



## **INTERNAL AUDIT DIVISION**

### **REPORT 2023/049**

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#### **Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

**The Mission needed to update its strategic  
communications and public information  
strategy, enhance strategic communications  
and public information coordination efforts,  
and analyze adverse developments and trends  
from media monitoring**

**29 September 2023  
Assignment No. AP2022-620-09**

# **Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO). The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the strategic communications and public information programme (communications programme) in addressing misinformation and disinformation and promoting accurate understanding and awareness of the implementation of the Mission's mandate and associated activities. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2022 and included the strategies and plans, capacity building, coordination and execution of programmatic activities, and monitoring and evaluation of the communications programme.

MONUSCO implemented adequate public information outreach activities and monitored online media news and conversations to gauge local sentiments about its activities. However, the Mission needed to update its strategic communications and public information strategy, enhance strategic communications and public information coordination efforts, and analyze adverse developments and trends from media monitoring.

OIOS made nine recommendations. To address issues identified in the audit, MONUSCO needed to:

- Update, approve and implement comprehensive communications and public information and digital communication strategies;
- Develop an annual work plan for the Strategic Communications and Public Information Division that includes measurable and time-bound outputs and ensures effective execution of activities;
- Enhance the coordination of planned communications and public information strategies, plans and activities among various Mission components;
- Conduct a training needs assessment to identify gaps in the knowledge and skills of public information officers and provide relevant training to enhance their capacity;
- Develop and implement coordinated measures to ensure that all United Nations entities work effectively to implement the One UN approach and coordinate the transition process;
- Conduct regular One UN press conferences to maintain a consistent and open line of communication with the media and help promote a One UN approach;
- Develop and implement a sustainability plan for Radio Okapi based on the outcome of the consultant's assessment to ensure the long-term sustainability of the radio station's operations;
- Establish and implement a mechanism to analyze adverse developments and trends from media monitoring to proactively mitigate or counter them; and
- Verify messaging on social media to ensure that its entities using social media platforms adhere to a unified approach, maintain consistent messaging and create impactful narratives or stories about its operations.

MONUSCO accepted all recommendations, implemented two and initiated action to implement the remaining outstanding recommendations. Actions required to close the recommendations are indicated in Annex I.

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# **Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

## **I. BACKGROUND**

1. The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).
2. Strategic communications and public information play a critical role in the Mission's ability to fulfill its mandate successfully, maintain its overall effectiveness, and contribute to cultivating its positive image and reputation. The Action for Peacekeeping initiative, the Department of Public Information (DPI)<sup>1</sup> social media guidelines, DPI operational policy and guidance for public information in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and the DPI/Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support's<sup>2</sup> strategic communications and public information policy guide the management of the Mission's strategic communications and public information programme (communications programme).
3. The MONUSCO Strategic Communications and Public Information Division (SCPID or the Division) manages the Mission's communications programme. The Division provides coverage of the Mission's activities in local, regional and international media to understand the Mission's mandate and activities. This coverage includes disseminating the Mission's strategic priorities to audiences involved in and affected by the peace process and providing information regarding the peace process to all segments of local and international audiences.
4. A Director at the D-1 level heads SCPID and reports directly to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). The SCPID Director is a member of the senior management group and serves as a crucial advisor to Mission leadership on matters related to strategic communications and public information. The Division comprises the Spokesperson's Office, Multimedia and Content Production Unit, Campaign and Outreach Unit and Radio Okapi<sup>3</sup>. It has public information officers in Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu, Bunia and Beni.
5. In the 2022/23 fiscal year, SCPID had 131 authorized posts of 16 international and 115 national staff, with approved operating budgets for 2021/22 and 2022/23 of \$308,135 and \$402,885, respectively.
6. Comments provided by MONUSCO are incorporated in italics.

## **II. AUDIT OBJECTIVE, SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY**

7. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the strategic communications and public information programme in addressing misinformation<sup>4</sup> and disinformation<sup>5</sup> and promoting accurate understanding and awareness of the implementation of the Mission's mandate and associated activities.

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<sup>1</sup> DPI was renamed the Department of Global Communications effective 1 January 2019.

<sup>2</sup> The Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support were restructured and renamed the Department of Peace Operations/Department of Operational Support effective 1 January 2019.

<sup>3</sup> A radio station established by MONUSCO in 2002 to provide news and information in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

<sup>4</sup> Misinformation is spreading false or inaccurate information without the intention to deceive or mislead people.

<sup>5</sup> Disinformation is spreading knowingly false or misleading information to deceive or mislead people.

8. This audit was included in the 2022 OIOS annual risk-based work plan due to the operational, political and reputational risks related to the Mission’s communications programme.

9. OIOS conducted this audit from February to July 2023. The audit covered the period from 1 July 2021 to 31 December 2022. Based on an activity-level risk assessment, the audit covered higher and medium-risk areas in the communications programme, which included the strategies and plans, capacity building, coordination and execution of programmatic activities, and monitoring and evaluation of the communications programme.

10. The audit methodology included: (a) interviews with key personnel; (b) reviews of relevant documentation; (c) analytical reviews of data; (d) a review of a judgmentally selected sample of 15 outreach activities; (e) a review of a randomly selected sample of 12 out of 18 monthly monitoring reports; (f) a review of 12 planned outputs from the fiscal year 2021/2022 SCPID work plan; and (g) field visits to SCPID offices in Kinshasa and Goma.

11. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

### **III. AUDIT RESULTS**

#### **A. Strategies and plans**

##### Need to update and approve communications strategies and an annual work plan

###### *a. The Mission’s strategic communications and public information strategy*

12. The SCPID Director is responsible for developing, implementing, and regularly updating the Mission’s strategic communications and public information strategy (communications strategy) that: (a) defines clear communications goals supporting the Mission’s objectives; (b) provides an overview narrative; (c) identifies target audiences and appropriate platforms; (d) identifies available resources; and (e) outlines an evaluation framework to assess the achievement of the communications goals. The communications strategy should also have an implementation plan.

