United Nations A/HRC/62/41/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
15 May 2026

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Sixty-second session
15 June–10 July 2026
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally*, **

Summary

The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, conducted a country visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 15 to 25 July 2025. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur addresses all forms of trafficking in persons and recommends measures to strengthen prevention, protection and accountability.

* Agreement was reached to publish the present report after the standard publication date owing to circumstances beyond the submitter's control.

** The summary of the report is being circulated in all official languages. The report itself, which is annexed to the summary, is being circulated in the language of submission and French only.

Please recycle

Annex

Report of the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, Siobhán Mullally, on her visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo

I. Introduction

1. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, conducted a country visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 15 to 25 July 2025. The Special Rapporteur is grateful to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the engagement throughout and after the visit and particularly thanks the Ministry of Human Rights for the constructive dialogue. She also wishes to thank the United Nations country team, especially the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for their excellent assistance and expert support.

2. During the visit, the Special Rapporteur met with government officials, including representatives of the Office of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Human Rights, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Social Affairs, Humanitarian Action and National Solidarity, the Minister of Justice ad interim, the Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Welfare, the Minister of Gender, Family and Children, the Minister of Vocational Training, the Cabinet Director of the Ministry of Mines and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, Security, Decentralization and Customary Affairs. She also met with the President and representatives of the National Human Rights Commission, the judiciary, including the President of the High Military Court, and the police, including the Child Protection and Sexual Violence Prevention Units. In addition, the Special Rapporteur met with the Special Adviser to the President on Youth, Gender and Violence against Women, the head of the Agency in charge of Coordinating Youth, the Fight against Sexual Violence and Trafficking in Persons and the Director of the Disarmament, Demobilization, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme. She also met with the humanitarian country team and representatives of United Nations agencies and the diplomatic community.

3. The Special Rapporteur visited Kinshasa and Haut-Katanga Provinces, including Limete commune and the municipalities of Lubumbashi and Kipushi. She also visited Makala Central Prison and shelters for children and victims of trafficking and gender-based violence to assess the protection systems in place. She met with local authorities and stakeholders in border areas, including social workers and security personnel. In Haut-Katanga, she met with representatives of trade unions and the Support and Guidance Service for Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining. The Special Rapporteur held a series of consultations with members of civil society organizations, religious leaders, representatives of Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, sex workers and victims and survivors of trafficking, and she thanks them for their invaluable input. She is particularly grateful to the victims and survivors of trafficking in persons, including children, whose testimonies and demands for justice and accountability bear witness to the need for urgent action by the Government and the international community to combat all forms of trafficking in persons and to ensure access to justice and accountability for victims.

4. The visit took place against the background of ongoing conflict in the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu, which had intensified in January 2025 following the offensive by the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23), with the direct support and participation of the Rwanda Defence Force. At present, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not have effective control over the parts of its territory occupied by M23, but retains de jure responsibility and, as the Security Council stressed in its resolution 2773 (2025), primary responsibility for ensuing security in its territory and protecting its civilians with respect for the rule of law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law. In its resolution 627 (LXXXII) on the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo, adopted on 11 March 2025, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights reminded the Government of its responsibility to guarantee security throughout its territory and to ensure the protection of its citizens, and exhorted the Government to take all measures necessary to put an end to impunity.

5. The Special Rapporteur deeply regrets the decision by the de facto authorities in North Kivu to revoke their authorization for her entry on 19 July 2025, without any advance notice, thereby preventing the conduct of her official visit. She recalls that, in accordance with the revised terms of reference for country visits by special procedure mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, experts should be guaranteed freedom of movement in any part of the country, particularly to restricted areas, and freedom of inquiry. She notes that country visits are conducted in a spirit of dialogue and that in situ assessments of the human rights situation are essential for engaging with and supporting victims and affected communities, meeting with all key stakeholders and formulating context-specific recommendations. She encourages all relevant stakeholders to engage constructively with the special procedures and human rights mechanisms, and commends those who continue to support and protect the human rights of all those affected by the continuing conflict. The Special Rapporteur reiterates that all acts of intimidation and reprisals against individuals or groups cooperating with the United Nations are unacceptable, and that victims of human rights violations must be guaranteed effective access to and communication with the United Nations human rights mechanisms.

II. Legal, policy and institutional frameworks

A. International and regional legal framework

6. The Special Rapporteur acknowledges the substantial steps taken to strengthen both the legislative and the policy frameworks aimed at combating trafficking in persons, including the ratification of core United Nations human rights treaties, key International Labour Organization conventions and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The State has also ratified key regional human rights treaties. It has brought inter-State proceedings against Rwanda before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, alleging serious human rights violations, including sexual violence and displacement of civilians,[1] and filed a similar case before the East African Court of Justice.[2]

B. Domestic legal framework

7. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the enactment in 2022 of Law No. 22/067 on the prevention and fight against trafficking in persons, which amends and supplements the Penal Code of 1940. Legislative prohibitions of trafficking in persons are also found in several other legal instruments, potentially contributing in the legal response to trafficking in persons. The Penal Code, as amended by Law No. 06/018, criminalizes trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. In particular, it covers forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced marriage and sexual exploitation.[3] Significant measures have also been adopted to address sexual and gender-based violence, including the 2020–2025 National Strategy to End Sexual and Gender-based Violence. In addition, legislative reforms have been enacted, notably Decree Law No. 23/023, which amends the Penal Code and introduces new offences related to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced marriage.

8. In relation to child trafficking, the Special Rapporteur is concerned that Law No. 22/067 does not explicitly state, contrary to the obligations arising under the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, that where the victim of trafficking is a child, it is not necessary to establish a threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of

[1] Application No. 007/2023.
[2] Reference No. 33 of 2023.
[3] See https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/DroitPenal/Loi.06.018.20.07.3006.htm, art. 3.

deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits. The 2009 child protection law (Law No. 09/001) contains detailed safeguards for children, including the principle of the best interest of the child.[4] Provisions relevant to child trafficking include the prohibition of child marriage,[5] the prohibition of child labour,[6] the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour, comprising slavery and practices similar to slavery, recruitment into the armed forces, "child prostitution", trafficking for the purposes of illicit activities and work with adverse effects on the well-being of the child,[7] and the protection of children from all forms of exploitation and violence, including economic exploitation.[8] Regarding child marriage, the revised Family Code is relevant.[9] Its 2016 amendment raised the minimum age for marriage from 15 to 18 years and criminalized forced and underage marriage.[10]

9. The 2002 Labour Code abolished the worst forms of child labour.[11] It set the minimum age for work at 15.[12] In addition, a 2008 Ministerial Order set the minimum age for hazardous work, as defined in the Order, at 18.[13]

10. The Special Rapporteur notes the pending draft law on trafficking in persons, which provides an opportunity to consolidate the legislative framework on trafficking in persons and ensure compliance with international law. While welcoming the proposed legislative reform, the Special Rapporteur stresses the need to ensure a comprehensive definition of trafficking, including for the purposes of forced criminality, forced begging, domestic servitude and forced marriage. To ensure compliance with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and international human rights law, explicit recognition of the irrelevance of means should be clearly stated with respect to children. The principle of non-punishment for both adult and child victims of trafficking should also be clearly stated to ensure consistency with international law.

