FBA Research Report

An Unfinished Peace – Study of the Peace Negotiations on the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Lessons Learned from the Peace Processes of Sun City, Goma, Addis Abeba and Nairobi

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People living in the town of Rutshuru march behind a banner that reads “Yes to negotiations” four days after CNDP armed group took over the town in the North Kivu region, on November 1, 2008. The facilitators of the process were appointed a few days later.

Disclaimer

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Summary

This study analyses the lessons learnt from a quarter of a century of peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo — from the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City (2002–2003) to the Goma Conference and the Agreement of 23 March 2009, and from the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement (2013) to the Nairobi Process (2022–2024) — to inform ongoing mediation efforts.

The study identifies three categories of lessons and recommendations: political; methodological and operational; and structural. Three warrant particular attention. First, direct negotiations — sometimes secret — between the leaders of the DRC and Rwanda have historically produced faster results than formal multilateral mediation, but these results have rarely proved sustainable in the absence of rigorous follow-up and verifiable commitments. Second, persistent regional divisions between the ICGLR and SADC, and within these blocs themselves, constitute a structural obstacle to any lasting resolution of the conflicts in eastern DRC. Third, coherence between processes is crucial: any new mechanism disconnected from existing structures, achievements and mandates risks taking up diplomatic space without addressing the underlying causes of the conflicts, as illustrated by the Nairobi Process.

Beyond these three central lessons, the study highlights several recurring patterns. The Inter-Congolese Dialogue demonstrated that political reunification is possible when underpinned by firm commitment from the international community, a host country with credible and committed political leadership, and sustained pressure on all belligerents — including states supporting rebellions. The Goma Conference illustrated the paradox of processes that focus too heavily on armed groups: they risk encouraging the proliferation of armed actors seeking to benefit from a "peace dividend". The Addis Ababa Framework Agreement represents the most comprehensive initiative in terms of diagnosing the conflict: by explicitly recognising national, regional and international responsibilities for cycles of violence, it laid the foundations for an integrated multilateral approach. Its very limited implementation nevertheless reveals the fundamental limitation of any agreement that depends almost entirely on the political will of the states most directly involved in the conflict. Finally, by overlooking the regional dimension of the conflict and focusing on local armed groups, the Nairobi Process rendered itself largely obsolete from the outset, illustrating the risks of "forum shopping" and the fragmentation of initiatives.

Underlying all these processes is a persistent reality: the unresolved vital concerns of the DRC's neighbours — primarily Rwanda, but also Uganda and Burundi — some of which are described as "red lines"[1] lie at the root of the emergence of rebellions. Understanding these countries' underlying motivations, assessing their concerns and, where necessary, actively seeking to reframe them — and providing a credible response — remains a prerequisite for lasting peace in eastern DRC.

[1] See, for example, Tertrais, Bruno. The Diplomacy of "Red Lines". 2016.

Glossary

ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AFC	Congo River Alliance *(Alliance du Fleuve Congo)*
AFDL	Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire *(Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Zaïre)*
AGI	Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo *(Accord global et inclusif sur la transition en République démocratique du Congo)*
CACH	Heading for Change *(Cap pour le changement)*
CEI	Independent Electoral Commission *(Commission électorale indépendante)*
CEPGL	Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries *(Communauté économique des pays des Grands Lacs)*
CEVB	Living Ecclesial Base Communities *(Communautés ecclésiales vivantes de base)*
CIAT	International Committee in Support of the Transition *(Comité international d'accompagnement de la transition)*
ICGLR	International Conference on the Great Lakes Region
CNDP	National Congress for the Defence of the People *(Congrès national pour la défense du peuple)*
CNONGD	National Council of Development NGOs *(Conseil national des ONG de développement)*
CNRD	National Council for Renewal and Democracy *(Conseil national pour le renouveau et la démocratie)*
CNS	Sovereign National Conference *(Conférence nationale souveraine)*
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
ICD	Inter-Congolese Dialogue
EAC	East African Community
EACRF	East African Community Regional Force
FAR	Rwandan Armed Forces *(Forces armées rwandaises)*
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo *(Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo)*
FAS	Femmes Africa Solidarité
FBA	Folke Bernadotte Academy
FDD	Forces for the Defence of Democracy *(Forces pour la défense de la démocratie)*

FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda *(Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda)*
FIB	Force Intervention Brigade
FUNA	Former Uganda National Army
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
MLC	Movement for the Liberation of the Congo *(Mouvement de libération du Congo)*
MNS	National Oversight Mechanism *(Mécanisme national de suivi)*
MONUC	United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo *(Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies en République démocratique du Congo)*
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo *(Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en République démocratique du Congo)*
MRS	Regional Oversight Mechanism *(Mécanisme régional de suivi)*
PARECO	Coalition of Congolese Resistance Patriots *(Coalition des patriotes résistants congolais)*
RCD	Congolese Rally for Democracy *(Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie)*
RCD-K/ML	RCD-Kisangani/Liberation Movement *(RCD-Kisangani/Mouvement de libération)*
RCD-N	RCD-National *(RCD-National)*
RDF	Rwanda Defence Force
REIF	Regional Economic Integration Framework
SSR	Security sector reform
RUD	Rally for Unity and Democracy *(Rassemblement pour l'unité et la démocratie)*
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STAREC	Stabilisation and Reconstruction Programme for Areas Emerging from Armed Conflict *(Programme de stabilisation et de reconstruction des zones sortant de conflits armés)*
AU	African Union
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola *(União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola)*
UNRF	Uganda National Rescue Front
WNBF	West Nile Bank Front

Foreword

Thirty years ago, Laurent Désiré Kabila launched the rebellion that toppled President Mobutu Sese Seko the following year. Less than three years later, in July 1999, the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement was signed to bring an end to the Second Congo War.

Since then, numerous peace agreements have been signed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). As of December 2025, some 26 peace agreements have been concluded (see annex 2 of this report). These agreements have sought to end hostilities, support disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, reform institutions and establish arrangements for power-sharing. Yet, despite these efforts, a lasting peace remains elusive. Many of the underlying challenges, including political exclusion, the illicit exploitation of natural resources, corruption and weaknesses in governance, continue to contribute to violent conflict in the DRC and the wider region. The recent move by Joseph Kabila, former president and son of Laurent-Désiré, to head up a new armed political movement, *Front pour la refondation de la nation (FRN)*, to depose the sitting president, seems to prove this point: the conflict cycle keeps on repeating itself.

This raises an important question: What can we learn from past peace processes to better inform future efforts to achieve lasting peace?

This question motivated the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA), in collaboration with the Community of Peacebuilding Practice (CPP) and *Centre d'études pour l'action sociale* (CEPAS), to conduct this comprehensive study of peace processes on the DRC, to identify lessons and recommendations that can inform ongoing and future negotiations.

Drawing on a literature review and interviews with individuals directly involved in or close to the processes studied, the research team examines both the outcomes of the peace negotiations as well as the choices made along the way. These include decisions on timing, participation, negotiation strategies and agendas. The study provides detailed information about each peace process through individual fact sheets, while also examining the wider political dynamics and connections between them. In doing so, the study offers a perspective that goes beyond treating the peace negotiations and agreements as isolated events, but rather as a sequence of efforts.

It is our hope that the findings of this report will provide practical insights for those involved in current and future efforts for peace in the DRC and the Great Lakes region. The report raises important questions for mediators, parties and external actors alike. For example, how can peace negotiations strike a better balance between reaching agreements and creating conditions for effective implementation? How can the interests and perspectives of the broader Congolese society, including women, young people and other excluded groups, be meaningfully reflected in peace processes? These questions invite deep reflection on how the interests and motivations of national and international actors, shape negotiations and their outcomes.

We express our sincere gratitude and recognition to the eminent research team under the lead of Dr. Rigobert Minani for their commitment and dedication in completing this project, and to the academics and practitioners who participated in the validation workshop of the draft report earlier this year (see annex 4). This research project would not have been possible without the diligence of our FBA senior advisor, Mr. Per Bjälkander, and Head of Research at FBA, Dr. Johanna Malm.

The report does not offer simple answers to the complex challenges of peacemaking in the DRC, but it provides the opportunity to reflect on past experiences and consider how their lessons can contribute to more effective and sustainable peace efforts today. A Peace that is more needed than ever.



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01 Introduction, methodology, inclusivity and historical context

Introduction

Over the past four years, the conflict pitting the March 23 Movement (M23) and Rwanda against the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has led to the creation of new conflict mediation mechanisms in the Great Lakes region: Luanda, Nairobi, Washington, Doha and Lomé. This succession of mediation efforts forms part of an almost three-decade history of national, regional and international attempts to resolve the conflicts in eastern DRC. These initiatives can be considered to have failed or achieved only partial success, given the persistence of violence and armed groups in the Kivu region and Ituri. Nevertheless, the record of mediation in the DRC and the region is far from uniform: it contains both mistakes to avoid repeating and successes to draw on. Both offer lessons that could inform current and future processes, and this is the premise guiding this research.

The study covers several peace processes spanning the period from the Lusaka Agreement (1999) to the Nairobi Process launched in 2022. It aims to examine major past mediation efforts, identify the factors contributing to success or failure, draw lessons learnt and formulate practical recommendations for the future.

One of the analytical challenges encountered in the research was distinguishing between contingent and structural factors: that is, separating successes and failures specific to their time and context from those that could offer lessons applicable today. This remains a matter of debate. We therefore sought to revisit and describe the lessons to be drawn, placing them in context while also looking to the future. The result is a typology of **lessons** and **recommendations:**

- **Political** (relating to specific political strategies that have or have not worked in mediation, as well as contextual developments)
- **Methodological and operational** (concerning process design, capacities and working arrangements)
- **Structural** (relating to the fundamental characteristics of the regional and international political landscape in which negotiations take place)

In the following pages, we describe and analyse four distinct peace and mediation processes: the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD) (1999–2002); the Goma Conference and the agreement of 23 March (2008–2009); the Kampala talks and the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation (2012–2013); and the Nairobi Process (2022–2023). At the end of the report, a series of numbered lessons and recommendations is set out under the three categories listed above. Throughout the report, we identify key elements or moments that illustrate particular lessons learnt by referring to their numbers (e.g. political lesson 3, methodological lesson 2, etc.). Other lessons, however, derive from observations drawn from the document review, interviews and the researchers' experience. The annex contains a list of laws, agreements and declarations, together with a chronology of mediation in the Great Lakes region between 1990 and 2026.

Methodology

This report draws on three sources of data: i) a documentary review of each process or set of processes, including a review of the literature, reports and documents relating to past negotiations; ii) interviews with 43 key informants (25 men and 18 women, through two focus groups and 29 individual interviews) — mediators, representatives of belligerent parties, members of civil society and others across three geographical hubs (the DRC/Africa, Europe and the United States); and iii) the researchers' expertise and experience. An initial draft of the report benefited from comments and suggestions from members of civil society and representatives of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union during a two-day workshop held in Nairobi on 15 and 16 April 2026. The report also received comments from staff at the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) and an FBA reference group comprising members of Congolese civil society.

Key informants

The key informants were divided into four categories:

- Facilitators and mediators involved in past processes
- Representatives of the Congolese government and rebel movements
- Representatives of the United Nations and regional organisations
- Civil society (women's organisations, youth organisations and organisations representing people displaced by war, as well as former political and administrative officials from areas currently under occupation)

Interview guides

The interview guides for key informants were developed based on the following research questions:

- What strategies did the mediators and facilitators use, and what results did they achieve?
- What approach did negotiators from the government and rebel movements take?
- What role did the United Nations and the international community play?
- How were political and administrative authorities, civil society, traditional leaders, youth organisations and women's organisations involved?

Ethical considerations

All key informants gave their consent, and the research ensured the anonymity of interviewees by omitting their names, addresses and positions.

