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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
1203RD MEETING

4 MARCH 2024
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

PSC/PR/CN.2.1203 (2024)

CONCEPT NOTE

SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY MISSION IN DRC (SAMIDRC)

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I. BACKGROUND

1. The prevailing insecurity and deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to be of major concern. Incidents of gross human rights violations, allegedly committed by the M23 and other armed groups, including the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), as well as degradation of bilateral relations between the DRC and Rwanda contribute to the current insecurity.

2. Consequently, the deteriorating humanitarian situation threatens the population of the eastern DRC. The recent escalation of the conflict in Masisi has further restricted humanitarian access, resulting in over 630,000 displaced persons with no access to essential services such as healthcare and food. The increase in violence, with heavy artillery and mortar fire hitting settlements and densely populated areas, has had a direct impact on vulnerable persons such as women, children, and the elderly. According to OCHA, Goma is home to over 2 million people, with at least 500,000 displaced.

II. DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS

3. The 2013 Revitalisation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework (PSCF) for the Great Lakes Region (DRC and the region), continues to serve as a political and diplomatic tool that brings together the thirteen countries of the region, Guarantor Institutions, and the International Community to establish the foundation of a cooperative regional security mechanism in the Great Lakes Region. SADC, the SAMIDRC, adheres to the commitments and processes of the PSCF.

4. It is to be recalled that, in 2013, SADC also deployed the Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) under the umbrella of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) following the signing of the Framework Agreement for Peace Security, and Cooperation for the DRC.

5. Other regional efforts under the auspices of the East African Community (EAC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR)- known as the Nairobi and Luanda Processes, respectively, have also been put in place. The Nairobi and Luanda Processes aim to secure a ceasefire, withdrawal of the M23, the disarmament and cantonment of its combatants, and the search for political solutions through dialogue.

6. The Quadripartite Summit, held on 27 June 2023, in Luanda, Angola under the auspices of the African Union (AU), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Eastern African Community (EAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) with the participation of the UN. It sought to ensure coordination and harmonization of the multiple peace processes and deployments in the Eastern DRC. The Summit adopted the Joint Framework on Coordination and Harmonization of Peace Initiatives in Eastern DRC by the EAC, ECCAS, ICGLR, SADC, and UN under the auspices of the AU. It also endorsed the establishment of a “Multilevel Coordination Working Group” composed of the representatives of the DRC, Rwanda, the AU, the Chairs of the EAC, ICGLR, SADC and ECCAS, as well as the UN, to examine the political, diplomatic, military, humanitarian and socioeconomic dimensions of the crisis to facilitate the continued exchange of information and to foster coherence.

7. From 4 to 6 October 2023, the AU Commission held a meeting of the Chiefs of Defense of the Members of the Quadripartite to deliberate on the coordination of current forces in Eastern DRC and the modalities for planned deployments to address the threat posed by the M23, the ADF and other negative forces. The Chiefs of Defence agreed on modalities to coordinate deployment efforts on the ground and to meet regularly for information sharing and cooperation.

III. SADC MISSION TO DRC (SAMIDRC)

8. Since the 42nd Ordinary Summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Heads of State and Government held from 17 to 18 August 2022, SADC has remained seized of the volatile security situation in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

9. On 8 May 2023, the Extra-Ordinary Organ Troika, Plus SADC Troika and Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), held in Windhoek, Namibia, adopted a Communique which approved the deployment of SADC Mission in eastern DRC (SAMIDRC) with Brigade (+) Force under the framework of the SADC Standby Force as a regional response in support of the DRC to restore peace and security in eastern DRC. Specifically, with the mandate to:

- a) Support the DRC to neutralize negative forces and armed groups in the eastern DRC in order to restore and maintain peace and security to create a secure environment;
- b) Support FARDC by providing logistic, land, air, and maritime assistance in order to enhance its military operational capabilities;
- c) Provide support to the efforts of the government of the DRC to continue creating a conducive environment for humanitarian assistance and providing humanitarian relief to the population affected by the military and paramilitary activities in the eastern DRC, including the internally displaced persons; and
- d) Protect critical infrastructure in the eastern DRC; and Protect civilians and their properties under imminent threat of attacks.