C. Policy and institutional framework

11. The adoption of the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons (2025–2027) is welcome. However, the Special Rapporteur notes that implementation of the previous Action Plan was limited, due to resource constraints, particularly outside of main urban centres. Sufficient budget allocation is needed to ensure the effectiveness of the new Plan, and a commitment to survivor-centred services and effective access to justice for victims.

12. The Agency in charge of Coordinating Youth, the Fight against Sexual Violence and Trafficking in Persons was established by the President in January 2023. Structurally, it sits under the Office of the President as the lead anti-trafficking coordination mechanism and it plays a pivotal role in shaping the Government's response to trafficking. The Special Rapporteur notes the high-level commitment to the Agency. However, it continues to face severe resource and capacity gaps and has a limited impact at the provincial level.

III. Conflict-related trafficking in persons

13. The Special Rapporteur expresses serious concern regarding the ongoing armed conflict and humanitarian crisis in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to the ongoing offensive in North Kivu and South Kivu by M23, with the direct support and participation of the Rwanda Defence Force. She also expresses serious concern regarding the continuing violence and violations of international law by foreign and domestic armed

[4] See https://natlex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/84828/Protection%20de%20lenfant%202.pdf, art. 6.
[5] Ibid., art. 48.
[6] Ibid., art. 50.
[7] Ibid., arts. 53 and 71.
[8] Ibid., arts. 57 and 58.
[9] See https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/Code%20de%20la%20famille/Loi.15.07.2016.html.
[10] Ibid., arts. 336, 352, 357, 395 and 404.
[11] See https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/JO/2002/JOS.25.10.2002.pdf, art. 3.
[12] Ibid., art. 133.
[13] See https://www.leganet.cd/Legislation/JO/2008/15.08.08.12.45.pdf.

groups, including M23, Coopérative pour le développement du Congo, Allied Democratic Forces, Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, Zaïre (also known as the Front populaire d'autodéfense en Ituri (FPAC)), Résistance pour un État de droit au Burundi (RED-Tabara), Mai-Mai groups, Twirwaneho and several other domestic and foreign armed groups. The continuing conflict in North Kivu and South Kivu is marked by widespread and systematic violations of international human rights, international humanitarian law and international criminal law.

14. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the recognition by the Security Council in its resolution 2773 (2025) of human trafficking and the recruitment and use of children as attacks against the civilian population, noting that conflict-related trafficking is often invisible in Security Council responses to threats to and breaches of peace and security. The Special Rapporteur recalls that trafficking in persons for the purposes of sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery, is a form of sexual violence in conflict, as recognized by the Security Council in its resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017). She highlights the fact that the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court provides that trafficking in persons may amount to the crime against humanity of enslavement, as defined under article 7 (1) (c), and may also constitute sexual slavery under article 7 (1) (g) or a war crime under article 8 (2) (b) (xxii). Trafficking in persons for other purposes, such as forced marriage or forced labour, may also constitute the international crime of enslavement.

15. The Special Rapporteur notes that trafficking in persons is a strategy used by armed groups to control, terrorize and displace communities and to maintain and strengthen the groups' capacity for continuing conflict and to exert control. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the continuing armed conflict, which has further intensified since January 2025, and the resulting loss of control by the State over parts of the territory, including the city of Goma and its surroundings and the city of Bukavu, to the M23 armed group. She notes that the armed conflict is also being fuelled by transnational organized crime, including trafficking in women and girls.

16. The Special Rapporteur stresses that it is the primary responsibility of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to ensure security in its territory and to protect civilians with respect for the rule of law, international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that MONUSCO has limited mandate capacity and resources to prevent conflict-related trafficking and to ensure protection of civilians. The proliferation of armed groups and the involvement of foreign entities in the conflict further hinder prevention, protection and accountability.

17. The Special Rapporteur stresses that humanitarian access is essential to the prevention of all forms of trafficking in persons, and most especially to the provision of assistance and protection measures to victims of trafficking in persons. The Special Rapporteur also highlights the devastating impact on civilians of cuts to humanitarian aid programmes, which have also affected services to trafficked persons, including emergency provision of post-exposure prophylaxis kits and other medical services.

18. The Special Rapporteur notes the ongoing peace efforts and stresses the central role of the African Union and its mediation efforts under the facilitation of Togo for peace and stability in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She also notes the signing of the Peace Agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Rwanda (Washington Agreement) on 27 June 2025 with the facilitation of the United States of America, and the signing of the Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 15 November 2025 with the facilitation of Qatar, as well as further progress on the agreement of the terms of reference for a ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism under the Doha Framework. The Special Rapporteur stresses the urgency of addressing the root causes of the conflict in a meaningful manner, including the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Ensuring accountability for conflict-related trafficking in persons and transformative reparations for survivors is essential to achieving a just and lasting peace.

19. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the extension until 20 December 2026 of the mandate of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including, on an exceptional basis and without creating a precedent or any prejudice to the basic principles of peacekeeping, its force intervention brigade. She calls for urgent attention to prevention of

trafficking in persons and protection of victims and survivors as an essential component of the protection of civilians mandate.

A. Trafficking as a form of sexual violence in conflict

20. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the prevalence of trafficking in women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and forced marriage in conflict-affected areas, in displacement situations and transit centres. The normalization of conflict-related trafficking is deeply troubling. The underreporting of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery, is exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, insecurity and reprisal risks. Limited access to medical assistance, as well as stigmatization, lack of legal protections and access to justice, and forced displacement are also contributing factors.

21. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at reports of conflict-related sexual violence committed by State and non-State armed actors, and in areas with MONUSCO presence. In the context of any future peacekeeping transition and possible MONUSCO withdrawal, advance consideration must be given to continuing human rights monitoring, reporting and investigations, including by keeping early warning systems of human rights violations operational. Relevant institutional arrangements and training should be conducted proactively to ensure continuity of protection measures and to establish an effective transition mechanism.

