

The punitive measures announced today by the United Kingdom (UK) Government in response to the conflict in eastern DR Congo - where the UK has now clearly chosen a side - are regrettable, says the Rwandan government in a statement.

According to the statement, it is unreasonable to expect Rwanda to compromise its national security and the safety of Rwandans. The measures do nothing to help the Democratic Republic of Congo, nor do they contribute to achieving a sustainable political solution to the conflict in eastern DRC.

The Government of the DRC has a lot more to answer for than any other party within the DRC itself and in the region, but gets away with all manner of violations for reasons that are obvious to all. Consistently not holding the Government of the DRC accountable for repeated attacks on its own citizens, including the ongoing indiscriminate bombing of Banyamulenge villages in South Kivu, encourages the DRC to double down on a military path, prolonging the conflict and the suffering of civilians.

Rwanda will continue to insist on security guarantees, which the DRC and the international community have so far been unwilling or unable to provide. This perpetual situation of instability seems to benefit, directly or indirectly, a number of those associated with the conflict.

Rwanda is fully committed to working with partner states on the ongoing African-led mediation process and calls on the international community to support this effort, which is the only credible pathway to a negotiated solution.

The UK government today said it would pause some bilateral aid to Rwanda and impose other diplomatic sanctions on Kigali in response to the situation in Eastern DRC.

Until significant progress is made, the UK will take the following measures:

1. Cease high-level attendance at events hosted by the Government of Rwanda.
2. Limit trade promotion activity with Rwanda.
3. Pause direct bilateral financial aid to the Government of Rwanda, excluding support to the poorest and most vulnerable.
4. Coordinate with partners on potential new sanctions designations.

5. Suspend future defence training assistance to Rwanda.

6. Review export licences for the Rwanda Defence Force.

Rwanda is facing global pressure over allegations it supports the M23 group which, since January, has captured swathes of eastern Congo including the cities of Goma and Bukavu. Kigali denies backing the group but says its own troops are acting in self defence against hostile groups based in Congo.