13. MONUSCO did not have an approved communications strategy during the audit period, and it was only in December 2022 that the Division drafted one for the fiscal year 2022/2023. The last communications strategy was prepared in 2016/2017. According to SCPID, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic hindered the development of a communications strategy for the fiscal year 2021/2022. Instead, the Division developed a work plan for the fiscal year 2021/2022. A review of the draft strategy revealed that it included the target audiences, partners, objectives, key messages based on the 2021 MONUSCO mandate, challenges and threats, communications channels, and actions to fight misinformation and disinformation. However, it needed to include other essential elements, such as a comprehensive situational operational analysis, a defined implementation plan, indicators of achievement, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

14. SCPID presented the draft communications strategy to the Mission Leadership Team (MLT) in its meeting on 12 December 2022. The MLT contributed inputs for inclusion in the strategy, such as incorporating the One UN approach, hiring an international consultant to train MPIOs, establishing guidelines for strategy implementation, and emphasizing proactive communications. However, as of June 2023, the communications strategy remained unapproved because SCPID had not incorporated the MLT inputs into the draft strategy.

15. The Division attributed the delay to the need to update the strategy with the current mandate, although the current mandate has been in effect since 20 December 2022. A comprehensive communications strategy could have helped enhance coordination among internal and external stakeholders. The lack of a clear and effective communications strategy also hindered the Mission's ability to effectively address anti-MONUSCO protests and contributed to (i) misunderstandings regarding the Mission's mandated priorities, (ii) negative perceptions, and (iii) mistrust among relevant stakeholders, including the local population.

*b. The Mission's digital strategy*

16. MONUSCO is required to harness the power of digital communications and emerging technologies, using their capabilities to enhance its communications and outreach activities. This requirement necessitates developing an effective social media strategy with vital elements, such as an analysis of the Mission's digital landscape, measurable goals and metrics, digital capacity building, digital risk management, an audience engagement plan, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

17. SCPID drafted a digital strategy in 2020. The digital strategy highlighted several challenges the Mission faced in its digital communication efforts. These challenges included a lack of dedicated staff and reliable digital and strategic information to counter misinformation, limited capacity for social media monitoring, inadequate action to increase traffic, a reactive approach, and a reporting system that focused more on activities than on results. A review of the strategy revealed that it contained the target audiences, objectives, key messages, required equipment, and an action plan but did not include the other essential elements mentioned above. Additionally, one of the proposed activities in the draft digital strategy was developing a social media strategy, a subset of the digital strategy that focuses explicitly on leveraging the Mission's social media platforms. However, the development of the social media strategy was pending at the time of the audit.

18. The Mission needed to prioritize developing an approved digital strategy, including a social media strategy. As a result, the incomplete digital strategy hindered the Mission's ability to effectively counter misinformation and disinformation on social media platforms, contributing to local mistrust and anti-MONUSCO protests, as later highlighted in this report.

*c. The Strategic Communications and Public Information Division's annual work plan*

19. SCPID is responsible for developing a detailed work plan encompassing all public information activities and their corresponding cost estimates. A review of the Division's annual work plans for the fiscal years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 determined that they contained activities, outputs, activity indicators, target groups, key partners and expected impact. However, the SCPID Director did not approve the work plans, and SCPID did not assign budget resources for implementing the activities outlined in the work plans. Additionally, the work plans' key performance indicators (KPIs) were not measurable, time-bound, or linked to specific monitoring timelines. For example, KPIs, such as 'regular broadcasting', 'wide distribution of photos', 'increased internal information', 'improved social media' and 'resourceful information platform's, were not time-bound and measurable; therefore, progress and impact could not be properly assessed.

20. OIOS selected 12 planned outputs from the fiscal year 2021/2022 SCPID work plan to verify their achievement. However, SCPID only provided documentation for three outputs. A documentation review indicated insufficient evidence for delivering two of these three outputs. For example, an Excel spreadsheet provided to support the output of submitting the Mission's daily occurrences to DPI did not include information on the number of daily occurrences submitted, which prevented a proper assessment of this

output. Similarly, an Excel spreadsheet provided to support the training of new users of Radio Okapi on the sound recording system lacked details of the training provided, making it challenging to determine the number of new Radio Okapi users trained.

21. These shortcomings in the annual work plans were due to an inadequate supervisory review to ensure the plans contained measurable and time-bound outputs and their effective delivery or execution. Consequently, this could hinder the Mission's ability to implement its communications efforts to effectively support its mandated objectives.

- (1) MONUSCO should update, approve and implement strategic communications and public information and digital strategies that include all essential elements to foster understanding and increase support for the Mission's mandated activities.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 1 and stated that preparing the communications strategy was a collaborative process dependent on the inputs of all substantive components, including the Force and United Nations Police. The Mission further stated that the communications strategy was awaiting the approval of some changes and additions proposed by the Mission Leadership Team, targeted to be completed by the end of October 2023. The Mission also acknowledged that the lack of a social media officer had impacted progress in finalizing the digital strategy, likely to be completed by 31 December 2023.*

- (2) MONUSCO should develop an annual work plan for its Strategic Communications and Public Information Division that includes measurable and time-bound outputs and ensures effective execution of activities.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 2 and stated that finalizing the annual work plan based on the communications strategy would be completed by 31 October 2023.*

## **B. Capacity building**

### Need to assess and provide relevant training to improve the capacity of public information officers

22. The SCPID Director or spokesperson is required to train military and police public information officers (MPIOs and PPIOs). The Action for Peacekeeping initiative also requires the Mission to systematize strategic communications training to a broader range of mission personnel, especially those regularly interacting with local communities, to effectively convey the impact of United Nations peacekeeping and address misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.