22. The availability of assistance and protection services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence is extremely limited, including the resources and capacity to provide mental health services, vital protection services, access to safe abortion and reproductive and sexual health services, and case management. The looting of essential supplies and the restriction of humanitarian access have worsened conditions for survivors of conflict-related trafficking in persons. Ongoing hostilities further hinder service delivery, with direct attacks on hospitals and shortages of medical supplies, such as life-saving reproductive health kits and post-exposure prophylaxis kits. There is a critical gap in the information or reporting on risks or prevalence of trafficking in men and boys for the purposes of sexual exploitation, and insufficient data on conflict-related sexual violence affecting men and boys. Continued attention is needed to address such risks, particularly given the limited visibility and entrenched stigma.

23. Reports of sexual violence and sexual exploitation by members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo are of serious concern. The lack of access to legal protections, continuing impunity and continued absence of reparations and remedies for victims sustains conditions conducive to conflict-related trafficking. The Special Rapporteur notes the inclusion of articles on the prevention of sexual violence in the Code of Ethics and Military Conduct of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the addition of two training modules on sexual violence and gender to its curriculum. She notes the establishment of the National Action Plan to Prevent Conflict-Related Sexual Violence by Armed and Police Forces and a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, and stresses that effective implementation must be ensured.

24. The Special Rapporteur notes and welcomes significant accountability measures, including the adoption of Law No. 22/065 of 26 December 2022 establishing the fundamental principles relating to the protection of and reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and other crimes against the peace and security of humankind, and the signature on 1 June 2023 of a memorandum of understanding with the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to facilitate cooperation and information-sharing in prosecuting crimes under the mandate of the Court. The Special Rapporteur highlights the importance of ensuring that reparations for conflict-related trafficking in persons are included in all accountability processes, and that the International Criminal Court effectively investigates and ensures accountability for conflict-related trafficking in persons, as crimes falling within the scope of the international crimes of enslavement and of sexual slavery within the Rome Statute.

B. Trafficking for the purposes of forced labour in conflict

25. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the continuing forced recruitment by armed groups. Systematic forced recruitment is reported to have intensified in all areas under M23 occupation, particularly targeting men and boys who are systematically rounded up, often under the pretext of identity verification or security operations, and forcibly recruited.[14]

26. Conflict-related trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, particularly in the mining sector, persists and is exacerbated by illicit mining activities and control by armed groups. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that trafficking for the purposes of forced labour and child labour is strategically used by armed groups to support their activities and extract resources in mineral rich regions, where control of resources is central to the ongoing conflict. Insecurity, serious protection risks for civilians, and the absence of State authorities limits the oversight and protection of workers' rights. Risks of other forms of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour by armed groups persist, including in particular, domestic servitude affecting women and girls.

27. The Ministry of Mines, by Ministerial Order of 3 November 2025, extended the classification of certain mining sites in the Rubaya sector in Masisi and the Nyabibwe sector in Kalehe as "red zones" in order to disrupt conflict financing through illegal extraction and illicit trade in minerals. The ministerial order draws upon the reports of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In its most recent report, the Group of Experts notes that M23 consolidated its access to mineral resources in South Kivu, seizing the strategic mining locality of Nzibira and the Twangiza industrial gold mine in Luhwindja. As a result, M23 gained control of nearly half of the cassiterite and coltan production in South Kivu and over two thirds of its wolframite output.[15] Against this background, the Special Rapporteur highlights the high risks of trafficking for the purpose of forced labour in the affected regions, and the lack of accountability or oversight.

C. Conflict-related child trafficking

28. The Special Rapporteur highlights with grave concern the widespread nature of conflict-related child trafficking, linked to the grave violations against children, particularly abductions, sexual violence and recruitment and use. The persistent impunity for conflict-related child trafficking has created an urgent and grave child rights crisis with lasting and devastating consequences. The Special Rapporteur is alarmed at the high levels of grave violations against children, including relating to child trafficking. She recalls that the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups constitutes child trafficking, and is a violation of international human rights law, anti-trafficking law and international criminal and humanitarian law. International law is designed to ensure ex post facto accountability for child trafficking, as well as its prevention, and effective access to justice for victims of conflict-related trafficking must be ensured.

29. The Special Rapporteur recalls that international human rights, humanitarian, criminal and anti-trafficking law can and must apply concurrently and cumulatively to address conflict-related child trafficking. The MONUSCO Child Protection Section continues to document grave violations against children, linked to child trafficking, despite its reduced field presence. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the impact of the reduced field presence of MONUSCO on the protection of children.

30. The Special Rapporteur highlights that, in the context of ongoing armed conflict, widespread sexual and gender-based violence and poverty,[16] girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation in brothels (*maisons de tolerance*) in conflict areas.[17] Child trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery by armed groups, State actors, mining actors and private security contractors persists with impunity, particularly affecting girls.

[14] S/2025/446, paras. 20–24.
[15] S/2025/858, p. 2.
[16] See CEDAW/C/COD/EP/CO/1.
[17] Ibid., para. 43 (a).

31. Reports of abductions of children by armed groups are prevalent and linked to the purposes of exploitation, including recruitment and use, sexual exploitation, child labour and child marriage. Unaccompanied and separated children, particularly in the context of displacement in North Kivu and South Kivu, are particularly at risk. Boys are targeted by armed groups for recruitment and use and kept in inhumane conditions.[18] Children in street situations in conflict-affected areas are abducted for the purposes of exploitation. The lack of access to education due to school closures and internal displacement further exacerbates the risk of child trafficking.[19] The Special Rapporteur highlights that children born of rape are at serious risk of becoming victims of trafficking in persons.

32. The Special Rapporteur notes with concern that elements of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reportedly provide support to and collaborate with armed groups known to recruit children, despite standing military orders prohibiting contact with such groups. She welcomes the memo issued by the Ministry of Defence to commanders and recruiting officers of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 24 February 2025, which reaffirmed the prohibition of child recruitment and the importance of age verification. She encourages all parties to the conflict to end and prevent grave violations against children and highlights ongoing accountability efforts in relation to the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict and the sexual exploitation of children. The Special Rapporteur highlights the urgency of progressing the implementation of the Action Plan to End and Prevent the Recruitment and Use of Children and of ending and preventing all violations and abuses against children, holding perpetrators accountable and ensuring that children are not detained for their alleged association with armed groups and are handed over to child protection actors.

D. Prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in the context of United Nations peacekeeping

33. The Special Rapporteur highlights the rights of all victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers to effective remedies and to assistance, protection and reparations. Accountability must be ensured through effective investigations, in order to prevent the continuation of the cycle of the presence of peace operations increasing the risk of trafficking in persons.