Limitations of the study

This report has certain limitations. The time available for the study was limited. Some facilitators involved in past processes who had been identified as key informants could no longer be reached or were unavailable. The study would also have benefited from focus groups with victims in eastern DRC. Owing to the occupation of parts of eastern DRC by the AFC/M23, we had to rely on remote interviews and focus groups with representatives of women's and youth organisations, as well as unstructured interviews with political leaders currently displaced to Kinshasa by the war.

Some issues important to peacebuilding received little or no attention in past peace negotiations. These include respect for human rights, justice and reconciliation, transitional justice, and the involvement of women, young people and traditional authorities. Although these issues were raised in some interviews and focus groups, an examination of these gaps in the peace processes falls outside the scope of the analysis presented in this report.

Inclusivity of the peace processes

One of the issues most frequently raised in discussions about this research is inclusion: that is, which stakeholders are involved in mediation. Today, Congolese civil society and other stakeholders criticise the Washington and Doha processes in particular for their lack of inclusivity: women, young people and civil society more broadly have no formal representation in these peace processes. Critics of the processes, including some members of civil society, view this omission as a weakness. Wherever possible, the research sought to document the participation and impact of these different groups in past processes.

How important is inclusion to the success of a peace process? What form should this inclusion take?

Academic debates on inclusion in peace processes often revolve around two issues: inclusion as both a factor contributing to the long-term success of a peace process and an obstacle to reaching a peace agreement. Some studies argue that including civil society in political settlements increases the durability of peace, or that excluding civil society allows peace agreements to be reached more quickly, although these agreements are not necessarily sustainable.[2]

Others demonstrate a strong correlation between peace agreements signed by women delegates and the durability of peace.[3] Women's participation in peace processes also considerably increases the likelihood that peace agreements will contain gender provisions.[4]

[2] Nilsson, Desirée. "Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace", International Interactions. 1 April 2012, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 243–266; Kew, Darren and Anthony Wanis-St. John. "Civil Society and Peace Negotiations: Confronting Exclusion", International Negotiation. 1 January 2008, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 11–36.

[3] Krause, Jana, Werner Krause and Piia Bränfors. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace", International Interactions. 2 November 2018, vol. 44, no. 6, pp. 985–1016.

[4] True, Jacqui and Yolanda Riveros-Morales. "Towards inclusive peace: Analysing gender-sensitive peace agreements 2000–2016", International Political Science Review. 1 January 2019, vol. 40, no. 1, pp. 23–40.

Academic studies therefore suggest a correlation between the inclusion of civil society and women in peace processes and the durability of the resulting peace. However, other authors raise questions about the legitimacy of civil society actors. These authors argue that inclusion as a factor contributing to the success of peace processes must go beyond the simple dichotomy of civil society's presence or absence in negotiations. One influential study in this regard explains that civil society's impact on the legitimacy of peace processes is mixed, that the degree of formal inclusion has little substantive impact, and that the type and diversity of actors matter greatly in determining legitimacy.[5]

This issue was also raised by one of our interviewees, who had been involved in selecting civil society participants for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue mediation process. He regretted the lack of sufficient time and resources to identify civil society members in the DRC beyond the "official" civil society circles in the various provincial capitals. Referring to the widespread view that civil society acts as a counterweight to elite capture of political processes, he nevertheless cautioned against "fetishising" it, as sections of civil society itself are often captured by political elites.[6]

The nature of a peace process also plays an important role in assessing its degree of inclusivity. Some peace processes in Congolese history are explicitly interstate (Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Washington), while others are broader in scope at the national (Sun City) or regional (Goma) level. For each peace process, it is therefore necessary to ask: i) whether the formal participation of civil society is desirable, or whether it can influence the process through other means; ii) which civil society actors are involved and how representative they actually are (legitimacy); and iii) what impact they have on the pursuit of lasting peace.

History of the peace processes in the DRC

Beyond securing a political settlement to the Second Congo War (1998–2003), the Inter-Congolese Dialogue sought a fundamental reshaping of the Congolese political landscape. It formed part of a longer trajectory of crisis in state legitimacy that began towards the end of Mobutu's rule. An initial reform attempt began with President Mobutu Sese Seko's announcement of multiparty politics on 24 April 1990, followed by the Sovereign National Conference (CNS) in 1991–1992.

As early as 1993, eastern DRC was experiencing armed violence, notably the Masisi war in North Kivu. This situation was exacerbated by the repercussions of the collapse of former Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana's regime during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. These dynamics led directly to the First Congo War (1996–1997), marked by extensive regional intervention, followed by Laurent-Désiré Kabila's seizure of power in 1997.

[5] Zanker, Franzisca. "Legitimate Representation: Civil Society Actors in Peace Negotiations Revisited", International Negotiation. 13 March 2014, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 62–88.

[6] Interview with a former member of the mediation team for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, 19 February 2026.

The First Congo War (1996–1997)

In this context, the ICD sought to bring a succession of unfinished transitions to a close by combining several objectives: territorial reunification, the integration of competing political and military elites, the rebuilding of the state through a new constitution, and preparations for pluralist elections — the first since the consolidation of Mobutu's power in the 1960s. Following the war and genocide in Rwanda (1990–1994), the new leadership in Kigali had formed a coalition with opposition figures opposed to President Mobutu, including Laurent-Désiré Kabila, to launch a large-scale military operation in the DRC.

This war began in the second half of 1996 in Uvira, South Kivu. It was described as the "Banyamulenge" war.[7] It destroyed the camps housing Rwandan Hutu refugees in South and North Kivu and drove the refugees far from Rwanda's borders.[8] All international mediation efforts to end the war, including the involvement of the respected South African President Nelson Mandela, proved unsuccessful. On 17 May 1997, the rebel coalition won the war and took power in Kinshasa. Given the number of countries involved in the war in support of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL), the literature refers to it as the "first African world war".[9]

The Second Congo War (1998–2003)

A second war saw divisions erupt between the countries that had supported the AFDL's rise to power in Kinshasa. On 2 August 1998, Rwanda launched a new rebellion by creating and supporting the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), which began its operations from Goma with the aim of overthrowing Laurent-Désiré Kabila — the very leader Rwanda had helped bring to power on 17 May 1997. This new war split the alliances of the First Congo War into two blocs, reshaping coalitions and realigning the countries involved in the earlier conflict. It pitted Rwanda, Uganda and, to a lesser extent, Burundi — grappling with its own civil war — together with a small number of Eritrean mercenaries, against a coalition of several members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which the DRC had only just joined. These included Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe. Kabila's government also received support from Chad and Sudan for a shorter period.

The rivalries between (and within) the East African Community (EAC) and SADC, which should be a concern for facilitators of current peace processes, are rooted in this reshaping of alliances between the two blocs (structural lesson 1).

The Second Congo War became increasingly complex, giving rise, alongside the Rwanda-backed RCD-Goma, to other rebel movements, principally the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), followed by RCD-Kisangani/Liberation Movement (RCD-K/ML) and RCD-National (RCD-N), all supported by Uganda. The creation and proliferation of rebel

[7] Stearns, Jason et al. Les Banyamulenge : Insurrection et exclusion dans les montagnes du Sud-Kivu. Rift Valley Institute, 2013.
[8] Some would cross the DRC on foot, reaching Angola, Zambia and Congo-Brazzaville.
[9] Braeckman, Colette. Guerre sans vainqueurs en République démocratique du Congo, 2001.

groups reflect the rivalries often observed within a single regional bloc (in this case, the EAC), between Rwanda and Uganda or between Rwanda and Burundi. These dynamics remain relevant today. Current peace processes must incorporate efforts to resolve these problems (structural lesson 1).

As in the current situation, two types of mediation were needed to resolve the crisis: negotiations between states, principally between Rwanda and Uganda and between both countries and the DRC; and negotiations between the Congolese government and the rebel movements. After several years of delays and indecision, these closely linked mediation efforts (methodological lesson 1) succeeded in securing the withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC and the establishment of a transitional government from 2003 to 2006, in which the different factions were represented under the "1 + 4" formula.[10]

Persistence of local conflicts and the issue of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR)

During the transition, despite constitutional reform (2005) and the holding of the first democratic elections (2006), Rwanda continued to sponsor rebellions. As early as 2004, the transition was shaken by mutinies that also reflected the lack of trust between the constituent factions of the transitional government and persistent tensions with Kigali. Colonel Jules Mutebusi and General Laurent Nkunda, former RCD-Goma officers, seized the city of Bukavu with the help of troops from Rwanda. In December 2003, Laurent Nkunda had already established a political platform, Synergy for Peace and Concord, which became the basis for a new rebellion, the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), led by Nkunda himself from July 2006. The emergence of this movement and the ensuing violent clashes with the new national army immediately exposed the weakness of the new government. The army had only just been formed through the complex integration of various rebel movements, militias and the former Zairian and Congolese armies. This situation required further negotiations, including US-facilitated negotiations between Rwanda and the DRC on the issue of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) (2004); negotiations between the DRC and the FDLR under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio (2005); the Goma Conference (2008), an initiative internal to the DRC; and the Nairobi Process (2008–2009), which led to the agreement of 23 March 2009.

From the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) to the March 23 Movement (M23)

The current conflict between the DRC on one side and the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and the M23 on the other therefore has its immediate origins in the March 2009 agreement between the CNDP and the DRC government. This agreement was primarily the result of a parallel process between Kigali and Kinshasa, with discreet support from the United States (political lesson 1). Its implementation brought a period of relative calm until early 2012,

[10] One president and four vice-presidents.

when, following the disputed elections of December 2011, the CNDP — frustrated by its poor electoral results and under pressure from Kabila, who was seeking to establish his legitimacy with donors — launched a renewed rebellion and renamed itself the March 23 Movement (M23).[11] It then declared that certain provisions of the agreement of 23 March 2009 had not been fully implemented.

On 20 November 2012, the movement briefly captured the city of Goma. It withdrew following international pressure on Rwanda, an essential element of a multi-pronged response (political lesson 2). This response to the 2012 M23 crisis also included the deployment of an intervention force within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), in cooperation with SADC; talks with the M23 mediated by the Ugandan president under the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR); and a regional peace process led by the United Nations and the African Union (AU) (political lesson 4, methodological lesson 1). The latter resulted in the signing of a framework agreement for peace and stability in Addis Ababa on 22 February 2013. While negotiations with the M23 stalled in Kampala, the deployment of MONUSCO and SADC troops alongside the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) secured a military victory over the M23. Most of its leaders and troops sought refuge in Uganda and Rwanda. Following the M23's military defeat and exile, the DRC, SADC and the ICGLR signed a series of declarations with the M23 in Nairobi in December 2013, bringing an end to the movement's existence.[12]

The Nairobi declarations were only partially implemented (political lesson 4, structural lesson 4), and the urgency of addressing this faded amid the complexities of Congolese politics — particularly the crisis surrounding the elections initially scheduled for 2016. M23 elements left Uganda and Rwanda to regroup in the area where the borders of Uganda, Rwanda and the DRC meet. Although a source of local insecurity, their presence was contained by Kabila's government.

Following President Félix Tshisekedi's rise to power in 2019, an M23 delegation was invited to Kinshasa, where it stayed for talks. These direct talks between Kinshasa and the M23 ended inconclusively, during a period marked by the political rift between President Tshisekedi and his predecessor.[13]

In 2021, Kinshasa sought to reshape its relations with its eastern neighbours, including through its accession to the EAC in April 2022. The Congolese government declared and imposed a state of siege in Ituri and North Kivu provinces. The economic and security concerns arising from these developments set the stage for a new regional war.

