

**Uganda to Mediate in DR Congo Conflict**  
**BY HENRY MUKASA**  
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As chair of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region, Uganda's president will work to defuse the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Uganda is to mediate in the simmering conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where rebels early this month overran a border post and captured territory from the government forces.

The escalation of the conflict at the porous borders in the west of the country impacts negatively on national security, trade, tourism and economic development, the Ugandan government said Monday.

Consequently, Uganda has called a summit of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to meet in Kampala to thrash a deal that could defuse the conflict from degenerating into a fully blown civil war.

Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni holds the chair of the ICGLR summit which he took over in December last year when Uganda hosted a similar summit.

He is in that capacity mandated to summon an extra-ordinary summit to discuss emergency matters in the region, the ministry of foreign affairs affirmed.

Subsequently, the eleven leaders of the nations that make up the ICGLR shall convene in Kampala on August 7 and August 8 this year to discuss the security threats posed by the M23 rebels to the regions, accusations that Rwanda is fighting a proxy war and possibility of deploying a neutral force in the area.

Regional cooperation affairs minister, Asuman Kiyingi said on Monday that apart from the meeting being a follow-up of the emergency ICGLR meeting held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on July 15, lack of action by Uganda, a close neighbour of DRC would be interpreted as deliberate.

"The situation in eastern DRC has worsened, with armed groups like M23 taking territory from government troops," Kiyingi explained.

"There have been accusations and counter-accusations between Kinshasa and Kigali. Uganda is mandated to mediate the situation."

The minister said Museveni has contacted his Rwandan counterpart, President Paul Kagame as well as the special envoy of President Joseph Kabila.

"The existence of negative forces in eastern DRC like M23, FDLR, LRA and ADF which is allied to al-Shabaab is a threat to our security, hence the extra-ordinary summit," he explained.

The DRC has been accusing Rwanda of brewing trouble in eastern DRC by propping up rebels groups. But Rwanda has denied the accusations, saying the conflict is purely internal and the DRC government should face it.

"There is also a fundamental problem that the Interahamwe who were uprooted from Rwanda are in Congo and have been using it as a base," Kiyingi observed.

The recent regional leaders meeting in Addis Ababa condemned the M23 rebels, committed themselves to support the DRC fight M23, proposed deployment of a neutral force in the East of DRC and border points and directed a meeting of ministers of defense which is due on August 1 and August 2 in Khartoum, Sudan.

There are currently 17,000 UN peacekeeping troops (MONUC) in eastern DRC.

Former presidents Benjamin Mkapa (Tanzania) and Olegum Obasanjo (Nigeria) have been named as special envoys on the conflict in DR Congo.

The Kampala summit is expected to be attended by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon; AU chairperson, who is also the President of Republic of Benin, Yayi Boni; ministers of foreign affairs; ministers of defense and defense experts.

ICGLR was founded in 2004 after a peace pact in London and Lusaka, Zambia.

It has 11 members namely; Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

The grouping would use regional mechanism to promote peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development, regional integration, humanitarian assistance, genocide prevention and prohibition of illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Its secretariat is headed by the Executive Secretary, the current one being Professor Alphonse Ntumba Luaba, with headquarters of the group in the Burundian capital of Bujumbura.

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