

**FORUM OF PARLIAMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION  
(FP-ICGLR)**



**Report of the Parliamentary Fact-Finding Mission on the Violence and Armed  
Conflict in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo**

**From July 2023 to March 2025**

**Kinshasa, March 2025**

## Executive Summary

The security situation remains unstable and has continued to deteriorate particularly in the eastern DRC and border regions. The DRC continues to witness the presence of over 120 armed groups engaging in multiple conflicts over territorial and resource control thereby creating instability in the country. Intercommunal violence has also affected the security and humanitarian situation especially for the most vulnerable people in the eastern DRC. In 2022, the eastern DRC faced further instability and a dramatic deterioration of the security situation due to the ongoing advancement of the armed group M23. The vulnerability of the population has continued to increase due to the current situation.

Pursuant to clause 13 of the resolution 13OSPA/02/2023 on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC held from 31 March to 1 April 2023 in Juba, the Republic of South Sudan, the Plenary Assembly of FP-ICGLR decided to deploy a Parliamentary Fact-Finding Mission to the eastern DRC to document in an independent and impartial manner the lingering insecurity, instability and various reports on armed violence. The decision for a Fact Finding Mission was intended to augment the ongoing regional efforts to bring peace and security in the area. The regional efforts are the EAC led Peace Process and Luanda Roadmap.

The FP-ICGLR mission was conducted from July 2023 to March 2025. The missions involved high-level consultations with political leaders, government representatives, and technical experts from Member States of EAC namely: DRC, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, in order to address the persistent armed conflicts in the eastern region. Further, the missions were intended to engage different stakeholders on regional instability, governance challenges, and the declining diplomatic relations between the DRC and Rwanda. Out of the planned six phases of implementation, the Mission managed to undertake five segments. The sixth and last phase of the mission also planned for Nairobi in the Republic of Kenya, with the Facilitator of the Nairobi Peace Process, H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta could not take place due to prior engagements.

Using its legislative powers, the FP-ICGLR has made relevant recommendations that will help to restore peace and stability in the eastern DRC. Ultimately, this final report contains appropriate recommendations from an informed standpoint and aims at supporting the DRC Government and Parliament to play a fundamental role in the pursuit of national unity, strengthening of the rule of law, promotion of political inclusion, peace-building and territorial integrity.

I take this seldom opportunity to deeply thank all the key personalities in Luanda, Goma, Kinshasa, Kigali, Entebbe and Nairobi, who took their time to participate and provide valuable insight to the process. It is my absolute and considered view that the Mission with recommendations advanced and once implemented by the ICGLR Summit of the Heads of State, shall contribute significantly to the noble efforts of the national and regional mechanisms towards the definitive resolution of the eastern DRC crisis.

**Mr. Ronald Mwelwa Tembo**  
**Acting Secretary General**

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ADF:	Allied Democratic Forces
AGs:	Armed Groups
APSA:	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASF:	African Standby Force
AU:	African Union
CODECO:	Cooperative for Development of the Congo
CNDP:	National Congress for the Defence of the People
DRC:	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EJVM:	Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism
FP-ICGLR:	Forum of Parliaments of Member States of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
GLR:	Great Lakes Region
IDPs:	Internally Displaced Persons
JIFC:	Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre
JIT:	Joint Intelligence Teams
IDPs:	Internally Displaced Persons
JIFC:	Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre
MONUSCO:	United Nations Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo
MOU:	Memorandum of Understanding
MP:	Member of Parliament
OSPA:	Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly
JIT:	Joint Intelligence Teams
IDPs:	Internally Displaced Persons
JIFC:	Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre
P-DDRCS:	Disarmament, Demobilisation, Community Recovery and Stabilisation Programme
PSC:	Peace, Security and Cooperation
PSO:	Peace Support Operations
RDRP:	Rwanda Demobilisation and Re-integration Programme
SOFA:	Status of Forces Agreement
UN:	United Nations
UNICEF:	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WFP:	World Food Programme

## **I. Context and Justification of the Mission**

### **I.1. Introduction**

During the 13th Ordinary Session of the Plenary Assembly of FP-ICGLR held from 31 March to 1 April 2023 in Juba, the Republic of South Sudan, a resolution was passed that the Forum should use its legislative powers to contribute significantly to the promotion of peace and stability in eastern DRC and in the Great Lakes Region of Africa as a whole. This resolution could only materialize by deploying a Parliamentary Fact Finding Mission to the eastern DRC aimed at documenting and obtaining facts on the ground in order to make an informed decision on the security, political and humanitarian challenges in the DRC.

### **I.2. Objectives of the Mission**

Pursuant to clause 13 of the resolution 13OSPA/02/2023 on the political, security and humanitarian situation in the DRC by the 13<sup>th</sup> OSPA held in Juba, the Republic of South Sudan; the Plenary Assembly decided to deploy a Parliamentary Fact-Finding Mission to the eastern DRC to document in an independent and impartial manner the lingering insecurity, violence, instability and various reports on the armed conflict in the eastern part of DRC in order to augment the ongoing regional efforts to bring peace and security in the area. The regional efforts are the EAC led Nairobi Peace process as well as the ICGLR Roadmap on the Pacification of the Eastern Region of the DRC (Luanda Roadmap). The mission also aimed at supporting the DRC Parliament so that it can fully play its role in national reconciliation and the consolidation of the peace process.

### **I.3. Specific Objectives**

**The specific objectives of the Mission were as follows:**

- a) Monitor and evaluate the lingering insecurity, violence and armed conflict in the eastern DRC;
- b) To identify the main causes of the conflict in the eastern DRC;
- c) To find out the progress achieved and effectiveness of the Nairobi Peace Process led by H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta and Luanda Roadmap facilitated by the H.E. Joao Lourenco, as ICGLR Chairperson in the restoration of peace and stability in the eastern DRC;
- d) To assess the factors that have led to the declining diplomatic relations between DRC and Rwanda;
- e) Advance proposals aimed at supporting the DRC Government and Parliament in ensuring that it plays a major role in the process of consolidating lasting peace and national reconciliation; and
- f) Make recommendations to the Plenary Assembly of FP-ICGLR to strengthen the process of maintaining lasting peace and stability in the eastern DRC.

#### **I.4. Methodology, Format and Participation**

The Fact Finding Mission was deployed and conducted field work to document in an independent and impartial manner lingering insecurity, instability and armed conflict in the eastern DRC. This Mission commenced in July 2023 and concluded the field work in March 2025. To await the results pursued by the Mission, the research tools were used, among other things, observation, interview, and an interview guide consisting of questions to be raised with appropriate personalities. The participatory method was used during the meetings. The official languages of the FP-ICGLR were used during the Mission.

The Mission was divided into six phases with the first segment being a visit to the ground in Goma (Eastern DRC). The second phase was a visit to the DRC capital of Kinshasa to meet the DRC President, H.E. Felix Tshisekedi, ICGLR Ambassadors accredited to DRC and other high ranking officials while the rest included interactions with key personalities in ICGLR Member States leading the EAC peace processes, namely: Republic of Rwanda, Republic Uganda and Republic of Kenya. Since this is a Fact-Finding Mission project, for efficiency and effectiveness, all the phases were limited to a maximum of seven countries (Member-Parliaments).

Earlier before the Fact Finding Mission was deployed in July 2023, the then Sitting President of the FP-ICGLR, Rt. Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba, with her delegation held a Consultative Meeting in May 2023 in Luanda, with the President of the Republic of Angola in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Summit of the Heads of State of ICGLR and Facilitator of the Luanda Roadmap, His Excellency, João Lourenço. The objective of the aforementioned high level meeting with President Lourenço was to handover the resolutions and final declaration of the 13<sup>th</sup> OSPA of the FP-ICGLR. The meeting was also intended to have a conversation with President Lourenço on critical issues that are affecting the Great Lakes Region.

#### **I.5. Participatory Method.**

The participatory method allowed the delegation to engage with targeted stakeholders of the Mission. The Head of the Mission prepared some questions and held interviews with stakeholders who provided their perspectives on the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC.

### **II. Helicopter view of the Security and Humanitarian situation in eastern DRC**

From our analysis as FP-ICGLR, the outstanding issues or obstacles that are largely hindering the return of lasting peace and stability in the eastern DRC can be found in the following key four (4) points:

#### **II.1. Reappearance of M23 rebels and increase in intercommunal violence**

The security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC has continued to deteriorate, despite a lull in fighting between the M23 rebels and the FARDC. The DRC is still facing a resurgence of attacks by armed groups, rebel forces, and terrorists who are sowing terror by massacring and abducting civilians, burning villages, etc., particularly in the North Kivu and Ituri. The atrocities committed by

these armed groups have led to so many people dead, injured, displaced and vulnerable. The resurgence of the M23 rebel group and the persistent human rights violations by the armed groups such as CODECO and ADF are the main drivers of instability in eastern DRC.

The resurgence of M23 has been accompanied with a series of violent acts against civilians in many villages of towns in the eastern DRC. The perpetrated attacks by armed groups have thus led to a massive displacement of the population in North Kivu. In addition, inter-communal violence between ethnic groups over land in Kwamouth territory and Mai-Ndombe Province which erupted in August 2022 worsened the situation. As a result, this increased the number of victims, including women and children. It should be mentioned that no security is guaranteed for the visitors in the eastern DRC as there are allegations of increased violence and a potential threat to lives of all those who do not belong to the ethnic groups in conflict.

North Kivu province also faced a separate rebel insurgency further south, with the M23 movement and the DRC's army locked in fighting following the failure of a Peace Summit in mid-December 2024. Recently, the resurgence of the M23 armed group and subsequent capture of the City of Goma in North Kivu province and also Bukavu in South Kivu province has continued to cause instability and cross-border tensions which not only threaten the security of those in the DRC but also poses a great threat to the stability of the entire Great Lakes Region.

On 19 March 2025, the M23 pushed deeper into the eastern DRC, capturing the town of Walikale despite growing international calls for a ceasefire. The rebels entered the mining hub in North Kivu province, a day after the DRC President, Felix Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart Paul Kagame called for an immediate ceasefire after meeting in Qatar's capital Doha. Conflict in the DRC has sent 63,000 refugees fleeing to neighbouring Burundi in its largest influx in decades, with conditions dire at a crammed stadium camp and many stuck in fields outside, the UNHCR said on 10 March 2025. The situation is absolutely dire and the conditions are extremely harsh, according to Faith Kasina, the Regional Spokesperson for East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes, who told reporters in Geneva.

## **II.2. Diplomatic tensions between DRC and Rwanda**

In the recent past, the DRC has accused Rwanda of supporting the M23 rebel group which is making inroads into eastern DRC, thus fueling new tensions between the two neighbours. The Rwandan Government, denying any support for the M23, says these accusations are part of an "Old blame game" that undermines peace efforts, "to which Rwanda is fully committed". Rwanda, in turn, accuses the DRC of supporting the FDLR, another DRC-based rebel group that carried out genocidal raids in Rwanda in 1994. Also, diplomatic relations between Burundi and Rwanda have hit a new low recently with renewed accusations that Rwanda is financing and training the RED-Tabara group rebels; which the latter has vehemently denied. The tensions between the two countries have further strained after Burundi closed all crossing points with Rwanda in January 2024.



### **II.3. Demonstrations against MONUSCO and calls for its exit**

The mission assigned to this UN body was to protect civilians against violence, facilitate humanitarian access, disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants into society. However, since July 2022, there has been a series of protests against MONUSCO deployed in the eastern DRC. Demonstrations took place in several cities and territories in eastern DRC, plagued by the activity of national armed groups. The demonstrators expressed their anger towards MONUSCO, which they deemed incapable of protecting civilians against the violence of the armed groups. A good number of protests appeared violent to the point that UN peacekeepers opened fire on demonstrators, killing two civilians after losing four of their own. With the UN Security Council having extended MONUSCO's mandate until December 2025. However, on February 28, 2024, MONUSCO began its withdrawal with the official handover to the Congolese authorities of the first of its bases in South Kivu, in the east of the country. The MONUSCO withdrawal called for by the DRC Government in 2023, comes after 25 years of its presence in the country. It was formalized in December 2023 by the UN Security Council, despite its concerns over the escalation of violence in eastern DRC. The Congolese authorities had deemed the force's operations as ineffective. Intense fighting resumed in January 2024 around the city of Goma, North Kivu's capital. The latest clashes have pushed tens of thousands of civilians to flee, with around six million people in total having been displaced by the fighting.

### **II.4. Alleged ineffectiveness of EACRF and subsequent withdraw from DRC**

The EACRF was established in 2022 with the aim of mobilizing soldiers who work in cooperation with FARDC in order to ensure the protection of civilians, enforce peace agreements and contain, defeat and eradicate negative forces in the country. Although regional initiatives concretized by Joint EACRF-FARDC security operations had been launched, solutions had been far from being found given the myriad of conflicts existing in eastern DRC. The foreign contingent has not provided significant support to FARDC-led efforts to reduce insecurity as attacks on civilians and looting of local resources persists. Faced with this failure, this contingent of the EACRF was accused of cohabiting with the M23 rebels. The DRC Government was committed to reassessing the operations of the EACRF in the eastern part of the country. Demonstrations against the EACRF planned for January and March 2023 were intended to express public concern over the alleged passivity and inaction of the EACRF in their failure to defeat the M23 as well as other rebel groups. It should be noted that those who organized the protests were violently repressed by the elements of the police.

Moreso, the scope of EACRF's mandate had been a point of contention between the EAC and the DRC Government. According to the EAC, the regional force was to oversee the withdrawal of armed groups including M23 rebels from occupied areas in the eastern DRC. There are estimated to be more than 120 armed groups in this region. It was also to ensure that a ceasefire negotiated in December 2022 was observed. However, the DRC Government wanted a more assertive posture, but EACRF had refused to engage in offensive operations. It is not clear how the two parties came to interpret the EACRF's mandate so differently, and this had been a major point of contention throughout its deployment.

The military presence of EACRF was intended to complement a political process that involved the regional bloc's leadership. However, this political process has stalled amid mounting tension between the DRC and Rwanda. Accusations of Rwanda's support for M23 rebels remain a crucial point of discord between the two countries. Rwanda officially denies these accusations. While the EAC had expressed its intention to remain engaged politically even after its troops withdrew, overcoming regional political tensions remains a major obstacle. After just over a year, the DRC Government decided not to renew the mandate of the EACRF past its 8 December 2023 expiration. President Felix Tshisekedi accused EACRF of not only being ineffective but also colluding with rebels. The EACRF on 21 December 2023 completed its exit from Goma, citing a mixture of successes and drawbacks during its stay in the DRC.