[11] A reference to the date on which the peace agreement between the CNDP and the DRC government was signed.
[12] ICGLR–SADC, Joint Final Communiqué on the Kampala Talks, 12 December 2013; Government of the DRC, Declaration at the Conclusion of the Kampala Talks, 12 December 2013; M23. Declaration on the Commitments of the March 23 Movement at the Conclusion of the Kampala Dialogue, 12 December 2013
[13] The delegation spent more than six months staying in hotels and was eventually ignored.

The resurgence of the M23 and regional involvement

The conflict began gradually in November 2021, when the M23 resurfaced in the border area between the DRC, Uganda and Rwanda. It led to a rapid escalation of tensions between Kigali and Kinshasa, with each side threatening regime change in the other country. A succession of military victories by the rebel movement, strongly supported by the RDF, once again compelled the DRC, regional organisations and international organisations to initiate new peace processes. Two parallel efforts were launched. The first, which began in April 2022, was the Nairobi Process, initiated by the EAC, which the DRC had just joined. Its aim was to address the issue of domestic armed groups, including the M23. Subsequently, under pressure from military developments on the ground, direct negotiations began in Doha, Qatar, between the government and the M23 — now joined by the Congo River Alliance (AFC), an umbrella political organisation. Under Qatari mediation, the DRC and the AFC/M23 signed a framework agreement on 15 November 2025, setting out a proposed peace agreement comprising eight protocols. Two of these — one on the ceasefire and another on prisoner exchanges — have been signed, while the remaining protocols are still being negotiated.

Led by President João Lourenço, the second process — the Luanda Process — was initiated by the AU and the ICGLR and began in July 2022. It was intended to address the regional dimension of the conflict. It failed to reach an agreement, notably because Rwandan President Paul Kagame, following Kinshasa's refusal to open direct negotiations with the M23, decided at the last minute to cancel his participation in a summit in Luanda in December 2024 at which a peace agreement was due to be signed. Although it did not result in a signed peace agreement, the Luanda Process produced a Concept of Operations (CONOPS) to address the presence of Rwandan troops in the DRC and to provide for the "neutralisation" of the FDLR in the DRC, to use the terminology of the CONOPS. This document was subsequently taken up by the US mediation effort launched in April 2025.

US and Qatari mediation

The so-called "Washington Process" ultimately produced several agreements whose content reveals the link between peace and natural resources in US mediation. A first set of agreements is collectively known as the "Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity".

These comprise the Declaration of Principles between the DRC and Rwanda (25 April 2025); the Peace Agreement between the DRC and Rwanda (27 June 2025); and the Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF, 4 December 2025).[14] In addition to these agreements, three other related documents were signed at the ceremony presided over by Donald Trump in Washington on 4 December 2025: an economic agreement between the DRC and the United States[15]; a memorandum of understanding on security cooperation

[14] US Embassy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Signing of the Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, 2025.

[15] United States Department of State. Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 2025.

between the United States and the DRC; and a "United States–Rwanda Framework for Shared Prosperity". The Doha and Washington processes are progressing slowly but have yet to break the cycle of hostilities between the belligerents.

This brief historical overview shows that the persistence of conflict in the DRC stems from the emergence of internal rebellions, but above all from the strong support they receive from neighbouring countries. These interventions have, in turn, generated their own internal dynamics within the Congo. Moreover, of all the countries that have supported factions in the DRC, Rwanda is the one that has continuously backed rebel movements since 1996. Uganda and Burundi, which were allied with Rwanda in 1996 and 1998, have developed different approaches to their relations with the DRC. Nevertheless, the dynamics between these three neighbours, particularly their political, security and economic tensions, play out primarily in eastern DRC, with harmful consequences for local populations (structural lesson 1, political lesson 3).

It is this observation — that conflicts recur in eastern DRC, often for the same reasons — that motivates this study of lessons learnt from peace negotiations in the DRC. It seeks to understand why, despite the many peace agreements intended to stabilise eastern DRC, all processes ultimately collapse or fail to achieve all their objectives. This question goes beyond the texts of the agreements: it challenges us to reassess current and future approaches by re-examining the past.

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02 The Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City

Context – The Lusaka Agreement

The peace process known as the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (ICD), which led to the Sun City Agreement and subsequently to the Global and Inclusive Agreement (Pretoria) (AGI), originated in the Lusaka Agreement. This agreement was a response to regional instability and a severe political and humanitarian crisis.

The agreement was signed on 10 July and 31 August 1999 by the DRC, Angola, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, in the presence of states and institutions acting as witnesses,[16] as well as by the MLC and RCD rebel movements. It was structured around three key activities: a ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign forces involved in the war in the DRC, and the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.[17]

"Upon the entry into force of the Ceasefire Agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Parties agree to make every effort to create a favourable environment for inter-Congolese political negotiations leading to the establishment of a new political order in the Democratic Republic of the Congo".[18]

The Lusaka Agreement affirmed that lasting peace in the DRC would require a ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign forces, the disarmament of armed groups and an Inter-Congolese Dialogue involving the government, rebel movements, the opposition and civil society, as part of an approach aimed at a domestic and regional political settlement.

It also set out the key items on the agenda for the inter-Congolese political negotiations:

- The formation of a new Congolese army, with personnel drawn from the Congolese Armed Forces and the armed forces of the RCD and the MLC;
- The new political order in the DRC, particularly the institutions to be established to govern the country;
- The process for holding free, democratic and transparent elections in the DRC;
- The draft constitution to govern the DRC after the elections.

Thus, as one of the negotiators stated, *"Issues of communal conflict and violence were not included on the agenda. They remained acute and unresolved, giving rise to future conflicts. The protection of civilians and minorities received little attention".*

[16] The witnesses to the agreement were the Republic of Zambia (the mediator), the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations (UN) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

[17] Lusaka Agreement, Annex A, Chapter 5, paragraph 5.1. Given certain similarities between the period preceding the Lusaka Agreement and the current situation, a ceasefire, the withdrawal of foreign forces and dialogue could be recommended as avenues towards de-escalation and relative peace.

[18] Ibid.

Inter-Congolese Dialogue

Laurent-Désiré Kabila's government, which considered the country to be under attack and argued that international law should be applied first, had strongly resisted implementing the provisions of the Lusaka Agreement. This was one of the main reasons why dialogue between the Kinshasa government and the rebel movements only truly began after Laurent-Désiré Kabila's assassination on 16 January 2001. His son Joseph Kabila, who succeeded him on 21 January 2001, inherited this impasse and decided to revive the dialogue by contacting its designated facilitator, Sir Ketumile Masire, the former president of Botswana, who had long been denied access to the DRC. At the same time, international pressure was mounting on the countries backing the rebel movements, whose military forces had fought each other directly in deadly clashes in Kisangani. These clashes, together with the publication of the first UN reports, shed light on their agendas for the illicit exploitation of Congolese natural resources.

The ICD got off to a slow and difficult start. Several preparatory meetings were held, including in Gaborone from 20 to 24 August 2001, Addis Ababa on 15 October 2001, Abuja on 11 and 12 December 2001, and Brussels from 15 to 17 January 2002[19]

> *Strong national and international mobilisation was needed to open the Sun City meeting to other non-belligerent constituencies.*

These meetings resolved the contentious questions of the venue for the dialogue and the number and categories of participants. Strong national and international mobilisation was needed to open the Sun City meeting to other non-belligerent constituencies. *"Ibrahima Fall… brought together the three belligerents at Kofi Annan's request… This meeting took place in December in Abuja, Nigeria. It was there that an initial agreement was reached on the representation of the Mai-Mai, religious denominations, traditional leaders and the unarmed opposition"*.[20] The Inter-Congolese Dialogue itself did not begin until 25 February 2002 in Sun City, South Africa.

Against this backdrop, during a focus group with young people, most of whom came from North Kivu, some complained that "historically, mediation efforts have given greater value to young people who have taken up arms and ignored those who are non-violent". They argued that this stance "rewards violence rather than peace".[21]

[19] The latter was an informal consultation between the "political opposition" and "civil society" constituencies.
[20] Minani Bihuzo, Rigobert. 17 ans de transition politique et perspectives démocratiques en RDC. Kinshasa: CEPAS/RODHECIC, 2008, p. 64.
[21] Focus group with young people from Goma and Kinshasa, 25 February 2026.

The process nevertheless encountered major obstacles, particularly over the distribution of executive power during the transition. The partial agreement signed in Sun City in April 2002 between the government and the MLC failed to secure the support of all parties, exposing the persistent fragmentation of the political and military landscape. One member of an armed group described this agreement between the DRC government and the MLC as a "disappointment", stating that only US pressure, exerted through its Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, Harold Wolpe, had saved the Sun City negotiations in the aftermath of the agreement.[22] Another negotiator from a rebel movement, however, explained that the agreement between the DRC and the MLC had come about after the MLC concluded that the RCD was not ready for an agreement, and that the joint initiative by the government and the MLC had been intended to "save" the negotiations.[23]

> *Historically, mediation efforts have given greater value to young people who have taken up arms and ignored those who are non-violent". They argued that this stance "rewards violence rather than peace".*

Ultimately, a more inclusive compromise was reached only through subsequent negotiations in Pretoria, with strong involvement from South Africa and the United Nations, and following the withdrawal of foreign armies. This led to the Global and Inclusive Agreement of December 2002. Further difficult negotiations on the army and security arrangements followed in early 2003. Agreements on these issues then paved the way for the "1 + 4" transition, which provided for a president and four vice-presidents representing the main constituencies: the RCD, the MLC, the political opposition and civil society.

Analysis of the Sun City dialogue process

Community involvement

Comparing the Sun City process with the Goma process, one might be tempted to conclude that communities were not involved in the former. However, extensive mobilisation by churches through Sunday sermons, together with grassroots consultations across local administrative units and consultations conducted by NGOs, enabled communities to participate through discussions in numerous structures, particularly the Living Ecclesial Base Communities (CEVB).[24] There was also regular communication between the delegates in South Africa and the structures that remained in the country. Both progress and setbacks in the dialogue were discussed on NGO-run radio stations, known as community radio stations, and within these structures, mobilising public opinion and

[22] Interview with a former head of a rebel movement's delegation to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, 25 February 2026
[23] Interview with a former negotiator for a rebel movement at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, 7 May 2026.
[24] The CEVB is the neighbourhood-level structure of the Catholic Church in the DRC. It meets once a week. Throughout the ICD, political dialogue was discussed at these meetings on several occasions.



▲ Congolese women trying to stop the Congolese delegates from leaving final negotiations before an agreement is signed at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue in Sun City, South Africa, April 2003.

Photo credit: Alexander Joe/AFP via Getty Images

encouraging community involvement in the debates. The views gathered and relayed to the delegates informed the contributions of participants in the Sun City dialogue.[25] Communities called for an end to hostilities, the establishment of a political transition and the holding of elections. As one informant confirmed, communities sent messages such as: *"Do not come back here without an agreement"*.[26] A former member of a rebel movement acknowledged that messages of this kind had an impact on the dialogue participants.[27] The civil society organisations that remained in the Congo and had sent delegates to Sun City were among those that most effectively organised this interaction and pressure on the dialogue delegates.

The role of civil society structures

Civil society in the DRC had begun preparing for the dialogue well before the talks in South Africa started. Following the Lusaka Agreement, it organised awareness-raising meetings across the country as part of the National Campaign for Peace.[28] The Brussels round table in January 2002, involving a national delegation of civil society organisations and the political opposition, as well as a delegation from the RCD rebel movement, played an important role. This meeting produced the first consensus documents on certain contentious issues, which the Congolese parties later adopted. These talks *"helped improve the political climate ahead of the dialogue and made reflection on the substance of the inter-Congolese negotiations an essential part of the broader process"*.[29]

[25] In addition to the dialogue participants, civil society organisations also sent other members to Sun City as experts. They served as links between the delegates and those who remained in the country.
[26] Interview with a participant in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, 21 February 2026.
[27] Interview with a member of a rebel movement, 27 February 2026.
[28] CNONGD. Campagne nationale pour la paix durable en RDC. Éditions CNONGD, 2001.
[29] Lebatt, Mohamed El Hacen Ould and Mohamed El Hacen Ould Lebatt. Facilitation dans la tourmente : deux ans de médiation dans l'imbroglio congolais. Paris: L'Archipel, 2005, p. 160; Informal Consultation between the "Political Opposition" and "Civil Society" Constituencies in the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations (Conclusions). [Publisher unknown], 2002.

