a way of sustaining the ongoing momentum in the DRC, I proceeded to Kinshasa on a working visit from 17 to 19 April 2006. On that occasion, I had talks with the key Congolese players in this process as well as the representatives of the international community within ITSC. I reiterated to them the will of the African Union to continue to accompany the ongoing efforts, while assuring them of the moral and political support of the African Union towards the electoral process. I also reiterated Africa's solidarity with the Congolese people and called on them to do everything to find a compromise to their current differences like they did when they invented the "1+4" formula, which restored peace in the country.

38. Earlier, in pursuance of the decision of the 23rd meeting of the PSC on the situation in the East of the DRC and the relations between the DRC and Rwanda, held in Libreville, on 10 January 2005, I dispatched a multi-disciplinary fact-finding mission to the region. I wish to recall in this regard that the decision of the 23rd meeting of the Peace and Security Council focused on disarmament/neutralization by an African force, of the foreign armed groups based in the East of the DRC. The fact-finding mission was in the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi from 12 November to 3 December 2005. The PSC had been briefed on the conduct and outcome of this mission at its 50th meeting held on 28 April 2006. On that occasion, members of the PSC exchanged views on the result of the mission and agreed to pursue consultations on the mission's recommendations and to meet in due course at appropriate level to finalize deliberation.

39. Again, pursuant to the Terms of Reference of the Joint Verification Mechanism (JVM) agreed by DRC and Rwanda in New York on 22 September 2004, the African Union deployed 11 military observers (5 Beninois and 5 Kenyans) in Goma (North Kivu) and Bukavu (South Kivu). These military observers, it should be recalled, had the mandate, in concert with MONUC and officers from the two countries, to verify within the framework of the Verification Teams, allegations leveled by any of the parties. The JVM has, to a large extent, contributed to the restoration of trust and confidence between the two countries.

40. The African Union further participated, as observer in the same vein as the United Nations, in all the meetings organized, first within the framework of the Tripartite (DRC, Rwanda and Uganda) and then the Tripartite + 1 (the above three countries + Burundi). With the facilitation of the United States Government, Tripartite + 1 has, alongside the JVM, contributed to the restoration of trust and confidence in the countries of the Great Lakes Region.

41. The negotiations within the framework of the preparatory process on the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region conducted under the auspices of the African Union and the United Nations will soon be crowned by the signing of the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the region at the 2nd Summit of the process which will take place in Nairobi in November 2006. The pact will bring together the 11 member countries of the process and greatly contribute in the creation of the conditions for the definitive return of confidence between the countries concerned, and to promote peace, security and economic development as well as regional integration of the Great Lakes countries.

42. The countries of the region and sub-regional organizations have equally contributed to the various endeavours, which have culminated in the current stage of the ongoing process. Council will recall the role played by Zambia, South Africa and Angola in the signing of the various agreements that resulted in the ceasefire, the Comprehensive and Inclusive Agreement and the departure of foreign troops from the DRC. On this score, these three countries are members of the ITSC. South Africa and Angola, alongside other partners, also participate in the training of the FARDC and the security services. South Africa further has undertaken to provide ballot papers and other electoral materials. In this regard, the IEC on 8 May 2006 received over 20 tons of the first consignment of the electoral materials at Kinshasa Airport.

43. The SADC has, through the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa - its local branch active in all the provinces of the country - trained several hundreds of national observers.

44. Additionally, the Conference of the Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) meeting in their 12th session in Brazzaville, in June 2005, mandated the current Chairman to implement all initiatives likely to enable the Community to contribute towards the normalization of the political situation in the DRC and the success of the electoral process in the country. The Current Chairman has contacted the Congolese authorities to brief them of the desire of ECCAS to open a small branch in Kinshasa, deploy an election observer mission and place a regional force in readiness for possible intervention in the DRC if the need arises.

VIII. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

45. The Council is meeting on the eve of a critical juncture in the future of the DRC, and in the search for peace and security in the country, and stability in the entire Great Lakes Region. The elections fixed for 30 July 2006 are expected to climax the three-year transition for which the international community has invested a lot of effort and resources, and should serve as an enviable example of success. To this end, the partners of the DRC should further mobilize in support of the current momentum.

46. As part of its support for this process, the African Union plans to deploy a sizeable team of observers in the country to monitor the elections throughout the national territory. It is for me gratifying that several African countries individually, and regional economic communities (RECs), have placed themselves in readiness to back the ongoing electoral process through deployment of observers. I am also particularly pleased with the initiatives of SADC and CEEAC. I strongly encourage them and all Member States to lend all necessary support to the DRC at this crucial stage in its history.