## PHASE I

### III. Mission to the ground in Goma City, eastern DRC

The first phase of the Mission was undertaken to investigate the lingering tension, insecurity, instability and armed conflicts in DRC. The Mission took place from 10 to 15 July 2023 in Goma. The mission also investigated the deepening bilateral relations between the DRC and Rwanda. To make the mission effective, the participatory method was used. This method allowed the mission to discuss with stakeholders in DRC, in consultation with key personalities in other selected Member-States of FP-ICGLR, regional and international organizations.

In particular, the FP-ICGLR Mission met members of the Government and local actors (Representatives of civil society and the private sector, Human Rights NGOs), Senators from the DRC Parliament representing Ituri and North Kivu Constituencies respectively, EACRF, JIFC, EJVM, the Tutsi Community. Others were representatives from Religious groups and IDPs Camps. During five (5) days of work in the field, the mission documented the persistent insecurity, instability and armed conflict in the eastern part of DRC.

The delegation to Goma comprised Parliamentarians from the Republic of Angola, the Republic of Kenya (Head of the Mission), the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Zambia, the Secretary General of FP-ICGLR and Technical staff from the General Secretariat. The Head of Delegation was Hon. Maurice Kakai Bisau, from the Parliament of the Republic of Kenya, who is also the President of the Committee on Peace and Security of FP-ICGLR. The President of the Committee on Humanitarian and Social Issues of FP-ICGLR, Hon. Ezra Chiwelesa also participated because of humanitarian challenges caused by the conflict in the DRC. Hereunder are the views of the stakeholders regarding the armed conflict in the eastern DRC:

#### III.1. Meeting with Civil Society and Private Sector Representatives

The Mission documented that the causes of the conflicts in eastern DRC were numerous, but the main one remained the weakness of national institutions with structures that fostered good corporate governance. It was also hinted that the search for identity, land, access to power and the economic positioning of the GLR fueled insecurity and instability in DRC. Economically, the City of Goma was cut off from the rest of the Province. Farming of daily produce which was the mainstay of the city was halted due to activities of armed groups. The farmers were displaced and no longer lived in areas close to their farms. The city of Goma had challenges to receive daily products from farmers in the area due to rebel attacks controlling areas close to farmlands for the local populations.

Young people had been neglected and had no jobs as a result of repetitive instability and insecurity. The status quo made the young people disgruntled and they easily bowed down to peer pressure to join armed groups in order to make ends meet. Reported cases of kidnappings had been on the increase in the recent past. Men, women and children were kidnapped and kidnappers asked for a lot of money to free the victims. At times, others who were kidnapped were forced to join the armed

groups. Additionally, the majority of the young people were displaced and subjected to deplorable living conditions amidst instability.

It was also mentioned that Goma had a lot of IDP camps. It was estimated that more than 20,000 people lived in the camps among them children, girls, young people and the elderly. Children had not been going to school for the past few years due to conflict. The mission also learnt that the huge population in IDP camps presented a security challenge in future for the people of Goma. Women were subjected to sexual violence. At least 40 women were raped daily in IDP camps when they went to fetch wood, according to Doctors Without Borders. The mission was assured that IDPs were willing to return back to their areas when peace was restored.

### **III.1.1. Expectations from the outcome of the Nairobi Peace process and the Luanda Roadmap Initiative**

What was expected from the peace process was the immediate return of peace so that everyone could quietly go about to do their business and that IDPs and refugees could return to their respective communities. However, the representatives stated that if it may happen that the population did not expect anything from these two processes like the several other peace agreements already signed, it was quite simply because this process did not provide for any sanction against the country which violated a provision of the Luanda Roadmap agreement. The representatives proposed the following solutions to end the conflict in the eastern DRC:

- The UN and the EACRF should declare that foreign armed groups (FDLR, ADF, etc.) return to where they came from by neutralizing them;
- The Government of Rwanda dialogues with the FDLR and that Uganda negotiate with the ADF to find an amicable solution to the armed conflict;
- The DRC Government should create jobs for young people to persuade them from joining armed groups;
- The parties to the conflict should commit to respecting the Nairobi Peace Process and the Luanda Roadmap as a whole;
- That all foreign military forces (EAC, MONUSCO...) return home and let the DRC take care of itself; and
- Promote strong leadership in the DRC capable of securing all the people and their homeland.

### **III.2. Meeting with Representatives of Religious Leaders**

The respondents stated that the root causes of conflict in eastern DRC were political in nature. However, the main one was the exploitation of resources (Mining, forestry, etc.). They narrated that great powers were attracted by the riches of the DRC and used their influence to destabilise the country for their personal gains. The representatives stated that from the fact that there was the presence of refugees on both sides of the border, that was to say those from Rwanda in Congo and those from Congo in camps in Rwanda, the same thing was also observed in Uganda. They explained that the situation brought about misunderstandings and fueled instability and conflict.

When asked which parties were involved and fueling conflict in the eastern DRC, the respondents stated that the first party involved in the conflict in the eastern DRC was Rwanda through the M23 rebels. They explained that several reports attest to the fact that Rwanda supported human resource and equipment to the M23 rebels. They cited that some Rwandans pretended to be Banyabwisha (Rwandophones from the Congo) and had gone to Ituri Province, supposedly in search of arable land. However, they had not been welcomed and forced to return to North Kivu. The religious leaders also cited the Republic of Uganda which came in second place and followed by CODECO, ADF, FDLR, Nyatura and other national armed groups called “Wazalendo”.

The FARDC and the PNC were also pointed with an accusing finger through the soldiers who had been recruited through mixing, brewing and accelerated integration, who from inside the FARDC were accused of carrying out military operations in favour of Rwanda instead of demonstrating their patriotism by defending their homeland, which in this case was the DRC. The religious leaders accused MONUSCO of initially aligning itself with the FARDC to repel the M23 and its predecessor CNDP. Subsequently, the respondents stated that FARDC made the rebellion a business that perpetuated their career and their mission under the expressions “No Nkunda, No Job, No war in Congo No Job”.

### **III.3. Meeting with Representatives of IDPs Camps**

This category of respondents stated that the deplorable situation in eastern DRC had its origins in the change of regime of President Juvenal Habyarimana in 1994. The Rwandan soldiers who entered the then Zaire were not disarmed and the current regime found a pretext to come and look for them in the DRC, believing that they constituted a serious threat to the regime of President Paul Kagame.

They narrated that the situation of the IDPs was deplorable due to the lack of assistance from the DRC Government and humanitarian organisations. There were no taps, erratic food supplies, no cooking utensils and cloths for young people to wear, among other challenges. It was revealed that the distribution of food to IDP camps was done once every six months. There were inadequate facilities because of lack of funding to support humanitarian work in the eastern DRC. They stated that police officers who were managing IDP camps were not properly trained and were not doing their job accordingly. The representatives lamented that the police officers in IDPs camps were not taken good care of by their supervisors. In return, they stated that police officers looked like refugees themselves because of lack of support be it financial or technical. Most refugees involved themselves in crime to make ends meet. Humanitarian aid was erratic in most IDP camps and humanitarian organisations only helped those IDPs who met their vulnerability criterion. Due to the deplorable conditions, children didn't go to school and young people involved themselves in illegal activities such as prostitution. The representatives revealed that women were the most affected as they were victims of rape, sexual harassments and prone to diseases such as HIV/AIDS since their husbands fled due to conflicts.

### **III.3.1. Main reasons for violence and armed conflict in DRC**

The representatives stated that the DRC was a victim of its generosity and its wealth. During the colonial era, the respondents narrated that the UN had settled a large number of Rwandans in the Masisi Territory, particularly in Bibwe, as part of its migration programme. They said that these Rwandese had benefited from the land, which they later surrendered to the Congolese when they returned to Rwanda in 1995. However, with the AFDL regime, they returned to Congo and occupied high positions in the army and the other institutions in the country. Using their influence, they reclaimed the lands they had sold out on a regular basis, creating confusion and conflict.

They pointed out that Rwandan and Ugandan troops had helped Laurent Désiré Kabila to oust Joseph Mobutu as President of DRC. But once in power, Kabila did not serve the interests of Rwanda and quickly turned away from it. On the other hand, Rwanda created the RCD to oust Laurent Désiré Kabila from power, but in vain because he was supported by Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. They explained that the RCD adventure was stopped in Kisangani. Of the six tribes existing in the Province of North Kivu, the respondents stated that only one (Tutsi) wanted to dominate the other five. The representatives explained that was the compelling reason why young people united in self-defense groups or movements of local patriots called "Wazalendo", to defend themselves against this tribe.

### **III.3.2. Consequences of insecurity and instability on IDPs in eastern DRC**

The representatives of IDPs stated that the persistence of the armed conflict had been the basis for the proliferation of national armed groups that claimed to protect their own. Unfortunately, the groups caused more harm than good to third parties or violated the human rights of the majority of citizens. The insecurity in the eastern DRC had affected the youths much more because most of them did not go to school. The representatives stated that many of the young generation were tempted to join armed groups because of the lack of occupation.

For the girls, since school was interrupted, many had been forced into early marriages, most of which did not last. The representatives narrated that young girls most times were forced into marriage with the leaders of the armed groups who controlled their surroundings. In the IDP camps, mothers and young girls were the poorest and most vulnerable to various abuses perpetrated by the armed groups. When they try to fetch water and firewood, they were raped, according to the IDP representatives. Even to find food, they were forced to indulge in prostitution with the consequence of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Some were traumatized when they were rejected by their husbands because of rape and even succumbed after being abused.

### **III.4. Meeting with Senators from the DRC Parliament**

The Mission was fortunate to interview the then Senators from the Parliament of DRC. The two lawmakers were MPs of Goma and Ituri, respectively. As regards the security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC, the Senators stated that the



eastern DRC was the subject of many political, security and humanitarian challenges. The precariousness of the security and humanitarian situation was due to endogenous and exogenous factors against a backdrop of a crisis of confidence between certain communities. It was explained that each community in the eastern DRC thought that it was well protected by its own people, resulting in the proliferation of local armed groups attached to or from different communities. The Senators revealed that there was also a contrasting fact in the eastern DRC which was a consequence of wealth that abounded in its soil and subsoil. The gigantic mines and the fertility of the DRC soil attracted everyone's attention and seemed to be the basis of the country's misfortunes. It was revealed that armed groups exploited the minerals and sold them to local traders or foreigners without any traceability. This constituted a loss of earnings for the Congolese Government and did not contribute in any way to the development of the local community. In return, the armed groups received money and/or weapons and ammunition to fight their own brothers.

In this confusion, the Senators stated that it was unfortunately that traders, senior officers and politicians were accused of being behind the unfortunate situation which persisted to such an extent that those who were ideally supposed to protect the local population were actually themselves executioners and only worked for selfish interests.

#### **III.4.1 Key solutions for security and stability in eastern DRC**

Considering its sovereign mission, the participants stated that FARDC should fight and bring to an end all the negative forces orchestrated by both nationals and foreigners armed groups. However, the Senators highlighted several challenges that must be overcome, in particular those related to logistics, finance and even humankind, which did not allow the FARDC to impose itself as a sovereign force. In view of this, the representatives proposed a political and diplomatic solution was needed to allow the DRC to settle all the issues that hindered its effectiveness and proactiveness to overpower some of its neighbours such as the forces from Rwanda and Uganda. The Senators advocated for the restoration of the authority of the State, which presupposes the organization and management of credible elections (Free, democratic and transparent) that could provide the country with legitimate institutions capable of rebuilding the security apparatus of DRC.

#### **III.5. Opinions of Representatives of the Tutsi Community**

When asked on events which have escalated violence and armed conflict in eastern DRC, the participants stated that the latest escalation of the conflict started from the Rwandan genocide war of 1994, when the Rwandan army entered into the then Zaire without being disarmed. Several Rwandans had formed themselves into elements of the FDLR and Interahamwe who had made many Tutsi speaking people flee from the DRC to Rwanda since March 1996, where they settled, despite themselves being in the refugee camps. At this time, the participants narrated that President Mobutu's was unable to protect the Tutsi, which prompted them to enlist in the AFDL army of Mzee LDK, in the hope of obtaining from him the protection and the return of their brothers confined in the refugee camps in Rwanda.

However, Laurent Desire Kabila whom the Tutsi considered as an ally and brought him to power turned away from them. They accused Laurent Kabila of calling them Rwandanese and summoning them to return home, ignoring the terms of their compromise. The participants stated that this was how the Tutsi created the RCD to fight their former ally and get him to accept the return of the Congolese Tutsi refugees who were still in Rwanda; which unfortunately was in vain.

The Tutsi community further narrated that even the Government pronounced that 1 to 4, resulting from the Sun City Agreements between the Congolese Government and the RCD, had not been able to resolve the issues of the Tutsi despite their presence in all the institutions of the country and in the army. Then, followed the creation of the CNDP which was a political armed militia established by Laurent Nkunda in the Kivu region of the DRC and the M23 I and II with the same demands, the Tutsi community considering itself discriminated against. The Tutsi community wanted to be the main victims of this war because its members were refugees in many countries including Rwanda, and many others were killed. This community believed that there was no corner in Goma and its surroundings, where a Tutsi could trade without being disturbed. The participants narrated that at this time, the Tutsi believed that their property was destroyed, their livestock carried away (More than 100,000 animals), and were victims of several other abuses with the knowledge and in full view of the DRC Government and wondered whether or not it was by complicity or by inefficiency of power. In other words, the Tutsi perceived this situation as a matter of poor governance from which the country had suffered for decades.

During the election campaign, the participants during the interactive session recounted how politicians based their speeches on the Heads of Congolese Tutsis. They accused these leaders of promising their voters that they would distribute land to the Tutsi land to them. Others treated the Tutsi community as Rwandans who had to return to Rwanda (The case of Justin Bitakwira), while others treated them as Foreign Nilotics (The case of Domi, leader of the National Armed Group -CMC). With this kind of speech, unfortunately audible in the ears of the population, these politicians were in good political healthy and eventually won the elections. For the Tutsi community, the participants stated that several challenges must be tackled head-on by the DRC authorities. Among them was insecurity, arbitrary arrests, rape, looting, malicious destruction of their property, the non-return of Congolese Tutsi refugees, the non-return of IDPs to their respective environments, children were not attending school and inter-municipal tensions, etc.

### **III.5.1. Proposals for promoting lasting peace and stability in DRC**

The Representatives proposed that the DRC Government must assume its responsibilities of respecting the peace agreements successively signed since 1999 to the present day. The DRC Government must begin to begin to separate the problems of Rwanda from those of the Congolese. They pointed out that the challenges with Rwanda were summarized by the question of the FDLR who destabilized Rwanda from the Congo where the opted to maintain the power in the DRC territory. The delegates of the Tutsi community accused the Government of the



DRC of never having taken the initiative to organize the return of the refugees who were in Rwanda, yet this was their main claim.

