

President Paul Kagame has accused the international community of applying double standards in implementing the Washington peace agreement between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), saying Kigali cannot be expected to meet its commitments while, in his view, Kinshasa fails to honour its own.

Speaking at a meeting of the RPF-Inkotanyi Bureau Politique in Kigali at Intare Conference Arena, Kagame devoted much of his address to the security situation in eastern DR Congo and Rwanda's role in the US-brokered peace process aimed at easing tensions between the two neighbors.

His remarks came a day after regional officials concluded the fifth meeting of the Joint Security Coordination Mechanism in Geneva, part of efforts to implement the Washington agreement signed earlier this year.

Kagame said Rwanda entered the agreement in good faith, hoping it would address the root causes of insecurity in eastern Congo while creating space for stronger regional cooperation.

But he argued that implementation had become unbalanced.

The Rwandan leader said international partners had focused largely on Rwanda's security measures while paying insufficient attention to what he described as the DRC's obligations under the agreement.

"A signed peace agreement binds all parties equally," Kagame said.

"You cannot expect one side to carry the full weight of compliance while the other side acts as if the rules do not apply to them."

He accused the Congolese government of failing to take action against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), an armed group that Rwanda says continues to pose a serious security threat because of its links to perpetrators of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

"Congo, or the leaders of Congo, didn't want peace," Kagame said. "They wanted to continue supporting the FDLR."

The Congolese government has repeatedly rejected allegations that it supports the FDLR.

Kagame also criticised what he described as the international community's handling of the conflict, accusing some UN officials and experts of underestimating the influence and activities of the FDLR.

He said the armed group had built networks through illegal mining, timber exploitation and other activities in eastern Congo but argued that these concerns were often overlooked.

"Despite all that, you will hear people say the FDLR doesn't exist," Kagame said.

"You Congolese, or the UN that is there, address that problem and stop them from invading our country, or we will sort it out ourselves."

The president also addressed sanctions imposed by the United States and the European Union on senior Rwandan military officers and businesses over allegations linked to the conflict in eastern Congo.

Rwanda has consistently rejected accusations that it supports the M23 rebel movement, insisting that its military actions are purely defensive.

Kagame said sanctions and international pressure would not influence Rwanda's security decisions.

"It's just sanctions, sanctions," he said.

"They talk about sanctions, they talk about cutting aid, they talk about restrictions as if those things can outweigh the lives of our people."

He added that Rwanda would not choose between international approval and national security.

"If the price for protecting our territory and ensuring our borders are secure is sanctions or isolation, then we will accept those consequences."

'The conflict cannot be solved by force alone'

Kagame argued that international efforts had increasingly focused on defeating the M23 rebels while paying less attention to the issues that, in Rwanda's view, fuelled the conflict.

“Initially the objective was to deal with both the FDLR and M23,” he said.

“Now it has become about finishing M23, but the FDLR was there.”

He also said Rwanda had previously shared intelligence with international partners regarding security developments in eastern Congo but claimed those warnings had not been acted upon.

In one of the strongest moments of his speech, Kagame rejected what he described as attempts by foreign governments to discourage Rwanda from speaking out about developments in eastern Congo.

Referring to recent fighting in South Kivu, he said Rwanda had raised concerns over civilian casualties but was told the matter did not concern it.

“Some people believe they can determine what the truth should be and expect others to remain silent,” Kagame said.

“They are essentially telling Rwanda to just shut up.”

“I will only shut up when I am dead. That is the only way to make me shut up.”

Rubio’s withdrawal timeline adds pressure

Kagame’s remarks also came against the backdrop of growing pressure from Washington over the implementation of the peace agreement.

Last month, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he hoped Rwanda’s defensive measures, including the withdrawal of Rwandan troops from eastern DR Congo, would be lifted by mid-July as part of the Washington peace process. The timeline was tied to parallel commitments by Kinshasa, including action against the FDLR.

However, the deadline has passed, while fighting has continued in parts of North and South Kivu. Both Kigali and Kinshasa have accused each other of failing to implement key provisions of the agreement.

Kagame ended his address by urging African countries to become more self-reliant in addressing security challenges.

He said African governments should stop viewing themselves as dependent on

international goodwill and instead take greater responsibility for protecting their sovereignty.

“We must stop carrying ourselves as permanent beneficiaries of global goodwill and start acting as equal contributors to global security,” he said.

“When we defend our sovereignty, we are also defending the principle that African countries have both the right and the responsibility to guarantee their own security.”

Kagame said Rwanda remained committed to peace efforts but maintained that its security posture would not change until what he described as the root causes of the conflict, particularly the threat posed by the FDLR, were addressed.

The Washington peace agreement remains central to ongoing diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions between Rwanda and the DRC, although significant differences remain over its implementation and the wider conflict in eastern Congo.