23. SCPID training plans for the fiscal years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 contained 13 planned training activities related to video production, Radio Okapi operations, transmitters, misinformation and storytelling. A review of training documents indicated that SCPID, in collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, organized a three-day in-house training to counter misinformation and disinformation in seven priority actions for 40 staff members. These areas included: (a) setting up a multi-disciplinary team, (b) monitoring, (c) analysis, (d) responses, (e) partnerships, (f) fact-checking, and (g) advocacy. Additionally, 14 Radio Okapi and multimedia staff received part-time training over two months in 2022 on filming, editing, and producing multimedia reports.

24. However, these training sessions did not stem from a training needs assessment. This assessment would have been instrumental in identifying knowledge and skill gaps among public information officers, enabling SCPID to deliver targeted, relevant, and impactful training programmes. As a result, there were

skills gaps and a lack of training among public information officers to enhance their communications capacity. For example, interviews with the Multimedia and Content Production Unit staff responsible for managing the social media functions explained that the Unit staff managing social media platforms needed to gain specialized skills in social media management to carry out their tasks effectively. Additionally, SCPID had not provided any capacity-building opportunities for MPIOs and PPIOs, who explained that their public information officers in the sectors needed formal training, experience or qualification in public information to perform their functions effectively.

**(3) MONUSCO should conduct a training needs assessment to identify gaps in the knowledge and skills of public information officers and provide relevant training to enhance their communications capacity.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 3 and stated it had developed a training needs assessment covering the period 2023-2025, specifically addressing the prevention of anti-MONUSCO sentiments.*

### **C. Coordination and execution of programmatic activities**

#### Need to enhance strategic communications and public information coordination

25. The public information component needs to support the substantive component by facilitating their activities, assisting in achieving their objectives and establishing regular consultation mechanisms to identify public information priorities and tasks. SCPID and other Mission components should closely collaborate in formulating all communications strategies and plans. Additionally, the SCPID Director is responsible for ensuring the Mission's active participation in the local United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) and promoting coordination and sharing of messages with United Nations partners to maintain a cohesive One UN approach. The UNCG is a platform to strengthen the One UN approach by ensuring coordinated and synergistic communications among the various United Nations entities operating in the country.

##### *a. Coordination with MONUSCO civilian component*

26. OIOS review of reports on outreach activities indicated that SCPID primarily coordinated outreach with other Mission civilian sections/units. For example, in August 2022, SCPID organized a meeting with 38 media officers from the South Kivu province in collaboration with the Bukavu Head of Office (HoO) and the Civil Affairs Office. The meeting was to establish a strong partnership between MONUSCO and local media to address anti-MONUSCO sentiments. Additionally, in December 2022, SCPID collaborated with the Political Affairs Division to conduct an educational session for about 500 participants on the fight against hate speech and disinformation. Another coordination mechanism was the weekly senior management team meetings at the field office level. These meetings facilitated the exchange of information among field sections/units about their planned activities and the support needed.

27. While these mechanisms demonstrated coordination between SCPID and the MONUSCO civilian component, there was a need for improved coordination in planning and implementing the Mission's communications strategies and the annual work planning of the SCPID. For example, SCPID did not consider the inputs of the relevant Mission's civilian components when formulating the draft communications and digital strategies. Similarly, despite assigning responsibilities to other Mission's civilian components, including all substantive sections, the Division did not develop its work plans in consultation with them.



*b. Coordination with the military public information officers*

28. Mission staff and military personnel acknowledged the need for improved coordination between SCPID and the military. The two entities did not hold regular meetings to effectively implement strategic communications and public information activities. Moreover, SCPID did not collaborate with the military when drafting the communications strategy. For example, during OIOS audit field visits in April 2023, the MPIOs were unaware of the draft communications strategy and requested it from the audit team.

29. The absence of a Mission communications strategy also weakened the coordination efforts between the SCPID and the military, implying that the Mission's civilian and military components were operating independently without aligning their communications efforts with a unified communications strategy. An example that highlighted the consequences of this lack of coordination was the after-action review of the relocation of MONUSCO personnel and assets from Butembo in July and August 2022. The review report highlighted a communications conflict where the military independently tweeted information about the Butembo withdrawal without coordinating with SCPID and the Mission leadership. This uncoordinated message contributed to anti-MONUSCO protests and exposed personnel involved in the relocation to potential danger.

*c. The One UN approach*

30. Mission leadership acknowledged the need to improve the One UN approach to enhance coordination, coherence and efficiency between MONUSCO and the UN Country Team (UNCT) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). During interviews, Mission leadership revealed that implementing the One UN approach faced challenges as most United Nations agencies in the DRC needed to collaborate more.

31. As indicated earlier, the UNCG was a platform to enhance the One UN approach by facilitating coordinated and synergistic communications among the various United Nations entities in the country. However, according to Mission leadership, the UNCG meetings discussed individual programme achievements rather than fostering collaboration. In its updated communications strategy developed in the March 2023 retreat, the UNCG acknowledged its weaknesses: irregular meetings, absence of a joint work plan, low meeting attendance, poor coordination and inconsistent dissemination of vital messages.

32. During the MONUSCO transition process, the Mission and the UNCT needed to collaborate closely in implementing the One UN approach by establishing links among the activities of all United Nations entities in the DRC. By fostering effective coordination, the United Nations entities could mitigate potential issues, such as incoherence and inefficiency, and maximize opportunities for leveraging strengths and expertise. The Office of the Deputy Representative of the Secretary-General (Resident Coordinator/ Humanitarian Coordinator) and UNCT lacked coordinated measures to ensure that all United Nations agencies effectively work with MONUSCO and play their part in implementing the approach while supporting the overall transition process.