### **III.6. Meeting with Representatives from EACRF**

In terms of the overview of the security situation, EACRF stated that the situation remained unstable. The EACRF representatives narrated that there were clashes between M23-Nyatura in Nyamitaba, Kausa, Kabizo, Mulimbi and Bukombo. There were also targeted attacks of civilians. The recent one being eight (8) killed in a retaliatory attack in Tongo. There were also reinforcements by both M23 and armed groups in Tongo enclave, Kahunga, Kinyandoni and along Sake-Kirolirwe.

Additionally, there were illegal roadblocks, extortions, looting and cattle theft incidences in many parts of the eastern DRC. Humanitarian situation remained dire with suspected cholera outbreaks. The IDP situation remained a concern albeit gradual return of civilians in EACRF controlled areas. The EACRF delegation stated that there was urgent need to establish pre-cantonment and cantonment sites. The EACRF noted with concern that negative publicity and propaganda fuelled insecurity and instability in the eastern DRC.

#### **III.6.1. Security Situation as at 13 July 2023**

EACRF representatives recounted that the M23 were yet to fully withdraw from Bwiza, Mulimbi, Kinyandoni, Kahunga, Rutshuru, Katale, Kalengera, Burungu. There was partial withdraw of M23 rebels in Kibumba, Rugari, Kiwanja, Bunagana and Tongo. The M23 reoccupied Kirolirwe, Kausa, Nyamitaba, Kausa, Lukore and Ntuuro in Masisi Territory. There were clashes in Ntuuro, Lukore, Nyamitaba, Bukombo and Kausa. Civilians were attacked in Bungushu and Tongo.

#### **III.6.2. Constraints encountered by EACRF**

These included slow progress on the preparation for the P-DDRCS, increased cases of clashes between M23 and other armed groups, increased attacks on civilians by armed groups, absence of local administrators in areas occupied by EACRF, negative propaganda and civil society incitements, lack of funding for EACRF operations and Logs support, functions of the HQs and other administrative matters. The EACRF leadership stated that the progress report made since 2022 by EACRF was positive in the eyes of the elements of the regional force, but seemed not to be so in the eyes of the population who were still waiting for the DDR of the Armed Groups, the withdrawal of the M23 troops to their positions and Sabinyo's initials and the repatriation of foreign forces still on the Congolese soil. With regards to the force's mandate, the EACRF stated that they already noted some progress in terms of joint operations already carried out with FARDC, in terms of support for humanitarian agencies to deliver humanitarian aid to the needy and support for the P-DDRCS, although the process still faced obstacles in its initial phase.

### **III.6.3. EACRF perspectives on the accusation of DRC Government and its citizens**

#### **III.6.3.1. Government of Passivity and Cohabitation with M23 Rebels**

The EACRF leadership stated that the local population had been living in indescribable misery for several decades and wanted a quick and immediate response; which was nothing other than the return of peace. Whatever the means used or the price to be paid to achieve it, the local population wanted peace and stability. Faced with this kind of delay in realizing peace, EACRF delegates lamented that there was a bad campaign against the Force which was spearheaded through the speeches of politicians who voluntarily or involuntarily intoxicate the population by accusing EACRF of not carrying out offensiveness against the negative forces which were bothering the population. They explained that the situation created a kind of mistrust between the population and EACRF until at some point the local population organized demonstrations against the regional force. It was also underscored that EACRF had not been given the mandate to clash with the M23 and other armed groups in the eastern DRC.

#### **III.6.4. Perspective on guiding conflicting parties towards cessation of hostilities and return to dialogue in ongoing peace processes**

Given that the EACRF soldiers have already done their part in the conflict in the eastern DRC, the EACRF leadership stated that it was now up to politicians to do their part as well. However, EACRF proposed that a honest dialogue between DRC Government and the M23 would greatly help to stabilise the situation in the eastern DRC.

#### **III.6.5. Strategies for lasting peace and stability to the DRC**

The EACRF representatives advanced the following solutions for security and stability in the eastern DRC:

- The voluntary DDR program for all combatants must be implemented;
- Consolidate the Nairobi Peace Process and Luanda Roadmap;
- The national armed groups must leave the positions left by the M23 so that the populations could freely go about their occupations (Fields, trade, education, etc.); and
- The EACRF would continue to focus on the pre-cantonment in Rumangabo and the cantonment in Kindu (Although the latter will be secured by Angolan forces) in order to facilitate the DDR of all armed groups.

### **III.7. Meeting with Representatives from Humanitarian Organisations**

The representatives from this category of stakeholders stated that the precarious security and humanitarian situation was mainly caused by the inter-communal conflict which aimed at conquering spaces and was characterized by the presence of the following:

- ADF: who kill, loot, set fire to vehicles and entire villages, thus causing massive population displacements;
- National armed groups: which clash with each other and against the M23 in the southern part of the province, thus causing recurrent population

displacements; as of June 30, more than 2,300,000 people moved to eastern DRC following clashes by local armed groups; and

- M23: which is worsening the security and humanitarian situation, making life unbearable in the south of the province of North Kivu. The IDPs living in this area were easy prey to any kind of solicitation.

### **III.7.1. Effects of instability on the work of humanitarian organisations**

In areas under the M23 and ADF control, there was no free movement of people and their goods. Even humanitarian must first negotiate to gain access to areas under the control of M23 rebels. It was explained that the traders in these areas no longer worked properly and this had a negative impact on the cost of products and their personal businesses. It was also mentioned that humanitarian had suffered several attacks from armed groups for purposes of obtaining supplies of money and goods necessary for their survival.

### **III.7.2. Factors contributing to resurgence of violence and armed conflict in eastern DRC**

The representatives stated that several factors were the root causes of the conflict in the eastern DRC. However, most importantly was the conquest of spaces that led to conflict. Added to this were the interests of neighbouring countries who wanted to have a share of the wealth from DRC.

### **III.7.3. Solutions to the peace and reconciliation process in the DRC**

The participants pointed out that the main solution to the peace and reconciliation process in the DRC was to speak with the belligerents in order to identify what was at the origin of the repetitive insecurity, violence and armed conflicts in the eastern DRC.

### **III.8. Meeting with JIFC and EJVM**

The representatives stated that the precarious security situation in the east of the DRC had plunged the population into disarray since the exit of the M23 from Chanzu in the Rutshuru Territory where it had retreated since 2013. The clashes between the M23 and the FARDC in the Territories of Masisi, Rutshuru, and Nyiragongo had pushed the populations into exile and others into IDP camps. According to the JIFC and EJVM, the reason for the armed conflict was that The M23 declared having taken up arms following the discrimination they suffered by its members on the one hand, and on the other hand to demand for the return of the members of the Tutsi community who were in Rwanda. However, this was not the case, because the Rwandan army officials stated that as long as the FDLR were in the DRC to destabilize Rwanda, they would pursue them to their last entrenchment. The representatives revealed that there were serious suspicions on both sides. They also pointed out that the economic interests that divided the two countries had also fueled the disagreement between Rwanda and the DRC.

The observation made by the representatives in this category of stakeholders was that when Uganda was to commence work on the Bunagana-Goma road, Rwanda

was afraid of a loss of revenue once the road was completed, because the vehicles that once passed through Rwanda would have to use the road of Bunagana and thus escape fiscal impositions on the Rwandan side. They stated that the Bunagana-Goma road project to a larger extent had also fueled disagreement between the two countries.

### **III.8.1. Parties involved in or causing conflict and violence in eastern DRC**

The representatives stated that Rwanda, Uganda, M23, FDLR, CODECO, Mai-Mai and other local armed groups were the parties involved in the armed conflict in the eastern DRC. The reasons for their involvement were diverse: political, economic, diplomatic, military, social, expansionist, etc.

### **III.8.2. Contribution of JIFC and EJVM**

The JIFC and EJVM operated according to their mandate, the main one being the security and humanitarian monitoring of the Member States of ICGLR and verification of incidents between States at the request of a State. The EJVM participated in the repatriation of combatants from Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania. It also contributed to the repatriation of foreigners who were in the DRC via OIM.

## PHASE II

### IV. Mission to Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

The second segment of the Parliamentary Fact Finding Mission to Kinshasa, DRC was led by the Sitting President of FP-ICGLR, Rt. Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba from the Republic of South Sudan. The mission involved having a discussion with H.E the President of DRC, Félix-Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi, the leadership of Parliament and ICGLR Ambassadors accredited to DRC. The FP-ICGLR President was also accompanied by Parliamentarians from the Republic of Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, the Republic of Zambia, the Secretary General of FP-ICGLR and Technical staff from the General Secretariat. The mission took place from 14 to 19 August 14-19, 2023 in Kinshasa, DRC.

#### IV.1. Meeting with the DRC President, H.E. Félix-Antoine Tshilombo Tshisekedi at State House in Kinshasa

The DRC President, H.E. Félix Tshisekedi commended the FP-ICGLR delegation for the Fact-Finding Mission. He categorically stated that his concern was the suffering majority of the Congolese people in the eastern DRC who were forced to live in deplorable and inhabitable conditions caused by imposters. He reiterated that the only way forward to end the armed conflict and violence was for all the concerned parties to respect the resolutions of the Luanda Roadmap facilitated by H.E. Joao Lourenco, President of the Republic of Angola.

The Head of State noted with concern that the implementation of the Luanda Roadmap was somewhat slow. President Tshisekedi attributed the slow pace of implementation to his counterpart, the President of Rwanda, H.E. Paul Kagame for not showing the urgent willingness to resolve the security challenges that had plagued the eastern DRC. He revealed that the insecurity and armed conflict was getting worse by the day and reiterated that the only option to ceasefire among the warring parties was to accord the peace and security interventions top priority.

President Tshisekedi told the mission that when he assumed Office as President of DRC, he revealed that he enjoyed the friendship and cooperation that existed between DRC and Rwanda. He stated that during his first three (3) years, bilateral relations with Rwanda were cordial until Rwanda started waging war against the Congolese people. The DRC President further told the mission that instability and insecurity being confronted in DRC was largely benefitting Rwanda. President Tshisekedi stated that the positive economic performance that was seen in Rwanda was as a consequence of the instability and violence from the DRC.

The DRC President assured that the delegation that his impression was not to threaten anyone but rather encouraged the FP-ICGLR to escalate his genuine concerns to the Heads of State and Summit of ICGLR. He said it was his moral obligation to defend and protect the territorial integrity of the DRC. The Head of State appreciated the FP-ICGLR for the initiative. He underscored that DRC and all its governance institutions were willing to give peace a chance.

President Tshisekedi stated that EAC, AU, UN and the international community among others should begin to denounce countries that were perpetrating crime and insecurity. The DRC President further disclosed that DRC remained available and willingness to the peace process but stated that he would passionately defend the territorial integrity of the DRC.

#### **IV.2. Meeting with ICGLR Ambassadors accredited to Kinshasa**

From the onset, the ICGLR Ambassadors stated that the security challenges in the eastern DRC was political and diplomatic. They explained that it was not a military challenge as it had been perceived in some sections of society. The Ambassadors stated that the security challenges in the DRC was a regional problem. They added that it could not be solved using bilateral means only but also political. The ICGLR Ambassadors underscored the importance of EAC Member States to intervene and help restore peace and stability in the eastern DRC.

The participants further stated that the state of siege which was imposed in North Kivu and Ituri provinces had blocked the movement of people and freedom of assembly. The Ambassadors expressed regret that instead of the siege restoring peace, it had escalated insecurity and instability in the eastern DRC. The ICGLR Ambassadors noted that the eastern part of DRC was turning into a 'rebel infested' area. They stated that the eastern DRC was proving to be a reserve site of armed rebels who were attacking the civilian population in the neighbouring countries such as Uganda. It was revealed that rebel groups were earning a lot of money through criminal enterprise. The participants stated that crime had become a way of life and source of living for the various armed groups. The Ambassadors challenged the FP-ICGLR to aid in transforming the eastern DRC into a peaceful area that could bring development to the communities.

The Ambassadors stated that in the last 12 years, there had been a lot of developments in the EAC and a definite natural focus on peace and stability. They stated that the formation of the EACRF helped to unite the East African bloc. The ICGLR Ambassadors stated that previously EAC only used to interact on business related issues and it was the first time that the bloc was involved in resolving conflict in the region.

##### **IV.2.1. Challenges associated with violence and armed conflict in the eastern DRC**

The ICGLR Ambassadors noted that EACRF had its own challenges adding that the Former Kenyan President, H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta had led the political and diplomatic route thereby scoring success. The Ambassadors revealed that it was the presence of EACRF that stopped the M23 rebels from escalating violence and conflict in the eastern DRC.

They noted that infrastructure was one of the challenges the eastern DRC was facing. The Ambassadors explained that there were rivers and forests which hindered the troops from movements. They stated that the eastern DRC lacked adequate infrastructure to support the mission of EACRF. The other challenge which was cited was the lack of cooperation and trust among ICGLR Member States. The Ambassadors stated that if cooperation was prioritised, there was no challenge which



could not be resolved in the GLR. The mission was informed that Uganda was harbouring a lot of refugees from neighbouring countries which was proving to be challenge.

Further, the Ambassadors stated that the interpretation of the SOFA for the EACRF was cardinal so that it was harmonised for effective implementation. They noted that there was a different understanding of the SOFA of EACRF between the DRC Government and EAC. The participants noted that there was need for all the concerned parties to understand the articles which established EACRF in the DRC. It was also brought to the attention of the mission that MONUSCO would withdraw after the General elections slated for 20 December 2023 in the eastern DRC. The Ambassadors stated that MONUSCO was being perceived as inactive by the local population. They explained that UN had made their position very clear that EACRF had brought about some relative peace and stability in the eastern DRC. It was revealed that the Government of DRC was positive to the peace processes which were underway. The Ambassadors were reminded that their role was to implement all the resolutions passed by the regional bodies.

The Ambassadors informed the mission that there was no combat between the FDLR and M23 rebels. They stated that EACRF had helped facilitate relative stabilisation and peace in the eastern DRC. It was announced during the interactive meeting that Angola had decided to send troops and mediation team on the ground to help find lasting solution to the conflict in DRC. The Ambassadors stated that the contribution of Angola to the peace process was demonstrated by tangible results felt on the ground. Further, the Ambassadors stated that humanitarian organisations had been on the ground to help IDPs in areas where there was conflict. It was observed that the humanitarian situation would continue to worsen if armed conflict and violence was not stopped in the DRC. The Ambassadors remarked that Angola had contributed 2 million US\$ to the humanitarian situation in DRC. They stated that whatever efforts were done for DRC, there was need to support the PD-DDRCS. It was revealed that Angola was enjoying peace because it succeeded with the PD-DDRCS and that DRC could take a leaf from the same model.

