The Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the M23 rebel group have agreed to allow rapid and unimpeded humanitarian access in conflict-affected areas of eastern Congo, marking progress in ongoing peace efforts mediated by Qatar.

The agreement, reached during talks held April 13–17 in Montreux, Switzerland, is part of the implementation of the Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in November 2025.

In a joint statement released Saturday, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Alliance Fleuve Congo/March 23 Movement (AFC/M23), along with international partners including the United States, Togo, the African Union Commission and Switzerland, said they had made “substantial progress” toward finalizing a protocol on humanitarian access and judicial protection.

The parties committed to ensuring safe, sustained and unrestricted movement for humanitarian personnel, goods and services based on independently assessed needs, without discrimination.

They also agreed to refrain from attacking or destroying infrastructure essential to civilians, including resources necessary for survival, and to avoid actions that could hinder the delivery of humanitarian aid.

The statement emphasized that humanitarian assistance would cover critical services such as food, health care, water, sanitation and shelter, while prioritizing the protection of civilians, particularly women and children, during ongoing hostilities.

Both sides further pledged to facilitate the evacuation and treatment of the wounded and to support the transport of medical supplies by impartial humanitarian organizations.

The talks also resulted in a memorandum of understanding with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to operationalize an expanded ceasefire monitoring mechanism. This framework will enable oversight teams to monitor, verify and report on the implementation of a permanent ceasefire.

The latest developments build on earlier negotiations held in Doha in February 2026, where both sides agreed on ceasefire monitoring arrangements with support

from the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In another confidence-building measure, the parties agreed to release detainees within 10 days under a previously signed mechanism.

Qatar has played a central mediation role in the conflict, hosting multiple round of talks between Kinshasa and M23 leaders. A declaration of principles signed in Doha in July 2025 committed both sides to a permanent ceasefire, following a separate peace agreement between DR Congo and Rwanda.

Fighting between the M23 rebels and the Democratic Republic of the Congo government resumed in 2022, displacing millions of civilians and triggering a severe humanitarian crisis in the country’s east. The number of internally displaced people peaked at 7.8 million in late 2024 but has since fallen to about 5.8 million in 2026, according to United Nations estimates.