

Member States of the East African Community (EAC) decided on Wednesday 31 May, at the 21st EAC Summit, to renew the mandate of the EAC regional force in the DRC until 8 September 2023.

A communiqué read by EAC Secretary General Peter Mathuki said that this extension of the mandate announced this Thursday, June 01, 2023 is aimed at consolidating the gains made by the East African Regional Force (EACRF).

Two heads of state, William Ruto of Kenya and Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi, who are the current chair of the EAC, took part in the 21st EAC summit, which ended Wednesday in Bujumbura (Burundi).

Three days of work were enough to thoroughly assess the conduct of military operations conducted by the EAC regional force in North Kivu.

On Sunday, the chiefs of staff of the armed forces of the member states and their experts combed through the current situation on the ground.

Earlier this week on Monday, regional defense ministers met on the same security issue to propose new political orientations for this new mandate; before the delegations of the Heads of Member States come to endorse this extension.

Only the Burundian and Kenyan Heads of State took part in these meetings.

Rwanda was represented by its Prime Minister Edourd Nigirente, Tanzania by its Vice-President, Uganda by a Minister of State, South Sudan by two Ministers and the DRC by the Minister of State for Regional Integration, Antipas Mbusa Nyamwisi.

Since their arrival in the DRC, EAC regional force troops have not attacked the M23, although according to the Congolese government, their mandate is offensive.

The Heads of States instructed the regional force to support the orderly withdrawal of the M23 and other armed groups from the areas they are required to vacate.

The regional force was also directed to work with the Chiefs of Defence Forces, MONUSCO and all the other shareholders to visit and verify the suitability of Rumagambo, a base currently occupied by the Kenya Defence Forces and the Sudanese People Defence Forces, as a cantonment area for M23 and other armed groups within three weeks.

It was directed that all communication with M23 be handled by former Kenya President Uhuru Kenyatta.

In addition, the Heads of States also directed the establishment of the civilian Head of Mission to coordinate the political affairs of the regional force.

President Ruto said in a statement that the civilian officer will help insulate the regional force from political and public affairs.

“This will enhance peace and security in the region” Ruto added.