#### **IV.2.2.Proposals for promoting lasting peace and stability in eastern DRC**

The ICGLR Ambassadors stated that the only solution to bringing about lasting peace and stability was honest dialogue. They urged the parties concerned to engage in a peaceful manner with the armed groups. They underscored the importance of sincerity among the warring parties adding that lack of it bred war and instability. The Ambassadors stated that they believed in dialogue and sincere communication if the armed conflicts in the eastern DRC was to end. They called upon the FP-ICGLR to guarantee support of the P-DDRCS as it was the only solution to the security challenges in the eastern DRC. The ICGLR Ambassadors reiterated that whatever efforts were being pursued, the FP-ICGLR and all the stakeholders needed to support P-DDRC politically, financially and technically. They categorically stated that P-DDRCS needed to be prioritized as it was deemed as an effective intervention to help in restoring peace and stability in DRC. The ICGLR Ambassadors called upon the concerned parties to be sincere and be attentive to the ongoing

peace mechanisms if stability was to be realized. They noted that delays in implementation, may escalate insecurity and violence. The Ambassadors echoed that political and diplomatic route was the only solution to ending the armed conflict. They further called upon the international community including ICGLR Heads of States and EAC to continue supporting the ongoing peace processes. The Ambassadors appealed to the Member States of ICGLR to remain calm and engage to find the lasting solutions to the armed conflicts in the eastern DRC.

#### **IV.3. Meeting with the Leadership from DRC Parliament**

President of the Senate of the Parliament of the DRC, Rt. Hon. Modeste Bahati Lukwebo reiterated the DRC was committed to supporting the ongoing and progressive peace processes whose ultimate objective was to bring about lasting peace and stability in the eastern DRC. Rt. Hon. Lukwebo underscored the fundamental importance of honest, sincere and open dialogue among the warring parties in the DRC.



## PHASE III

### V. Mission to Kigali, Republic of Rwanda

The third phase of the Mission was deployed to Kigali, the Republic of Rwanda. The delegation was led by the Sitting President of FP-ICGLR and Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly of the Republic of South Sudan, Rt. Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba. The FP-ICGLR President was accompanied by Honourable Parliamentarians from the Republic of Angola, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, the Secretary General of FP-ICGLR and Technical staff from the General Secretariat. The Mission took place from 26 February to 1 March 2024. This phase involved discussions with the Leadership of the Parliament of the Republic of Rwanda with the concerned officials being the Bureaus of the Rwandan Parliament. Other discussions were held with officials and key stakeholders from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement. While in Kigali, the Mission visited the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Gisozi to offer heartfelt tribute and pay their respects to individuals who had left their mark on the country's history. It was a deeply meaningful gesture by the delegation that resonated with their innate sense of dignity and reverence.

Further, the mission also undertook a field visit to Mahama Refugee Camp in Kirehe District where it undertook engagement meetings with the leadership of the Camp, representatives from the UNHCR and refugees themselves most of whom were from the eastern DRC. Aside from this, the mission undertook a field visit to Mutobo Demobilisation and Reintegration Centre in Musanze District which was facilitated by the host MPs and Protocol team from the Parliament of Rwanda. At the Centre, the mission had a meeting with former combatants of armed groups based in the eastern DRC and civilians associated with armed groups who provided their perspective about the insecurity and armed conflicts in the eastern DRC.

#### V.1. Meetings with the Leadership from the Parliament of Rwanda

The Parliament of the Republic of Rwanda, was represented by the President of Senate, Rt. Hon. François-Xavier Kalinda. In his preamble, he appreciated the mission for the efforts it was undertaking in finding a lasting solution to the crisis in the eastern DRC. The President of Senate stated that the international community had given a blind eye to the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the DRC. He cited the colonial legacy after the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 as one of the root causes of the crisis in the DRC to this day. Rt. Hon. Kalinda informed the mission that the DRC authorities had for a long time denied citizenship to the Tutsi speaking people in the country. He revealed that Kinyarwanda speaking community were marginalised in the DRC. The Rwandan lawmaker further explained that non-recognition of the Tutsi-speaking people in DRC was fuelling the conflict in the country. The President of Senate noted with the grave concern that as long as the terrorist group he cited as the FDLR was enjoying safe-haven in DRC, the violence and armed conflict in DRC would continue.

He narrated:

“The FDLR is an armed rebel group active in the eastern DRC. So, the presence of this particular rebel group in DRC is a threat both to that of DRC, Rwanda and the entire region. As long as hate speech towards the Tutsi speaking community continues to be propagated, genocide will never stop.” The Rwandan lawmaker stated that the DRC authorities had decided not to recognise the Tutsi community in the Country who were occupying some parts of the land. He added that non-recognition of the DRC Tutsi community was perpetrating instability in the country:

Rt. Hon. Kalinda stressed:

“The main problem is failure by the DRC Government to recognise the Kinyarwanda speaking community in the DRC. The other real problem is the FDLR who have continued to propagate hate speech and genocide ideology. The solution to the problem of insecurity has to start with the DRC Government. The Tutsi and Kinyarwanda community for many years were living in harmony with the local tribes. However, the collaboration between the Nyatura and FDLR in identifying the Tutsi and Kinyarwanda community to harass and marginalise them is contributing to the crisis in DRC.

Rt. Hon. Kalinda was quick to categorically state that the genocide ideology was slowly spreading not only in the eastern DRC but also many other parts of the country and the problem was complex. Rt. Hon. Kalinda stated that DRC as a country was not doing enough to help stop the conflict in the eastern region. He explained that the status quo was evident in the build-up of military activities in the border regions. He accused the DRC authorities of promoting military solutions as opposed to the diplomatic route.

Rt. Hon. Kalinda pointed out:

“The preservation, security and collaboration of the FDLR with the DRC army was a source of concern. If FDLR is not neutralised, the conflict will not only continue, but also the innocent lives of the civilian population will be lost and we will have dozens of IDPs and refugees.”

#### **V.1.1. Strained diplomatic relations between DRC and Rwanda**

The leadership of Parliament of Rwanda stated that diplomatic relations had hit low because the DRC had not seriously tackled the root causes of the conflict. He challenged the DRC authorities and Leadership of the Senate of the Parliament of the DRC not just to sit back and watch the deadly clashes between the M23, the DRC Army forces and other rebel groups. However, Rt. Hon. Kalinda stated that the DRC authorities and other relevant stakeholders must handle the issue holistically. He remarked that the armed conflict had been the same since the colonial times further stating that there was need for political and diplomatic solutions to end the crisis in DRC.

As regards to the dialogues between DRC and Rwanda, Rt. Hon. Kalinda informed the mission that Rwanda was ready and willing to dialogue with the DRC Government especially on the FDLR a terrorist group and which was active in the

DRC causing a threat to Rwanda and the entire region. He informed the mission that the FDLR had on many occasions attacked the people especially in the northern part of the Rwanda. Rt. Hon. Kalinda noted with concern that as long as the security situation persisted and not addressed urgently, it would be very difficult for Rwanda and DRC to dialogue.

Further, the President of Senate acknowledged that DRC had its own internal challenges as a sovereign nation and Rwanda was not going to take part in its governance problems. He blamed the DRC Government for being reluctant and willing to end the crisis in the eastern region. He stated that DRC had more than 130 rebel groups and accused some senior authorities of teaming up with some rebel groups in fighting the M23 rebels. The President of Senate stated that insecurity in the eastern DRC was poorly a governance problem which to a larger extent could be resolved by the Central Government.

#### **V.1.2. Assessment of the Nairobi Peace Process and Luanda Roadmap**

Rt. Hon. Kalinda re-emphasised that the Republic of Rwanda was committed to regional peace initiatives. He recounted that the Nairobi Peace Process had been frustrated by the refusal by the DRC Government to renew the mandate of the EACRF. The President of Senate asserted that the regional initiative had to be respected for peace and stability to prevail. He remarked that Rwanda believed in the regional peace initiative and not in any way the military initiative.

Rt. Hon. Kalinda further informed the mission that the withdraw of the EACRF in December 2023 has had its own consequences on the civilian population. The President of Senate revealed to the mission that Rwanda as a country had received thousands of refugees crossing the borders into Rwanda. He stated that due to the crisis in the DRC, Rwanda had received a lot of refugees who were in dire of humanitarian assistance.

As regards to the Nairobi process, Rt. Hon. Kalinda stated that it had two tracks, the political and military. With the political track, he explained that it was envisaged that all the parties to the conflict must dialogue and honestly so, to arrive at an amicable solution. He stated that this had not been achieved because the process had been frustrated due to lack of political will and honest dialogue on the part of the DRC Government. However, the President of Senate re-echoed that the Parliament and Government of the Republic of Rwanda was committed to finding a lasting solution to the DRC crisis.

#### **V.1.3. Proposals for promoting lasting peace and stability in eastern DRC**

Rt. Hon. Kalinda proposed that the solution to the crisis in the DRC would never come from guns but through honest dialogue among all the parties to the conflict. He pointed out that a honest political dialogue can resolve the security challenges in the DRC. The President of Senate further called for urgent political and diplomatic interventions to resolve the crisis in the eastern DRC.

## **V.2. Meeting with Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**

The Ministry was represented by the senior leadership. They recounted that the instability in the DRC emanated after the historical demarcation of the DRC where some other groups such as the Tutsi and Kirwanda were sidelined. Such groups began to be marginalised as they were deemed to be alien. Eventually, such communities started reiterating to save their ethnicity. The Ministry further narrated that the GRC Government didn't include the M23 in the political dialogue with the Nairobi Peace Process because they were deemed to be a terrorist group. The mission was informed that in 2013, the M23 were defeated by FARDC and the SADC regional force at that time and an Agreement which was signed in 2013 had not been implemented. It was narrated that the M23 group who left DRC for Uganda are the ones who resurfaced in December 2022 to fight the FARDC for survival. It was placed on record that these active M23 in the eastern DRC at the moment did not come from Rwanda but Uganda. The Ministry further alleged that the DRC Government had been scapegoating Rwanda for the M23 and armed conflict in the eastern part of the country. The Ministry representatives explained that with the establishment of the EACRF, there was a ceasefire which was operational for a period of six (6) months. However, after the withdraw of EACRF, there was resumption of armed conflicts and violence in the eastern DRC. It was explained that the DRC army occupied the areas once occupied by the M23 and this rebel group reacted and there had been deadly clashes since then. Representatives from the Ministry reiterated that the Republic of Rwanda was committed to the regional mechanism and wanted lasting peace and stability not only in DRC but the GLR. The Ministry stated that it was possible to achieve lasting peace if there was political will from the DRC Government.

### **V.2.1. Identified challenge of good governance in DRC**

The Ministry remarked that the main causes of armed conflict in the DRC was the lack of governance. It was pointed out that it was the existence of more than 120 armed groups in the 3 provinces namely: North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri who were fuelling instability in the eastern region. The Ministry noted that the rebel groups had taken over the governance of those areas and the state of affairs was worrisome. The mission was informed that most of the armed groups had nothing to talk about. Some officials from the DRC Government were accused of owning officials to protect their mines, the interests of the local chief and international counterparts who had interests in the country's abundant natural resources.

The Ministry explained that armed groups in the DRC had been institutionalised. It was alleged that the FDLR was sponsored by foreign powers to externalize the genocide ideology against the Tutsi community in DRC. The mission was told that the M23 was a minority group of which some lived peacefully in Rwanda, DRC and Uganda. The Ministry stated that the Nairobi Peace Process excluded the M23 rebels from the process. However, the Ministry explained that the M23 was only the only rebel group with legitimate grievance in the Nairobi Peace Process. It was further revealed that at the first meeting of the Nairobi Process, the M23 were attacked. The Ministry alleged that the DRC Government had opted for a military as

opposed the political solution. It was mentioned that the collusion between the FDLR and other mercenaries, militarised the local population including those who were unarmed groups in North Kivu. The mission was informed that M23 was fighting for citizenship, security and lasting peace in their own areas. Worse still, the Ministry accused the Republic of Burundi who had come on board with a different style of ethnicity as they were custodians of the genocide ideologies. The mission was told that Burundi was fighting ethnic wars and mutilation which was even more dangerous. The Republic of Burundi was accused of supporting the ideologies of FDLR by sending forces to the eastern DRC.

#### **V.2.2. Salient concerns of the Rwandan Government**

The Senior leadership from the Ministry disclosed to the mission that when the FDLR were integrated into the DRC National Army, they began to propagate hate speech, persecution, rape and genocide. They explained that FDLR burnt people alive and marginalised them based on ethnicity grounds. They pointed that there was ethnic cleansing happening in the eastern DRC against the Tutsi and Kirwandan community.

The Ministry narrated:

“Ethnicity cleansing is real in some parts of eastern DRC. For example, if the mentioned marginalized communities are asked to go back to Rwanda and they refused, they were immediately persecuted.”

Under this backdrop, the Ministry stated categorically and without compromise that that Rwanda as a sovereign state had taken a defensive stance to prevent the re-occurrence of genocide so as to safeguard the lives of all the citizens and maintain political stability in the country. The Ministry pointed out that escalation of hostilities involving the M23 and FARDC was based on the simple request by the rebel group demanding among others restoration of their human rights, be recognised as bonafide DRC citizens, urgent protection and security for the Tutsi and other marginalised communities to go back to their original farmlands which had been forcefully taken over from them since the time the armed conflicts started in the eastern DRC. They stated that the hate speech propagated by the Governments of DRC and Burundi by their desire to cause regime change in Rwanda was worrying and had enormous potential to destabilise the GLR.

The Ministry made a decree:

“With such utterances of the desire from both DRC and Burundi Government to cause regime change, we can publicly declare here that the Ministry and the Government of Rwanda have taken keen interest in the matter. As a Ministry, we will soon table the matter before the Parliament of Rwanda for guidance and an appropriate action will be taken in due course.”



### **V.2.3. Solutions to ending the violence and armed conflict in eastern DRC**

The Ministry stated that Rwanda absolutely valued peace and stability more than everything else. They remarked that it was only the existing peace mechanisms that had been established by our regional leaders such as the Nairobi Peace Process and the Luanda Roadmap that can bring lasting peace and stability in the DRC.” They explained that the political leaders understood the problem of insecurity and knew the exact solutions to resolve the crisis in the eastern DRC. The Ministry further implored on all the parties to the conflict not to escalate the war but rather trust the wisdom of Heads of State and Government and the already established EAC Mechanisms if peace and stability was to prevail in the eastern DRC.

