

Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are set to finalize a draft economic partnership agreement with U.S. support, aiming to boost regional trade, infrastructure, and public health, though security challenges may delay the process.

The 17-page framework, part of a broader peace deal reached in Washington in June 2025, outlines collaboration on energy, infrastructure, mineral supply chains, transport, tourism, national parks, and public health. It includes provisions for working with the U.S. and international partners to reform regulations, reduce investment risks, enhance transparency, and implement independent inspections of mines and cross-border special economic zones.

The draft also calls for an annual high-level summit on regional economic integration and technical working groups to coordinate implementation. Stakeholders, including private sector actors, banks, and donor agencies, are currently reviewing the proposal. Officials from both countries are expected to meet in early October to finalize the agreement, with a formal signing planned later in Washington, D.C.

However, implementation faces obstacles. The DRC has not yet dismantled the FDLR rebel group, a key condition for Rwanda to lift its border security measures. Rwanda had initially allowed 90 days for the DRC to take action. On August 22, Rwanda's UN Ambassador Martin Ngoga told the Security Council that the DRC had not started dismantling the group.

A Western diplomat noted that stalled peace processes, including delays in the Doha mediation between Kinshasa and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels, complicate economic cooperation. Congolese officials have warned they cannot pursue joint economic initiatives while Rwandan troops occupy parts of eastern Congo, a region rich in tantalum, cobalt, gold, copper, and lithium.

The draft framework reaffirms each country's sovereign control over its natural resources while committing to curbing funding to armed groups and developing a regional industrial mining sector. Success will depend on simultaneous progress in resolving security and political disputes.