**(4) MONUSCO should enhance the coordination of planned communications and public information strategies, plans and activities among various Mission components to align communications efforts and enhance the impact of communications initiatives.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 4 and stated that there was a monthly misinformation and disinformation working group led by the Mission Chief of Staff. The Mission further stated that there were bi-monthly meetings between SCPID and the Force and weekly SCPID meetings attended by the Military Chief of Information Operations.*

**(5) MONUSCO, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team, should develop and implement coordinated measures to ensure that all United Nations entities work effectively to implement the One UN approach and coordinate the transition process.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 5 and stated that it would continue to engage and actively encourage collaboration with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes representatives around communications with a transition focus.*

Need to conduct the One UN press conference regularly

33. MONUSCO needs to engage all relevant media, hold regular press briefings, issue regular information releases, and respond to press inquiries. During the audit period, the Mission conducted 12 One UN Press conferences. The primary purpose of these bi-weekly press conferences was to demonstrate the commitment of MONUSCO and UNCT to operate as a unified and effective system in the DRC. The One UN Press conferences also provided a platform for national and international journalists with MONUSCO accreditation to question the United Nations entities' priorities, activities and positions on significant events and issues impacting the country.

34. A review of all transcripts of the press conferences showed that senior representatives from MONUSCO and other United Nations entities participated and shared updated information on various areas, including the security situation in the country's eastern region, human rights, health, initiatives, humanitarian assistance, child protection, education and the electoral process. However, the last One UN press conference during the audit period was held on 13 July 2022 because Mission leadership decided to suspend the press conferences following the expulsion of the Mission's Spokesperson by the DRC Government on 3 August 2022.

35. Mission leadership members were divided over the suspension of the press conferences. Some argued that holding the One UN press conferences could increase misinformation and disinformation, risking intensified protests against MONUSCO. Conversely, others believed that not engaging with local and international media to communicate challenges and ongoing efforts related to critical issues impacting the country's stability and security could exacerbate misinformation and disinformation. Following a nine-month suspension, the Mission held a One UN press conference on 19 May 2023 but had not convened any such press conference since then.

36. The Mission clarified that it held press conferences on 19 June 2023 and 2 August 2023. However, these were not One UN press conferences aimed at bringing senior representatives from all United Nations entities to inform the public, media and stakeholders about the United Nations' recent operations, developments, initiatives or activities in the country. The lack of regular One UN press conferences could hamper a consistent and open line of communication with the media and a One UN approach to addressing stability and security issues in the DRC.

**(6) MONUSCO should conduct regular One UN press conferences to maintain a consistent and open line of communication with the media and help promote a One UN approach.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 6 and stated that it would resume the monthly One UN press conferences in September 2023 and invite UNCT members to use this forum to inform the public about the work of the United Nations system in the DRC. A "One UN" communications group would support this effort.*

Need to use the radio station effectively to counter misinformation and disinformation and develop its sustainability plan

37. United Nations Security Council resolution 2666 (2022) directed MONUSCO and relevant partners to explore options to sustain Radio Okapi programming during the Mission's transition. The radio station should be a robust platform for the Mission to directly explain its mandate in real-time and local languages, with the broadest audience outreach. The radio content should provide impartial information, foster public engagement in the peace process, and generate popular support for the Mission's activities. Additionally, the Mission is required to incorporate an exit or sustainability plan in the planning and operations of the radio station in the context of the transition process.

38. MONUSCO established Radio Okapi in February 2002 to support its mandate and provide impartial news and information to contribute to peace and development in the DRC. Radio Okapi produced and broadcasted programmes in four national languages (Swahili, Lingala, Kikongo and Tshiluba) and French. During the audit period, Radio Okapi had five regional stations (Kinshasa, Goma, Bukavu, Bunia and Beni) and operated 42 FM transmitters, reaching an estimated 24 million listeners weekly. Its weekly programmes included MONUSCO mandate, news, interviews, debates, entertainment, education and community engagement activities. Additionally, it had a website that received an average of 1.2 million monthly visitors. The radio station actively engaged with its audience on Facebook and Twitter.

39. Radio Okapi had been a credible and trusted source of information in the DRC, as confirmed by various surveys. For example, an IMMAR Research and Consultancy survey conducted between September and October 2022, with a sample size of 3,378, ranked the radio station first in Goma and Kisangani, second in Bukavu and Matadi, and third in Lubumbashi based on the number of listeners. Furthermore, a survey by Radio Okapi and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in February 2022, using a sample of 82,549 individuals, showed that 90 per cent of respondents positively perceived Radio Okapi. Among them, 68 per cent had a very positive perception of the radio stations.

*a. Fighting hate speech, misinformation and disinformation*

40. In July 2022, during the anti-MONUSCO protests in the DRC, Radio Okapi invited respected Congolese figures known for their moderate stances to promote understanding and calm within the demonstrations. Additionally, Radio Okapi recognized the impact of Congolese influencers and their established networks. To leverage the influencers' extensive networks and reach, the station invited them to increase awareness about the Mission's activities and objectives, particularly those related to peace, stability and development in the DRC.

41. Mission leadership acknowledged that Radio Okapi did not increase its coverage of MONUSCO activities during increased protests by coordinating special programmes with Heads of Offices and relevant sections/units to combat hate speech and provide a platform to discuss the Mission's achievements sustainably. To address this issue, MONUSCO developed a crisis communications strategy in August 2022 that required Radio Okapi, during a crisis, to prioritize expanding news coverage and programming that addresses explicitly crucial topics, including the Mission's roles and responsibilities, and activities that demonstrably benefit local communities. Furthermore, Radio Okapi developed a plan to counter anti-MONUSCO hate speech, which involved creating special programmes in collaboration with HoOs and the Political Affairs Division. Due to the ongoing efforts of the Mission to ensure Radio Okapi effectively fights hate speech, misinformation and disinformation during crises, OIOS did not make a recommendation.