34. The Special Rapporteur notes that MONUSCO developed an inter-agency strategy for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for the period 2025–2029 and implements the annual action plan to mitigate the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse. This includes regular joint patrols of off-limits locations at different duty stations, daily monitoring by closed-circuit television of entrances and exits, dissemination of toll-free numbers for reporting, training for civilian and uniformed personnel and risk assessments in field locations. The Special Rapporteur notes that MONUSCO has referred victims of sexual exploitation and abuse to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and child victims to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and has proposed a dedicated budget line to support victim assistance. In 2025, reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse fell by over 70% compared to 2024. However, the Special Rapporteur highlights the possibility of underreporting due to the escalating conflict and displacement in the region, and the need for continued prioritization of prevention and assistance measures. In addition, she notes that limited and diminishing resources may contribute to case backlogs and stresses that national ownership of initiatives for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse must be backed with structured handover plans, clearly defined responsibilities and dedicated funding mechanisms during any future peacekeeping transition period.

[18] A/HRC/60/80, para. 47.
[19] CEDAW/C/COD/EP/CO/1, para. 43 (d) and (e).

IV. Trends and contemporary forms of trafficking in persons

A. Trafficking for the purposes of forced labour

35. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the high risk of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour in the mining sector, particularly in artisanal mining and in related activities, such as stone crushing. Security forces, non-State armed actors and private companies reportedly engage in conduct amounting to serious human rights violations at mining sites, particularly in regions such as Haut-Katanga.[20] The weak regulation of supply chains and of the activities of subcontractors compounds the risks of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, including child labour. The Support and Guidance Service for Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining was established in 2022, pursuant to the Mining Code. The Special Rapporteur notes that it continues to lack resources. The role of the Inspector General of Mines is critical to ensuring responsible mining and the effective enforcement of labour rights legislation and the Mining Code. To date, inspectorate mechanisms, including labour and mining inspectorates, have not functioned effectively to ensure protection against trafficking for the purposes of forced labour and other serious human rights violations in the mining sector. Lack of independence, widespread corruption and insecurity, and lack of investigations result in trafficking occurring with impunity.

36. Data on the number of migrant workers in mining areas are limited, particularly in illicit mining and artisanal mining operations. Many workers, including migrant workers, are not registered, increasing risks of exploitation and limiting accountability.

37. The Special Rapporteur notes positive initiatives towards preventing child labour in mining, particularly in relation to the activities of major business enterprises and foreign companies. However, implementation of such initiatives remains limited in practice. Urgent action is required to ensure effective regulation and protection of just and fair conditions of work across the mining sector, in partnership with trade unions, civil society and local communities.

38. The Special Rapporteur notes the adoption of the memorandum of understanding on a partnership between the European Union and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on sustainable value chains of critical and strategic raw materials, and the 2024 road map with the objectives of developing economic opportunities, local jobs and sustainable value chains in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Special Rapporteur stresses the importance of ensuring effective monitoring and implementation of human rights, fair and equitable distribution of profits and the protection of human rights defenders and trade unionists in the context of this partnership.

39. Trafficking in persons in the agricultural sector, particularly in cocoa production and in the context of continuing deforestation, is a serious concern. The limited capacity of the labour inspectorate and the limited information available on enforcement of the Labour Code in the agricultural sector limit accountability, as does the remote nature of the work. There are also concerns about the lack of independence and about corruption in the labour courts, which hinder access to justice for victims of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour.

40. In the agricultural sector, customary patriarchal practices persist, preventing rural women and girls from inheriting and securing control over land and natural resources. The allocation of mining concessions is done without prior consultation with rural women, and the lack of compensation and planned resettlement significantly increases the risks of extreme poverty, economic dependence and, as a consequence, exploitation.

41. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that women and girls are at high risk of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour in the domestic work sector, which is largely unregulated. The absence of labour inspections or enforcement of just and fair conditions of work exacerbates such risks. The displacement of women and girls from rural to urban areas, and from conflict-affected areas, has greatly increased the risks of trafficking in the domestic work and other sectors of the informal economy. Limited knowledge of the application of labour

[20] A/HRC/60/84, para. 21.

laws and anti-trafficking law in the informal domestic work sector contributes to a normalization of trafficking in the domestic sector, which is deeply gendered.

B. Trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation

42. The Special Rapporteur notes that the trafficking in women and girls for the purposes of sexual exploitation is driven by deeply rooted gender inequality and entrenched impunity for all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and further exacerbated by poverty. Repeated concerns were raised with the Special Rapporteur in relation to the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS and other serious and lasting health consequences for women and girls as a consequence of sexual exploitation, including high rates of early and unplanned pregnancies. Access to sexual and reproductive health services, including contraception and safe abortion care, remains limited and in many regions is non-existent. Stigma and discrimination also hinder engagement with police services and reporting. The Special Rapporteur underscores the importance of mitigating the risks of sexual and gender-based violence in mining areas and providing appropriate health services for women in mining communities, including through the UNFPA country programme for 2025–2029.[21]

43. The Special Rapporteur is seriously concerned that women and girls are exposed to high risks of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery, particularly in areas surrounding mining sites, by mining employees and contractors, private security contractors, armed groups and State actors. Women and girls are targeted, with trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation occurring on a wide scale in communities and in the entertainment and hospitality sector surrounding mining sites, such as in bars, hotels and casinos.

44. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at reports of violence and discrimination against sex workers, which limits access to assistance and protection for those at risk of trafficking. Access to justice is also limited due to discriminatory attitudes among law enforcement and judicial authorities, widespread stigma and harmful gender stereotypes.

45. The Special Rapporteur notes the limited information and reporting on the sexual exploitation of men and boys. She highlights the need to take urgent measures to address underreporting and to combat harmful stereotypes and discrimination that limit the effectiveness of prevention measures and access to protection and to justice for men and boys at risk or victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

C. Child trafficking and the rights of children

46. The prevalence of child trafficking for sexual exploitation in mining areas is alarming; such trafficking persists with impunity. Girls are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation, sexual slavery and forced marriage in areas surrounding mining sites, with devastating consequences for their rights to life, survival and development, education, health and freedom from violence. Legislation on child protection is supported by national mechanisms, including the 2017–2025 National Sectoral Strategy to Combat Child Labour in Artisanal Mining, the 2012–2025 National Action Plan to Combat the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Monitoring Child Labour in Artisanal Mining established in 2020. While Law No. 015/2002 – the Labour Code – prohibits forced and compulsory labour and the worst forms of child labour, implementation remains weak, especially at the provincial level within the artisanal and small-scale mining sector, and in surrounding areas and related work, such as stone crushing and in construction. Child labour in large-scale industrial mining operations and surrounding areas is difficult to monitor, due to restricted and controlled access to the concession areas and the significant presence of State armed forces and security forces, in addition to the mining police.

