

The International Contact Group for the Great Lakes region has urged the Democratic Republic of Congo to promptly implement a protocol for the disarmament, demobilization and cantonment of a faction of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).

The group, chaired by France and comprising the United States, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, issued the call in a statement Friday.

The ICG said it took note of the July 28 announcement by the Congolese government that an FDLR faction had formally accepted and signed the protocol.

It urged Congolese authorities to develop an operational plan and realistic timeline for implementing effective FDLR neutralization, in line with commitments under the Washington Accords, the Oct. 31, 2024, Disengagement of Forces/Lifting of Defensive Measures of Rwanda (CONOPS), and the June 27, 2025, Washington agreement.

The group stressed the importance of the Congolese government implementing the protocol and called on Kinshasa to clarify mechanisms for combating impunity, as referred to in the protocol.

It also urged the Congolese government to work with the U.N. peacekeeping mission MONUSCO as a key partner in implementation.

The ICG warned that any co-location or operational collaboration with elements of the FDLR would be fundamentally at odds with commitments made under the Washington Accords.

At the same time, the group said it was ready to welcome any concrete steps taken by either the DRC or Rwanda following commitments made under the peace process.

The ICG urged all parties to the Washington Accords and Doha Framework, as well as various mediation efforts, including those of the African Union, to continue working to implement their commitments.

The group also reminded the parties of their obligation to protect civilians, comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions 2773 and 2808, respect sovereignty and territorial integrity, and immediately de-escalate the situation.

The ICG also recognized a prisoner exchange agreement between the DRC and the AFC/M23 as a vital confidence-building measure to help de-escalate tensions and foster trust between the parties.

It commended a recent transfer facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross of individuals released by Congolese authorities to AFC/M23, describing it as a step in the right direction.

The group also called on all parties to respect international humanitarian law and guarantee full, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access so essential aid can be delivered to people in need.