



RWANDA CIVIL SOCIETY PLATFORM - RCSP

Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) Statement on the Ongoing crisis in DRC and the Great Lakes region: Call for a coordinated and inclusive approach towards a sustainable resolution of the conflict.

RCSP is deeply concerned by the deteriorating security and humanitarian conditions in South and North Kivu that induced heightened fears of confrontation between DRC, Rwanda and Burundi. The Burundi government issued stark warnings of potential conflagration in the region; for instance: the Burundian President called for the international community to decisively act before the conflict spilled over the entire region during the diplomatic luncheon early in February 2025.

The surge in violence in Eastern DRC has resulted in significant loss of life, forced massive displacements and destruction of key infrastructures, worsening an already critical humanitarian situation. Since the intensification of fighting later in January 2025, hundreds of people have died and thousands have been displaced both internally and across the borders. Neighbouring countries, including Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi continue to receive and host refugees and asylum seekers from DRC.

Regional economic organizations, supported by AU, have held a series of high-level summits to address the escalating situation in Eastern DRC which threatens regional stability. High-level regional diplomacy stepped in with the view of merging the Luanda and Nairobi processes under the recent SADC and EAC summit. Indeed, a coordinated and inclusive diplomatic action needs to be stepped up between these actors and processes if a meaningful ceasefire is to be implemented and sustainable peace achieved through an Africa-led and owned solution.

Regional actors have made repeated commitments to peace efforts but this has not really resulted in inclusive peace beyond the rhetoric of public declarations. RCSP recognizes the swift response of African leaders through AU, SADC, EAC in addressing the crisis. However, if these efforts are not prioritized enough, this crisis could ripple out of the DRC and destabilize the entire Great Lakes region. On February 24, 2025, the EAC-SADC summit announced former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, former Nigerian President Obasanjo and former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn as the facilitators for the crisis.

Following the recent surge of hostilities in the region, RCSP noted a growing wave of sanctions against Rwanda over alleged M23 ties. For instance : The US imposed sanctions on Rwanda regional integration minister, General (Rtd) James Kabarebe and M23 spokesman Laurence Kanyuka.



The UN Security Council unanimously issued the Resolution 2773 condemning Rwanda for its alleged support to M23. The EU suspended defense consultations with Rwanda and plans to review the MoU it signed with Rwanda on Sustainable Raw Materials Value Chains. The UK announced a halt to direct financial aid, except for humanitarian assistance, but also paused defense training and reviewed export licenses for Rwanda military. A similar stand was taken by Germany and Canada.

RCSP Position

On sanctions : RCSP strongly believes that sanctions could derail ongoing regional diplomatic mediation. Indeed, compelling and authoritative research¹ suggests that sanctions can complicate mediation efforts by fostering exclusion, emboldening non sanctioned parties, closing mediation space, undercutting mediator's impartiality. Sanctions are of little help in breaking stalemates, incentivizing cooperation and ensuring broad participation in talks and facilitating the onset of talks. Sanctions can exacerbate conflict by inadvertently strengthening hard-liner actors leading to increased resistance to a negotiated resolution and ultimately prolonging the conflict.

Furthermore, sanctions can disproportionately harm civilian populations, leading to economic hardship, potentially fueling instability and resentment. Finally, sanctions generally can strain international cooperation and undermine the principle of collective action, which can be crucial for effective conflict resolution. In this regard, sanctions undermine the sustainable development goal of strategic partnerships (Goal 17) to address complex issues and meet the sustainable development agenda. For all the reasons listed above, we call all concerned global leaders to revisit the sanctions regime and rethink them in the framework of the nexus of humanitarian, peace and development that requires a holistic approach to address the complexity of the regional conflict issues.

On Mediation efforts: The Dar-es-salaam joint EAC-SADC summit sought to bridge regional differences by bringing the two blocs together. RCSP strongly supports this joint effort and urges regional leaders and appointed facilitators to establish a staged process to bring about peace by (1) obtaining a lasting and respected cease fire between the warring parties and (2) mediating honest, transparent and comprehensive discussions that address once and for all the root causes of the conflict. A mere cease-fire without addressing the genuine concerns of all the parties would be postponing problems that may erupt again later with far more devastating consequences.

¹ Thomas J. Biersteker , Rebecca Brubaker, David Lanz, exploring the relationships between sanctions and mediation, Global governance 28(2), 180-202, 2022.



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The mediation team should make every effort to address the root causes of the conflict beyond rhetoric. The DRC crisis is not another national emergency, it is a regional crisis with evident spill-over effects that require bold, coordinated and inclusive action from all stakeholders including civil society actors. Equally, grassroots communities including women and youth should be actively involved in shaping peace efforts in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions: 1325 and 2260 respectively.

While DRC had previously rejected the idea of negotiating with M23, it is encouraging that Angola's President announced direct talks between M23 and DRC government set to start in Luanda on March 18, 2025.

On the other hand, there are reports of talks between the Government of Rwanda and Burundi. RCSP considers these recent developments as a window of opportunity that the international community should seize to push for an inclusive peace process.

On Humanitarian Crisis: RCSP encourages all stakeholders to facilitate access to humanitarian assistance, restore essential services and forge comprehensive measures aimed to protect civilians.

Finally, we ask the UN Security Council to press DRC and other relevant stakeholders of the Nairobi and Luanda processes to move beyond short-term interests and stalemates to build inclusive solutions that put peace and security for the Great Lakes region's population first.

Done at Kigali, 17th of March, 2025

MURANGIRA Theoneste
Chairperson
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Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) Profile

Rwanda Civil Society Platform (RCSP) is the apex body for civil society organizations in Rwanda, established in July 2004. Its current membership comprises 14 umbrella Civil Society Organizations with 377 members in the network. The members constitute the General Assembly, the RCSP's supreme organ. RCSP's mission is to act as a framework for coordination and knowledge exchange, promoting synergy among its members and strengthening their capacity to be impactful at national, regional and international levels. Its vision is to be an effective platform for safeguarding the public interest and sustainable development in Rwanda.

RCSP's three strategic priority areas are (1) Capacity strengthening for CSOs, (2) Coordination, representation and partnerships, and (3) Advocacy and policy influence. In collaboration with its members and their constituencies, RCSP fosters partnerships and amplifies the voice of the Rwandan civil society to enhance and facilitate inclusive citizen participation for sustainable development. It also partners with international NGOs, development partners, and government institutions to ensure the needs and aspirations of citizens are represented in national policy processes.

Equally, RCSP strengthens the capacity of CSOs to dialogue with policy-makers and facilitates increased public engagement in development and democratic processes through evidence-based advocacy. Moreover, RCSP's efforts are essentially dedicated to building and inspiring a vibrant civil society that truly amplifies the voices of the voiceless. Additionally, RCSP is currently championing the aid localization agenda in Rwanda. RCSP is a member of the East African Civil Society Forum (EACSOF) and the East African Philanthropy Network (EAPN).

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