



– Rwanda –

Engaging Society, Making a difference

INFORMATION NOTE ON THE

SITUATION IN EASTERN DRC

NOTE N° 2

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WRITTEN AND PUBLISHED BY NEVER AGAIN RWANDA



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this note is to call the attention of all actors involved in the Great Lakes Region and their partners on the deteriorating security situation in Eastern DRC, the subsequent diplomatic tensions between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda as well as the potential effect of the crisis on other countries in the region in a context weakened by hate speech and fragile social cohesion.

As a result of the deteriorating situation in Eastern DRC, the wider great lakes region is increasingly fragile and destabilised. Unless all parties act swiftly, the region could be pushed towards further instability and conflict especially in this pre-electoral period (DRC in 2023, Rwanda in 2024, Burundi in 2025 and Uganda in 2026).

Electoral periods are characterized by internal tensions. The search for scapegoat or nationalist cause to rally the various electorates might strain an already fragile situation.

It is imperative that all the actors are involved in the search for a long-term political solution.

KEY FACTS THAT MARKED THE REPORTING PERIOD

1. On June 14th, 2022, the DRC Expert Group published its report on the situation in the Eastern DRC.
2. On June 20th, 2022, the Heads of State of the East African Community met in Nairobi to revive the Nairobi Process and agreed on the deployment of a regional force in the Eastern DRC.
3. On June 29th, 2022, the United Nations Security Council held a meeting on the situation in the DRC.
4. On June 30th, 2022, in his address to the nation for the celebration of the 62 years of the independence of the DRC, President Tshisekedi named Rwanda as the aggressor of the DRC under cover of the M23.
5. On July 4th, 2022, the EU High Representative Josep Borrell condemned, in a statement, the calls for hatred and reiterated the EU's support for the territorial integrity of the DRC.
6. On July 4th, 2022, during an interview on national television, President Paul Kagame expressed reservations about the military solution to the crisis in Eastern DRC. He refuted claims of Rwanda's support to the M23.
7. On July 6th, 2022, within the framework of the ICGLR and with the mediation of Angolan President João Lourenço, current chair of the ICGLR, the Presidents of Rwanda and the DRC agreed on a roadmap for a de-escalation of tensions between the two countries.
8. On July 6, 2022, in an interview with the Financial Times, President Tshisekedi brandished the threat that an all-out and open war was possible between Rwanda and the DRC. «The DRC is not weak», he said.
9. On July 8, 2022, in an interview with France 24, President Kagame subscribed to a logic of de-escalation and did not respond to the threats of «wan» made by President Tshisekedi. He recalled the presence of the FDLR on Congolese soil and the inaction of the Congolese government and MONUSCO towards this group declared terrorist by the United Nations. Asked whether Rwanda had troops on Congolese soil, President Kagame did not give a clear answer. On the other hand, he refuted the accusations of support to the M23.
10. The joint DRC-Rwanda meeting scheduled in Luanda for July 12th under the Luanda Roadmap has been postponed to a later date. This is justified by the national mourning decreed in Angola following the death of former Angolan President Eduardo Dos Santos.
11. The M23, through its spokesperson Maj. Willy Ngoma, indicated that it does not recognize the Luanda agreements. The M23 still controls the border town of Bunagana.

HATE MESSAGES, INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE, HARM TO PHYSICAL INTEGRITY AND PROPERTY

1. Following the various calls for calm and non-stigmatization of a group (Congolese Tutsis/Rwandophone) by Congolese political and religious authorities (cf. note 1), there has been a decrease in verbal and physical attacks on Tutsis or persons identified as such in various cities (Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu).
2. In his speech on June 30th, 2022 President Tshisekedi called on all Congolese citizens to refrain from messages of hatred and xenophobia against a particular group. He mentioned that diversity is the strength of DRC.
3. The Congolese Government has also banned unauthorised gatherings of members of political parties. These spontaneous, unsupervised gatherings in the past month degenerated into attacks against anyone identified as "Tutsi", "Rwandophone" or "Rwandan". Mention was made of the "standing parliaments" of the UDPS, of which the famous Kalubi was the president. (cf note 1)
4. On social media, however, the virulence of attacks against some people, including journalists reporting on the situation, continued. This is the case of journalists Steve Wembi @steve_wembi and Stanis Bujakera @StanysBujakera falsely presented on social media as «pro-rwanda». These journalists reported being the victims of open death threats.
5. Mr. Ludovic Kalengayi, @KalengayLudov1 member of the Congolese Civil Society promoting peace between the DRC and Rwanda was targeted in a neighborhood of Kinshasa and treated as Rwandan. The attackers shouted «Boma Rwandais» (kill the Rwandan). He luckily escaped from the mob.
6. The hashtag #RwandalsKilling is no longer trending as in June. This hashtag, although targeting Rwanda as a country, was the

driving force behind the attacks against all those who were identified as "pro-Rwanda", "Rwandan" or "Rwandophone".