*b. Need for Radio Okapi's sustainability plan*

42. The survey conducted by Radio Okapi and UNICEF provided valuable insights into the public's perception and desire for the radio station to continue its operations after the Mission's departure. The

survey revealed that 78 per cent of respondents wanted Radio Okapi to continue its operations. To assess the future of Radio Okapi beyond the Mission's departure, MONUSCO contracted a consultant in 2020. The consultant's report, dated 9 October 2020, evaluated three options for the radio station's future: (a) establishing an associative radio involving the international community, (b) transferring Radio Okapi to UNCT, or (c) transferring Radio Okapi to a United Nations Special Political Mission in the DRC.

43. At the time of the audit in May 2023, the Mission did not act on the consultant report. Instead, the Office of the Deputy Representative of the Secretary-General (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator) initiated the recruitment of a new consultant to evaluate potential options for the future of Radio Okapi regarding its governance, economic and legislative models. However, there was a risk that Radio Okapi could only be sustainable with a plan to ensure its long-term viability and positive operational impact in the DRC in the context of the ongoing transition process.

**(7) MONUSCO should finalize a sustainability plan for Radio Okapi.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 7 and stated that it had hired a consultant who was preparing a report to determine the sustainability plan for Radio Okapi, with recommendations expected by late October 2023. The Mission added that, upon review of the report, it would develop the sustainability plan for Radio Okapi by the end of December 2023.*

Need to enhance media monitoring analysis and its social media platforms' effectiveness

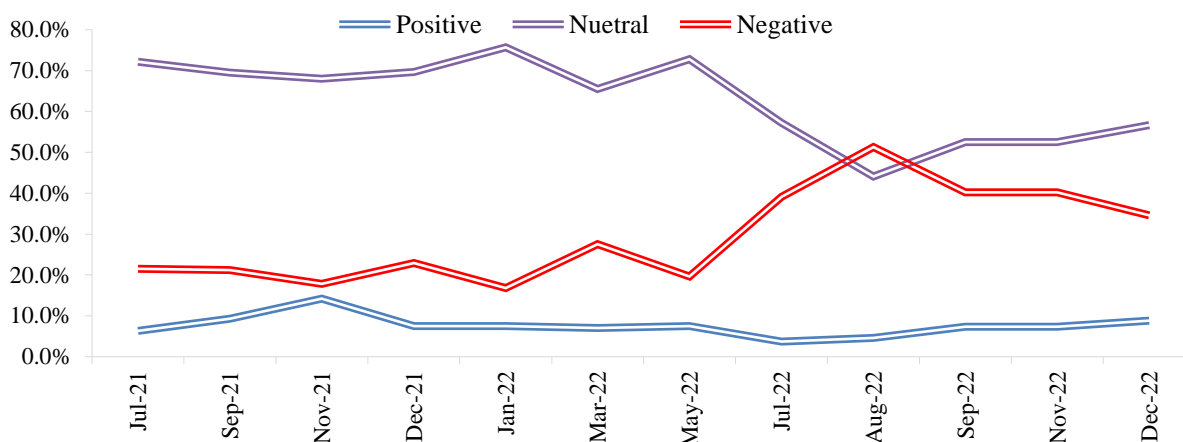
44. MONUSCO is required to use social media platforms, conduct media monitoring and reporting across traditional and digital media platforms and prepare daily media summaries and analyses for Mission leadership.

*a. Media monitoring and analysis*

45. The Media Relations Unit in the Spokespersons' Office produced daily monitoring reports called "Presse panorama" or press reviews. These reports consolidated news from local and international media sources pertinent to the country and the Mission's operations. The press reviews covered various topics, including security, politics, elections, justice, human rights, the economy and society. The Unit distributed the press review daily to the SCPID mailing list, which included Mission staff, United Nations agencies and diplomats in the DRC.

46. The Multimedia and Content Production Unit utilized Talkwalker, a social media analytics and monitoring tool, to track sentiments and reactions within online media conversations about MONUSCO. The Unit generated a monthly Talkwalker monitoring report and distributed it to the SCPID Director and Mission leadership. The report included media type, filters, themes, sentiments, conversation origin and audience demographics. OIOS selected 12 monthly reports and analyzed the sentiments on the online media conversations associated with the Mission over the specified 12-month period, as shown in figure 1. The analysis revealed that, on average, positive, neutral and negative sentiments accounted for 7.6 per cent, 63 per cent, and 29.4 per cent, respectively.

**Figure 1: Sentiment analysis over a selected 12-month period in 2021/2022**



Source: Monthly Talkwalker monitoring reports

47. Although the monitoring efforts helped the Mission to identify emerging trends and gauge local sentiments, the Mission did not take appropriate follow-up actions. As evident from figure 1, positive sentiments regarding the Mission consistently remained below negative sentiments, indicating the Mission needed to take more effective measures to enhance its public perception and proactively counter the spread of misinformation and disinformation, which had already begun before the anti-MONUSCO protests in July 2022. The Mission's leadership attributed its inability to combat hate speech, misinformation and disinformation from multiple sources to insufficient staff, competence and financial resources.

48. On 31 December 2022, MONUSCO engaged the services of 10 consultants to monitor and analyze misinformation and disinformation against the Mission in the DRC. These consultants started their work in April 2023 and generated a biweekly report on misinformation and disinformation. A review of the consultant's report for the period from 22 May to 4 June 2023 revealed that misinformation, disinformation and neutral information constituted 50 per cent, 30 per cent, and 20 per cent, respectively. This significant prevalence of inaccurate information required the Mission to analyze adverse developments and trends from its media monitoring and take necessary steps to mitigate or combat the spread of misinformation and disinformation effectively.