### **V.3. Meeting at the Ministry of Defence**

On the security and humanitarian situation in DRC, the representatives started by pointing out that Rwanda’s internal landscape remains peaceful and secure despite existing threats to its national security caused by the presence of armed groups in the region. The mission was informed that Rwanda was not indifferent to the security beyond its borders, and remained committed to contribute to the achievement of sustainable peace and security in the GLR and beyond through various regional and international support initiatives. The presence of armed groups in the region and the increasing threat of terrorism demanded collective efforts and regional cohesion for sustainable action as no single country was able to address them alone. Rwanda was extremely concerned with the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the eastern DRC, despite several regional initiatives to end the crisis. The current situation in eastern DRC called for urgent actions to put to an end the crisis and protect the civilian population in the area.

As regards the background of instability and insecurity in DRC, the Ministry stated that insecurity in the eastern part of DRC was rooted in its colonial history. The origin of Rwandophones in DRC dated back to the partitioning of Africa at the Berlin Conference of 1885, during which some of the Rwandans found themselves on the DRC territory. Part of the eastern DRC which was inhabited by Rwandophones, especially Masisi and Rutshuru became part of Congo. Congolese people speaking Kinyarwanda lived in the boundaries of the current DRC, along before the Berlin Conference of 1885 (Banyamulenge). The Ministry Leadership remarked that contrary to the disinformation campaign by the DRC Government, accusing Rwanda of harbouring territorial ambitions, Rwanda did and had never intentions of any territorial claims over DRC. The mission was informed that the two countries finalised the common border demarcation in June 2018 and had no territorial disputes.

Additionally, other waves of migration occurred between 1920-1955; 1959-73; and in 1994. The manipulation of the identity of Congolese Rwandophones had led to repetitive persecution and political exploitation by successive Governments for political gains. Nationality of communities with Rwandan ancestral origin had been contested since independence. The Ministry further recounted that from 1963 to 1966, there was intercommunal violence dubbed; “Kanyarwanda”. (Pitted Hunde/Nande communities’ vs Banyarwanda). The 1980s Habyarimana’s regime

capitalised on the good relationship with the then President Joseph Mobutu, to create a Hutu Association called “Mutuelle des Agriculteurs des Virunga” (MAGRIVI) in Rutshuru with direct support of Kigali. It was mentioned that there were deliberate attempts by the DRC Government through the National Assembly to exclude Congolese Rwandophones. The application of divide-and-rule policy was implemented by enacting self-contradicting laws/regulations seeking to exclude Rwandophones during the period 1964 to 1996. The Ministry cited that the resolution on nationality of the Transitional Parliament dated 28 April 1995, describing all Congolese Banyarwanda community as foreigners was approved. In this year, several Congolese Tutsi’s were killed, and the survivors fled to Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda.

The Ministry of Defence stated:

“In October 1996, the DRC Parliament announced the expulsion of the so called, “Rwandan, Burundian and Ugandan nationals.” During the same year, the Vice Governor of South Kivu, declared that Banyamulenge should leave the country. The mission was further informed that the declassified telegram from the US Consulate in Bukavu of 29 October 1965 showed that the international community had been aware of the true identity of the Congolese Rwandophones, and the political motivated hostility against them.

### **V.3.1. Strained diplomatic relations between DRC and Rwanda**

According to the Ministry of Defence, the strained relations between DRC and Rwanda started way back during the reign of President Joseph Mobutu. In 1990, when Mobutu’s regime provided political and military support to Habyarimana’s Government, to fight the RPF liberations struggle. The situation worsened after the defeat of the genocidal regime in Rwanda in 1994, when the Government of Zaire and allies re-organised and further armed the genocidal forces to carry out attacks inside Rwanda, with intent to recapture power and finish their genocidal agenda.

Cross-border attacks and killings targeting civilian populations started in 1995. Anti-Tutsi Propaganda Genocidal Rethoric became common in both North and South Kivu provinces. The authorities in DRC kept ignoring Rwanda’s concerns over the presence of Ex-FAR Interahamwe and refugees near the border. The same refugee camps were used as military bases for the remnants of ex-FAR and genocidal militias.

In addition to this, the Ministry stated that there was a concern over the mismanagement of the issue of refugees by the DRC Government from 1994 upto now with refusal to repatriate Congolese refugees. It was estimated that more than (80,000) Congolese citizens lived in Refugee camps in Rwanda. The use of “so-called refugee camps” to attack Rwanda triggered the first Rwanda’s intervention in DRC known as “Congo I” (1996-1997) whose objective was to dismantle refugees and repatriating refugees. “Congo II” (1998-2000) was triggered by the active collaboration of Laurent-Desire Kabila’s Government with Rwandan Genocidal forces in the killings of Congolese Tutsi which led to the resurgence of hostilities and the creation of RCD Movement.

### **V.3.2. Threats posed by Rwandan armed groups**

The Ministry disclosed that the FDLR and its splinter groups were dangerous for peace and reconciliation in the Republic of Rwanda due to their genocide ideology, and spread across the region. They also constituted an asymmetrical threat targeting key economic areas of the country, notably the tourism ecosystem. The Ministry leadership narrated that the most recent attacks and violations include:

- RUD-Urunana attack in Kinigi, Burera, North Province of Rwanda in October 2019, in which 14 innocent civilians were killed;
- CNRD.FLN attacks from their bases in Kibira forest, Burundi in Nyabimata and Kitabi sectors of Nyaruguru and Nyamagabe districts in Southern Province of Rwanda, in June and December 2018, in which 9 people were killed ( 3 in Nyabimata and 6 in Kitabi)
- FDLR's killing of Italian Ambassador Luca Attanasio, in Kibumba area along Goma-Rutshuru Road, in February 2021

### **V.3.3. Rwanda's efforts to improve bilateral relations**

Following the election of President Felix Tshisekedi in 2018, the Ministry stated that Rwanda undertook various initiatives to revive bilateral relations which had deteriorated during the regime of Former President Joseph Kabila. Many Agreements were signed both on the political and the economic aspects. As a result, Rwanda Air launched direct flights between Kigali and Kinshasa. According to the Ministry, the following were other major initiatives that had been put in place:

- The initiative of DRC-Rwanda Joint Intelligence Teams (JIT) composed of military and civilian Intelligence experts;
- The Chief of Defence and Security Meeting for the eradication of common security threats. The MoU was signed but was never implemented;
- The facilitation of engagements between the DRC Government and M23 members living in Rwanda, but without any tangible outcomes; and
- Joint military operations involving RDF and FARDC were also conducted, and provided tangible outcomes which disrupted FDLR activities, resulting in the killing of several FDLR leaders and repatriation of about 500 members of their families.

### **V.3.3. State –sponsored acts of hostility by DRC**

As regards to the role of DRC's Government in consolidating peace and stability in the eastern DRC, the Ministry stated that more needed to be done by the top leadership if lasting peace was to prevail in the country. However, the Ministry noted that with concern the resurgence of M23 armed struggle in October 2021 and DRC hostile propaganda backed by anti-Rwanda actors. The Ministry narrated that this propaganda had been particularly marked by malicious spread of conspiracy theories of the Hima Empire, Balkanisation, double genocide theory and exploitation of natural resources, in an effort to externalise the conflict as sponsored by Rwanda.



The other hostiles activities pointed out included:

- Labelling the Republic of Rwanda as an enemy country;
- Suspension of all cooperation agreements between the two countries;
- Arbitrary arrests and detention of Rwandans in the DRC;
- Expulsion of the Rwandan Ambassador at common borders and at the Rwandan Embassy in Kinshasa;
- Stigmatisation of Congolese Rwandophones calling on them to return to Rwanda;
- Hate speech spreading, double genocide theory and advocating for attack and annexation of Rwanda to the DRC; by political leaders, members of civil society, and religious leaders, from June to mid-August 2022;
- Statements by the DRC Government officials and members of the Security Organs calling on the local population to arm themselves with Machetes and hunt all Rwandans and Congolese Rwandophones;
- Declaration by President Felix Tshisekedi, while addressing over 250 youths drawn from the 26 provinces of Kinshasa on 5 December 2022, of his desire to support regime change in Rwanda and blaming the Rwandan leadership for the Congolese problems; and
- Exclusion of Rwandan military and civilian experts from all regional mechanisms based in DRC (EACRF, EJVM, JIFC, JIT).

#### **V.3.4. Recent development escalating hostilities in eastern DRC**

In response to the resurgence of M23-Makenga Faction I in October 2021, the Ministry of Defence informed the mission that the DRC Government blamed Rwanda instead, and opted for military approach to fight and neutralise the group. To do so, the DRC Government sought support from anti-Rwanda Armed Groups by:

- Reviving collaboration with FDLR and re-arming them for joint operations against the M23 rebels;
- Accusing Rwanda of supporting M23 rebels, leading to hostile acts of provocation by the FARDC (e.g. Shelling on Rwandan Territory using 122mm BM-21 multiple rocket launcher three times; on 19 March, 23 May and 10 June 2022) in attempt to sabotage CHOGM; and
- Propagating disinformation and hate speech against the Congolese Tutsi and Rwanda as a country.

#### **V.3.5. Continued acts of provocation by DRC Government**

According to the Ministry of Defence, the provocation continued and these included the following incidents:

- Kidnapping of two (2) RDF soldiers on 28 May 2022, who were later released after intervention by the Angolan Republican President in June 2022;
- Repetitive and deliberate shootings by FARDC soldiers at the border areas in Rubavu;

- Violation of Rwandan airspace by FARDC fighter jets three times on 7 November 2022, 30 December 2022 and 24 January 2023;
- Attacks by a section size of FARDC soldiers at Rusizi I border on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2023;
- Deployment of mercenaries in less than 5 km to the Rwandan border, from where they have been violating Rwanda's air space by conducting drone surveillance; and
- Deployments of FDLR and local armed elements (Nyatura and Wazalendo) allied to FARDC in Kibumba, north of Goma, 3 km from the Rwandan border;

#### **V.3.6. Initiatives to find peaceful solutions to the conflict in eastern DRC**

The Ministry of Defence informed the mission that many initiatives were put in place to find peaceful solutions to the conflict in the eastern DRC including the following:

- Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999 between parties to the Congo War II;
- Pretoria Agreement between the DRC and Rwanda of 2002 on the withdraw of the Rwandan troops from the Territory of the DRC and the dismantling of the Ex-FAR and Interahamwe Forces (FDLR) in the DRC;
- The Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region of 15 December 2006, providing a legal framework governing relations between signatories, ( ICGLR Member States) through additional Protocols and Program of Actions in various areas of common interests including non-aggression and mutual defense, democracy and good governance, judicial cooperation, prevention and punishment of the crimes of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity and all forms of discrimination;
- The Nairobi Joint Communique of the Governments of the DRC and Rwanda of 9 November 2007 on a common approach to ending the threat posed to peace and stability in both countries and the GLR;
- The Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region (The PSC Framework) of 24 February 2013.; and
- In addition to the Regional Initiatives, the UN Security Council also issued a number of resolutions sanctioning the FDLR leaders and requesting the Rwandan Armed Groups in eastern DRC to lay down their weapons such as Resolutions 1596 (2005), Resolution 1804 (2008), Resolution 2098 (2013), Resolution 2136 (2014) and Resolution 2293 (2016)

The Ministry noted with grave concern that despite numerous resolutions condemning FDLR and calling for its neutralization, the DRC Government had preserved it, and overtime used it as a proxy against Rwanda. The inaction and indifference of the international community in preserving the FDLR/FOCA continue to have negative implications to regional efforts to bring about peace and stability in the Eastern DRC and the GLR.

### **V.3.7. Ongoing initiatives to address armed conflict in eastern DRC**

The mission was informed the two regional processes namely the EAC-led Nairobi Peace Process and Angola-led Luanda Roadmap were put in place in April 2022 and June 2022, respectively, with the aim of helping to end fighting between FARDC and M23 as well as ease diplomatic tensions between DRC and Rwanda. On 21 April 2022, the Ministry of Defence told the mission that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Heads of State Conclave on DRC was convened in Nairobi, the Republic of Kenya seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict. The Political Track focused on Political Consultations/Dialogue between the DRC Government and local armed groups (M23 excluded), while the Military/Security Enforcement Track approved the deployment of EACRF to disarm Armed Groups not complying with the political process and repatriation of all foreign armed groups. According to the Ministry, the Luanda Roadmap was adopted on 6 July 2022, during the 1<sup>st</sup> Tripartite Summit between the Heads of State in Angola and comprised the following key points:

- The establishment of a climate of confidence between the States of the GLR;
- The creation of ideal conditions for dialogue and political consultations to resolve the security crisis in the eastern region of the DRC;
- The normalization of political and diplomatic relations between DRC and Rwanda;
- The immediate cessation of hostilities by armed groups;
- The creation of an Adhoc Monitoring Mechanism, headed by an Angolan General, to monitor compliance with the Agreements;
- The immediate withdraw of the positions occupied by the M23 rebels on the Congolese Territory by the Nairobi Final Communiqué;
- The creation of conditions for the return of refugees; and
- The reactivation of the JIT to define the practical arrangements and program for fighting armed groups.

### **V.3.8. key achievements of the Regional initiatives**

The mission was informed that the key noticeable achievements of the regional efforts were among them the deployment of the EACRF, the withdraw of the M23 rebels from 80% of the captured areas and the ceasefire since March 2023 and the deployment of the AdHoc Verification Mechanism in the eastern DRC.

### **V.3.9. Challenges to regional Initiatives**

The Ministry of Defence informed the Mission that despite series of meetings and decisions at the Regional level which are intended to bring peace to the eastern DRC, the Government of the DRC continued to frustrate existing initiatives by:

- Arming and collaborating with FDLR despite various Agreements/Commitments by DRC to neutralize the group;
- Maintaining a hostile stance against Rwanda, through belligerent statements and hate speech in violation of the Luanda Roadmap Process;

- Prioritizing the militaristic approach in dealing with the M23 issue in violation of the Nairobi process and other initiatives; and
- Termination of the EACRF mandate that ended its deployment on DRC Territory in December 2023.

#### **V.3.10. Other initiatives to de-escalate Rwanda-DRC Tensions**

The Ministry disclosed that additional initiatives to de-escalate tensions between Rwanda and DRC were undertaken beyond the regional level, led by France (August 2022), Qatar (December 2022), Togo (January 2023) and Sao Tome (August 2023), and US-led Tripartite Initiative. However, the Ministry of Defence was quick to mention that none of these initiatives had materialised due to the consistent lack of political will on the part of the DRC Government.

The Ministry of Defence noted:

“It is important here to note that most of these initiatives were requested by GoDRC, as part of its attempts to undermine regional efforts and distract international community through proliferation of peace initiatives.”