10. Subsequently, the SADC 43rd Ordinary Summit of the SADC Heads of State and Government, held on 17 August 2023, in Luanda, Angola, endorsed the decision of the Extra Ordinary-Organ Troika Summit, held virtually on 11 July 2023, which approved the mandate, including other legal instruments and documents for the deployment of SADC Mission in DRC (SAMIDRC).

11. SAMIDRC was deployed for an initial period of 12 months and (2) months, subject to extension for further periods depending on the evolution of the security situation on the ground following an assessment. This assessment shall be conducted to advise the Mission leadership/ the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Organ through the Executive Secretary of SADC on the need to extend/review the mission mandate duration if deemed necessary.

12. Notwithstanding the deployment of SAMIDRC, the situation in eastern DRC continues to deteriorate. SADC acknowledges the need for a holistic approach to resolving the crisis in the Eastern DRC. It is against this background that the PSC scheduled a meeting to consider the situation in eastern DRC and to receive a briefing from SADC regarding its deployment in eastern DRC.

IV. OBJECTIVE

13. The main objectives of this PSC session are threefold, namely:

- i. To brief the Council on the deployment and mandate of SAMIDRC;
- ii. To provide an update to the PSC on the activities of SAMIDRC, progress achieved thus far, and challenges to be urgently addressed, with a view to further enhance effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate; and

- iii. To ascertain possible support that the AU and other strategic partners can extend to the SAMIDRC;

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

14. Following the analysis of the situation in the Eastern DRC, it is expected that, as part of the outcomes of the meeting, the PSC will adopt the Communiqué clearly:

- a) Expressing deep concern over the resurgence of the M23 and strongly condemning its activities;
- b) Also expressing deep concern over the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the eastern DRC as a result of the activities of the M23 and other negative forces and armed groups operating in the region;
- c) Taking note and endorsing the deployment of the SAMIDRC;
- d) Affirming the AU Support to the Mission;
- e) Requesting the Commission to mobilize required support, including from the Crisis Reserve Facility to enable SADC to expedite the airlifting/or shipment of the equipment donated by the AU Commission to SADC, which is still at the AU Continental Logistics Base in Doula, Cameroon, in supporting the SAMIDRC;
- f) Acknowledging all efforts being deployed to stabilize the region, including the Luanda and Nairobi Processes and in this respect, commend the efforts of President Joao Lourenco, including the convening of the recent meeting on 16 February 2024, on the margins of the 37th Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government;
- g) Underscoring the importance of enhanced coordination of efforts within the framework of the Quadripartite Mechanism;
- h) Encouraging the leaders of the region to tone down their rhetoric to avoid further inflaming the situation and embracing dialogue to de-escalate tensions, as there can be no viable and sustainable military solution to their differences;
- i) Call for immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities, creation of humanitarian corridors and mobilization of humanitarian assistance to the affected population.

VI. PARTICIPATION

15. It is proposed that the following should be part of the meeting:

- a) Zambia as the Chair of the SADC Organ.
- b) Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
- c) SADC Secretariat.
- c) SAMIDRC Force Commander.

VII. DATE, VENUE AND LANGUAGE

16. This PSC Session will be held virtually using the ZOOM Online Platform on 4 March 2024, starting at 10:00 a.m. (10hrs), Addis Ababa Local Time. The Session will be conducted in English and French languages.

2024-03-04

Communiqué of the 1203rd Meeting of the Peace and Security Council held on 4 March 2024, on the Consideration of the Situation in the Eastern DRC and the Deployment of SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC).

Peace and Security Council

African Union Commission

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