

In a significant step toward regional stability and humanitarian progress, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have signed a joint agreement to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of refugees. The move marks a renewed commitment to peace and cooperation in the Great Lakes region, following recent diplomatic breakthroughs aimed at resolving long-standing tensions and displacement crises.

The tripartite agreement was formalized on Thursday, July 24, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, after two days of expert-level discussions.

Both Rwanda and the DRC reaffirmed their commitment to finding lasting solutions for refugees, building on recent diplomatic milestones such as the Washington Peace Agreement between Kinshasa and Kigali, and the Declaration of Principles signed on July 19 in Doha between the Congolese government and M23-AFC rebels.

According to a statement from the Congolese Ministry of the Interior, these commitments are designed to foster a climate conducive to the safe and voluntary return of refugees.

One of the key outcomes of the joint statement is the recommendation to expedite the repatriation of 600 Rwandan refugees currently staying at the Goma transit center.

The statement also emphasizes the importance of verifying the identity and nationality of refugees who opt to return, in coordination with UNHCR, to ensure their safety and rights.

The joint statement was signed by Jacquemin Shabani, Congolese Minister of the Interior, and (Rtd) Major General Charles Karamba, Rwanda's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Permanent Representative to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.