

In a critical move to address the intensifying conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), leaders from the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) have called for an immediate ceasefire and urged for direct negotiations between the DRC government and the M23 rebels.

The summit, held in Dar es Salaam on February 8, 2025 convened eight heads of state, including President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and President Felix Tshisekedi of the DRC, who attended virtually. The gathering sought urgent solutions as the conflict continues to escalate, with humanitarian crises worsening by the day.

The summit comes after M23 rebels captured Goma, the largest city in eastern DRC. The city's fall marks a significant shift in the conflict, raising fears of further violence and instability in the region.

The DRC government continues to accuse Rwanda of backing the M23 rebels, a claim Kigali has repeatedly denied. The conflict has prompted international concern, with the United States and France calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and urging Rwanda to withdraw any support for the rebels.

During the joint meeting, EAC and SADC leaders agreed on several urgent measures:

Ceasefire: An immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities was demanded from all parties.

Security and Aid: The reopening of Goma Airport and key trade routes, including Goma-Sake-Bukavu and Goma-Kibumba-Rutshuru, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid.

Additionally, direct talks between the DRC government and the M23 rebels to pave the way for peace.

The summit, also agreed that the Chiefs of Defense Forces from EAC and SADC, be directed to develop a security plan for Goma and provide technical guidance on conflict resolution strategies.

The leaders also emphasized the need for enhanced coordination between the Luanda and Nairobi peace processes, merging them into a unified "Luanda-Nairobi Process" to foster greater effectiveness in addressing the conflict.

The United Nations has expressed grave concern over the humanitarian impact of the conflict, with reports indicating thousands of deaths and widespread displacement. Essential services in Goma have been severely disrupted, leaving residents without access to food, clean water, or medical care.

“We cannot allow this situation to spiral further out of control,” one summit participant remarked, urging swift implementation of the summit’s resolutions.

As the conflict unfolds, all eyes are on the EAC and SADC to see whether their intervention will bring about a peaceful resolution to a crisis that has plagued the eastern DRC for years.