47. As one of the Pathfinder Countries of Alliance 8.7 (the Global Alliance to Eradicate Forced Labour, Modern Slavery, Human Trafficking and Child Labour), a Child Labour

[21] DP/FPA/CPD/COD/6.

Monitoring and Remediation System was established in 2022. To date, the System pilot has identified 6,242 children working in 14 sites in Lualaba and Haut-Katanga (3,516 boys and 2,726 girls). While the children were registered for further protection needs assessments, service provision in practice continues to be limited. In conjunction with that System, the Child Labour Platform is working to promote public-private cooperation for responsible supply chains and to align remediation efforts with responsible sourcing practices across the mineral supply chain.

48. The Special Rapporteur notes the efforts made to eliminate child labour in the mining sector. However, implementation in practice remains limited and impunity is widespread. Corruption, insecurity and weakness in the administration of justice limit independent monitoring of compliance with anti-trafficking and child labour laws, particularly in artisanal and small-scale mining. Human rights defenders remain at serious risk when challenging the powerful extractive mining sector, and accountability is limited, as special procedure mandate holders have highlighted in multiple communications.

49. The Special Rapporteur highlights also that domestic work is a high-risk sector for young children, who are targeted for recruitment when considered too young to be recruited into armed groups or the mining sector. Children trafficked for the purposes of domestic servitude are at high risk of sexual exploitation and sexual slavery. The invisibility of child trafficking in the domestic work sector and the persistent impunity are deeply gendered, particularly impacting girls who are in situations of extreme poverty and are out of school.

50. Agriculture is also a high-risk sector where children are recruited, in particular to work in cocoa production. They remain out of school and are at high risk of trafficking for the purposes of forced labour and other serious human rights violations. As cocoa production is concentrated in conflict-affected areas, especially Beni in North Kivu Province and Bunia in Ituri Province, the risks of child trafficking by armed groups remains high. Children are abducted and subjected to forced labour or exploited along with adult family members. The conflation of criminal smuggling networks and illicit activities by armed groups operating across international borders limits the effectiveness of supply chain monitoring measures as a tool to combat child trafficking.

51. The Special Rapporteur highlights the continuing prevalence of child marriage, particularly in rural areas, despite its prohibition under article 407 of the Family Code.[22] She is concerned at the failure to investigate cases of trafficking in children for the purposes of child marriage. The lack of services to support child victims and ensure shelter, safe accommodation, guardianship and the upholding of their best interests all contribute to a continuing cycle of child trafficking. Chronic impunity, corruption in the administration of justice and weak child protection systems further compound the risks of child trafficking.

52. The Special Rapporteur notes that approximately 450,000 children aged between 0 and 17 are orphans because of HIV/AIDS. She highlights the particular vulnerability of HIV/AIDS orphans to all forms of child trafficking. Children in street situations are at extremely high risk of all forms of child trafficking, including for the purposes of sexual exploitation, child labour, exploitation in begging and exploitation in criminal activities and recruitment and use by armed groups.

53. The Special Rapporteur highlights the discrimination and violence experienced by children with albinism. Children living with albinism are at a heightened risk of discrimination and violence, including trafficking for the purposes of forced begging, forced labour and sexual exploitation. Children with disabilities similarly face increased risks of exploitation, including all forms of trafficking in persons. Access to justice remains limited. Discrimination, stigma and a lack of accessible services and child-friendly justice procedures exacerbate impunity for trafficking in children with disabilities.

[22] CEDAW/C/COD/EP/CO/1, para. 43 (b).

D. Trafficking in the context of forced migration and internal displacement

54. The Democratic Republic of the Congo is experiencing one of the world's largest, most protracted and complex internal displacement crises, with more than 7 million people internally displaced. The Special Rapporteur notes that displacement seriously increases the risks of trafficking in persons. The dismantling of camps for internally displaced persons has forced communities to move from one precarious situation to another, without access to essential supplies and services, including medical and pyschosocial assistance and protection measures, significantly heightening their vulnerability to trafficking in persons.

55. Since January 2025, some 140,000 people have left the Democratic Republic of the Congo and fled to neighbouring countries, in particular Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and the United Republic of Tanzania. Agencies providing cash assistance and food rations have been forced to cut their support per person due to budget constraints. Likewise, support for family tracing is reduced, due to a lack of funding, preventing family reunification.[23] This increases the vulnerability of displaced persons, particularly children, to trafficking. More than half of the refugees who have fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo to neighbouring countries are children, many of whom may have endured sexual violence, sexual exploitation, recruitment and use by armed groups, and continue to be at risk of trafficking during transit and in countries of destination. The Special Rapporteur highlights the urgent need for increased resources and support for host communities in line with the comprehensive refugee response framework, to ensure effective protection against risks of trafficking in persons, particularly affecting children and women-headed households in refugee communities, and to provide assistance, including medical and psychosocial assistance, access to education and long-term social inclusion measures.

V. Assistance and protection for victims of trafficking

56. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the establishment of a national referral mechanism and standard operating procedures for the identification and assistance of victims of trafficking. However, implementation in practice remains limited and non-existent in many parts of the country, with limited awareness among law enforcement authorities, child protection actors, labour inspectors and healthcare workers.

57. The specialized Child Protection and Sexual Violence Prevention Units of the police force lack resources, including trained front-line personnel, accommodation facilities and modes of transportation to assist victims in a timely and dignified manner. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that the human rights of victims and survivors of trafficking in persons are widely ignored.

58. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the lack of protection services for victims and persons at risk of trafficking, which contributes to further traumatization of victims and continuing risks of reprisals and retrafficking. Inadequate assistance and protection services, including safe homes and emergency shelters, remain a pressing concern that demand urgent and coordinated action. The protection gaps have been filled by civil society organizations, religious and community leaders whose services are heavily reliant on volunteers and external funding.

59. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the adoption of Decree No. 23/09 of 22 February 2023 on the establishment, organization and operation of integrated multisectoral service centres for survivors of gender-based violence. She calls on the Government to ensure that survivors of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced marriage, domestic servitude and sexual slavery are ensured effective access to assistance and protection services, particularly in rural areas and at the provincial level. Currently, there is very limited access to essential services for victims, including medical, reproductive and sexual health services, pyschosocial assistance, legal aid, safe, long-term accommodation and social inclusion measures.