This work influenced the Lusaka Agreement and helped secure civil society's participation in the political negotiations on an equal footing with the other constituencies: *"The inter-Congolese political negotiations must include, in addition to the Congolese Parties — namely the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese Rally for Democracy and the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo — the political opposition and representatives of the nation's civil society"*.[30]

This recognition was therefore no coincidence. It was the result of civil society's longstanding social and political engagement. Since the CNS in 1990, civil society had played a mediating role between political forces. When war broke out in 1996, it was at the forefront of advocacy for peace dialogue. Despite the country's division into several administrations, it continued to coordinate civil society organisations nationally through provincial civil society offices. In the run-up to the ICD, under the leadership of the National Council of Development NGOs (CNONGD), it launched an extensive national and international campaign for peace.[31] Ahead of the dialogue, civil society prepared sets of demands on several issues and submitted them to the facilitators. During the dialogue, organisations that remained in the DRC regularly sent their contributions to the delegates in South Africa.These contributions enabled more detailed consideration of the issues and led to proposals for positions that civil society should advocate during the negotiations. As one participant in the women's focus group held in Kinshasa put it: *"The establishment of institutions supporting democracy — namely the electoral commission, the human rights commission, the high media authority and the truth and reconciliation commission — now enshrined in the DRC's Constitution, is the result of our struggles"*.[32] These are regarded as major contributions arising from civil society's engagement in the inter-Congolese dialogues.

Women's organisations' engagement

The women's constituency, comprising networks of women's organisations, is an important platform within Congolese civil society. It was highly active in the civil society National Campaign for Peace, and it inspired women's engagement in the ICD. The women first established a thematic group on peace. This group received support from African women leaders who came to impress upon the belligerents and the facilitator the need to include women in the peace process. This high-level delegation of African women encouraged the women to *"develop a common platform that would promote and give visibility to women's vision for the ongoing peace process"*.[33] The resulting platform received political and financial support from UN agencies and Western embassies, enabling women's organisations to coordinate their efforts, prepare for the dialogue and

[30] Lusaka Agreement, Chapter 5, paragraph 3.
[31] CNONGD. Campagne nationale pour la paix durable en RDC. Op. cit.
[32] Focus group with women, 12 March 2026.
[33] Femmes Africa Solidarité. "African Women on Peace and Solidarity Mission to DRC", Femmes Africa Solidarité. 23 December 2001.

participate in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.[34] This mobilisation enabled women to overcome divisions between political parties and civil society organisations, undertake joint advocacy activities and promote a common women's agenda in the discussions within the ICD forum.[35]

Thus, although women were represented in Sun City through different delegations, they also succeeded in organising themselves into an additional platform that transcended their respective constituencies. Through this platform, they secured representation on working commissions and in political positions during the transition, and even succeeded in enshrining in the Constitution of the Third Republic a requirement to reserve one-third of leadership positions in all institutions for women.

During the interviews, a former ICD participant proudly recalled that "the 30% quota for women's representation in institutions enshrined in our constitution is one of the major victories of women's struggle during the dialogue".[36]

> *"The 30% quota for women's representation in institutions enshrined in our constitution is one of the major victories of women's struggle during the dialogue".*

Unfortunately, youth organisations did not manage to organise themselves in the same way and did not attract partners' attention. They were represented through the civil society delegation but had not organised around their specific needs. As a result, the Sun City Agreement contains no specific provisions for young people and did not adequately address their particular needs, such as education and employment.

[34] The adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 enabled women's mobilisation to receive substantial support from various UN agencies, including UNIFEM and UNDP. These agencies were able to send and fund just over 40 women experts to support the women delegates participating in the ICD and monitor whether their action plan was being taken into account during the negotiations. See Odimba, Catherine, Paul Robain Namegabe and Julienne Baseke Nzabandora. La participation des femmes dans les processus de paix et la prise de décision politique en République Démocratique du Congo. International Alert, 2012; Mpoumou, Doris. "Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations: Discourse in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" in Julie Ballington (ed.). Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), 2004, pp. 120–123; Selebogo, Mothepane Yaliwe Petunia. Assessing the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and a Gender Perspective in Peacebuilding Processes in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), PhD thesis. Mafikeng: North West University, 2018.

[35] Nairobi Declaration and Action Plan for Congolese Women. [Publisher unknown], 2002.

[36] Interview with a former delegate of the women's constituency to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, 25 February 2026.

The role of armed groups

Intensive negotiations between the DRC government, the facilitators and the rebel movements had led to a distinction between the foreign armed groups listed in the Lusaka Agreement and the Congolese armed groups known as the "Mai-Mai". At the insistence of the central government, the latter were included as stakeholders in the Sun City negotiations.[37]

"The Constituencies and Entities participating in the ICD that are parties to this agreement (the Parties), namely the DRC Government, the RCD, the MLC, the Political Opposition, Civil Society, the RCD-ML, the RCD-N and the Mai-Mai, agree to combine their efforts to implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions on the withdrawal of all foreign troops from DRC territory and the disarmament of armed groups and militias, and to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the DRC".38

The Mai-Mai had their own coordination structure. On the ground, they had fought against the Rwandan army and the rebel movements it supported. Their position was closely aligned with that of the government in Kinshasa. After the dialogue, their delegates joined the transitional institutions, and some groups formed political parties. These parties, however, were short-lived.

Factors contributing to failure

The Sun City process was severely undermined by the agendas of the countries supporting the rebel movements. The various rebel movements struggled to reconcile their own demands with their sponsors' expectations. They sought access to power in Kinshasa, while their sponsors wanted to continue exploiting minerals in eastern DRC. The clearest example was RCD-Goma's refusal to sign the partial Sun City Agreement in April 2002, which provided for the country's political and military reunification. Thus, even after the signing of the AGI, some RCD-Goma troops did not join the national army and continued to receive support from Rwanda. This situation lies at the root of the persistence of conflict in the Kivu region. Another factor was the strategy of maintaining pressure on the parties to the dialogue by continuing to launch attacks and capture new territory at regular intervals.[39] On each of these occasions, delegates walked away from the negotiating table, making it difficult to reach an agreement.

[37] "'Armed groups' means forces other than those of the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese Rally for Democracy and the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo that are not signatories to this Agreement. They include the ex-FAR, the ADF, the LRA, the UNRF II, the Interahamwe militias, the FUNA, the FDD, the WNBF, the NALU, UNITA and all other forces" (Lusaka Agreement, Annex C).

[38] Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

[39] This strategy was repeated with the capture of Uvira on 10 December 2025, following the signing of the Washington Agreement.

Another factor was the strategy of maintaining pressure on the parties to the dialogue by continuing to launch attacks and capture new territory at regular intervals. On each of these occasions, delegates walked away from the negotiating table, making it difficult to reach an agreement.

On 14 March 2001, less than 45 days after negotiations began, the RCD and the Rwandan army occupied Moliro, on the shores of Lake Tanganyika. The DRC government briefly withdrew from the negotiations. On 19 March 2002, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1399, demanding the immediate withdrawal of these troops from Moliro. Following this pressure, the forces withdrew on 27 March.

Factors contributing to success

Despite the country's division into four rebel administrations, none had an actual plan for autonomy or secession.[40] All, including RCD-Goma, which advocated federalism, believed in a unitary DRC.[41] The reunification of the country was an objective shared by all the rebel movements and the government in Kinshasa. This common position helped bring the Sun City process to a successful conclusion. The process was also facilitated by firm commitment from the United Nations, South Africa — then at the helm of the AU — and certain Western actors.[42] Several of our interviewees valued the strong involvement of South African President Thabo Mbeki,[43] and the success of the ICD was undoubtedly due in part to his involvement (political lesson 5). The international community as a whole invested considerable resources and demanded the withdrawal of foreign troops from DRC territory before the conclusion of negotiations on the Global and Inclusive Agreement. Its determination took concrete form in the establishment and deployment of UN troops from August 1999, initially to monitor the ceasefire and subsequently to ensure the withdrawal of foreign troops (political lessons 3 and 4).

During the political transition from 2003 to the elections in 2006, the international community played a crucial role (political lesson 4). The International Committee in

[40] The AFC/M23 is currently divided internally over this issue, although, in practice, its governance arrangements and appointments to "state" positions amount to a de facto secession project.

[41] The form of state adopted in the 2006 Constitution is a highly decentralised unitary state. In practice, political power is fairly centralised, partly because most provinces lack financial resources. This has become even more pronounced since the 2011 constitutional revision, which shifted the balance of power towards the national level by empowering the President to dissolve provincial assemblies and dismiss provincial governors.

[42] United States, Belgium, France, European Union.

[43] One of our key informants described Mbeki as "more of a facilitator than a moderator", explaining that, in his view, a moderator merely gives participants the floor, whereas a facilitator is more actively involved in seeking an agreement. Interview with a former negotiator for a rebel movement at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, 7 May 2026.

Support of the Transition (CIAT) was a support and monitoring body established to accompany the Congolese transition following the Global and Inclusive Agreement. Led by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, the CIAT provided a forum for consultation between the main international partners and Congolese actors. It helped keep the transition on the right track by exerting diplomatic pressure, facilitating the resolution of disputes and reminding the parties of agreed deadlines. Its role under the agreement was distinctive: it was an international body tasked with supporting the implementation of the agreement and sustaining the momentum of the transition process, rather than a Congolese authority.

The outcome of the Sun City Agreement

The Sun City talks helped create the political conditions necessary for the withdrawal of foreign forces; this withdrawal was essential for the dialogue to reach a successful conclusion. The disengagement of external forces subsequently facilitated a gradual reduction in fighting in the DRC. It also facilitated the reunification of the country, which had been divided into five separate regions,[44] the restoration of a single, centralised administration and the drafting of a transitional constitution. It was also possible to bring the majority of troops under a unified command. Finally, the agreement enabled the country to embark on a political transition and hold a constitutional referendum in 2005 and its first democratic elections in 2006.

Key lessons learnt

The Sun City and Pretoria agreements were only possible through a combination of factors. These included:

- The withdrawal of foreign armies from the DRC;
- Strong commitment from the UN and the AU (political lesson 5, methodological lesson 3);
- A host country (South Africa) with strong political leadership willing to host the talks and mediation (political lesson 5);
- Financial commitment from donors (US$18 million);
- Qualified personnel to conduct the mediation (33 people) (methodological lesson 3);
- A balance of power between the parties that made a military victory by either side difficult;
- The mobilisation of civil society — communities, women's organisations and churches — around the ideal of peace;
- Sustained pressure from domestic actors, namely political parties and civil society, as well as the international community, on the actors involved in the conflict.

The AGI succeeded in reunifying the country and setting the political transition in motion, in particular through strong international involvement in the negotiations and, above all,

[44] Government, RCD-Goma, RCD-K/ML, RCD-National, MLC.

through the CIAT as the body monitoring the agreement's implementation. Many former participants in the mediation efforts emphasised the CIAT's key role in the transition. As one negotiator from a rebel movement stated during the interviews: *"Without the CIAT, the political transition could not have succeeded"*.[45] However, the political transition that followed Sun City also exposed weaknesses in the support measures for the post-transition period. Some rebel movements, such as the CNDP, did not remain engaged in the political process after their leaders' electoral defeat. The Sun City Agreement had not anticipated the frustrations of groups that retained military strength but had failed to translate it into electoral legitimacy. One lesson that could be drawn from this experience is that agreements should also anticipate issues concerning the political balance after elections.

