

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) government and the M23-led rebel alliance have officially agreed on a structured roadmap for peace negotiations. The breakthrough follows five days of intensive, closed-door talks in Switzerland mediated by international stakeholders, including the United States, Qatar, Togo, Switzerland, and the African Union Commission.

According to a joint statement released this weekend, the new framework establishes a standardized method for reporting ceasefire violations and introduces a mechanism to address implementation bottlenecks. The agreement builds directly upon the foundational Doha framework signed in Qatar in November of last year.

As an immediate next step, an international ceasefire verification mission is scheduled to arrive on Monday in Minembwe, located in the volatile South Kivu province. The move comes on the heels of a recent confidence-building measure earlier this month, where the DRC government handed over 15 prisoners to the M23 and the Congo River Alliance (AFC) in a transfer facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Despite the diplomatic breakthrough in Europe, the reality on the ground in eastern DRC remains highly volatile. Hours after the roadmap was finalized, AFC/M23 spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka claimed that DRC coalition forces launched kamikaze drone strikes against civilian infrastructure in the Minembwe region, a claim that underscores the fragile nature of the current truce.

The United Nations recently warned that the introduction of advanced drone technology by both sides has heavily destabilized North and South Kivu. The humanitarian crisis is further compounded by a severe Ebola outbreak in the region, which has claimed over 2,500 lives since May.

The ongoing conflict continues to strain relations across the Great Lakes region. Kinshasa routinely accuses Rwanda of backing the M23 rebels with weapons and troops. Kigali has consistently and firmly denied these allegations, countering that the DRC military actively collaborates with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a remnant Hutu militia linked to the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. Kinshasa denies supporting the FDLR.

With the M23 currently holding significant swathes of territory in eastern DRC, including the strategic provincial capitals of Goma and Bukavu captured in early 2025, regional observers remain cautious. While the Swiss-brokered roadmap offers

a diplomatic lifeline, the success of the Doha peace process will ultimately depend on whether both sides halt frontline hostilities and honor the verification mechanisms starting this week.