

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Olivier Nduhungirehe, has issued a scathing rebuke of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), accusing it of manipulating regional institutions for political gain—just hours after Kigali announced its formal withdrawal from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS).

“It’s unbelievable and unacceptable,” Nduhungirehe said on X (formerly Twitter), “that whereas President Tshisekedi met President Kagame in a fruitful meeting in Doha, Qatar on 18 March 2025; whereas Minister Kayikwamba and myself signed a Declaration of Principles in Washington on 25 April 2025; and whereas Rwanda and DRC are actively engaged, over the past month, into promising US-facilitated negotiations for a historic peace agreement—the DRC, nonetheless, is still whining around in all regional and international organisations accusing Rwanda for its own turpitudes, not to mention crying out for sanctions.”

The Minister’s statement comes in the wake of the 26th ECCAS Summit held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, where Rwanda’s right to assume the rotating Chairmanship was deliberately sidelined. Kigali says the move—engineered by the DRC and backed by unnamed member states—violates Article 6 of the ECCAS Treaty and exposes the organization’s internal dysfunction.

“Rwanda is engaged in all current peace processes (AU/EAC-SADC, Washington and Doha) in good faith and with a sense of responsibility,” Nduhungirehe stressed, “and will never accept the manipulation, by a reckless and hopeless DRC, of regional economic communities such as ECCAS.”

Rwanda’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs echoed this stance in its formal communiqué, pointing to a pattern of obstruction. The Ministry recalled that Rwanda had already raised alarm in 2023 when it was excluded from the 22nd ECCAS Summit in Kinshasa. A letter of protest was sent to the African Union, but no corrective action followed.

“The silence and inaction that followed confirm the organization’s failure to enforce its own rules,” the statement read.

Meanwhile, the DRC president’s office fired back. In a formal statement, it said ECCAS members had “acknowledged the aggression against the Democratic Republic of Congo by Rwanda and ordered the aggressor country to withdraw its troops from Congolese soil”

Beyond the ECCAS clash, unsettling rhetoric from President Félix Tshisekedi has also emerged. Earlier, he vowed a “vigorous and coordinated response,” accusing Rwanda of violating “the principle of the Charter of the United Nations” by deploying “thousands” of troops—describing the M23 rebels as “puppets” of Kigali and warning that the international community’s response “borders on complicity”

Congolese government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said in his comments directed towards Rwanda, “one cannot continually and voluntarily violate the principles that underpin our regional institutions and claim to want to preside over them”.

He added that the Eccas decision “should inspire other regional organisations to adopt a firmer stance against Rwanda”.

Rwanda has been accused of supporting M23 rebels in the east of DR Congo. The group has made major advances at the beginning of the year, taking the key regional cities of Goma and Bukavu.

Last year, a UN experts’ report said that up to 4,000 Rwandan troops were fighting alongside the rebels.

But Rwanda has denied the accusations, saying instead that its troops were deployed along its border to prevent the conflict spilling over into its territory.

Rwanda maintains that ECCAS has no legitimate role in the Eastern DRC conflict, which is already under the stewardship of two other regional blocs—the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—under AU mediation led by Togolese President Faure Gnassingbé.

“ECCAS has no business to deal with the crisis in eastern DRC,” Nduhungirehe reiterated, as he reaffirmed Rwanda’s commitment to ongoing negotiations that prioritize regional peace over politics.

With this withdrawal, Rwanda sends a clear message: it will no longer tolerate institutional complicity in what it views as the DRC’s regional defamation campaign.

Political analysts say that the exit from ECCAS, while significant, does not mark a retreat from diplomacy—but rather a recalibration of engagement on Rwanda’s own terms.