

At the 44th Southern African Development Community (SADC) Summit, held in Harare on Saturday, August 17, regional leaders reaffirmed their unwavering political, diplomatic, and military support for the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) amid escalating security concerns. The summit, which brought together heads of state from across the region, focused on critical issues including economic development, energy, and security, with a particular emphasis on the volatile situation in Eastern DRC.

Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa was sworn in as the new SADC Chairman, taking over the rotating presidency from Angolan President João Lourenço. In his inaugural address, Mnangagwa emphasized the community's commitment to fostering regional stability and deepening cooperation among member states.

The deteriorating security situation in Eastern DRC dominated the summit's discussions, particularly during the Troika organ's meeting and the plenary session. SADC leaders, led by Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Therese Kayikwamba, pledged comprehensive support to the DRC, including the continued presence of the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIM/DRC). This commitment also includes the deployment of additional combat troops from South Africa, Malawi, and Tanzania to North Kivu, a region severely affected by armed conflict.

Kayikwamba also highlighted SADC's growing concern over the ongoing Mpox epidemic in the DRC. In response, the community called for a swift and coordinated effort to curb the outbreak, drawing on lessons learned from the management of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the summit, leaders underscored SADC's crucial role in ensuring peace and stability within the region, stressing the importance of collective action in addressing both security and public health challenges faced by member states.

As SADC enters a new phase under Mnangagwa's leadership, this summit marks a pivotal moment in the organization's ongoing efforts to support the DRC and other member states during times of crisis, reinforcing the region's resolve to stand united in the face of adversity.