



**Remarks by Mr Ronald Lamola, Minister of International
Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa**

Consideration of the Situation in Eastern DRC

27 January 2025

1257th Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security

Council

Your Excellency, Kacou Houadja Leon Adom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire and Chairperson of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union for the Month of January 2025

Your Excellency, Ambassador Bankole Adeoye, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security;

Your Excellencies, Members of the Peace and Security Council;

Chairs of the Regional Bodies

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great honour for me to address the 1257th Ministerial Meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council (PSC) on the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. I wish to thank the PSC Members and the AU Commission for the invitation and for facilitating this important Meeting.

Your Excellencies,

The current security situation in the eastern DRC is utterly appalling and unacceptable. South Africa strongly condemns the recent activities of the M23 rebel group in North Kivu Province which have now affected Goma, the Provincial Capital of North Kivu, and surrounding areas. We would also like to condemn Rwanda for its support of the M23 as clearly proven by various United Nations reports of experts. We therefore call upon Rwanda to cease its support to the M23 and for its forces to withdraw from the DRC. The unauthorised presence of the Rwanda Defence Forces in eastern DRC is in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC.

As the standing decision-making organ of the AU for the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the continent, the PSC must redouble its efforts to stop the

carnage and the worsening humanitarian situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Therefore, there must be practical efforts that should be urgently undertaken by the PSC to resolve the current situation.

Excellencies;

South Africa has been doing its level best to bring about much needed peace and stability in the eastern DRC through the deployment of peacekeepers under the auspices of both the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC). In this connection, I sadly wish to state that the recent violence by the M23 with the support of Rwanda has led to the unfortunate deaths of 13 of our patriots who paid an ultimate sacrifice in our efforts to silencing the guns in the eastern DRC to bring about peace and stability that the Congolese people have been yearning for over three decades. The 13 warriors were part of the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) contingent deployed as part of the SAMIDRC and MONUSCO.

Excellencies;

We once again wish to call upon the Congolese and Rwandan governments to resuscitate talks in the context of the Luanda Peace Process facilitated by H.E. President Lourenco of Angola. In the meantime, we demand that M23 must immediately cease all its armed activities and withdraw from all territories that they occupy to prevent further loss of lives. We would like to reiterate that military action is not the only solution in Congo, therefore there must be a political dialogue that would address all concerns by the parties in conflict.

It is evident that the current conflict in the eastern DRC will not stop without the concerns of both the DRC and Rwanda being addressed through mediation and negotiations.

Excellencies;

South Africa wishes to request more support from the African Union. We would like to request that the AUPSC should prioritise the support towards SAMIDRC when disbursing funds through the Crisis Reserve Fund of the Peace Fund. Currently, this Mission requires urgent financial and material support to overcome the current situation in the DRC. We also wish to call upon the United Nations to provide more support to SAMIDRC in line with Resolutions 2719 and 2717.

Excellencies;

The reality is that much more still needs to be done to 'Silence the Guns' in Africa. To achieve this noble goal, we must show zero-tolerance to current and emerging conflicts and redouble our efforts to resolve them. We also need to take decisive action for those who are fueling these deadly conflicts. South Africa remains fully committed to its peacekeeping responsibilities under the auspices of MONUSCO and SAMIDRC. Our troops continue to operate with resolve, courage and discipline in pursuit of peace and stability in the region but urgently need support from our partners, especially this august body.

I thank you.