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UN Volunteer Victor on the radio with colleagues from his section, updating the Daily Flights Schedule (UNV, 2014)

MONUSCO aims for 100% safety in its air operations

A dentist and an airplane pilot? Yes! It's possible! Victor Raul Wiche-Meza is living proof. A native of Peru, Victor has been practicing both professions for 25 years; first in the Air Force, and then in business for himself in his hometown of Arequipa in the Andes mountains. You're probably asking yourself why? "When I began my studies in dentistry, I joined a flying club so I could become a private pilot. Crazy about airplanes, I then enrolled in Aviation School to learn to fly commercial planes, while continuing my dentistry studies," he explains. According to Victor, one must be socially-minded to practice these two professions: "It was the desire to help people that led me to these two professions, which have service in common: service to patients by treating their dental problems, and service to the community by flying

airplanes,” he remarks.

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In 2014, Victor temporarily hung up his white dentist’s coat to join the United Nations Volunteers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC.) He explains his motivations: “I wanted to contribute to the stabilization process in DRC to improve the living conditions of the people, but also to benefit from a cultural experience based on exchange and discovery.

Deployed to the Air Terminal Unit at the MONUSCO airport as Air Operations Assistant in Goma, Victor is a part of the team responsible for coordinating daily flights and ensuring compliance with safety regulations on the tarmac. “To ensure ground safety, we inspect two kilometers of runway every day. We make sure there is nothing obstructing the runway that might damage the planes upon take-off or landing,” Victor explains.

Every activity on the tarmac - boarding and disembarking of passengers, loading and unloading materials, refueling, parking the planes... - is clearly defined. As part of his responsibilities, Victor also makes sure that the flight schedules are followed and the aircraft are operational and ready for take-off. “Guaranteeing safety on the tarmac requires constant vigilance, which demands a great deal of concentration and professionalism. There is no room for error, since any mistake could be fatal. We must make sure that all safety regulations are followed 100%,” explains Victor.

With an average of 20 flights per day, the MONUSCO regional air base in Goma is the busiest in the Mission in DRC. In addition to regular flights, it is also used for military exercises such as surveillance patrols and reconnaissance operations. The Goma airport plays a strategic role in maintaining peace in the east of the country, especially in North Kivu: “The

Goma airport provides transportation support for civilian and military personnel and equipment for operations in areas under the control of armed groups,” says Victor. A total of 32 people, including 9 UN Volunteers, are assigned to the air base in MONUSCO’s Aviation Section.

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions](#)