

An extraordinary Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ Troika summit held in Windhoek, Namibia on May 8th resolved to send troops to help restore peace and security in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Monday's meeting was called amid concerns over deteriorating security in the DRC where M23 rebels are fighting government forces in North Kivu province.

The Congolese government accuses Rwanda of backing the rebels to which Rwanda has denied the accusations.

SADC, which deployed troops to fight Islamic Insurgents in northern Mozambique in 2022, has resolved to assist the DRC government to fend off the M23 rebels.

The meeting in Windhoek did not set timelines for the deployment of a standby force.

"The summit called for immediate regional support to the Government of the DRC to address the prevailing security situation in the Eastern DRC, ahead of the national elections scheduled to be held in December 2023," reads a communique released after Monday's meeting which was chaired by Namibian President, Hage Geingob.

Geingob is the chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation.

"The summit further approved the deployment of a SADC Force within the framework of the SADC Standby Force as a regional response in support of the DRC to restore peace and security in Eastern DRC." further reads the statement.

"The summit approved a SADC Common Position to have a more coordinated approach, given the multiple deployments under multilateral and bilateral arrangements in the Eastern DRC, and urged the Government of the DRC to put in place the necessary conditions and measures for effective coordination amongst sub-regional forces and bilateral partners operating in the DRC."

Other heads of state who attended the meeting are South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa, who is the outgoing chairperson of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation and DRC leader, Félix Tshilombo Tshisekedi.

Incoming SADC chairperson, Angolan President, Joao Lourenco sent a senior

government official. Other representatives were from Malawi, currently the chair of SADC, while the incoming SADC chairperson, Hakainde Hichilema was also represented. SADC executive secretary Elias Magosi was also in attendance.