By Jejje Muhinde;

East African Community leaders on Monday agreed on the immediate deployment of a regional military force whose mandate is to secure peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

All the Presidents, Paul Kagame (Rwanda), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Evariste Ndayishimiye (Burundi), Salva Kiir Mayardit (South Sudan), and Felix Tshisekedi (Democratic Republic of Congo) approved the decision at State House in Nairobi with instructions to the force to deploy immediately.

According to the communique issued after the meeting by the Presidency of Kenya, the Heads of State accepted and adopted the concept of operation, Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Rules of Engagement (ROE), and other legal and technical regulations to facilitate the operationalization of the Regional Force and its various operational arms.

The heads of state called for the regional force to work in cooperation with the military and administrative forces of the DRC besides cooperating in the implementation of the disarmament and demobilization process.

In attendance at the brief was the Executive Secretary of the EAC and the Chiefs of Defence Forces (CDFs) of all the seven (7) countries of the EAC Partner States.

The communique in part called for an immediate cease-fire and cessation of hostilities, offensive language, hate speech, threats of genocide, and another politically inciting language to cease on top of the withdrawal of forces from recently captured towns like Bunagana.

The insecurity in the region is heightening tension between Congo and Rwanda. Congo accuses its neighbor of supporting the M23 rebel group, a claim denied by Rwanda.