7. The Banyamulenge community still reports attacks on its members in the highlands of South Kivu. According to certain sources via social media, following this stigmatization of «Tutsis», the Banyamulenge are accused of connivance with the M23 and attacked by neighboring communities. It should be remembered that historically speaking, the Banyamulenge are a different strain from the Tutsis of North Kivu, the majority in the M23.

The Tutsis of North Kivu have always been on these lands belonging to the ancient Kingdom of Rwanda while the Banyamulenge descend from a rebel group that allegedly fled the wrath of a Rwandan king in the early 19th century and settled in the uninhabited highlands of South Kivu. They are therefore collateral victims of this renewed tension.

OFFICIAL POSITIONS OF THE CONGOLESE AND RWANDAN GOVERNMENTS

In his speech on Independence day, President F.A. Tshisekedi named Rwanda as the DRC's aggressor through the M23. President Tshisekedi spoke of a two-pronged strategy i.e diplomatic and military to resolve the crisis in the East. He reiterated his support for the Nairobi Process, including the deployment of the regional force without Rwanda involvement.

In an interview with the national television on July 4th, President Kagame denied Rwanda's involvement in the crisis. He questioned the effectiveness of a military solution as proposed in Nairobi. For President Kagame, a political solution is needed. He also mentioned the active presence of the FDLR in Eastern DRC posing a security threat to Rwanda.

THE POSITIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

1. The United Nations Security Council

During its meeting on the DRC, the UN Security Council extended until July 1st, 2023 the arms embargo imposed on the Democratic Republic of Congo.

In her situation brief to the Security Council, the Head of MONUSCO Ms. Bintu Keita, conceded that the M23 was behaving more

and more like a conventional army with firepower and sophisticated equipment. This situation threatens MONUSCO's ability to protect civilian populations.

2. The African Union

In a tweet published on July 7th, the AU chair President Macky Sall praised the positive results of the dialogue held in Luanda between Presidents Kagame and Tshisekedi and encouraged all parties to abide by the Luanda Roadmap.

BRIEF COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE NAIROBI PROCESS AND THE LUANDA ROADMAP

It is worth noting that the Luanda roadmap focuses on the M23 and the fight against the FDLR while the Nairobi Process includes all arms groups operating in the Eastern DRC.

	Initiative	President	Conclusions	Risks
Nairobi process	EAC	HE Kenyata	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Deployment of a regional force – Continued implementation of the recommendations of the Nairobi Process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Over-militarization of a region already militarized with the presence of MONUSCO, the Ugandan army and the Burundian army fighting alongside FARDC for the eradication of armed groups – The Congolese government, by designating the M23 as a terrorist group, has de facto excluded it from the Nairobi process

DRC- Rwanda Luanda Roadmap	ICGLR	HE Lourenço	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Immediate withdrawal of positions occupied by the M23 – Fight FDLR and satellite groups – Promoting the return of refugees – Reactivation of the Joint Intelligence Mechanism DRC-Rwanda – Reactivation of the implementation of the roadmap for the repatriation of ex-M23 fighters wing Runiga 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The M23 does not recognize the conclusions of the Luanda summit – Long-term objective. FARDC facing logistic and operational challenges on the battlefield. – Refugees can only return to a pacified region. – Tension and distrust still high between DRC and Rwanda – Requires resumption of diplomatic dialogue between DRC and Rwanda
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CONCLUSION

We call on:

1. Authorities from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo to continue efforts to de-escalate tensions and reactivate diplomatic channels to find a lasting solution.
2. The International Community to continue its efforts in mediating and monitoring the Nairobi and Luanda agreements implementation.
3. Civil Society Organizations in the region to work together and be vectors of peace and social cohesion.