Fact sheet: Global and Inclusive Agreement	
Process name	Inter-Congolese Dialogue
Duration	3 years
Objectives	To end the conflicts that had divided the DRC into four regions with separate administrations (Kinshasa, Goma, Beni and Bunia).
Mandate	To reunify the country, establish a transitional government and prepare for national elections.
Mediator(s), mediation/facilitation mechanisms	Facilitator (from December 1999): President Ketumile Masire (Botswana); President Thabo Mbeki (South Africa); Ibrahima Fall (UN); Moustapha Niasse (UN).
Organiser	OAU/African Union, United Nations and South Africa (host country).
Main stakeholders	Constituencies (*composantes*): the DRC government, RCD-Goma, the MLC, the political opposition and civil society. Entities: RCD-K/ML, RCD-N and the Mai-Mai.
Agreements signed (where applicable)	Political Agreement on the Consensual Management of the Transition in the DRC (Sun City, 8 April 2002). Pretoria Agreement: Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the DRC (Pretoria, 17 December 2002). Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations (Sun City, 2 April 2003).
Outcomes	Reunification of the country. Establishment of the transitional government.
Challenges and lessons learnt	Convincing former warlords to place their trust in electoral processes.

03 From the Goma Conference to the agreement of 23 March 2009: Between domestic negotiations and regional diplomacy

Context

The "Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations" of April 2003 (Sun City) officially ended the war in the DRC, but the institutional restructuring of the ensuing "1 + 4" political transition did not dispel political and security tensions in the east. These continued to be fuelled by persistent tensions with neighbouring countries, particularly Rwanda, despite the commitments made in the "Pretoria Agreement" of July 2002. The RCD-Goma, previously the dominant movement in the east, lost some of its institutional influence, fuelling concerns among certain Tutsi elites and officers about their place in the new national structures. In this context, a dissident network took shape around Laurent Nkundabatware (Nkunda) and several former RCD-Goma commanders.[46]

The crises in Bukavu, particularly the capture of the city in May 2004 by General Laurent Nkunda's forces, exposed the fragility of the transitional order. Following the Bukavu crisis, intercommunal reconciliation, particularly with Kinyarwanda-speaking communities, came under severe strain.[47] A few months later, on the night of 13–14 August 2004, the massacre of 152 Banyamulenge refugees in Gatumba, a Burundian village near the border that hosted a camp for Congolese refugees, triggered a crisis both with and within the RCD-Goma.[48] Its political leader, Azarias Ruberwa, accused Congolese forces of being complicit in the massacre and withdrew his party from the transitional government, leading to a split within the party. The Kanyabayonga crisis followed in December 2004, in a locality in Lubero bordering Rutshuru, North Kivu.

[46] Stearns, Jason. From CNDP to M23: The Evolution of an Armed Movement in Eastern Congo. Rift Valley Institute, Usalama Project, 2012; International Crisis Group. Congo: Consolidating the Peace. Africa Report Report No 128. [Publisher unknown], 2007.

[47] Autesserre, Séverine. Local Violence, International Indifference? Post-Conflict Settlement in the Eastern D.R. Congo (2003-2005), PhD thesis. New York: New York University, 2006, pp. 111–113.

[48] United Nations. Joint Report of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Operation in Burundi and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Gatumba Massacre. [Publisher unknown], 2004. The Burundian PALIPEHUTU-FNL claimed responsibility for the massacre, but the UN team's investigation report indicates that this group was not the only one involved.

Following his retreat to Masisi and Rutshuru territories, Nkunda gradually consolidated a more organised political and military structure, culminating in the creation of the CNDP in July 2006. The movement presented its actions as a response to the insecurity faced by Tutsi populations in the presence of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR)/Interahamwe (FDLR), while also engaging in competition over territorial control, military integration and access to resources. These interests were closely linked to those of its regional sponsor, Rwanda.

Following the post-election violence of 2006, the Congolese authorities favoured a negotiated approach. An agreement negotiated between General Numbi (FARDC) and Nkunda in Kigali on 31 December 2006 provided for a process of "mixage", intended to integrate Nkunda's brigades into the FARDC.[49] The six brigades formed through this process were supposed to remain in the Kivu region to conduct operations against the ex-FAR/Interahamwe. This agreement reflected a recurring practice of incorporating armed groups into state structures. The process also provided CNDP troops with funding and supplies. Nkunda continued his political and economic activities. Tensions rose rapidly, and from June 2007, Kinshasa began making serious preparations for an operation to neutralise the CNDP and establish state authority in North Kivu. At the same time, the violence of operations against the ex-FAR/Interahamwe contributed to the formation of local armed groups, such as the Coalition of Congolese Resistant Patriots (PARECO). In late 2007, a new military offensive against the CNDP ended in another crushing defeat for the FARDC.

[49] International Crisis Group. Congo : Ramener la paix au Nord-Kivu. Africa Report No. 133. [Publisher unknown], 2007.

▼ Participants at the Goma Conference in January 2008.

Photo credit: Myriam Asmani/MONUC



On the political front, elected representatives from North and South Kivu advocated against purely military initiatives and their severe impact on civilian populations. On 16 May 2007, the government announced plans for an "intercommunal round table" for the two provinces, but elected representatives rejected the initiative and began boycotting parliamentary sessions on 25 May 2007. From then on, Father Malu Malu, chair of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI), and Vital Kamerhe, president of the National Assembly, actively sought a political or dialogue process. At the regional level, this period also saw the first attempts to reactivate or establish sub-regional structures.[50] First, there were efforts to revive the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (CEPGL), which brings together Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. Although best known as a forum for cross-border energy cooperation, the organisation is rooted in regional stabilisation and security. The second initiative was the establishment of a permanent conference on security in the Great Lakes region, grounded in several UN resolutions. This developed into the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), founded on the Dar es Salaam Declaration (19–20 November 2004) and the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region (Nairobi, 15 December 2006). The Nairobi Pact and the ICGLR, headquartered in Bujumbura, became operational in 2008.

The Goma Conference

Following the failure of successive military offensives, and building on preparations for a political dialogue, the Congolese government took the initiative to convene a "Conference on Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu Provinces" in Goma in January 2008. The conference was an attempt to develop a broader political response, bringing together government representatives, 22 armed groups (including the CNDP), civil society and several international partners acting as facilitators or observers.

Ahead of the Goma Conference, Kinshasa had also taken initiatives at the regional level. On 8 September, an agreement was concluded in Ngurdoto between Kinshasa and Kampala. This was followed on 9 November by the Nairobi Joint Communiqué, which proposed a new joint approach to addressing threats to peace and stability. This bilateral communiqué was signed in the presence of international witnesses, including the UN, the European Union and the United States. In early December, Kinshasa submitted a plan for the disarmament of the ex-FAR/Interahamwe.

The Goma Conference in January 2008, chaired by Father Malu Malu, chair of the electoral commission and a "moral authority" in North Kivu, ultimately brought together more than 1,400 participants. For the first time since the conflicts began, it gave grassroots

[50] Despite the problems discussed in this report, it is also important to note that there was a degree of optimism internationally. This stemmed from the signing of peace agreements (the Arusha Agreement and the Global and Inclusive Agreement), the holding of democratic elections in Burundi (2005) and the DRC (2006), the establishment of regional institutions (ICGLR), efforts to reactivate the CEPGL and a continental renewal — the establishment of the AU — which held the promise of being better equipped than its predecessor. At all these levels, reality has proved more challenging and progress less linear than hoped.

community leaders an opportunity to speak and express their fears and perceptions, helping to bring the local root causes of the conflict to light and address them. The conference also sought to develop a set of recommendations and secure a firm commitment from the signatory parties to resolve these problems and pave the way for the integration ("brassage") and disengagement of all domestic armed groups. The main issues concerned identity and ethnicity, coexistence, deep-seated resentment and mistrust inherited from a violent past, military integration, the return of refugees, land issues, local administration, the exploitation of natural resources, illicit cross-border trafficking in arms and supplies, and amnesty.

Nevertheless, the process and its "Statements of Commitment", signed on 23 January 2008, remained focused on armed groups, committing the signatory groups to a ceasefire, a general amnesty, integration into the army and the return of refugees. In a clear warning for future initiatives of this kind, the conference paradoxically prompted the creation of new armed groups, which mobilised in the hope of benefiting from the peace dividend (structural lesson 2). The Congolese government contributed to this proliferation in the hope of counterbalancing the CNDP.[51]

In a clear warning for future initiatives of this kind, the conference paradoxically prompted the creation of new armed groups, which mobilised in the hope of benefiting from the peace dividend.

Although the conference sought to democratise peacebuilding by inviting grassroots representatives rather than only warlords, observers and participants voiced several strong criticisms. Some sources even described it as a smokescreen,[52] with the official conference taking centre stage publicly and diverting attention from the real issue — negotiations with the CNDP. These negotiations took place in parallel during the final week of the conference, outside the official agenda and with substantial involvement from external facilitators, including direct calls to Laurent Nkunda and Kigali.

There were several other criticisms of the conference:

The "per diem" culture and co-optation. The conference far exceeded its anticipated size, growing from an expected 200 delegates to more than 1,400. A major criticism was that many "representatives" of civil society and communities were attracted by generous daily allowances rather than a genuine commitment to peace. There was even a temporary boycott by participants from South Kivu over per diem payments.

[51] Vlassenroot, Koen and Timothy Raeymaekers. "Briefing: Kivu's Intractable Security Conundrum", African Affairs. 2009, vol. 108, no. 432, pp. 475–484.

[52] Davis, Laura and Priscilla Hayner. Difficult Peace, Limited Justice: Ten Years of Peacemaking in the DRC. International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009.

Organisations created from scratch and "phantom" organisations. Local associations and even small armed groups — including some Mai-Mai factions — were hastily created just weeks before the conference. Their primary aim was to secure a seat at the negotiating table, receive allowances and influence the future allocation of political positions. This dynamic diluted the influence of established and legitimate civil society organisations.

Elite dominance and grassroots marginalisation. Despite the impressive number of participants, delegates drawn from grassroots communities in the worst-affected "red zones", such as Masisi and Rutshuru, reported being side-lined.

Several participants persisted in using **strongly identity-based rhetoric, particularly anti-Tutsi rhetoric**. This raised fears of a boycott by Tutsi delegates. External observers actively intervened on this issue during consultations with representatives of other communities and armed groups.

A clear exclusion of key groups.

Women: Women accounted for 25 per cent of participants. At the selection stage, the various groups attending the conference were required to choose one woman and three men. There was also influence peddling and rivalry over leadership among the women present. There was little meaningful opportunity for them to speak.[53]

Indigenous Pygmy communities: Indigenous representatives left the conference, denouncing blatant discrimination and a lack of serious consideration for their land and citizenship rights.

Malu Malu's depoliticisation strategy. The coordinator, Father Malu Malu, insisted that "ideological and philosophical speculation" had no place at the conference.[54]

While this approach sought to prevent the discussions from getting out of hand, it effectively excluded any in-depth discussion of structural issues such as land rights, identity, citizenship or the illegal exploitation of natural resources — reducing the conference to technical security arrangements.

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[53] Odimba, Catherine, Paul Robain Namegabe and Julienne Baseke Nzabandora. La participation des femmes dans les processus de paix et la prise de décision politique en République Démocratique du Congo. Op. cit., p. 34.
[54] Tshimanga, Joseph / MONUC. RD Congo / Goma : La conférence sur la paix a débuté. 2008.