#### **V.3.11. Rwanda’s key concerns on the DRC crisis**

In view of the current security situation in DRC, the Ministry of Defence stated that Rwanda remained concerned over the following:

- Preservation of Rwandan Genocide Forces by FARDC and cooperation in the destabilization of Rwanda;
- DRC’s efforts to externalise the insecurity in the Eastern DRC, by scapegoating Rwanda for political gains and promoting state-sponsored hate speech and genocide ideology against Rwanda and Congolese Tutsi;
- Continued influx of Congolese Tutsi, with intent to force them to exile and make them stateless;
- DRC’s reluctance to comply with existing Peace Agreements/ Initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity and instability in eastern DRC; and
- Unhelpful of western powers that intervene based on their vested interests in disregarding of the root causes of the conflict.

#### **V.3.12. Actions for durable peace and stability in eastern DRC**

The Ministry of Defence stated that Rwanda remained ready to contribute to regional efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability in the eastern DRC. In this regard, a number of actions were recommended as follows:

- Address the threat of FDLR/FOCA and its splinter groups by disarming them and dismantling the latter’s support networks across the world;
- Strongly condemn and hold to account individuals and DRC officials, in the DRC and the diaspora, who were involved in the spread of hate speech and ethnic/genocide ideology; and

- Recognise and support both the Nairobi and Luanda Roadmap Peace Processes aimed at addressing the root causes of the violence and armed conflict in the eastern DRC and the GLR, including the presence of FDLR, persecution of Congolese Tutsi and repatriation of Congolese refugees for durable peace;

In conclusion, the Ministry of Defence underscored the fact that Rwanda was one of the countries severely affected by the continued instability and fighting in the eastern DRC. They stated that Rwanda stood ready to benefit from sustainable peace and stability in the GLR particularly in the neighbouring countries. It was in this respect that the Ministry of Defence stated that the Republic of Rwanda would continue to support all efforts, whether bilateral or multilateral meant to restore peace and stability in the eastern DRC and the GLR at large.

#### **V.4. Meeting at the Ministry of National Unity and Civic Engagement**

On the major challenges of insecurity and instability in the eastern DRC, the Ministry started by giving an account of the genesis of instability in DRC from the historic perspective. They explained that the security challenges started when there was a political and military stance to overthrow the Government of Rwanda at that time. There was a serious issue of genocide against the Tutsi community between 1994 - 1995. The Rwandan Government had a major problem of refugees that fled from DRC (Zaire). The Ministry explained that the mistake which both the DRC Government and the international community made was to allow the dozens of refugees to stay at the border of DRC/Rwanda against the International Law and Standards of 150 km away from the border. Unfortunately, the refugees were intoxicated with the genocide ideology. The refugees gradually started to propagate genocide ideology and undertook ethnic cleansing.

On the ground, the Ministry disclosed that the local population composed of different ethnic groupings in the eastern DRC living peaceful and in harmony with each other. However, the hate speech and genocide ideology propagated by some political and civic leaders on various media platforms was one of the reasons that was fueling the crisis in the DRC. The Ministry noted with sadness that even the people in the diaspora had started propagating hate speech against certain marginalized ethnic groupings in the DRC at a very alarming rate. The Ministry stated that the status quo was worrying in that part of the DRC. When asked whether or not Rwanda was supporting some rebel groups to fuel conflict and in the process plundering natural resources from the DRC territory, the Ministry vehemently denied these allegations and stated that there was an international traceability mechanism of minerals from the source to the manufacturer. They explained that there were laws and regulations that guided the implementation. The Ministry stated that it was unfair to accuse Rwanda of plundering natural resources from the DRC Territory when there were systems in place to monitor the implementation process.

#### **V.4.1. Programmes to promote National Unity and Reconciliation in Rwanda**

The mission was informed that between 1994 to 1995, Rwanda had more than 2,000,000 cases of genocide. So, in order to promote unity among the people of Rwanda and between different ethnic groups that cut across Rwanda and DRC border, the Ministry narrated that they had to initiate home grown solutions and programmes to deal with the cases of genocide against the Tutsi community and other ethnic groupings. Major stakeholder consultations were made with two main objectives namely to deal with genocide cases and reinforce national unity that was destroyed by the genocide. The Ministry pointed out that stakeholders had to adopt the “Gachacha Court” to deal with issues of genocide. Further, the Ministry informed the mission that there was also a Social-Economic Integration Program for ex-combatants. They stated that the Ministry with other relevant Government agencies had embarked on awareness programs to reintegrate the ex-combatants into society.

#### **V.4.2. Views on the role of DRC Government in the process of consolidating lasting peace and national reconciliation**

The Ministry stated that despite various peace initiatives both regional and international, the DRC Government did not exhibit full political will to end the crisis in the country. They stated that the DRC Government seemed to favour a military solution as opposed to a political and diplomatic route to end the conflict. They added that the seemingly preferred military solution by the DRC Government could never resolve the deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the country.

The Ministry recollected:

“The situation in the eastern DRC is not only unbearable but unpleasant. There was a DRC delegation which comprised Senators and ICGLR representatives who visited refugee camps for the Tutsi Congolese in the eastern DRC. The delegation appreciated the misery and inhuman sufferings of the People. The Mission took place in 2013.”

#### **V.4.3. Solutions to ending the instability and insecurity in eastern DRC**

The Ministry stated that Rwanda as a country was motivated in peace building and reconciliation because of the vast experience it had gained when fighting genocide forces and political stability it had endured the past 30 years. The mission was informed that Rwanda did not and would never have any intentions whatsoever of destabilizing the DRC.

To permanently resolve the problem of the Tutsi Congolese who had now resorted to taking arms to survive and demanding for citizenship, the Ministry proposed that the EAC and International Community should strive to fight and completely neutralise the FDLR who were being protected by the DRC Government. The Ministry also urged all the stakeholders to fight and end the FDLR genocide ideologies in the DRC Territory.



The Ministry further proposed that there was need to repatriate the Tutsi Congolese back to their land and to secure their properties which had been left behind in the eastern DRC. However, the Ministry warned that if that was not done, the Tutsi Congolese would take up arms and continue to fight FARDC and other rebel groups.

The Ministry stated that they were looking forward to lasting peace and stability in the eastern DRC. They appreciated the efforts the FP-ICGLR was making in contributing towards ending the crisis in the eastern DRC. The Ministry hoped that the DRC Government would address the crisis holistically by tackling the root causes and finding practical solutions as opposed to being reactive.

## **V.5. Visit to Mahatma Refugee Camp**

As regards the helicopter view of the Refugee Camp, the mission was informed that the camp hosts over 63,000 refugees mainly from DRC. It had more than 115 households. The only operating Agencies are the WFP and UNICEF. The mission learnt that three (3) categories of refugees existed namely Highly Vulnerable Group who got a monthly stipend of 8000 RF, Moderate Vulnerable Group (4000RF) and Least Vulnerable Group who did not get any stipend.

### **V.5.1. Reasons and experiences for opting to live in the Refugee Camp**

When interviewed, the refugees stated that they decided to leave DRC after the militias from the Ex-forces started chasing the Tutsi in the Congolese territory. They told the mission that the conflict in the eastern DRC had intensified compared to the 1994s and 1995s. The refugees lamented that the Tutsi community continued to be killed in full view of the international community. They blamed the international community for their indifference in helping to find a lasting solution to the suffering of the Tutsi and other marginalised ethnic groupings in the DRC. It was the wish of the refugees that they returned back to their land in DRC. They pointed out that the camp was safe from attacks of armed groups but their desire was to be repatriated to DRC.

The refugees accused some countries both in the region and abroad of supporting and sponsoring the genocide and ethnic cleansing in the eastern DRC. They pointed out that the Tutsi-Congolese community started suffering and being marginalised since 1964. They narrated that the situation worsened when the ex-combatants from Rwanda crossed to DRC and started propagating ethnicity ideology. The refugees further called on the FP-ICGLR to advocate for them to the political leaders since the international community had ignored their genuine plight.

### **V.5.2. Relationship with Host Government and Communities in Rwanda**

The refugees told the mission that they enjoyed a cordial and friendly relationship with the host community and the Rwandan Government. In reality, the refugees disclosed that they appreciated the support from the Rwandan Government for the provision of schools, education and health facilities. They expressed further profound gratitude to the Rwandan Government for accepting the burden to host thousands of refugees in their territory. As regards to safety and security, the refugees told the mission that they were happy, secure and living in harmony with their loved ones at the camp.

### **V.5.3. Major challenges at the camp**

The refugees stated that in as much as the Rwandan Government, UNHCR and WFP were helping them, they wanted to return to their farmland in DRC. They noted that at the camp, they had small household and it was their desire to go to their land in DRC. They expressed concern that the support they were receiving from UNHCR had been reduced while the cost of living was high. They lamented that the high cost of living was high compared to the monthly stipend they were receiving.

The refugees underscored:

“What we want is to repatriate because we are tired of living here and we don’t want to continue. We have huge farms in DRC where we can cultivate and grow crops to survive. We will never be in a peaceful mode as long as our relatives back in eastern DRC are suffering and others are killed.”

When the mission asked UNHCR representatives for comments, they stated that the camp had received more than 15,000 new refugees from the DRC since November 2022. They told the mission that the camp received hundreds of refugees everyday. The UNHCR said reduced funding had affected the daily operations of the camp. The UNHCR explained that with reduced funding, they had to prioritize assistance to specific category of refugees in the camp. However, UNHCR stated that the reduction in funding was only in cash assistance but the other social services such as education and health were absolutely free at the Camp. They explained that it was only food assistance that has been prioritised at the camp.

### **V.5.4. Conditions to be improved at Mahatma Refugee Camp**

The refugees appealed to the UNHCR and the international community to increase funding to the Camp so that the refugees can cope with the high cost of living. They also longed for a lasting solution for the refugees to be repatriated to DRC.

### **V.5.5. Solutions to ending the violence and armed conflict in the eastern DRC**

The mission was informed that ongoing regional peace mechanisms were effective to stop the atrocities perpetrated by the various armed rebel groups in the eastern DRC. The refugees called on the ICGLR Heads of State and Summit to show political will in resolving the crisis in the region. They urged the EAC, AU, SADC and the UN to expedite efforts aimed at bring back lasting stability and security to the eastern DRC in order to enable the Congolese refugees repatriate to their lands.

## **V.6. Meeting with Ex-Combatants at Rwanda Demobilisation and Re-Integration Commission**

As regards their perspectives on the DRC security situation, the mission was informed that peace became elusive in Rwanda from the onset of colonial rule to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. The Colonial political economy degenerated social cohesion into a divisive and antagonistic social order. Peace became a privilege over the years (Some people were not meant to live peacefully: Persecution, torture, exclusion from certain spheres of the country’s life).



After the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the people of Rwanda embarked on building lasting peace for all. In 1990, the people of Rwanda through the RPF/RPA started a liberation struggle to free the country from a repressive, discriminative, murderous and genocidal regime. In 1993, the two sides signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Arusha (With a provision of DDR). The former Government deliberately refused to implement the Peace Agreement and instead started the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi which they had planned for a long time.

In April 1994, the then Government openly started the genocide against the Tutsi. To stop the genocide, the RPF/RPA fought and overthrew the genocidal regime on 4 July 1994 and embarked on rebuilding Rwanda. The genocidal forces fled to DRC and formed the FDLR and its splinter factions.

Furthermore, the Government of National Unity was set up in July 1994 after stopping the Genocide against the Tutsi. The demobilization and re-integration was part of the 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement. The RDRC was established and started implementation of the RDRP in 1997. RDRP covers ex-RDF, Ex-FAR, ex-AGs. The Ex-AGs are included under the Lusaka Agreement. The overall mission of the RDRC is to facilitate the re-insertion and re-integration of the former military members to empower him/her to develop himself/herself and contribute to the comprehensive development of the country. This mission was pursued through the Rwanda Demobilisation and Re-integration Programme (RDRP). Likewise, the overarching goal of the RDRP is to contribute to the consolidation of peace in the Great Lakes Region and foster unity within Rwanda

#### **V.6.1. Compelling reasons for joining armed groups**

When interviewed, the Ex-Combatants told the mission that most of Ex-combatants were forced to join the armed groups. One of the Ex-combatants narrated: "It was the influx of refugees from Rwanda to DRC during the 1994 genocide. I went to DRC with my parents. My father then forced me to join the armed group. However, when I was told that Rwanda was peaceful, I decided to come back through the RDRC."

#### **V.6.2. Opinions on how to deter young people and youths from joining armed groups**

The Ex-combatants pointed out that politicians were the ones who were facilitating in ensuring that young people join armed groups. They argued that if a country had good leadership and governance, there would be no need for young people to join armed groups. They stated that they were forced to join armed largely because of influence and financial support from politicians.

The ex-combatants re-emphasised that they were committed to being ambassadors of peace to their colleagues. They informed the mission that it was a long process to convince their colleagues who were in the jungle to come back to Rwanda since it was now a peaceful and stable country. The Ex-combatants stated that they were always in talks with their friends who were fighting in the jungle so that they return to Rwanda.

However, the Ex-Combatants remained hopeful that their colleagues fighting in the jungle could make up their minds and come to Demobilisation and Re-integration Centre in Mutobo.

#### **V.6.3. Solutions to ending violence and instability in eastern DRC**

In response to the above, the Ex-combatants stated that the demarcation of the border between Rwanda/DRC was what had necessitated the violence and armed conflict in the eastern DRC. The Ex-combatants strongly challenged the DRC Government to find lasting solutions to the security and humanitarian challenges in the country.

## PHASE IV

### VI. Mission to Entebbe, Republic of Uganda

The fourth segment of the mission was deployed to Entebbe, the Republic of Uganda. The delegation was led by the Sitting President of the FP-ICGLR and Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, Rt. Hon. Nelly Butete Kashumba Mutti. She was accompanied by Honourable Parliamentarians from the Republic of Angola, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. Others in attendance were the Acting Secretary General of FP-ICGLR and Technical staff from the General Secretariat. The mission took place from 7 to 10 March 2025. This phase involved a discussion with H.E. the President of the Republic of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni.

#### VI.1. Meeting with H.E. President of Uganda, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni at State House in Entebbe

President Museveni informed the mission that on 20 June 2022, he shared his thoughts and observations on the presence of armed illegal groups in the eastern DRC during the East African Summit in Nairobi, the Republic of Kenya.