*b. Social media platforms' messaging*

49. MONUSCO and several internal entities used social media platforms to disseminate information and interact with the local population regarding their activities. These entities included Radio Okapi, MONUSCO Force and the United Nations Police. The Mission acknowledged that its entities' use of social media led to inconsistent messaging, making it challenging to communicate with a unified voice. This issue was evident in the Force's communication regarding the Butembo relocation mentioned earlier in the report. Nonetheless, on 26 April 2023, the MONUSCO Force Commander ordered the closure of the Force's Facebook and Twitter accounts. However, the MONUSCO Force Northern Sector's Facebook account was still active on 8 June 2023. This proliferation of social media accounts in the Mission resulted from the lack of verification mechanisms to ensure that all MONUSCO entities using social media platforms adhere to a unified approach, maintain consistent messaging and create impactful narratives or stories about its operations to protect civilians and stabilize the country, two core mandated areas.

**(8) MONUSCO should establish and implement a mechanism to analyze adverse developments and trends from media monitoring to proactively mitigate or counter them.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 8 and highlighted its ongoing efforts in generating a bi-monthly monitoring report focusing on social media and online media. The Mission acknowledged the importance of extending the monthly reports to offline sources, such as WhatsApp, community radio and communities, and it would seek support from the Civil Affairs Section, the Force and Heads of Offices to implement a systematic monitoring process.*

**(9) MONUSCO should verify messaging on social media to ensure that its entities using social media platforms adhere to a unified approach and maintain consistent messaging, and create impactful narratives or stories about its operations to protect civilians and stabilize the country.**

*MONUSCO accepted recommendation 9 and stated that it would limit official channels to prevent the proliferation of channels by other divisions or entities. It would require any Mission component desiring its own social media platforms to adhere to a unified approach and maintain consistent messaging. Additionally, the Mission would continue to create impactful narratives based on information related to mandate implementation shared by substantive components, including the Force and United Nations Police.*

#### MONUSCO implemented adequate outreach activities

50. The Communication Policy requires MONUSCO to carry out outreach activities and campaigns to foster trust and garner local support for the Mission's mandate and peace process to promote a culture of sustainable peace. The SCPID Campaign and Outreach Unit implemented outreach activities to facilitate information exchange and cultivated partnerships with civil society, the media, educators, students and youth associations to enhance engagements concerning the Mission's operations. During the audit period, SCPID participated in 49 outreach activities. Of these activities, the Division independently planned 15 activities, collaborated on 12 activities with other MONUSCO entities, UNCT, non-governmental organizations, or national government, and supported 22 activities organized by external entities.

51. OIOS selected and reviewed the 15 outreach activities planned by SCPID and determined that the Division successfully implemented these activities. These activities included: (a) a workshop on strategies to counter hate speech; (b) the production of banners and posters for peace promotion; (c) advocacy for women's rights in North Kivu; (d) MONUSCO role in restoring peace in the DRC; and (e) the Mission's impact on the fight against armed groups. These activities attracted participation from key stakeholders, such as journalists, university students, youth groups, women's organizations, civil society representatives and government officials. Consequently, OIOS concluded that the Mission had established adequate mechanisms to conduct outreach activities and support its operations.

#### Initiatives were in progress to develop and implement a centralized archiving system

52. The Mission needs to archive public information materials throughout its lifespan. However, MONUSCO had yet to establish and implement centralized archiving procedures for its public information materials, leaving the discretion to archive them to individual units or staff within the SCPID. For example, Radio Okapi in Kinshasa temporarily stored its broadcasting and audio production on a computer server for three months. Afterwards, it copied the sound files onto digital video discs and stored them indefinitely. Additionally, the radio station published its main programme on its websites as sound files, accessible as podcasts. However, an inspection of the Radio Okapi's studio in Goma uncovered that audio radio programmes were stored on staff members' personal computers, increasing the risk of losing valuable historical public information materials.

53. Furthermore, the Media Relation and Multimedia and Content Production Units staff acknowledged storing public information materials, such as videos, photos, press releases and transcripts, on personal computers rather than in a centralized repository. These archiving gaps could increase the risk of valuable information loss that can hinder historical documentation, research, accountability and transparency. However, at the time of the audit, the Mission was in the process of establishing a centralized archiving system to electronically store all mission documents to enhance accessibility in anticipation of the impending transition. The Mission directed its entities to appoint a focal point responsible for receiving training in information management to facilitate this archiving effort. Given the ongoing archiving initiatives, OIOS did not make a recommendation regarding archiving.

## **D. Monitoring and evaluation of the communications programme**

### Challenges in monitoring and evaluating the strategic communications and public information programme

54. Establishing evaluation procedures to assess its communications programme's qualitative and quantitative impact regularly is required to ensure the Mission achieves its communications objectives and uses the findings to enhance its effectiveness. This necessitates mechanisms to monitor, evaluate, and report on the Mission's communications and social media strategies, plans, and associated activities.

55. Since its inception, the Mission was yet to evaluate its strategic communications and public information programme due to resource constraints and a lack of evaluation procedures. While Radio Okapi had conducted perception surveys to gauge listeners' satisfaction, they only measured one programme component. Furthermore, SCPID did not have formal mechanisms to monitor its work plan's activity implementation and objectively assess its impact. As a result, the Mission could not demonstrate whether its overall communications programme effectively achieved its objectives and influenced its target audience. Additionally, the Mission missed valuable opportunities to identify and address gaps and challenges to improve its communication efforts.

56. According to MONUSCO, the evaluation of the Mission's communications strategies and plans would not be feasible due to the Mission's transitional nature, as the evaluation would necessitate funding allocation to be considered in the fiscal year 2024/2025 budgeting process. Furthermore, the Mission highlighted that hiring a consultant, formulating terms of reference and an evaluation plan, conducting the evaluation, delivering the report, and implementing the recommendations would take at least two years. Additionally, the OIOS Inspection and Evaluation Division (IED) will conduct an evaluation of the contribution of strategic communications to fostering public trust in peacekeeping operations, including MONUSCO. Therefore, based on the Mission's explanation of the challenges involved in evaluating the communications strategies and plans and the planned IED evaluation, OIOS did not make a recommendation on this issue.

