



# POLICY BRIEF

## PROMOTING THE BENEFITS OF PEACE AGREEMENTS ON DAILY LIFE IN EASTERN DRC

### 1. CONTEXT

The latest report by the United Nations Group of Experts [1] described in strong terms the harmful role of the AFC/M23 and Rwanda in the current situation in eastern DRC. In addition to large-scale massacres, they have encouraged the forced recruitment of young people, changes in traditional authority and local administration, and illegal mining of mineral resources, which have now reached unprecedented levels.

The massacre in Goma, the capture of two provincial capitals (Goma and Bukavu), and the danger of regionalization of the conflict with Burundi's military involvement alongside the DRC have prompted many regional and international actors to propose peace plans [2].

The American and Qatari proposals are the most advanced of the proposed processes. The US commitment emerged in response to two urgent needs. The US aims to combat China's presence in the DRC and gain control of Congolese strategic minerals. The Kinshasa regime has been shaken by the fall of Goma and Bukavu and the expansion of territories controlled by the AFC/M23 and Rwanda. Inspired by the US proposal to Ukraine, President Tshisekedi took the initiative to propose the "security for minerals" deal [3].

To implement this request from Kinshasa, the United States became involved as a mediator between the DRC and Rwanda. On June 27, the two countries signed a peace agreement in Washington. This was preceded by

the signing of a declaration of principles on April 25. As for the Doha process, after three months of negotiations between the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Congo River Alliance (CRA)/M23, it resulted in a declaration of principles signed in Doha on July 19, 2025.

The Washington agreement is hailed as a major step forward for peace and development in the Great Lakes region. It opens the door to renewed good relations between the DRC and Rwanda, the possibility of ending a deadly conflict that has lasted more than thirty years, and promises of substantial funding that could boost the economy of the DRC and the region.

The normalization of bilateral relations between the DRC and Rwanda will also allow the completion of the Doha process focused on resolving the conflict between the DRC and the AFC/M23 supported by Rwanda.

[1] *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of Congo, United Nations, S/2025/446 (Summary).*

[2] *East African Community (EAC) Process, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Process, African Union Process, Qatar Process, Washington Process, Catholic and Protestant Churches Process (ECC-CENCO).*

[3] *Dr. Aaron Poynton, U.S. President of the Africa-USA Business Council, Advancing a U.S.-DRC Strategic Partnership for Critical Mineral Security and Global Stability, February 21, 2025.*

## 2. SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Clashes in North and South Kivu continue to claim lives. The narrative on both sides remains belligerent, and Kinshasa's reprisals and legal actions against rebel leaders and affiliates continue unabated.

These agreements are struggling to translate into improvements in the situation on the ground. They suffer from the parties' interpretation of important clauses such as the restoration of state authority and the withdrawal of the Rwandan army from the DRC. These commitments also do not offer convincing solutions to the underlying structural causes of endemic con-

flicts such as the lack of legitimacy of power after the 2018 and 2023 elections, the exile of opposition leaders, the deficiency of governance in the eastern provinces with the repeated massacres of populations by, among others, the ADF/MTN, the multiple actors in the control of natural resources, historical ethnic tensions exacerbated by regional instability, etc. These factors contribute to perpetuating a vicious circle of violence, massive displacement of populations and chronic insecurity.



## 3. CHALLENGES

Current agreements are complex. They raise several challenges and uncertainties that must be addressed to ensure their effective implementation. It will therefore be necessary to ensure coordination, harmonization, and complementarity (S/RES/2773 (2025)) between the Washington process and the Doha process. Among the challenges, we note:

- The ongoing lack of mutual trust between stakeholders.
- The overlap between initiatives and the clear contradiction between these agreements and Resolu-

tion 2773, which is legally more stringent.

- The difficulties of neutralizing the FDLR and ensuring the effective return of Rwandan troops (Implementation of the Operational Concept, CONOPS).
- The absence of a conciliatory narrative and mutual gestures to ease tensions and create the conditions for constructive negotiations.
- The existence of gaps between official narratives and the realities experienced on the ground by the civilian population.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

### For the Congolese Government :

#### To rebuild trust :

- Maintain stable and coherent negotiating teams, accompanied by figures respected by all parties, possessing a his-

torical memory of past mediations, and who understand the geopolitical dynamics of the Great Lakes region.

- Organize discreet meetings between high-level party emissaries, facilitated by accepted and respected mediators, to rebuild trust.

- Formalize the agreement with the Congo River Alliance (CFA)/M23 without delay, to facilitate the rapid and consistent implementation of the Washington Agreement.
- Honor the commitments made rigorously and avoid delaying tactics to strengthen the government's credibility.

### To Ensure Consistency :

- Improve coordination with international actors—including MONUSCO and regional mediators—to ensure the effective and consistent implementation of the agreements;
- Involve the national parliament in the study, review, and validation of agreements, in order to ensure broad popular legitimacy and strengthen national ownership of peace initiatives.

### In order to implement the CONOPS :

- Address the FDLR issue in parallel with other foreign armed groups so that each country can participate in resolving its own problems.
- Ensure the complete withdrawal of Rwandan troops.
- Include SADC, EAC, and Angola in the verification mechanisms and give this mechanism the mission of definitively resolving the issue of the FDLR and the presence of Rwandan troops in the DRC.

### The government is called upon to take the following urgent actions :

- Include the issue of territorial reunification as an urgent and short-term action.
- Avoid decisions that affect and penalize the population in the occupied areas.
- Create a specialized working team to analyze and define the future of the Volunteers for the Defense of the People (VDP/WAZALENDU).
- Integrate the security issues in Ituri province into the current negotiations, in order to bring a definitive solution to the conflicts in the east of the country.
- Develop an integrated plan with Uganda to address the ADF/MTN issue.
- Create a specialized working team to address the complex problem of refugee returns from all neighboring countries as well as the issue of internally displaced persons.
- Align official statements with an improvement in the situation in North and South Kivu and initiate actions likely to reap the benefits of the agreements on the lives of the populations in the occupied areas for peace goes beyond diplomatic flourishes and the signing of agreements. It must be lived.

### For Congolese Civil Society :

- Establish a monitoring structure to ensure rigorous citizen oversight of the implementation of the agreements, exerting pressure on the government and the rebels to promote transparency and accountability among various stakeholders. Advocate for appropriate sanctions against stakeholders who delay or violate the implementation of commitments.
- Strengthen expert contributions to provide relevant support for the proper conduct and monitoring of the process.
- Plan a workshop on economic agreements and transnational trade corridors, identified as important levers for national economic recovery, with a view to establishing permanent monitoring teams.

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