[23] United Nations, UN News, "Anthrax outbreak compounds security crisis in eastern DR Congo", 1 May 2025.

VI. Accountability, rule of law and administration of justice

60. The Special Rapporteur notes the need to strengthen the justice sector, in particular to ensure effective access to justice for victims of trafficking in persons in rural and provincial areas. Insufficient resources allocated to the police, prosecutorial offices and courts hinder effective investigations and prosecution of trafficking crimes. Significant delays in progressing investigations and prosecutions, particularly in rural areas and conflict-affected areas, limit access to justice. The Special Rapporteur highlights continuing serious concerns over persistent corruption and the lack of judicial independence, which undermine efforts to ensure accountability. In addition, limited access to legal aid for victims of trafficking further restricts their ability to secure effective remedies.

61. The Special Rapporteur welcomes the joint justice reform support programme for the period 2025–2029 signed by the United Nations and the Democratic Republic of the Congo on 18 November 2025, which aims to strengthen the criminal justice system and facilitate the handover of tasks to national authorities.[24]

62. In response to the limited functioning of the formal justice system, military and mobile courts have been utilized to ensure access to justice and accountability. The High Military Court has established notable jurisprudence, including through the Kavumu case in South Kivu, in which it recognized rape and sexual violence as crimes against humanity and ordered reparations for the victims. The Goma military court convicted a former armed group leader who was active in the Masisi territory on charges including child recruitment and sexual violence against children.

63. During her visit to Makala Central Prison, the Special Rapporteur met with victims and corrections facility personnel and observed that there were potential victims of trafficking held in detention. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the limited awareness of the non-punishment principle. She emphasizes that victims of trafficking should not be punished for unlawful acts committed as a consequence of trafficking, including in the context of forced criminality and forced recruitment into armed groups. The Special Rapporteur was alarmed at the inhumane conditions in the Central Prison, particularly for women detainees, who had been subjected to sexual violence, including gang rape by male inmates, during serious security breaches and had remained in custody without adequate access to essential medical services, having given birth to children born of rape. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned by the level of impunity in relation to trafficking in persons occurring in the mining sector and in communities located near mining sites, exacerbated by corruption and weakness in the rule of law and the administration of justice.

64. Discriminatory and harmful stereotypes continue to undermine the effectiveness of investigations and victim protection, and enable trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation of young women and girls to persist with impunity. The limited availability of resources for victim and witness protection further hampers the ability of authorities to conduct effective investigations. Insufficient resources to undertake investigations and to provide support to victims significantly weaken law enforcement efforts and perpetuate impunity, particularly in rural areas, where services are either constrained or entirely absent.

65. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the limited capacity for follow-up investigations and the ongoing stigma experienced by victims of sexual exploitation, particularly in contexts where specialized police units are neither involved nor present. The Special Rapporteur is also concerned that the adoption of the law on legal aid is still pending and there is no specific law to protect victims and witnesses. She is further concerned that judicial facilities are inaccessible, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas, despite previous commitments to expanding the presence of mobile courts in rural areas.

[24] S/2025/779, para. 54; and DP/DCP/COD/4.

66. Gender inequality is deeply rooted in harmful societal practices, limiting access to justice for victims of trafficking. The Special Rapporteur is concerned that customary laws that discriminate against women continue to be enforced, including by traditional leaders and courts, in contravention of the statutory law, which prevails over customary law, according to the Constitution (art. 207).

VII. Transitional justice and reparations

67. The Special Rapporteur notes that the national transitional justice policy adopted recently is an important opportunity to address conflict-related trafficking in persons, particularly affecting women and children. The Special Rapporteur notes the important steps taken, including: (a) the enactment of Law No. 22/065 on 26 December 2022 establishing the basic principles on protection and reparations for victims of conflict-related sexual violence and victims of crimes against the peace and security of humankind; (b) the establishment of a commission of inquiry on 8 June 2023 to investigate possible acts of violence committed by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in Goma and Kwamouth; and (c) the signature of a memorandum of understanding on 1 June 2023 with the Office of the President of the International Criminal Court to facilitate cooperation and information-sharing in prosecuting crimes under the mandate of the Court.

68. The Special Rapporteur stresses that accountability for conflict-related trafficking in persons, particularly affecting women and children, should be integrated into all transitional justice measures, including reparations for survivors. She welcomes the establishment of the National Fund for Reparations for Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

69. The MONUSCO project agreement signed with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in March 2024 to assist the judicial authorities in setting up a digital investigations unit and support investigations into international crimes and process criminal analysis is a welcome development.

70. The Special Rapporteur also welcomes the electronic archives management initiative led by MONUSCO to digitize judicial data and to secure archives. She stresses that access to justice procedures and legal aid, including in post-conflict and transitional justice processes, should be child-friendly, gender-sensitive, accessible to victims with disabilities and survivor-centred.

VIII. Women and peace and security

71. The Special Rapporteur commends the Government’s efforts to implement the women and peace and security agenda through a dedicated National Action Plan. She underscores that women should lead the initiatives aimed at finding lasting solutions to conflict, including the fight against criminality. Specific measures aimed at combating trafficking in persons must be integrated into the Action Plan and fully operationalized, recognizing the prevalence of trafficking in conflict, transitional and post-conflict societies. The Special Rapporteur commends the reintegration project jointly launched by MONUSCO and provincial governments focused on strengthening community resilience, the role of women in stabilization initiatives, and the socioeconomic reintegration of ex-combatants.

72. The Special Rapporteur is concerned at the limited participation of women in ongoing peace negotiations and in recently concluded peace agreements. She highlights the essential role of women and youth in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding processes. She stresses the importance of their full, equal, meaningful and safe participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including in peace processes.

IX. Demobilization, disarmament, community recovery and stabilization

73. The Special Rapporteur notes that the proliferation of weapons and small arms contributes to the prevalence of conflict-related trafficking and impunity. The adoption of the national strategy for the implementation of the Demobilization, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilization Programme is a welcome development and a critically important measure for child victims subjected to recruitment and use in armed conflict and other forms of trafficking. It is critical that sufficient resources are allocated to prevent rerecruitment and to support the continuing rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by armed conflict.

74. The coverage of the programme for ex-combatants should be extended and a survivor-centred approach to preventing and responding to conflict-related trafficking in persons, including trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, should be embedded within it, in accordance with Security Council resolution 2467 (2019). Continued and expanded measures to protect child victims of conflict-related trafficking must be ensured, with targeted resources for child victims with disabilities, to ensure the full realization of their rights and best interests.