## **IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

57. OIOS wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of MONUSCO for the assistance and cooperation extended to the auditors during this assignment.

Internal Audit Division  
Office of Internal Oversight Services

## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

<b>Rec. no.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Critical<sup>6</sup>/ Important<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>C/ O<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>Actions needed to close recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation date<sup>9</sup></b>
1	MONUSCO should update, approve and implement strategic communications and public information and digital strategies that include all essential elements to foster understanding and increase support for the Mission's mandated activities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has updated, approved and implemented strategic communications and public information and digital strategies that include all essential elements.	30 September 2024
2	MONUSCO should develop an annual work plan for its Strategic Communications and Public Information Division that includes measurable and time-bound outputs and ensures effective execution of activities.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has developed and implemented a SCPID annual work plan containing measurable and time-bound outputs.	30 September 2024
3	MONUSCO should conduct a training needs assessment to identify gaps in the knowledge and skills of public information officers and provide relevant training to enhance their communications capacity.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented
4	MONUSCO should enhance the coordination of planned communications and public information strategies, plans and activities among various Mission components to align communications efforts and enhance the impact of communications initiatives.	Important	C	Action completed.	Implemented
5	MONUSCO, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team, should develop and implement coordinated measures to ensure that all United Nations entities work effectively to implement the One UN approach and coordinate the transition process.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has developed coordinated measures to implement the one UN approach and foster the transition process.	30 September 2024
6	MONUSCO should conduct regular One UN press conferences to maintain a consistent and open line of communication with the media and help promote a One UN approach.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission is regularly holding the One UN press conferences.	30 September 2024
7	MONUSCO should finalize a sustainability plan for Radio Okapi.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has finalized a sustainability plan for Radio Okapi.	30 September 2024



## STATUS OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

**Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo**

<b>Rec. no.</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Critical<sup>6</sup>/ Important<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>C/ O<sup>8</sup></b>	<b>Actions needed to close recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation date<sup>9</sup></b>
8	MONUSCO should establish and implement a mechanism to analyze adverse developments and trends from media monitoring to proactively mitigate or counter them.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has established and implemented a mechanism to analyze adverse developments and trends from media monitoring.	30 September 2024
9	MONUSCO should verify messaging on social media to ensure that its entities using social media platforms adhere to a unified approach and maintain consistent messaging; and create impactful narratives or stories about its operations to protect civilians and stabilize the country.	Important	O	Receipt of evidence that the Mission has verified social media messaging from its entities using social media and reviewed its current social media efforts to create impactful narratives or stories about its operations.	30 September 2024

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<sup>6</sup> Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>7</sup> Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>8</sup> Please note the value C denotes closed recommendations whereas O refers to open recommendations.

<sup>9</sup> Date provided by MONUSCO in response to recommendations.

# **APPENDIX I**

## **Management Response**



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## INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

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**Date: 15 September 2023**

Ref.: SRSO.DMS.MONUSCO-2023-01783

**To:** Mr. Kemal Karaseki, Acting Chief  
**A:** Peacekeeping Audit Service  
Internal Audit Division, OIOS

**From:** Bintou Keita  
**De:** Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
and Head of MONUSCO

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bintou Keita".

**Subject:** Mission response to the Draft Report on the audit of strategic  
**Objet:** communications and public information programme in  
**MONUSCO (Assignment No. AP2022-620-09)**

1. Your interoffice memorandum dated 30 August 2023 (Ref: OIOS-2023-01496) forwarding the Draft Report on the subject audit is received with thanks.
2. Attached please find the Mission's comments on the recommendations of the Draft Report for your consideration. Supporting documents mentioned in the comments will be provided to the Audit Team only.
3. Thank you and best regards.

Cc:

- Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye, Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
- Mr. Khassim Diagne, DSRSG (Operations and Protection), MONUSCO
- Mr. Bruno Lemarquis, DSRSG (Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator), MONUSCO
- Lt. General Otavio Rodrigues De Miranda Filho, Force Commander, MONUSCO
- Ms. Nathalie Ndongo-Seh, Mission Chief of Staff, MONUSCO
- Ms. Sakuya Oka, Director, Strategic Communications and Public Information Division, MONUSCO
- Mr. Daniel Maier, Chief Strategic Planning Cell, MONUSCO
- Ms. Judith Atiagaga, Mission Audit Focal Point, MONUSCO
- Mr. Jeffrey Lin, OIOS

## Management Response

## Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in MONUSCO

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
1	MONUSCO should update, approve and implement strategic communications and public information and digital strategies that include all essential elements to foster understanding and increase support for the Mission's mandated activities.	Important	Yes	Director SCPID	30 September 2024	<p>As has been noted, the preparation of the strategic communications strategy is a collaborative process which is dependent on the inputs of all substantive components, including the Force and UNPOL.</p> <p>The strategic communications and public information strategy is awaiting approval of some requested changes/additions by the Mission Leadership Team (MLT). This can be finalized by the end of October 2023.</p> <p>Currently there is no social media officer, and this has an impact on finalizing the digital strategy which is likely to take until 31 December 2023.</p>
2	MONUSCO should develop an annual work plan for its Strategic Communications and Public Information Division that includes measurable and time-bound outputs and ensures effective execution of activities.	Important	Yes	Director SCPID	30 September 2024	The annual workplan is being finalized based on the strategic communications strategy and will be ready by 31 October 2023.

