

Defence ministers from the East Africa Community on Sunday proposed the extension of the region's forces' stay in the Democratic Republic of Congo(DRC) until peace and stability is restored.

The meeting was convened to address pressing regional security concerns, with a primary focus on the ongoing instability in Eastern DRC due to the activities of the M23 rebels.

Kenya's Defence Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale is reported to have said that the approval of the East African Community Regional Forces (EACRF) follows gains in efforts to restore peace among the warring groups in the volatile Eastern DRC region.

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He said the Defence ministers discussed a range of regional security concerns with a focus on the situation in the Eastern DRC and noted the need for the extension of the EACRF mandate given the relative calm in the country.

"The sitting proposed an extension of their occupancy until peace and stability is fully restored," he said.

Duale said Kenya being one of the Troops Contributing Countries welcomed this move and committed to supporting the quest for peace in the economic development of the DRC.

Present were Ministers of Defense Alain Tribert Mutabazi (Burundi and Chair of EAC Council of Defense Ministers), Dr Stergomena Lawrence (Tanzania), Vincent Ssempijja (Uganda), Jean-Pierre Bemba (DRC) and the Representative of South Sudan.

The force is made up of Kenyan, Ugandan, Burundian and South Sudanese soldiers

In August, EAC Defence ministers unanimously supported the call to have the EACRF remain focused on its mandate to support the DRC in restoring peace.

An Extraordinary Security meeting held in Nairobi also considered the progress of the Regional Force in restoring security.

The ministerial meeting noted that insecurity continues in areas where withdrawal has not been achieved.

EACRF was first deployed in November last year and had its mandate extended in March for six months.

EACRF is supposed to be a buffer force to prevent confrontations between armed groups and encourage political dialogue.

The EACRF was supposed to leave DRC in September unless Kinshasa signed an extension of the Status of Force Agreement, a deal between the East African Community and the government of the DRC granting a mandate for the forces.