X. Rights of persons with disabilities

75. The Special Rapporteur met with persons with disabilities, persons with albinism and representatives of disability rights organizations. She is deeply concerned at the serious risks of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, forced labour, exploitation in begging and forced criminality faced by persons with disabilities and persons with albinism. Limited and often a complete lack of access to education, employment, training or social protection is a root cause of trafficking in persons and other serious human rights violations. Children with disabilities and children in situations of extreme poverty in particular face serious risks of trafficking in persons. Current measures to combat trafficking are not fully disability-inclusive, particularly in conflict-affected areas where risks are heightened in the context of displacement and services are increasingly inaccessible. The Special Rapporteur highlights that services and humanitarian aid are not always accessible for persons with disabilities.

XI. Rights of Indigenous Peoples

76. The Special Rapporteur met with representatives of Indigenous Peoples and heard reports that Baka, Pygmy and Bakete peoples, in particular, face heightened risks of trafficking for the purposes of child labour, forced labour, sexual exploitation and conflict-related trafficking, including recruitment and use by armed groups.

77. The Special Rapporteur notes the particular vulnerability of Pygmy Peoples to trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, and notes that Law No. 22/030 of 15 July 2022 on the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Pygmy Peoples officially recognizes the rights of Indigenous Pygmy Peoples and their protection against all forms of discrimination and violence. The Law also explicitly prohibits their reduction to slavery and the imposition of forced labour or any other form of exploitation on Indigenous Pygmy Peoples (sects. 9 and 51). While welcoming this legislative development, the Special Rapporteur notes that implementation of the Law to date, particularly in conflict-affected areas, remains limited.

XII. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and persons of diverse gender identities

78. The Special Rapporteur expresses concern in relation to reports of discrimination and violence particularly affecting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and

persons of diverse gender identities. Such discrimination leads to stigma and marginalization, heightening the risks of trafficking in persons and hindering effective access to justice or to safe reporting, assistance or protection mechanisms. The recent introduction of a bill proposing to amend the Penal Code to criminalize same-sex acts is a worrying regression in human rights protection.

XIII. Communities affected by environmental degradation and climate change

79. The Special Rapporteur stresses that environmental degradation and loss of biodiversity due to extractive mining, deforestation and climate change further contribute to displacement, loss of livelihoods and the consequent risks of trafficking in persons. Children who are displaced, out of school, separated from their families or in precarious situations due to the lack of planned relocations are at high risk. Given women's limited access to decision-making in relation to land and natural resources, and more limited access than men to sustainable livelihoods, the gendered impact of climate change is evident, particularly as a consequence of displacement from rural to urban centres.

80. Illicit resource exploitation by armed groups has further exacerbated the risks of displacement and trafficking in persons. The Special Rapporteur recalls that in its resolution 2808 (2025), the Security Council recognized the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, natural disasters, and lack of energy access on the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and expressed concern regarding the activities of armed groups in protected areas that lead to environmental damage. The Special Rapporteur expresses concern regarding the activities of armed groups in protected areas and the further loss of livelihoods, conflict and displacement.

XIV. Role of civil society and trade unions

81. The Special Rapporteur is deeply concerned at the absence of an enabling environment for civil society, trade unions and human rights defenders. Intimidation, harassment and violence against human rights defenders and trade unions remain a serious concern, especially in areas under the control of armed groups and particularly in mining areas. Women human rights defenders have reportedly been intimidated and subjected to incommunicado detention and death threats. The Special Rapporteur highlights previous communications issued in relation to human rights defenders, in particular those campaigning against illicit mineral exploitation by M23 in Masisi and child labour in mines.[25] She emphasizes that civil society organizations, human rights defenders and trade unions are essential partners in combating trafficking in persons and in combating impunity, often working at great personal risk in conflict-affected areas.

XV. Conclusions and recommendations

82. **The Special Rapporteur welcomes the commitment of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to strengthen action to combat all forms of trafficking and encourages the Government to demonstrate leadership in combating all forms of trafficking in persons, including conflict-related trafficking in persons, and ensuring accountability, notably through its roles on the Security Council and the Human Rights Council.**

83. **She notes that conflict-related trafficking in persons has intensified in the context of the ongoing insecurity and widespread impunity in conflict-affected areas, with devastating consequences for victims and survivors, particularly women and children. The prevalence of trafficking in persons is not confined to the armed conflict. The Special Rapporteur highlights that weakness in the rule of law and the administration of justice,**

[25] See communications COD 3/2024 and COD 7/2024. All communications mentioned in the present report are available from https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/Tmsearch/TMDocuments.

corruption and governance challenges, particularly in relation to the control of mineral resources and illicit mining, the continuing legacies of colonialism, combined with systemic gender inequality, sexual and gender-based violence, and discrimination against women and girls, contribute to multiple and widespread forms of trafficking in persons within the State and to limited accountability for victims and survivors.

84. **The Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendations to the Government:**

(a) **Amend Law No. 22/067 on the Prevention and Fight against Trafficking in Persons to criminalize all forms of trafficking, clearly state the irrelevance of the means element in relation to child victims, and incorporate the non-punishment principle into legislation and prosecutorial guidance;**

(b) **Expand training on the anti-trafficking law, in particular on all forms of child trafficking, victim referral mechanisms and the non-punishment principle, in the training curricula of all security sector and justice sector actors;**

(c) **Translate the anti-trafficking law into all national languages, including Lingala, Kituba-Kikongo, Tshiluba and Swahili, and disseminate it widely in accessible formats;**

(d) **Ensure that anti-trafficking measures are disability inclusive, ensuring the participation and leadership of persons with disabilities in the design and implementation of anti-trafficking measures, including in conflict-affected areas;**

(e) **Ensure sufficient budget and human resource allocation and disbursement to the Agency in charge of Coordinating Youth, the Fight against Sexual Violence and Trafficking in Persons and related technical working commissions, as well as to the implementation of the National Action Plan on Trafficking in Persons;**

(f) **Strengthen the independence, capacity and resources of labour commissions and inspectorates, increasing the frequency of unannounced inspections, and ensure training on identification and referral of victims of trafficking, particularly in high-risk sectors, including agriculture and domestic work, and strengthen the implementation of the Labour Code;**

(g) **Strengthen the independence of inspectorate mechanisms in the mining sector, ensuring effective implementation of anti-trafficking laws – particularly in relation to children – and protection of just and fair conditions of work, in partnership with trade unions, civil society and local communities;**

(h) **Take urgent and effective measures to combat child trafficking in artisanal and small-scale mining, and in illicit mining activities in conflict-affected areas, ensuring accountability;**