##### VI.1.1. President Museveni's perspective on the violence, instability and armed conflict in the eastern DRC

"It is now 62 years and for most of these years. One of the bases of instability in the GLR has been the support for or harbouring of the enemies of neighbours by the successive Governments of Congo. President Mobutu, the killer of Patrice Lumumba, the first elected President of Congo, for a long time, supported the group of Holden Roberto and UNITA of Savimbi against Angola. Mobutu backed the killers of Marien Ngouabi in Congo Brazzaville. Mobutu created ADF against Uganda by uniting a Bakonjo group known as Nalu with the Molsem faction of Buseruka and fully equipping them to attack Uganda on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, 1996, at Mpondwe.

Mobutu here was co-ordinating with Bashir of Sudan to overthrow the NRM Government because it sympathized with the oppressed Black People of Sudan. Bashir was backing Kony in the North of Uganda and this attack by ADF supported by Mobutu from the West, was supposed to be a *coup de grace*. Mobutu sent troops into Rwanda to fight RPF in 1990 in support of the sectarian regime of Habyarimana, but that army was defeated. Eventually, in 1994, when the RPF, finally, defeated the Hutu regime, 1 million Hutus, with their weapons, fled into Goma and were preparing to reorganize and attack Rwanda, again. We begged Mobutu to disperse these people, but to no avail. It was that threat that caused the Congolese Tutsis known as Banyamulenge, supported by some actors, to go into action, disperse the 1 million Hutu genociders and their supporters and brought down the Mobutu regime.

When H.E. Laurent Kabila came in, installed by the Banyamulenge force, he never bothered to solve the problem, except for the one of Holden Roberto and Savimbi, involving Angola. Also unaddressed was the problem of ADF, NALU etc. While the Governments of Congo have been supporting or harbouring the enemies of neighbours for a long time, the neighbours have also, once in a while, counter-acted.

I remember 3 occasions: the support by the Mbale Summit of East African leaders for the *Muleleists*, seen as followers of Patrice Lumumba that had been treacherously killed by the imperialists and their local stooges; the Banyamulenge counter-action of 1996; and the actions by Uganda and Rwanda against H.E. Laurent Kabila for his continued support of the Interahamwe and ADF. The Intervention by Rwanda and Uganda, was ended by the Lusaka Agreement that was never implemented.

Therefore, although the external actors may make their own mistakes, the basic problem is with the successive Congolese Governments. Especially, after the Lusaka Agreement of 10<sup>th</sup> July 1999, the neighbouring countries have not been active inside Congo. Certainly, Uganda has not been involved. It has been the Congolese Governments, the UN and Regional African Forces from South Africa, Tanzania, etc. The terrorists have, however, been allowed to control large parts of North Kivu and Ituri, oppress the local people, make money from their illegal activities, including mining gold, cutting timber, harvesting and selling Wanainchi's Cocoa crops and, once in a while, crossing into Uganda and killing people. They have, in these ways killed 8 Sheikhs, army officers, police officers, tried to assassinate General Katumba Wamala, our Minister of Works and planting numerous bombs in Kampala, thereby killing innocent Ugandans. This is not correct, not fair and not acceptable to Uganda and I sympathise also with the victim communities of eastern DRC. All these years, we have been begging the Congolese Governments to solve the problem, but to no avail. It has been as if we were begging them to do us a favour. Yet, it is not a favor but to ensure that the country runs and does not become a threat to the neighbours- a well-known and conserved threat. It was a betrayal for the UN and, even, for our own brothers, the FIB, to sit around with these killers of the Ugandans and Congolese, unbothered for the last 20 years (for the UN).

I, therefore, salute H.E. Felix Tshisekedi who, in spite of so much pressure, allowed the UPDF to operate with the Congolese Army. The people in the 3 zones where we have operated, have seen the positive results. The killings have dramatically reduced and the Wanainchi were able to harvest their Cocoa for the first time in many years.

It is our view, that insecurity in eastern DRC and in all the African Countries, can be defeated. Both the foreign armed groups and the Congolese ones, can be defeated. If Congo is not able to do it alone, certainly, East Africa can help Congo do it. The question is: **“How?”**

The problem is both small but also big. It is small, if we know how to handle it. It is big, if we mishandle it as it has been mishandled for the last 20 years. I have heard the CDFs talking of some options. When I met H.E. Felix Tshisekedi at Kasindi-Mpondwe on the Uganda-Congo border, I told him that the option of all the East African Countries participating with each country being given a sector under the overall supervision of a Congolese General, is one that will produce results. Why? Especially, for the foreign groups, it is the countries from which they come, that have the motivation and the information required to relentlessly pursue and defeat them. We know everything about ADF and we are the best qualified, most motivated and knowledgeable to defeat ADF. Are we the best to fight the Interahamwe of Rwanda or Red Tabara of Burundi? That is a totally new topic for us. How long will it take for

us to learn how to fight these non-Ugandan groups? Why did FIB fail to fight ADF? Was it deliberate, that they never cared about the security of Uganda?

The other option is to create a new FIB minus the victim countries and see whether it works or not. The gap in the option of the victim countries taking the lead, could be that, in the past, such efforts were not jointly supervised by Congo and East Africa.

Regarding the internal Congolese groups- Mai Mai, CODECO, Ngiti, M-23, etc., I would like to inform you, again, Their Excellencies, that those are groups for communities (tribes) that are linked with the tribes of Uganda and other neighbouring countries. We, therefore, know a lot about these groups. According to what we know, the community and Church leaders can help the Congo Government to peacefully bring out many of these groups. This is especially so, when they know that there is potential of military action if they despise the peace process. Grievances that led to the emergence of these groups, should be identified and addressed.

High handed, undiplomatic and unbalanced positions may be, wrong. “Unconditional laying down of arms”, for instance. Could we not separate “unconditional participation, participation in the peace process” from “the unconditional laying down of arms” for the internal Congolese groups? Did they not have grievances? How about their security when they surrender? We are aware of a number of extra-judicial killings e.g. Mbusa Nyamwisi (Senior) and Father Machoozi. Pierre Mulele was murdered after surrendering to Mobutu in the year 1968.

Even for the foreign armed groups to surrender, they need some conditions to follow as they surrender. In the regional fora of Africa, using my long experience with fighting, I have been advising actors to be careful about branding every armed opponent as a “terrorist”. In Uganda, for instance, Alice Lakwena was a warrior against us, confused, believing in mysticism, but, certainly, not a terrorist. Why? It is because she was not attacking non-combatants or prisoners of war. The people with power should not use mis-labelling, to avoid the handling of grievances of citizens.

In conclusion, it is crucial that ever since the landing of the Belgian paratroopers in Kisangani to fight the Muleleists, the core of one of the security problems in this North Kivu-South-Kivu-Ituri area, has been the problem of successive Congolese Governments either supporting or harbouring enemies of neighbours.

The actions of other mistake makers are consequences of this original mistake. It is not correct to go on avoiding this and spending so much effort on the peripheral issues. Secondly, this problem is easily solvable, if we act together and act right.

#### **VI.1.1. Solutions to lasting peace and security in the eastern DRC**

President Museveni categorically stated that the solution was honest dialogue by all conflicting parties in order to have a win-win situation. He said DRC Government and the rebels groups should honestly and openly negotiate to end the crisis in the DRC. The Ugandan Head of State advised that sectarianism should come to an end in the DRC.

## PHASE V

### VII. Mission to Nairobi, Republic of Kenya

The fifth segment of the mission was deployed to Nairobi, the Republic of Kenya. The delegation was led by the President of the Executive Committee of FP-ICGLR and Second Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia, Rt. Hon. Moses Frank Moyo. He was accompanied by Honourable Parliamentarians from the Republic of Angola, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. Others were the Acting Secretary General of FP-ICGLR and Technical staff from the General Secretariat. The mission took place from 21 to 24 March 2025. This phase involved a discussion with H.E. the President of the Republic of Kenya, Dr. William Samoei Ruto.

#### VII.1. Consultative Mission with H.E. President of Kenya, Dr. William Samoei Ruto at State House in Nairobi

President Ruto welcomed the delegation to Kenya. He stated that peace and security was the fundamental bedrock for sustainable social economic development of any country. He appreciated the efforts of the Fact Finding Mission of the FP-ICGLR as the undertaking aspired to augment the ongoing regional efforts aimed at restoring peace and stability in the eastern DRC. The Head of State recounted that as a continent, Africa had tremendous potential in many aspects be it in natural resources, minerals and human capital development. He remarked that Africa had a major part to play in global commerce and trade.

President Ruto stated: “To unlock this potential of Africa’s abundant natural resources, there was need for peace and security in all dimensions. He noted that African countries needed to relook at different systems and processes that should facilitate effective trade and regional integration.”

The EAC Chairperson explained that AU was a liberation instrument for the entire African continent. He noted that the real challenge affecting the African people were among others poverty, unemployment, inequality, instability and diseases. He categorically stated that the AU needed reforms. President Ruto disclosed that he had been given the button to reform the AU as the current Chairperson of EAC. He pledged to deal with the many challenges that the continent was facing. President Ruto was particularly concerned with issues related to peace, security and development. The Head of State stated that if those challenges were not adequately addressed, they would gravely affect the African people.

The EAC Chairperson stated that as Africans, we needed to take charge of the peace and security challenges. President Ruto informed the mission that AU was unable to support the EACRF which was the intervention the EAC had deployed in the eastern DRC. The Head of State noted that if AU had the capacity, it would have gone a long way in addressing the security challenges in the DRC. He expressed optimism that with the planned reforms at AU, the UN would support that African initiatives aimed at promoting durable peace and security. President Ruto remarked that AU must take a leading role on peace and security interventions.



President Ruto stated, “I will personally propose to AU that the peace and security architecture should respond to the security challenges in our continent. To address the lingering security challenges, we must assess, propose and recommend before it becomes a fully-fledged war or conflict.”

He stated that going forward, the AU had to make deliberated informed actions on issues relating to peace and security before they developed into full scale conflicts and instability. On economic and regional integration, President Ruto noted that AfCFTA would not be actualised if peace and security were far-fetched.

The Kenyan Head of State disclosed to the mission that the DRC Government did not appreciate the value of the EACRF intervention to the peace building process in the eastern region. He stated that President Felix Tshisekedi wanted EACRF to fight the rebels in the eastern DRC but which was not their mandate. President Ruto pointed out that EACRF was established to find peace. Regrettably, EACRF had to withdraw because the DRC Government did not appreciate its interventions. He recounted that EAC attempted to persuade the DRC Government for EACRF to continue to implement its mandate with focus on P-DDRCS in coordination with the GoDRC – security to the pre-cantonment site. He added that Force was mandated to facilitate the return of IDPs in EACRF occupied areas, liaise with local administration to establish control, facilitate repatriation of Foreign Armed Groups, support to DRC Government in capacity building within vacated areas and opening of MSRs in close coordination with GoDRC.

The Kenyan Head of State further narrated that after the withdraw of EACRF from eastern DRC in December 2023, hostilities had escalated to the present day. President Ruto said it was a huge challenge for EACRF to fight rebel groups who were willing to dialogue with the DRC authorities. The EAC Chairperson stated that after the withdraw of EACRF, SADC was deployed to the eastern DRC and still the hostilities escalated. He stated that many lives were lost in the peacekeeping process and eventually the SADC mission had to withdraw.

President Ruto told the mission that he would attend the SADC/EAC on 24 March 2025 to deliberate on the security situation in the eastern DRC and which also would appoint facilitators. He added that the meeting would lay the ground work for the facilitators to engage and dialogue with the DRC Government and its people to find a practical mechanism to address the humanitarian challenges and ultimately ceasefire.

The Kenyan President stated that EAC was committed to finding lasting solutions to the security challenges in the DRC. He announced that the Nairobi Peace process and Luanda Roadmap were merged to make peace interventions effective. He was sad to note that DRC had abundant natural resources but was in perpetual turmoil. President Ruto told the mission that the African leaders were equal to the task at hand and certainly a permanent solution would be found to address the security challenges in the eastern DRC.

## **VIII. Findings, Strategic Recommendations and Conclusion**

### **VIII.1. Findings**

The fact-finding missions were conducted in five phases with the first done in Goma (DRC), second in Kinshasa (DRC), third in Kigali (Rwanda), fourth in Entebbe (Uganda) and fifth (Nairobi). The missions were very important in providing more details on the realities on the ground and highlighting the underlying causes of instability and offering strategic recommendations for achieving peace and stability in the GLR.

#### **VIII.1.1. Phase I**

During the first phase in Goma, the mission established that there was widespread insecurity in the region with armed groups controlling significant parts of the eastern DRC, particularly in North Kivu. These groups often engaged in illegal activities, generating significant revenue that further instrumentalise violence and instability. The mission further found that the exploitation of resources (mining, forestry, etc.) continued to instrumentalise violent conflicts in the DRC with powerful external players attracted by the abundant natural resources (riches) in the region and using their influence to destabilize the country for their personal gains.

The mission observed that the insecurity has led to the displacement of thousands of civilians, with limited access to basic needs such as healthcare, education, and food. With several IDP camps in Goma, more than 20,000 people lived in the camps among them children, girls, young people and the elderly. Displaced populations faced difficult conditions in overcrowded camps, contributing to a growing humanitarian emergency. Further, there was lack of assistance from the DRC Government and humanitarian organizations, with the distribution of food to IDP camps erratic and done once every six months.

The mission further identified that there were several foreign and local armed groups operating in the region, including the ADF, M23, and Mai Mai. These groups often have complex ethnic and political motivations with some linked to neighbouring countries, further complicating peace efforts.

The mission documented that one of the major contributory factors to the conflict was the weakness of national institutions in the DRC. The DRC Government was struggling to assert control over its territories and address the underlying grievances of local communities. The search for identity, land, access to power and the economic positioning of the GLR fueled insecurity and instability in the eastern DRC. Rwanda was identified as a key player in the DRC conflict as they had continued to provide support with human resources and equipment to the M23 rebels.

The mission further examined the Nairobi Peace process and Luanda Roadmap, which involved multiple regional stakeholders. Whilst there have been some positive outcomes, the lack of effective implementation and the limited involvement of the local population in the peace process were seen as major barriers to achieving lasting peace. The stakeholders hoped that the peace processes would be upheld and be fully implemented to bring lasting peace and stability in the eastern DRC.

### VIII.1.2. Phase II

The FP-ICGLR held its second segment of the mission with its entourage travelling to Kinshasa, and led by the then Sitting President of FP-ICGLR, Rt. Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba from the Republic of South Sudan in August, 2023. During the meeting with the DRC President, he highlighted the importance of all the concerned parties respecting and up holding the resolutions of the Luanda Roadmap facilitated by H.E. Joao Lourenco, President of the Republic of Angola. He further observed that the implementation of the Luanda Roadmap was rather slow because of the lack of willingness on the part of the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame to resolve the security challenges that had plagued the eastern DRC.

