

Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente is representing President Paul Kagame at the 26th Ordinary Summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), where Rwanda is expected to assume the rotating presidency of the regional bloc for the coming year.

The summit, which began Saturday in Malabo, brings together leaders from the 11-member regional organization to assess progress on ongoing reforms and chart the way forward in achieving ECCAS's core objectives. These include advancing regional economic integration, improving agriculture, natural resource development, trade, and transport, as well as enhancing the welfare of member states' citizens.

Member nations include Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Chad.

However, Rwanda's assumption of leadership has been met with resistance from the DRC, citing ongoing tensions between the two countries. During a ministerial meeting earlier in the week, Equatorial Guinea's Minister for Regional Integration, Lucas Abaga Nchama, attempted to mediate between the Rwandan and Congolese delegations to ease diplomatic strain.

According to *Jeune Afrique*, this is not the first time the two countries have clashed within ECCAS. In February 2023, Rwanda was reportedly barred from attending the 22nd regular ECCAS summit in Kinshasa due to directives from then-chair Félix Tshisekedi of the DRC.

Despite the friction, Rwanda is expected to formally take over leadership from Equatorial Guinea during the summit. The position rotates annually among member states.

Another major item on the agenda is the upcoming leadership transition within the ECCAS Commission. Angolan diplomat Gilberto Da Piedade Verissimo is set to hand over the Commission presidency to a representative from Burundi when his mandate expires on Aug. 31. Burundi's Foreign Affairs Minister, Albert Shingiro, is widely expected to take the role.

Other commission positions, including vice presidents and five commissioners, are to be filled through intergovernmental consultations, with nominations and selections due before Aug. 30.

Founded in 1983, ECCAS is headquartered in Libreville, Gabon, and aims to promote economic cooperation, peace, and security in Central Africa.