(i) **Strengthen child-friendly justice processes to ensure access to child victims of trafficking, particularly in rural, mining and conflict-affected areas;**

(j) **Expand the provision of assistance and protection measures for child victims and children at risk, including safe accommodation and timely appointment of guardians, prioritizing the strengthening of child protection services, particularly in rural, mining and conflict-affected areas;**

(k) **Ensure sufficient resources and capacity for the establishment and functioning of integrated multisectoral service centres for survivors of gender-based violence, including survivors of trafficking in persons, and ensure effective access to medical, pyschosocial and legal assistance, safe accommodation and access to sustainable livelihoods, particularly in rural, mining and conflict-affected areas;**

(l) **Expand the provision of survivor-centred responses to all forms of conflict-related trafficking, long-term assistance and protection measures, including medical assistance, reproductive and sexual health and psychosocial services, legal aid, effective remedies and long-term social inclusion measures;**

(m) **Recalling Security Council resolution 2467 (2019), ensure the integration of gender-sensitive and child rights measures into the National Fund for Reparations for Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, led by survivors of conflict-related trafficking, and ensure that the Fund is fully operationalized and that survivor-centred measures, financial assistance and just and transformative reparations promptly reach survivors of conflict-related trafficking in persons;**

(n) **Ensure that child victims of recruitment and use in armed conflict are ensured assistance, protection and reintegration support measures, integrating responses to conflict-related child trafficking into all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes and ensuring that children formerly associated with armed groups are treated primarily as victims and are not punished;**

(o) **Establish a centralized and digitized database on trafficking investigations, prosecutions and court proceedings, and ensure that all justice sector actors are trained on the effective implementation of the anti-trafficking law;**

(p) **Provide sufficient resources to the specialized Child Protection and Sexual Violence Prevention Units of the police to identify and assist victims of trafficking in persons;**

(q) **Strengthen victim referral and protection mechanisms, and ensure the availability of reproductive health kits and post-exposure prophylaxis kits for victims of trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation;**

(r) **Strengthen measures to prevent trafficking in persons for sexual exploitation in mining areas and take effective measures to ensure accountability and combat impunity;**

(s) **Prioritize as a matter of urgency the prevention of child trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour, particularly in mining areas, ensuring effective investigations to combat impunity;**

(t) **Continue strengthening child-friendly justice procedures, including in rural, mining and conflict-affected areas, to ensure accountability for child trafficking for all purposes;**

(u) **Ensure the provision of long-term protection and support for child victims of trafficking, including measures to prevent retrafficking by tackling underlying factors, such as poverty and gender equality, guaranteeing universal birth registration and eliminating statelessness;**

(v) **Prevent the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, including by enforcing relevant policies prohibiting child recruitment and implementing age verification;**

(w) **Resume the operation of toll-free hotlines and embed victim identification and screening procedures in community-level social services in order to ensure early detection and referral of potential victims of trafficking;**

(x) **Implement measures to ensure victim and witness protection in all trafficking investigations and legal proceedings, including the protection of human rights defenders and trade unions, as well as trauma-informed, gender-, child- and disability-sensitive justice proceedings, prioritizing effective access to justice;**

(y) **Commit to an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities and ensure that peace negotiations address the root causes of conflict, including impunity for illicit extraction of natural resources and conflict-related trafficking;**

(z) **Take further steps to hold armed forces accountable for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and continue fighting impunity for all conflict-related trafficking in persons by armed forces;**

(aa) **Continue and strengthen cooperation with the International Criminal Court following the referral of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2004 and 2023, as well as cooperation with the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;**

(bb) **Ensure protection of internally displaced persons and refugees, including during transit and, recalling Security Council resolution 2765 (2024), ensure that all parties to the conflict respect the civilian and humanitarian character of camps and settlements for internally displaced persons and refugees, stressing the role of the Congolese National Police in securing such camps;**

(cc) **Recalling that both the Washington Agreement and the Doha peace process integrate concerns relating to refugee issues, ensure that any returns of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo to Rwanda are safe, voluntary and dignified, ensuring access to sustainable livelihoods and prioritizing the best interests of all children affected;**

(dd) **Ensure effective action to promote and protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples, combating all forms of trafficking, particularly trafficking for the purposes of forced labour, affecting Indigenous Peoples. The Special Rapporteur calls for the National Assembly to adopt the draft law against tribalism, racism and xenophobia, and underscores that the law on the protection and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Peoples should be implemented with meaningful consultation.**

85. **The Special Rapporteur calls upon all States Members of the United Nations and United Nations entities:**

(a) **To promote the transparent and lawful management of natural resources, including through responsible mineral sourcing supply chain due diligence, recalling Security Council resolutions 1952 (2010), 2389 (2017), 2457 (2019) and 2773 (2025) and presidential statement S/PRST/2021/19;**

(b) **To ensure structured handover plans with clearly defined responsibilities and dedicated funding mechanisms for the potential withdrawal of MONUSCO field missions, including with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse cases;**

(c) **To ensure adequate resourcing of MONUSCO to ensure effective protection of civilians and to combat all forms of conflict-related trafficking, including during mission transitions, recalling Security Council resolution 2594 (2021);**

(d) **To ensure increased resources and support for host communities in line with the comprehensive refugee response framework, to ensure effective protection against risks of trafficking in persons, particularly affecting children and women-headed households in refugee communities, and to provide assistance, including medical and psychosocial assistance, access to education and long-term social inclusion measures;**

(e) **To ensure that the Commission of Inquiry mandated by the Human Rights Council in its resolutions S-37/1 and 60/22 is fully operationalized and given adequate resources to continue the work undertaken by the fact-finding mission, including monitoring of and investigations into alleged human rights violations;**

(f) **To ensure that the prevention of all forms of conflict-related trafficking, as well as protection and accountability measures, are fully addressed in peace negotiations, and to integrate human rights-based responses to trafficking in persons into the women and peace and security and the youth and peace and security agendas.**

86. **The Special Rapporteur urges all parties to the conflict:**

(a) **To implement fully the previous conclusions of the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo;**[26]

(b) **To cease immediately the recruitment and use of children, to release immediately and without preconditions all children within their ranks and to hand them**

[26] See S/AC.51/2022/7.

over to civilian child protection actors for their full reintegration through family- and community-based reintegration programmes, as well as to end and prevent further recruitment and use of children, including the rerecruitment of children who have been released, consistent with their obligations under international law;

(c) **To enter into dialogue with the United Nations, if they have not already done so, and to sign commitments to end and prevent the six grave violations, including all forms of conflict-related child trafficking.**