President Tshisekedi revealed that DRC and Rwanda initially shared good cooperation and friendship in his first three years, with bilateral relations with Rwanda cordial until Rwanda started waging war against the Congolese people. The delegation was informed by the President that instability and insecurity being experienced in DRC was largely benefitting Rwanda with its positive economic performance resulting from alleged looting of natural resources from the DRC. The DRC President acknowledged the efforts of the FP-ICGLR and implore the Forum ICGLR to escalate his genuine concerns to the Heads of State and Summit of ICGLR for support towards lasting peace in DRC.

The meeting with the ICGLR Ambassadors revealed that the numerous security challenges prevailing in the eastern DRC were more political and diplomatic in nature with a regional dimension and needed not just bilateral means to be resolved but also political interventions. The ICGLR Ambassadors called for honest dialogue as a means of bringing peace and stability. They called on the parties concerned to engage in a peaceful manner with the armed groups.

### VIII.1.3. Phase III

Among the major issues that were highlighted include Rwanda's security concerns on the presence of hostile armed groups in Eastern DRC, particularly the FDLR, which has been a long-standing threat to Rwanda's security since the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. The ongoing activities of the M23 group were also discussed, with Rwanda viewing them as a significant destabilizing force in the eastern DRC.

Rwanda's involvement in the DRC conflict, particularly through its support of armed groups like the M23, was framed within the context of historical grievances related to ethnic tensions, refugee movements, and cross-border incursions. Rwanda's leadership emphasized the need for a holistic approach in addressing these issues, including addressing historical injustices and promoting reconciliation. The stakeholders in Rwanda also reiterated their commitment to regional peace processes, including the Luanda and Nairobi peace talks. However, they stressed that these peace processes needed to be more inclusive and address the root causes of the conflict, including the role of armed groups.

The mission also learnt that the humanitarian conditions had deteriorated with the plight of refugees fleeing conflict in the DRC, particularly those in Mahama refugee

Camp being very harsh. Rwanda's efforts to integrate refugees into the country's socio-economic fabric were emphasized, as well as its efforts to demobilize and reintegrate former combatants through programs like the Mutobo Demobilisation Centre.

The Rwanda Government raised concerns on what they asserted as the preservation of Rwandan Genocide Forces by FARDC and cooperation in the destabilisation of Rwanda. They further argue that the DRC had been making deliberate efforts to externalise the insecurity in the eastern DRC, by scapegoating Rwanda, for political gains and promoting state-sponsored hate speech and genocide ideology against Rwanda and Congolese Tutsi. They also accused the DRC Government of being reluctant to comply with existing Peace Agreements aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity in the eastern DRC. The western powers were also seen to have contributed by their deliberate failure to intervene in the conflict because they have specific interests in the conflict.

The stakeholders suggested that any sustainable peace in the region must involve not only military solutions but also a strong emphasis on governance reforms, economic development, and the protection of human rights. A multi-pronged approach to regional security, which included enhancing the capacity of regional forces and addressing governance issues in the DRC was suggested as one way of dealing with the conflict.

#### **VIII.1.4. Phase IV**

During the fourth phase, President Museveni provided important historical context and highlighted the persistent role of the DRC in harbouring armed groups that destabilize the region. The President's observations traced the history of conflicts in the GLR, from the President Mobutu era to the present day, emphasizing the role of Congolese Governments in supporting armed groups hostile to their neighbours. He particularly noted that under the rule of President Mobutu Sese Seko, DRC played a huge role in harbouring and supporting armed groups that destabilized Uganda and its neighbours. The Ugandan President specifically referenced the support for the ADF, which led to violent incursions into Uganda in the 1990s. President Museveni argued that the historical legacy of these actions continues to fuel insecurity in the region.

President Museveni emphasized Uganda's active role in combating armed groups in the eastern DRC, particularly the ADF, which continues to attack Uganda. He praised the recent cooperation between the UPDF and the Congolese army, which had resulted in a significant reduction in violence and an improvement in the security situation. The Head of State also reiterated the call that the East African Countries must take a more active role in addressing the security challenges in DRC. The Ugandan President suggested that neighbouring countries, particularly Uganda, have the necessary knowledge and motivation to deal with the ADF and other armed groups in the region. However, President Museveni also called for a coordinated regional strategy to ensure that the Congolese Government remains at the centre of peace-building and reconciliation efforts.

President Museveni acknowledged the inefficiency of past peace processes, including the Lusaka Agreement, which he felt was never fully implemented. He proposed a new approach where East African countries take the lead in stabilizing specific sectors in eastern DRC, working under the supervision of a Congolese general. The Head of State further emphasized the need to address the grievances of local communities and armed groups. The Ugandan President warned against labelling every armed group as a “terrorist” organization, arguing that many groups had legitimate grievances that needed to be addressed through diplomatic means. President Museveni suggested that peace processes should be flexible and allowing armed groups to participate in the negotiations without the precondition of “unconditionally laying down arms.”

#### **VIII.1.5. Phase V**

In the fifth phases, President Ruto noted with great concern that development for African countries had delayed due to insecurity and instability. He underscored that peace and security was the fundamental bedrock for sustainable social economic development of my country. The EAC Chairperson hinted that no nation could boost of development in the absence of peace and security. He stated that the relevance of peace and security entailed development of stable economy, encouragement of unity as well as attraction of foreign investors. President Ruto echoed that peace was the absence of violence, fear, and conflict further stating that it should be the motivation for all the countries facing security challenges. The Kenya President underscored that peace was essential for the well-being of individuals and communities, and is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Regrettably, President Ruto noted that despite having abundant natural resources, the DRC was faced with a cycle of violence and armed conflicts. The head of State lamented that trade and commerce was depressingly impacted due to the crisis in the eastern DRC. He was saddened that the DRC crisis had made banks to close, diverted trade routes, caused inappropriate customs decisions and boarder closures were not making life easier for EAC traders. The EAC Chairperson categorically stated that there was urgent need for Africa to unlock its potential of abundant natural resources by relooking at different systems and processes that should facilitate effective trade and regional integration.

Further, President Ruto underscored the role of the AU as an ASF in the architecture of peace and security which could not be over emphasised. He stated that the ASF, envisioned under Article 13 of the PSC Protocol as a cornerstone of the APSA, which was designed to serve as Africa’s primary mechanism for peace and crisis interventions. The Kenyan President re-echoed this critical aspect of APSA and underpinned that the AU was established as a liberation instrument for the entire African continent but had made challenges to achieve its objectives particularly those relating to security and peace. President Ruto recommended that the AU needed to reform in order to address challenges of peace, security, humanitarian, unemployment, inequality, diseases, unfair trade and instability. President Ruto pledged to deal with the aforementioned challenges as the current EAC Chairperson

of the EAC. He restated that if such challenges were not adequately address, they would continue to impact negatively on the African people.

The Kenyan President advocated for home grown solutions to address security challenges in the GLR. He challenged African leaders to take a leading role on peace and security interventions. President Ruto further challenged African leaders to detect, evaluate, recommend and address lingering insecurity before they become fully fledged war. Henceforth, President Ruto reiterated the need for African leaders to take charge of aspects related to peace and that he would personally advocate for the reforms of the AU.

The EAC Chairperson expressed optimism that the UN would support that African initiatives if the AU was reformed to respond to growing challenges of peace and security. President Ruto opted for progressive and aggressive efforts in dealing with security challenges in the African continent. The Kenyan President advocated for honest dialogue and diplomatic interventions in addressing the DRC crisis.

The Mission also noted the efforts of the Joint Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the EAC and SADC which had their meeting in a warm and cordial atmosphere to deliberate on the report of the Joint EAC – SADC Ministers on the security situation in the eastern DRC. In many aspects, it implied that African leaders were equal to the task and more than willing to find a lasting solutions to the DRC crisis. The mission also took cognisant of the Joint EAC-SADC meeting held virtually on 24 March 2025 which laid the ground work for the facilitators to engage and dialogue with the DRC Government and armed groups to find an appropriate solution to halt the hostilities and bring back peace to eastern region of the country.

The Kenyan President declared that the EAC was committed to finding lasting solution to the security challenges in the DRC. The Kenyan President announced that the Nairobi Peace process and Luanda Roadmap were merged in order to tackle DRC crisis holistically and make the joint EAC-SADC interventions effective. Despite the continuous cycle of turmoil in the eastern DRC, the EAC Chairperson remained optimistic and assured the mission that a permanent solution would be found to address the security challenges in the country.



## IX. Strategic Recommendations

The FP-ICGLR mission identified several key challenges and opportunities for addressing the ongoing conflict and instability in the GLR. Based on the insights gathered from Goma, Kinshasa, Kigali, Entebbe and Nairobi, the following strategic recommendations are proposed by the mission:

1. The Government of DRC must fundamental dialogue with warring parties in a honest, sincere and open manner in order to end the crisis in the eastern DRC;
2. Restoration of the authority of the State, which presupposes the organization and management of the public service that could provide the country with legitimate institutions capable of rebuilding the security apparatus of DRC;
3. Promote strong leadership in the DRC capable of protecting and securing all the citizens and their homeland;
4. Address the threat of FDLR/FOCA and its splinter groups by disarming them and dismantling the latter's support networks across the world;
5. The Government of Rwanda must dialogue with the FDLR and that Uganda negotiate with the ADF to find an amicable solution to the armed conflicts;
6. All foreign military forces must return home and let the DRC take care of itself;
7. Strongly condemn and hold to account individuals and DRC officials, in the DRC and diaspora, who are involved in the spread of hate speech and ethnic/genocide ideology;
8. There is an urgent need for greater coordination between East African countries, particularly Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya and the DRC. Uganda's experience in combating the ADF should be taken advantage of, and regional forces should be equipped with the necessary resources and knowledge to tackle other armed groups, including the FDLR and M23;
9. The presence of armed groups and the increasing threat of terrorism in the GLR demanded collective efforts and regional cohesion for sustainable action as no single country was able to address them alone.
10. The DRC Government must:
  - Must engage with Rwanda in meaningful dialogues and be willing to support peace processes that will end the war;
  - Take stronger action to assert control over its territory and address governance deficits, particularly in the eastern DRC. This includes tackling corruption, improving the rule of law, and ensuring the protection of civilian populations from armed groups;
  - Assume its responsibilities of respecting the peace agreements successively signed since 1999 to the present day;
  - Create jobs for young people to persuade them from joining armed groups; and
  - Take initiative to organize the return of the refugees (DRC Tutsi Speaking Community) who were in Rwanda, yet this was their main claim.
11. All peace processes must be inclusive, taking into account the voices of local communities, ethnic groups, and religious leaders. Grievances that fuel the rise

- of armed groups should be addressed diplomatically, with an emphasis on reconciliation and the protection of human rights;
12. Peace initiatives such as the Luanda Roadmap and Nairobi Peace processes must be reformed to ensure better implementation and greater involvement of all stakeholders. Past peace agreements, like the Lusaka Agreement, must be fully implemented, and new frameworks for cooperation should be explored to ensure lasting peace and stability;
  13. Regional peacekeeping forces should be strengthened and given a clearer mandate to address regional security challenges. The involvement of neighbouring countries in peacekeeping efforts in DRC could increase the chances of success by utilizing their local knowledge and expertise;
  14. Humanitarian aid must be increased to support displaced populations and communities affected by the conflict. Efforts should focus on providing access to education, healthcare, and basic services to help rebuild affected regions and reduce the impact of ongoing violence;
  15. All the parties to the conflict should not escalate the war but rather trust the wisdom of Heads of State and Government and the already established EAC Mechanisms if peace and stability was to prevail in the eastern DRC;
  16. The voluntary P-DDRCS program for all combatants must be implemented; and
  17. The FP-ICGLR and all the stakeholders must support P-DDRCS politically, financially and technically. The P-DDRCS should be given top priority as it was an effective intervention to help in restoring peace and stability in eastern DRC.

## **X. Conclusion**

This report sums up the findings of the FP-ICGLR mission which among other key aspects highlighted the deep-rooted challenges of instability and insecurity in the GLR, particularly in the DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda. Despite the complex geopolitical, ethnic, and historical factors that have contributed to the ongoing conflicts, there is a strong consensus among regional actors that these issues can be addressed through enhanced cooperation, improved governance, and inclusive peace-building efforts. The mission's findings point to the importance of regional ownership of the peace process, with Uganda and Rwanda playing key roles, and a broader, more holistic approach that addresses both the security and socio-economic dimensions of the crisis. The regional leaders need to take bold and coordinated actions to secure a lasting peace in the GLR.

**Done in Luanda on 25 March 2025**

**Rt. Hon. Nelly Butete Kashumba Mutti, MP, SC, FAFRA**

**Sitting President of FP-ICGLR**

**Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia and Head of the Mission**

## Annexes

### **Annex 1: List of the Members of the Mission**

1. Rt. Hon. Nelly Butete Kashumba Mutti, Sitting President of FP-ICGLR and Speaker of the National Assembly of the Zambia: Head of the Delegation;
2. Rt. Hon. Jemma Nunu Kumba, Outgoing President of FP-ICGLR and Speaker of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly of South Sudan;
3. Hon. Moses Frank Moyo, MP, President of Executive Committee of FP-ICGLR and Second Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly of Zambia;
4. Hon. Maurice Kakai Bisau, President of the Committee on Peace and Security of FP-ICGLR
5. Hon. Ezra John Chiwelesa, President of the Committee on Humanitarian and Social Issues and Member of the Executive Committee of FP-ICGLR
6. Hon. Morgan Sitwala, Vice President of the Committee on Peace and Security of FP-ICGLR
7. Hon. Simon Bizimungu, Rapportuer of the Committee on Peace and Security of FP-ICGLR
8. Hon. Sergio Leonardo Vaz, Member of Executive Committee of FP-ICGLR and Member of the Peace and Security Committee
9. Hon. Geoffrey Ekanya, Member of the Executive Committee of FP-ICGLR
10. Hon. Christine Gabriel Ishengoma, MP (Tanzania), Member of Committee on Peace and Security of FP-ICGLR
11. Hon. Charles Majak Aleer, Member of the Peace and Security Committee of FP-ICGLR
12. Senator Lemaletia Hazena, Member of the Committee on Children, Women and Youths from the Parliament of the Republic of Kenya;
13. Ambassador Onyango Kakoba, Secretary General of FP-ICGLR from 2018 to 2024;
14. Ronald Mwelwa Tembo, Acting Secretary General of FP-ICGLR
15. Dr. Modeste Mafwala Mafuta, Finance and Administration Manager
16. Cedric Matondo Bueya, Events Coordinator of FP-ICGLR
17. Charles Chishimba, Desk Officer National Assembly of Zambia
18. Ms. Charity Mulenga, Liaison Officer, National Assembly of Zambia