<sup>1</sup> Critical recommendations address those risk issues that require immediate management attention. Failure to take action could have a critical or significant adverse impact on the Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Important recommendations address those risk issues that require timely management attention. Failure to take action could have a high or moderate adverse impact on the Organization.

## Management Response

## Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in MONUSCO

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
3	MONUSCO should conduct a training needs assessment to identify gaps in the knowledge and skills of public information officers and provide relevant training to enhance their communications capacity.	Important	Yes	Director SCPID and DMS	Implemented	<p>MONUSCO accepts recommendation 3 and would like to highlight that a training needs assessment was conducted in September 2022 by the Integrated Mission Training Cell (IMTC). The assessment covered the period 2023-25 and revealed, inter alia, that “How to prevent anti-MONUSCO sentiments” was amongst the needs that were identified.</p> <p>As a result, in September 2022 SCPID, in collaboration with DPO, organized a three-day training “in-house” dedicated to countering mis- and disinformation. The training covered seven priority actions, including the (i) setting up of a multi-disciplinary team, (ii) monitoring, (iii) analysis, (iv) responses, (v) partnerships, (vi) fact-checking, and (vii) advocacy. Forty staff members attended this training and the attendance list was shared earlier with OIOS.</p> <p>In addition, 14 Radio Okapi and multimedia staff received a training provided by the Institut Congolais de l’Audivisuel which was part-time over a two-month period in 2022 which provided training in how to film, edit and produce multimedia</p>

Management Response

Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in MONUSCO

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>reports. The attendance sheets are attached.</p> <p>Additionally, there is a Task Force/Working Group established in July 2022 on countering mis/disinformation. Minutes of the task force/working group have been provided to the Audit Team for review and verification.</p> <p>Based on the actions taken and evidence provided, it is suggested that this recommendation be considered as implemented and be closed.</p>
4	<p>MONUSCO should enhance the coordination of planned communications and public information strategies, plans and activities among various Mission components to align communications efforts and enhance the impact of communications initiatives.</p>	Important	Yes	Director SCPID and Chief of Staff	Implemented	<p>Communication has been recognized as a responsibility of the whole mission and all substantive components need to share relevant information in a timely manner and collaborate on key communications activities such as press conferences and fighting disinformation through monitoring and conducting various response activities.</p> <p>Currently there is a misinformation and disinformation working group which meets once a month and is led by the Mission Chief of Staff.</p> <p>There are also now bi-monthly meetings between the SCPID and Chief MPIO and Chief Info Ops.</p>

## Management Response

## Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in MONUSCO

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						<p>Chief Info ops also attends the weekly SCPID meeting (copy of notes provided to the Audit Team).</p> <p>The notes/records of discussions at the meetings for June, July and August 2023 have been provided to the Audit Team for verification.</p> <p>The Mission therefore considers this recommendation as implemented and requests its closure.</p>
5	MONUSCO, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team, should develop and implement coordinated measures to ensure that all United Nations entities work effectively to implement the One UN approach and coordinate the transition process.	Important	Yes	PIO DSRSR RC/HC	30 September 2024	<p>MONUSCO will continue to engage UN agencies, funds and programmes representatives to actively encourage collaboration with MONUSCO around communication with a transition focus.</p> <p>As far as communication regarding the protection of civilians' mandate is concerned, humanitarian and development partners have routinely expressed concerns over being associated with the military.</p>
6	MONUSCO should conduct regular One UN press conferences to maintain a consistent and open line of communication with the media and help promote a One UN approach.	Important	Yes	Spokesperson	30 September 2024	The Mission has already conducted four press conferences this year with the SRSR/ASG which includes one which was joint with the Minister of Communications. It will re-instate the monthly ONE UN press conferences, starting in September and invite members of the UN country team to

## Management Response

## Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in MONUSCO

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						use this forum to inform the general public about the work of the United Nations system in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.  A “one UN” communications group will support this effort.
7	MONUSCO should finalize a sustainability plan for Radio Okapi.	Important	Yes	Director SCPID	30 September 2024	A consultant has been hired and is in the process of working on a report to determine the sustainability of Radio Okapi. The sustainability plan with various possible scenarios for a future Radio Okapi will be developed upon review of the report. However, it should be stressed that the sustainability of a UN Radio station which costs over 10 million USD annually to run is ambitious, particularly as there have been no successful transfers of UN radio stations. The sustainability plan should be finalized by the end of December 2023.
8	MONUSCO should establish and implement a mechanism to analyze adverse developments and trends from media monitoring to proactively mitigate or counter them.	Important	Yes	Director, SCPID	30 September 2024	Mechanisms for implementation of this recommendation are already in place. A regular bi-monthly monitoring report of social media, online media is produced. It is important to extend this to off-line sources such as WhatsApp, community radio and communities.



## Management Response

## Audit of the strategic communications and public information programme in MONUSCO

Rec. no.	Recommendation	Critical <sup>1</sup> / Important <sup>2</sup>	Accepted? (Yes/No)	Title of responsible individual	Implementation date	Client comments
						For this the support of Civil Affairs Section, the Force and Heads of Offices will be sought to implement a systematic monitoring process. The reports that have been produced were already provided to the Audit Team for verification in response to the DAR.
9	MONUSCO should verify messaging on social media to ensure that its entities using social media platforms adhere to a unified approach and maintain consistent messaging; and create impactful narratives or stories about its operations to protect civilians and stabilize the country.	Important	Yes	Director SCPID and Chief of Staff	30 September 2024	<p>To address this recommendation, MONUSCO will limit official channels in order not to have a proliferation of channels by other divisions or entities. Currently, the Force has stopped publishing their material on their Twitter account. Any Mission component that decides to have their own social media platforms will be required to adhere to a unified approach and to maintain consistent messaging.</p> <p>In addition, MONUSCO will continue to create impactful narratives based on information related to mandate implementation shared by substantive components, including the Force and UNPOL.</p>