

In a high-stakes diplomatic ceremony held at the White House, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have signed the long awaited peace agreement aimed at ending decades of conflict in eastern Congo—a region long plagued by violence, rebel activity, and international mineral interests

Brokered by the United States, the deal is being heralded as a significant breakthrough despite the lack of public detail and the troubled history of similar accords in the past.

“This is a tremendous breakthrough,” said U.S. President Donald Trump during the signing ceremony on Friday, flanked by Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and foreign ministers from both African nations. “Today, the violence and destruction comes to an end, and the entire region begins a new chapter of hope and opportunity.”

The peace accord builds upon a “Declaration of Principles” signed on April 25 at the U.S. State Department. The core commitments of the agreement include the disarmament, disengagement, and conditional integration of armed groups operating in the restive eastern region of DRC.

While the mood in Washington was celebratory, experts and regional observers remain cautious. The deal was signed amid ongoing fighting involving the M23 rebel group, which seized strategic cities like Goma and Bukavu earlier this year, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians.

A statement from Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi’s office described the agreement as “the most important diplomatic achievement in over three decades.” There is also speculation that Tshisekedi and Rwanda’s President Paul Kagame may soon travel to Washington for a trilateral meeting with President Trump—though no date has been confirmed.

Despite the public optimism, thorny issues remain unresolved. Rwanda continues to deny backing the M23 rebels, even in the face of overwhelming international evidence. Kigali argues its military involvement in eastern DRC is defensive, primarily targeting the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)—a group linked to the 1994 Rwandan Genocide and operating from Congolese territory.

In response, Kinshasa has long accused Rwanda of violating its sovereignty by

deploying troops and supporting rebel movements. The Congolese government has demanded an immediate withdrawal of Rwandan forces, which Kigali has resisted. Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungerehe stated that the final deal does not explicitly mention the terms "Rwanda Defense Force" or "withdrawal," reflecting the diplomatic tightrope both nations continue to walk.

Instead, the deal uses the term "disengagement" to describe troop movements—a choice Tshisekedi's office defended as more comprehensive and politically acceptable.

At the heart of this conflict lies the DRC's immense mineral wealth. The eastern region is rich in coltan, cobalt, gold, and other rare earth minerals critical to global electronics and battery industries. Sources close to the negotiations suggest that Kinshasa offered the United States privileged access to some of these minerals in exchange for security guarantees and diplomatic support.

The U.S. administration has not publicly confirmed these reports, but officials have emphasized the importance of stability in a region vital to the global supply chain for high-tech industries.

Qatar is also said to have played a behind-the-scenes role in the peace process, dispatching envoys and hosting preliminary talks in Doha earlier this year. A joint committee was reportedly established after Kagame and Tshisekedi met in the Qatari capital, with American backing.

While both countries have signed peace agreement, experts have weighed in asking critical questions: about the M23 withdraw from the territories it currently occupies, will Rwanda admit having troops in eastern DRC, and the refuges issue.

Just hours before the signing, Rwanda's government condemned the leak of a draft agreement and emphasized the need for confidentiality. "We demanded all parties respect the confidential nature of the discussions," said Minister Nduhungerehe in a strongly worded statement.

Last year, efforts mediated by Angola to secure a troop withdrawal and coordinate joint operations against the FDLR collapsed when ministers failed to endorse the deal.

While the U.S. is presenting the peace treaty as a major diplomatic victory, past

experience in the region urges caution. A previous deal in 2009, also involving M23 precursors, failed to ensure disarmament and ultimately contributed to renewed conflict.

One diplomat familiar with the negotiations summarized the outlook succinctly: “The document is signed, the cameras are off, and now the hard part begins.”

Whether this Washington-brokered accord will hold, or falter like so many before it, depends on the will of the parties and the international community’s commitment to long-term oversight and enforcement.