Fact sheet: Goma Conference

Process name	Conference on Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu Provinces / Goma Conference
Duration	7–23 January 2008
Objectives	To dispel the fears, mutual mistrust, suspicions, frustration and anger that had made coexistence almost impossible. To establish a committee to monitor the implementation of the conference's resolutions and recommendations.
Mandate	DRC government
Mediator(s), mediation/ facilitation mechanisms	Conference chair: Father Apollinaire Malu Malu. Chair of the Committee of Elders: Vital Kamerhe (president of the National Assembly). Deputy coordinator of the Panel of Moderators: Azarias Ruberwa Manyw a (former vice-president during the transition, RCD-Goma). North Kivu delegation: Governor Julien Paluku Kahongya; deputy president of the Provincial Assembly, Mukinti Baumbilia. South Kivu delegation: Acting Governor Watunakanza B. Bernard; president of the Provincial Assembly, Baleke Kadudu Emile. International facilitators: United Nations (Alan Doss), European Union (Roeland van de Geer), United States (Tim Shortley), African Union (Pierre Yere) and ICGLR (Liberata Mulamula) — all signatories to the Acts of Commitment. Several other international representatives attended as observers, including Belgium's Special Envoy, Jozef Smets.
Organiser	Congolese state — Presidential Ordinance No. 07/070 of 20 December 2007.
Main stakeholders	Representatives of the Congolese state. Congolese armed groups (including the CNDP). Political parties. Civil society. Religious denominations. (More than 1,400 participants.)
Agreements signed (where applicable)	North Kivu Statement of Commitment. South Kivu Statement of Commitment. Adoption of several recommendations concerning peace, security, humanitarian issues, the return of refugees, the CEPGL and development.
Outcomes	The conference led to the establishment of a follow-up programme under Ordinance No. 08/008 of 2 February 2008 on the organisation and operation of the "National Programme for Security, Pacification, Stabilisation and Reconstruction in North and South Kivu Provinces", better known as the "Amani Programme" (launched on 3 April 2008). A Joint Technical Commission on Peace and Security was tasked with monitoring the implementation of the Acts of Commitment and the Nairobi Joint Communiqué of 9 November 2007.
Challenges and lessons learnt	The conference focused too heavily on reaching agreements with armed groups and did not address fundamental debates on peaceful coexistence and the resolution of communal conflicts. Increasing the number of participants does not guarantee quality or representativeness.

Follow-up to Goma: the Amani Programme

The Amani Programme established national and provincial structures, including technical commissions and consultation mechanisms.

The CNDP formally participated in the process while expressing reservations about its implementation and demanding special treatment. Implementation of the programme was hampered by limited institutional capacity, differing interpretations of the commitments and persistent mistrust between the parties.

THE "AMANI PROGRAMME"

(National Programme for Security, Pacification, Stabilisation and Reconstruction in North and South Kivu Provinces, Ordinance No. 08/008 of 2 February 2008)

Under the authority of the President of the Republic, the programme is led by a Steering Committee, supported by a National Coordination Unit chaired by Father Malu Malu, which oversees technical and administrative management. At the national level, several technical commissions structure the programme's activities:

- Joint Technical Commission on Peace and Security
- Technical Commission on Pacification and Reconciliation
- Technical Commission on Finance and Projects
- Technical Commission on Stabilisation and Reconstruction

Some commissions include subcommissions, particularly in the military, humanitarian and social fields. Two monitoring bodies complete the structure: the Governance Observatory and the Intercommunal Coexistence Observatory. The programme also included Provincial Management Committees in North and South Kivu. These committees coordinate local implementation through provincial commissions specialising in:

- Security and Stabilisation
- Development
- Pacification and Reconciliation
- Humanitarian and Social Affairs

A consultation framework is provided for at the national and provincial levels, bringing together the institutions of the Republic, international partners, local bodies and the courts.

Finally, oversight mechanisms are established at the national level (National Assembly and Senate) and the provincial level (Provincial Assembly) to ensure monitoring and supervision of the programme.



▲ UN special envoy Olusegun Obasanjo and CNDP-leader Gen. Laurent Nkunda in Jomba, North Kivu, on 16 November 2008.

Photo credit: Roberto Schmidt/AFP via Getty Images

In a repetition of history, fighting resumed between the FARDC and the CNDP in late August 2008, resulting in another defeat for the FARDC. By October 2008, Goma was under direct threat. The fighting caused large-scale population displacement. MONUC's presence helped prevent the CNDP from capturing the city, but the security situation remained unstable. In this context, the Amani Programme's institutional framework remained in place, although military dynamics dominated the course of the conflict.

The Nairobi dialogue and the agreement of 23 March 2009

The threat of an escalation of the conflict in autumn 2008 prompted intensive diplomatic mobilisation. In late September 2008, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly, the United States presented the Rwandan and Congolese delegations with a plan to resolve the crisis. The document set out the conditions for a rapprochement between Kigali and Kinshasa, including a joint military operation against the FDLR. [55]

From late October 2008, high-level contacts were established between Rwanda and the DRC. On 28 October, the Congolese and Rwandan foreign ministers met in Kigali, opening an uninterrupted series of bilateral consultations. In parallel, on 3 November 2008, the UN Secretary-General appointed former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo as his Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region. On 7 November, at an extraordinary ICGLR summit in Nairobi, also attended by Joseph Kabila and Paul Kagame, former Tanzanian President

[55] International Crisis Group. Congo: No Stability in Kivu despite a Rapprochement with Rwanda. Africa Report No. 165. [Publisher unknown], 2010.

Benjamin Mkapa was appointed facilitator on behalf of the ICGLR and the AU. The summit also decided to establish a Nairobi-based mechanism and process, chaired by Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki and led by the two facilitators, Obasanjo and Mkapa. The mechanism was tasked with supporting political mediation, promoting a ceasefire and restoring regional trust.[56]

Within this framework, President Obasanjo began a series of regional consultations and observed a gradual rapprochement between the Congolese president and his Rwandan and Ugandan counterparts.[57] However, alongside the formal mediation, bilateral discussions between Kigali and Kinshasa intensified. Building on the US proposal, Kabila and Kagame concluded a secret security cooperation agreement in November. On 25 and 26 November, the military leaders of the two countries — General James Kabarebe for Rwanda and General John Numbi for the DRC — worked out the arrangements for a joint military operation against the FDLR.[58]

The existence of this agreement was made public at a meeting of the Rwanda–DRC 4+4 Commission in Goma on 4–5 December. At the meeting, the Congolese foreign minister asked Rwanda "to use its moral authority over Laurent Nkunda to bring the rebel leader back to the negotiating table".[59]

A meeting of the US-facilitated "Tripartite Plus Mechanism", which also included Uganda and Burundi, then took place in Kigali on 10 December. Between mid-December 2008 and early January 2009, closed-door bilateral negotiations continued to prepare for the joint military campaign, the integration of CNDP combatants into the Congolese army and the neutralisation of Laurent Nkunda.

During this period, although President Obasanjo had been involved in discussions between the Congolese government and the CNDP since December 2008, the facilitators were not informed of all the bilateral arrangements concluded between Kigali and Kinshasa. This was despite the appeal made at the Kigali meeting, where "the Joint Commission urged all parties concerned to cooperate with Presidents Mkapa and Obasanjo, particularly in the context of the Nairobi talks between the DRC Government and the CNDP".[60] This partial exclusion highlights the disconnect between the facilitation mechanism established in Nairobi, involving Obasanjo and Mkapa, and the parallel progress of direct security negotiations between the two capitals under the Tripartite Plus Mechanism (methodological lessons 1 and 2).

[56] Joint Communiqué of the Heads of State of the Great Lakes Region on the Situation in the DRC, Nairobi, 7 November 2008.
[57] United Nations Security Council. 6067th meeting. Report S/PV.6067. [Publisher unknown], 2009.
[58] International Crisis Group. Congo : cinq priorités pour une stratégie durable de construction de la paix. Africa Report No. 150. [Publisher unknown], 2009.
[59] African Union, Peace and Security Council. Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 163rd meeting. Report PSC/MIN/2(CLXIII). [Publisher unknown], 2008.
[60] International Crisis Group. Congo. Op. cit.

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Formal dialogue between Kinshasa and the CNDP began in Nairobi on 8 December. The initial exchanges were largely procedural, and the CNDP refused to formalise its unilateral cessation of hostilities, accusing the government of entering areas it had called on MONUC to occupy following its withdrawal. Over the festive period, Obasanjo maintained close contact with Presidents Kabila and Kagame, as well as Laurent Nkunda. Meanwhile, developments on the ground accelerated. On 14 December 2008, a joint Uganda–DRC operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) began in Haut-Uélé.

The dialogue resumed on 6 January 2009. The CNDP's chief of staff, Bosco Ntaganda, announced that he had taken over leadership of the movement, creating uncertainty about its internal dynamics. On 8 January, Obasanjo travelled to Kinshasa, Kigali and Jomba (North Kivu) to consult Presidents Kabila and Kagame and meet Nkunda. All reaffirmed their commitment to the dialogue. The Congolese and Rwandan presidents noted a significant improvement in their relations, particularly through frequent direct contacts and ministerial meetings. They expressed satisfaction with progress concerning the FDLR, and a joint military plan was put in place to exert pressure on the group, in accordance with the Nairobi Joint Communiqué of 2007.

The dialogue resumed on 6 January in a more constructive atmosphere, with trust beginning to develop and direct cooperation between the delegations. On 12 January, the parties adopted a third document setting out the rules for substantive discussions and reaffirming the objective of concluding a comprehensive agreement incorporating the Goma Statements of Commitment and their implementation arrangements. The dialogue now focused on a joint declaration on the cessation of hostilities, although rumours of parallel manoeuvres slowed progress.[61]

On 16 January, the MONUC Force Commander notified the UN force's brigades of the need to prepare for possible joint operations by Rwanda and the FARDC against the FDLR.[62] That same day, without coordination with the facilitators or MONUC, four parties — the governments of the DRC and Rwanda, the CNDP and PARECO — signed

[61] United Nations Security Council. 6067th meeting. Op. cit.
[62] MONUC, Internal Memorandum No. 28/MONUC/FC, Kinshasa, 16 January 2009. Internal document — restricted access.

the "Ihusi Agreement" in Goma. It provided for an immediate cessation of hostilities, CNDP participation in the operation against the FDLR under the joint military plan agreed between the DRC and Rwanda, and the immediate integration of CNDP combatants into the FARDC. A CNDP political declaration issued the same day reiterated the group's key political demands: an amnesty law, the return of refugees and the neutralisation of the FDLR/Interahamwe to ensure their safe return.[63]

The joint operation "Umoja Wetu" was launched on 20 January 2009, with large numbers of Rwandan forces entering eastern DRC. In early January, Bosco Ntaganda announced that he had replaced Laurent Nkunda as leader of the CNDP, and Nkunda was arrested in Rwanda on 22 January 2009. This sequence of political and military developments ultimately led to the signing of the agreement of 23 March 2009, co-signed by the two facilitators. The agreement formalised the CNDP's integration into Congolese institutions, making official a process that had begun the previous autumn.

The period from autumn 2008 to March 2009 marked a significant shift from the approach adopted in Goma. While Goma was based on broad inclusivity, the 2009 processes gradually refocused on relations between Kinshasa and Kigali and their shared security concerns.

While Goma was based on broad inclusivity, the 2009 processes gradually refocused on relations between Kinshasa and Kigali and their shared security concerns.

The neutralisation of the FDLR, in particular, provided the basis for a compromise that enabled Kinshasa to secure the removal of Laurent Nkunda and the rapid integration of the CNDP. This bilateral approach, inspired by the United States, made it possible to conclude the agreement of 23 March 2009, but at the expense of the process's transparency and inclusivity. The contrast with Goma is therefore significant: while the conference sought to build a solution with broad support from Congolese actors, the 2009 process favoured a narrower, pragmatic settlement whose immediate effectiveness was accompanied by limitations in follow-up, transparency and local ownership.

