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PRESS RELEASE

Political stability through internal dialogue in neighbouring countries of the DRC's is a prerequisite of durable peace in the sub region.

Kigali 30 November 2022. Since the war waged by the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) against the Democratic Republic of Congo then called Zaire in late 1990's supported among others by Rwanda, the east of DRC has not been at peace to date.

The permanent state of wars waged by armed groups including local and others of foreign origin—some of whom are allegedly serving as proxies for the DRC's neighboring countries are responsible of the death of millions of people, illicit exploitation of natural resources of DRC, partly deforestation of the Congo rain forest. The people of Congo have endured an unimaginable suffering including sexual violence against women as a weapon of war and recruitment of children soldiers. As former President of Kenya pointed out in his press conference in Goma, time for pointing fingers at each other should end and each should feel concerned and work for the end of the war and the suffering of the people in eastern DRC.

Today, people in eastern DRC are victims yet again victims of intense fighting between DRC army and the M23, an armed group that has resurfaced with renewed force after 10 years of no activities. Thousands of people have had to leave their homes and remain in makeshift camps. As a person who believes that political problems need to be resolved through political means, I condemn anyone involved in this war which creates unnecessary suffering for the people of Congo and continues to create tensions between Rwanda and DRC.

I would like to recall that in the past several ceasefire agreements to end the conflict which have been signed with little or no tangible results including the inter Congolese dialogue held in 2002. The government of the DRC signed agreements for military cooperation with neighbouring countries and many joint military operations were carried out jointly against armed insurgents, but the problem was not resolved.

The Second Heads of State Conclave on the DRC held in Nairobi in April 2022 agreed that a consultative dialogue between the president of the DRC and the representatives of local armed groups in the DRC be undertaken. It was also agreed that Foreign armed groups must groups and return unconditionally and immediately to their respective countries of origin. Those that fail to do so will be treated as negative forces and handled militarily by a regional force to be established.

Furthermore recently, Heads of states agreed in Luanda on a timetable that calls for the most prominent M23 movement to withdraw from all occupied areas and return to the Sabyinyo volcano area no later than 27th November 2022. The rest of the armed groups, local and foreign, must lay down their arms by 30th November 2022. Displaced people should have returned to their homes by 2nd December 2022.

Although commendable, these new initiatives do on their own address the root causes of unending wars and conflict in eastern DRC.



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It must also be recognized that there are external factors that fuel the conflict in east of DRC, including instability and political tensions in neighboring countries of the DRC. against the Democratic Republic of Congo then called Zaire in late 1990's. The outcomes of conflict and wars in neighbouring countries have spilled over across the border and transformed the DRC into an unwilling host of foreign rebel groups. Thus, a solution to this problem of insecurity in Eastern DRC and in the region must include a commitment of neighbouring countries to remove internal conditions that cause conflict and wars in their home countries that force their citizens to flee their countries to form armed groups in the DRC.

The solution lies in dialogue at two levels:

The first solution should be discussion at regional level. The objective of such talks would be 1) to establish a regional peace treaty to foster cohesion, in particular to prevent any country in the region from supporting armed insurgents against a neighbor as contained in the African charter on the question of refugees. 2) To agree on the conditions that guarantee safe and voluntary return of ordinary refugees, members of the various armed groups and affiliated politico organizations as well as opposition members who have no armed wings, to their respective countries of origin. 3) to discuss issues of justice in the spirit of Nairobi joint communiqué and Security Council resolution S/2007/679 of November 2007 in order to avoid blanket accusations of refugees and members of armed groups for political ends 4) to agree on how to collaborate to meet respective economic needs of the refugees and achieve a mutually acceptable outcome for the welfare of the refugees and their respective countries (win-win solution).

The second level should be Internal dialogue. Each government must commit itself to engage in collaborative, constructive and positive discussions with dissenting voices of its people both within and outside the country. The ultimate aim of this internal dialogue is to remove reasons for political opponents organizing outside the country, forming insurgent groups within the country, or even forming armed groups within neighbouring countries. It will be an opportunity for each member state to strengthen good governance based on respect for human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law through consultation with its citizens.

The aforementioned dialogues, combined with the ongoing Inter Congolese dialogue in the DRC, constitute an alternative solution that can put an end to armed groups forming in the eastern part of the country.

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