

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) have taken another step toward restoring diplomatic and economic ties, following years of tension and deadly conflict.

The two neighbors, with the backing of the United States, have agreed on a broad framework for economic cooperation that aims to deliver peace and stability in the Great Lakes region.

The agreement, brokered by the U.S. State Department, outlines collaboration in key sectors such as energy, infrastructure, mineral supply chains, conservation, and public health. The announcement came Friday after the first meeting of a joint oversight committee tasked with implementing the terms of a peace deal signed on June 27 in Washington, DC

According to a source familiar with the discussions, both countries have approved a preliminary draft of the cooperation framework. A consultation process with the private sector and civil society is now underway before finalizing the document.

At the heart of the deal is a shared commitment to economic integration and resource sovereignty. Rwanda and the DRC affirmed their full control over the exploitation and export of their natural resources, while agreeing to develop domestic processing capacity for minerals such as gold, cobalt, copper, lithium, and tantalum—some of the world’s most sought-after minerals for clean energy and tech industries.

Human Rights Watch has described the agreement as “a mineral deal first, an opportunity for peace second,” highlighting the billions in potential investments linked to good governance, regional cooperation, and territorial integrity.

The DRC has long accused Rwanda of backing the M23 rebel group in eastern Congo, a region plagued by violence and rich in mineral wealth. The conflict has displaced hundreds of thousands and remains one of the deadliest humanitarian crises in the world.

The new deal seeks to prevent the mineral trade from fueling armed groups and calls for the creation of a world-class mining sector built on transparency and cross-border cooperation. The two countries also pledged to connect infrastructure projects to the U.S.-supported Lobito Corridor, a key transport route Washington hopes will enhance access to critical resources while countering China’s growing

influence in Africa.

While the deal focuses on long-term economic goals, two key projects received immediate attention: the Ruzizi III hydropower project and the sustainable exploitation of methane gas from Lake Kivu. Both nations agreed to prioritize funding and joint development of these energy initiatives.

Despite progress on the economic front, delays remain in implementing some of the security-related commitments outlined in the June agreement.

The deal included a pledge for Rwanda to withdraw its troops from eastern DRC within 90 days, and for the DRC to conclude military operations against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—a rebel group rooted in the perpetrators of the 1994 Rwandan genocide—within the same period.

The two countries also agreed to set up a joint security coordination mechanism within 30 days of the June signing. That deadline has now passed with no formal meeting held. However, a source involved in the talks said the meeting is now scheduled for August 7 in Addis Ababa.

Meanwhile, leaders of the regional blocs in East Southern Africa have agreed to merge the respective peace initiatives under the umbrella of African Union (AU).

The decision, aimed at eliminating duplication and driving more tangible results, was reached in Nairobi, Kenya during a meeting of co-chairs of the joint- summit of East Africa Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The Nairobi meeting was attended by Kenyan President William Ruto, his counterpart Zimbabwe Emerson Munagagwa, and a panel of appointed peace envoys. The leaders said they would align their efforts with the AU-led process, signing a broader continental push for coordinated peace building in the DRC

The also DRC continues separate negotiations with the M23 rebel group hosted by Qatar. Both sides have pledged to sign a peace agreement by August 18, though several critical details remain unsolved.