[63] Voice of America. "RDC : le CNDP se transforme en parti politique", Voice of America. 5 February 2009.

Fact sheet: Nairobi dialogue

Process name	Nairobi dialogue
Duration	7 November 2008–23 March 2009
Objectives	■ Immediate compliance with a ceasefire by all armed groups and militias operating in North Kivu. ■ Establishment of a humanitarian corridor. ■ Immediate implementation of the DRC–Rwanda Joint Communiqué (Nairobi, 9 November 2007) on a joint approach to ending threats to peace and stability in both countries and the Great Lakes region (witnesses: UN, EU and United States), the Goma Statement of Commitment (23 January 2008), and all other relevant agreements and protocols to ensure lasting peace and political stability.
Mandate	ICGLR, AU and UN
Mediator(s), mediation/ facilitation mechanisms	Former President Olusegun Obasanjo (UN). Former President Benjamin Mkapa (ICGLR, AU).
Organiser	AU, ICGLR and UN
Main stakeholders	DRC government. Rwanda. CNDP.
Agreements signed (where applicable)	Peace Agreement between the DRC Government and the CNDP (23 March 2009). Follow-up: ■ National Monitoring Committee (Decree No. 09/18 of 30 April 2009 establishing and regulating the organisation and operation of the National Monitoring Committee for the peace agreements of 23 March 2009 concerning the resolution of crises in eastern DRC; Decree No. 09/19 of 30 April 2009 appointing members of the Joint Monitoring Committee for the peace agreement signed in Goma on 23 March 2009 between the Government and the Armed Groups of North Kivu). ■ International Monitoring Committee for the Agreement (UN, AU and ICGLR), through the two co-facilitators. ■ National Reconciliation Mechanism.
Outcomes	The Goma Statements of Commitment.
Challenges and lessons learnt	Follow-up was only short-term. Long-term follow-up needs to be built into the process.

Immediate follow-up to the Nairobi dialogue

At the national level, the entry of Rwandan forces created a political dispute within the DRC's parliamentary majority. Vital Kamerhe, president of the National Assembly and former chair of the Committee of Elders at the 2008 Goma Conference, expressed surprise that the Assembly had not been consulted beforehand and concern about the human impact. He referred, among other examples, to the experience of Ugandan forces' operations against the LRA in Haut-Uélé. He resigned on 25 March 2009.

The facilitators continued their efforts to consolidate the implementation of the commitments made. Their priority was to support the political process through regular consultations in Kinshasa and Kigali with the presidents of both countries, as well as government representatives and key actors from North and South Kivu. These efforts were undertaken notably within the framework of the "International Monitoring Committee" established by the agreements.[64]

These contacts contributed to several concrete advances. The National Monitoring Committee provided for in the agreements was established in late April 2009 (Decree No. 09/18 of 30 April 2009). Tripartite meetings bringing together the DRC, Rwanda and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) were held in April to examine arrangements for the repatriation of refugees.[65] The amnesty law was adopted on 12 May 2009 (Law No. 09/003 of 7 May 2009). Also in May 2009, the governors of North and South Kivu met their counterparts from neighbouring provinces in Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. CNDP officials joined the provincial administration, but there was little progress at the national level, where the CNDP registered as a political party (Registration Order No. 032/2009) and joined President Kabila's alliance ahead of the 2011 elections.[66] Little changed on the ground either: the CNDP largely maintained parallel administrations in its areas and retained substantial control over its troops.

At the bilateral level, the "4 + 4" Commission, bringing together the foreign ministers and chiefs of staff of the DRC and Rwanda, met regularly. The joint military operation against the FDLR helped strengthen trust between the two states, and the presidents expressed satisfaction with its political results. Diplomatically, this momentum encouraged further discussions within the Commission to deepen economic cooperation and normalise official relations. On 7 May 2009, Rwanda appointed an ambassador to Kinshasa, while the DRC submitted a list of candidates to Kigali with a view to appointing its own ambassador.

During this consolidation phase, President Obasanjo identified six priorities for the future:

- The integration of forces recently incorporated into the FARDC, including through the regular payment of military salaries;
- Coordinated military, political and legal action against the FDLR;
- The overall implementation of the agreements of 23 March, with targeted support from the international community;

[64] United Nations Security Council. Report on the Security Council Mission to the African Union, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. Report S/2009/303. [Publisher unknown], 2009. URL: http://docs.un.org/fr/S/2009/303 [accessed 7 August 2026].

[65] On 17 February 2010, in Kigali, Rwanda, the DRC and UNHCR signed a Tripartite Agreement on the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees living in Rwanda.

[66] The CNDP would have only one elected representative in the National Assembly, Edouard Mwangachuchu Hili (Masisi Territory, North Kivu).

- The adoption of further measures to strengthen trust between Rwanda and the DRC;
- Increased international support for institution-building in the DRC, including security sector reform (SSR);
- Sustained engagement by the leaders of the Great Lakes region and the AU, including the implementation of the stability pact.

Under Presidential Ordinance No. 09/051 of 29 June 2009, the Amani Programme officially ended and was replaced by the "Stabilisation and Reconstruction Programme for Areas Emerging from Armed Conflict" (STAREC).

WHY THE STAREC PROGRAMME WAS ESTABLISHED

The STAREC Programme was established to consolidate stabilisation and reconstruction in areas emerging from armed conflict in eastern DRC.

WHAT WERE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STAREC PROGRAMME?

The STAREC Programme's main objective was to promote stabilisation and reconstruction, notably through:

1. Restoring state authority in areas previously controlled by armed groups and improving the security environment;
2. Humanitarian and social action, including facilitating the return and reintegration of displaced persons and refugees;
3. Civilian protection and efforts to combat sexual violence;
4. Linking DDR III with community recovery;
5. Socio-economic reconstruction and the development of road, airport, port, healthcare, education and housing infrastructure;
6. Reviving agricultural activities and rural electrification to promote micro-industry, microfinance, vocational training and regional integration projects, among other initiatives;
7. Improving governance in post-conflict areas, particularly in administration and politics, justice, the economy and public ethics.



WHICH AREAS DID STAREC COVER?

The STAREC Programme operated throughout the national territory. However, to ensure effectiveness and consistency in project planning and implementation, the country was divided into six intervention zones:

Zone 1: Maniema, North Kivu and South Kivu provinces;

Zone 2: The former Orientale Province;

Zone 3: The former Équateur Province;

Zone 4: The former Katanga Province;

Zone 5: The former West Kasai and East Kasai provinces;

Zone 6: Kinshasa, the former Bandundu Province and Kongo Central.

The period from 2008 to 2009 was therefore marked by several peace initiatives. The Goma Conference had the merit of bringing together a broad range of actors. In the short term, however, its focus on armed groups prompted the creation of new groups hoping to benefit from the peace dividend. Although the conference established monitoring structures, these could not prevent the resumption of fighting between the CNDP and the FARDC, partly because the CNDP disagreed with their implementation. Two important but poorly coordinated processes followed: a bilateral process between the DRC and Rwanda, proposed by the United States; and a parallel process involving the DRC, Rwanda and the CNDP — the Nairobi dialogue. The facilitators of the latter were not informed of all the initiatives undertaken through the former, creating an unfortunate disconnect. Ultimately, the failure to implement the agreement of 23 March between the DRC and the CNDP would serve as a pretext for the launch of another group in 2012: the M23, the CNDP's successor.

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04 The Addis Ababa Framework Agreement: Attempting a regional response

Context and the Kampala dialogue

The Addis Ababa Conference, held in Ethiopia in February 2013, aimed to establish a regional framework to address the conflicts in the DRC and the region, with a particular focus on the DRC's neighbours.[67] It was convened following, among other developments, the capture of Goma by the M23 rebel movement in November 2012, the Kampala negotiations between the DRC and the M23 in late 2012, and approximately three months of UN shuttle diplomacy.[68] It culminated in the signing of the Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation for the DRC and the Region on 24 February 2013.

To understand the context in which this agreement was reached, it is first necessary to examine regional organisations' attempts to resolve the M23 conflict, which began in April 2012. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) met and discussed the M23 issue on several occasions from July 2012 onwards. That month, on the sidelines of an African Union summit, Presidents Joseph Kabila of the DRC and Paul Kagame of Rwanda met in person, and the creation of a "Neutral International Force" to patrol the DRC–Rwanda border was proposed. However, the proposal failed to materialise, primarily because of perceptions of bias: the Congolese side viewed the idea of a "neutral" force as favouring Rwanda by obliging Kinshasa to deal directly with an armed group supported by a neighbouring country.[69] Following several ICGLR meetings between July and November 2012, the Kampala negotiations began in December that year. Their purpose was to assess the implementation of the agreement of 23 March 2009 between the CNDP and the government, rather than to address a broader issue, as the Framework Agreement would later seek to do.

The other regional organisation concerned about the M23 crisis was the Southern African Development Community (SADC). SADC viewed the M23 simply as an illegitimate movement, whereas the ICGLR gave credence to its grievances.[70] The Kampala negotiations, which began in December 2012, were hampered by the perceived partiality of the mediator, Uganda, which the DRC itself accused of supporting the M23.[71] However, engagement by the person directly responsible for facilitation, the Honourable Chrispus Kiyonga, and the DRC's two lead negotiators, Raymond Tshibanda and Father Apollinaire Malu Malu, helped overcome this mistrust.

[67] Koko, Sadiki. Peace at last? Appraisal of the Addis Ababa Peace and Security Cooperation Framework and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2098 for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. 2013.
[68] Zounmenou, David and Naomi Kok. Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC: hopes and challenges. 2013.
[69] Shepherd, Ben. Elite Bargains and Political Deals Project: Democratic Republic of Congo (M23) Case Study. UK Stabilisation Unit, 2018, pp. 21–22.
[70] Ibid., p. 14.
[71] Ibid.

The road to Addis Ababa

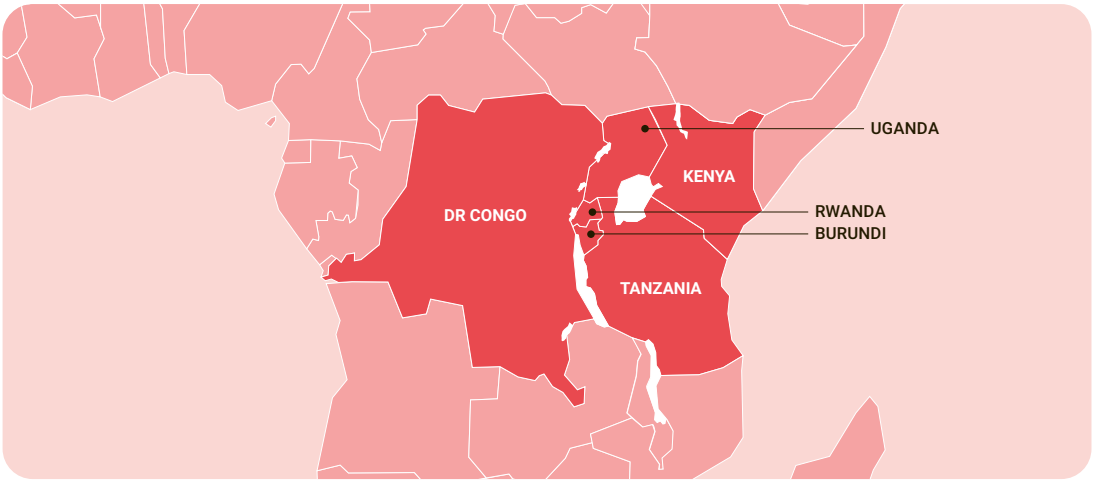
Much as in the M23 crisis in 2025 involving SADC and the EAC, regional divisions were evident in 2012 and 2013 in these organisations' interpretations of Rwanda's role and their perceptions of the legitimacy of the M23's grievances (structural lesson 1). To understand the difficulties the Framework Agreement would later face, it is therefore important to bear in mind that, before it was signed, the ICGLR and SADC held divergent views on the M23.

Alongside these regional initiatives, other actors also sought to help resolve the M23 conflict. Reports by the UN Group of Experts increasingly clearly identified Rwanda's role in supporting the M23. In mid-2012, major donors — notably the United States and the European Union — suspended their assistance to Rwanda.

The United Nations also played an important role. At the initiative of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in particular, the UN led negotiations in Addis Ababa alongside the AU Commission, the ICGLR and SADC. This initiative ran in parallel with the ICGLR-led talks in Kampala, which focused specifically on the M23. Together with these four multilateral organisations — led by the UN — ICGLR member states and South Africa met and adopted a text in February 2013 that primarily addressed the root causes of recurring cycles of violence in the DRC. The Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, which emerged in the context of the 2012 M23 rebellion, explicitly recognised the role of states in the region in sponsoring armed groups, without explicitly naming Rwanda or the M23 (methodological lesson 2). It contained commitments at three levels: national (DRC), regional and international.

The Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, which emerged in the context of the 2012 M23 rebellion, explicitly recognised the role of states in the region in sponsoring armed groups.

▶ The Great Lakes region



The DRC made six commitments: security sector reform; the consolidation of state authority, particularly in the east, including preventing armed groups from destabilising neighbouring countries; the implementation of decentralisation; the promotion of economic development; structural reform of the state, including public finances; and national reconciliation, tolerance and democratisation.

For their part, states in the region made seven commitments: non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring states; refraining from supporting armed groups; respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring states; stronger regional cooperation and economic integration; respect for the legitimate concerns and interests of neighbouring states; refraining from harbouring or protecting persons accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity or acts of genocide, or persons subject to UN sanctions; and facilitating the administration of justice through regional judicial cooperation.

For its part, the international community made five commitments: continued UN Security Council engagement in support of stability in the DRC and the Great Lakes region; support for the region from bilateral partners; efforts to revitalise the CEPGL; a strategic review of MONUSCO to strengthen its support to the government in addressing security challenges; and the appointment of a special envoy for the region.[72]

The Framework Agreement sought to prioritise and consolidate existing regional commitments and secure international guarantees for them, under pressure from the fall of Goma and the threat of renewed regional destabilisation. The first commitment was the explicit recognition of the different levels of responsibility for the recurring crises in eastern DRC, particularly the interplay between national and regional politics. For example, the commitments by states in the region to stop supporting armed groups that attack their neighbours and to respect neighbouring countries' territorial integrity pointed directly to Rwanda, but also to the DRC, Burundi and Uganda.

To monitor its implementation, the Framework Agreement established a number of structures and mechanisms. These included the National Oversight Mechanism (MNS) for the DRC and the Regional Oversight Mechanism (MRS) for the agreement's 13 signatory countries. Both were tasked with assessing implementation, while the MNS was also responsible for supporting and supervising the implementation of commitments.

The most immediate consequences of the Framework Agreement's signing came from the international community. As provided for in the agreement, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed the first in a series of Special Envoys for the Great Lakes region, beginning with former Irish President Mary Robinson in March 2013. At the time, she was part of a group of envoys that included Russ Feingold of the United States, Koen Vervaeke of the European Union and Boubacar Diarra of the African Union, alongside the

[72] Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. [Publisher unknown], 2013.



▲ Signatories of the Addis Abeba Framework Agreement with representatives of the AU, SADC and the UN on 24 February 2013.

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Martin Kobler. Some of our key informants recalled a high degree of coordination between the various special envoys and international organisations, which enabled the signing of the Framework Agreement and a coherent international approach through the different special envoys (see political lesson 4).[73] While Diarra and Vervaeke were already in post before the Framework Agreement was signed, the US appointment of Feingold in July 2013 — the country's first Special Envoy for the Great Lakes — was a direct result of its signing.

> *Our key informants recalled a high degree of coordination between the various special envoys and international organisations, which enabled the signing of the Framework Agreement and a coherent international approach.*

Alongside this diplomatic attention, the UN Security Council established MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) through the adoption of Resolution 2098 on 24 March 2013.[74] Comprising South African, Tanzanian and Malawian troops, the force was one of the key factors contributing to the M23's military defeat in 2013. The FIB was also closely linked to SADC: it originated as a SADC initiative before being placed under UN authority and funded by the UN. However, the results of implementation at the regional and national levels have been mixed over the years, to the point where meetings of the MNS and MRS now appear merely to note the limited progress made.

Analysis of the Framework Agreement

Few interviewees questioned the merits of the commitments set out in the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement. With hindsight, however, several weaknesses can be identified that contributed to the failure to implement it.[75] First, its implementation necessarily depended almost entirely on the political will of states in the region, including the DRC. As this was an interstate process, non-state actors (civil society, armed groups, etc.) were not included in the negotiations. Nevertheless, the inclusion of civil society in the monitoring mechanisms provided for in the agreement could have been considered. Second, the apparent consensus established by the agreement concealed persistent regional divisions, both between the ICGLR countries and SADC and within the two blocs. This explains why the FIB, a force from southern Africa, was ultimately adopted and integrated into the UN

[73] Interviews with a former Ethiopian diplomat, 3 March 2026; and a former US diplomat, 26 March 2026.
[74] United Nations Security Council. Resolution 2098 (2013). Report S/RES/2098. United Nations, 2013.
[75] Since May 2025, the signatory countries to the Framework Agreement have proposed an action plan to revitalise it, following an evaluation report on its implementation between 2013 and 2023.

force rather than the neutral force proposed by the ICGLR. The M23's military defeat in 2013, brought about by the FIB, the Congolese army and international pressure on Rwanda, without resolving the M23's grievances, sowed the seeds of its resurgence in late 2021 (methodological lesson 4).

Fact sheet: Addis Ababa Framework Agreement	
Process name	Addis Ababa Framework Agreement
Duration	3 months (December 2012–February 2013)
Objectives	To establish a national, regional and international framework to address the conflicts in eastern DRC and the wider region.
Mandate	UN, AU, SADC and ICGLR
Mediator(s), mediation/ facilitation mechanisms	UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Chairperson of the AU Commission, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.
Organiser	Jointly organised by the UN, the AU Commission, SADC and the ICGLR.
Main stakeholders	Signatory states: Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia (later joined by Kenya and Sudan). International organisations acting as witnesses: UN, AU Commission, SADC and ICGLR.
Agreements signed (where applicable)	Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region (often referred to as the "Addis Ababa Framework Agreement").
Outcomes	The main outcomes of the Framework Agreement's signing were at the international level. It paved the way for the establishment of MONUSCO's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB), composed mainly of troops from southern Africa; the appointment of a UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region; and the establishment of a regional office in Nairobi.
Challenges and lessons learnt	The main challenge was the failure to implement commitments, or their very limited implementation, by the DRC and other states in the region.

05 The Nairobi Process

Context

The issue of the M23 and the refugee populations affiliated with it in Rwanda and Uganda remained on the agenda. In 2016, after three years in exile in Uganda, a small group of M23 members returned to eastern DRC, where they established a camp in the tri-border area between the DRC, Uganda and Rwanda and engaged in several clashes with the FARDC. Following the December 2018 elections in the DRC, their activity intensified, bringing the issue back to the fore. Discussions on the return and reintegration of the M23 resumed in late 2019 but dragged on as the Heading for Change (CACH) coalition, which brought together President Tshisekedi's UDPS and Vital Kamerhe's UNC, was locked in a power struggle with former President Kabila's Common Front for Congo (FCC) for control of all the levers of power.

From April 2021, President Félix Tshisekedi's camp gained the upper hand, and a new governing majority took office and devised an underfunded, improvised strategy to regain control of the east, where regional military networks were deeply entrenched. One aspect of this strategy was the imposition of a "state of siege" in North Kivu and Ituri, involving the temporary suspension of civilian governance structures and the replacement of military command structures. The strategy also included renegotiating relations with the three eastern neighbours and securing the DRC's accession to the EAC. Negotiations with these neighbours covered trade, economic and security matters. The security dimension enabled Burundi and Uganda to deploy military forces in eastern DRC to address their respective security threats.



▶ Final attempts at dialogue with Congolese armed groups under the Nairobi Process in December 2022

Photo credit: URN

In previous years, Rwanda had conducted military operations in cooperation with the Congolese army and allied Congolese armed groups against the FDLR and its splinter groups, the National Council for Renewal and Democracy (CNRD) and the Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUD). At the time, Rwanda's relations with its neighbours, Uganda and Burundi, had deteriorated, leading to border closures and accusations that each country was actively supporting the others' opposition groups, including armed groups such as the FDLR. In this context, Rwanda warned Kinshasa that it would not accept the deployment of these neighbouring countries' forces or their economic and infrastructure plans. In November 2021, the M23 resumed hostilities against Congolese forces in the border areas of North Kivu.

Overview

In an attempt to resolve this new crisis, several diplomatic peace initiatives accompanied the DRC's accession to the EAC on 8 April 2022. The Kenyan presidency organised a series of meetings of heads of state in Nairobi, known within the EAC as the "Nairobi Process". From the second meeting onwards, a structure comprising two tracks was established. Following the third conclave in June, the Nairobi Process was formally adopted by the EAC Summit on 22 July 2022.

The first was a political track involving a consultative dialogue between the DRC and all its armed groups, with the aim of securing their demobilisation. In parallel, at the UN's initiative, civil society was gradually included in the process, and the EAC began describing it as an "inter-Congolese" dialogue.[76] Nevertheless, civil society's role remained very limited, and the process was primarily known for its consultations with armed groups.

Three dialogue meetings were held in 2022: two in Nairobi and one in eastern DRC. As fighting intensified, the M23 was excluded immediately after the first consultation began. Ultimately, little overall progress was made.

The second was a military track centred on the deployment of the East African Community Regional Force (EACRF), intended to "contain local and foreign armed groups" and provide other forms of support to the FARDC. This was the first deployment of such an EAC force in the organisation's history. It was also the first time, across the various phases of armed conflict in the Great Lakes region, that a peace initiative had originated from the East African bloc.

[76] Interview with a person involved in the mediation process, 18 February 2026.

FOREIGN ARMED GROUPS

The Nairobi Process followed a longstanding practice of using military strategies to secure the demobilisation of so-called foreign armed groups, offering little or no scope for broader discussion or dialogue. With the exception of Uganda, the DRC's eastern neighbours tend to close the door to dialogue with their armed opposition groups. These groups operate primarily in the DRC, where they clearly have the greatest impact on security.

There is no indication that any serious attempt at dialogue between Burundian armed groups and Gitega has been made in recent years. There have been only a few attempts to approach individual commanders and their units with offers of demobilisation agreements. The DRC government has been involved in a few rare attempts at dialogue with the FDLR. The last such attempt took place more than a decade ago. Engagement between the DRC and the FDLR during these processes was inconsistent. Crucially, Kigali's absence from the negotiating table made it impossible to reach a compromise on the intended outcomes: the FDLR insisted on some form of political dialogue, while only demobilisation was offered.

On several occasions, the Ugandan government has shown a willingness to engage in dialogue with the ADF, and these overtures have been reciprocated. However, Kampala has clearly invested more heavily in a series of military operations against the group. Moreover, the DRC and international actors have been less inclined to support such initiatives, mainly because of the brutality of the group's actions and its reputation.

The lack of appropriate engagement with these groups, as described above, shows that diplomatic avenues for resolving regional tensions have not been exhausted, particularly since the persistence of these foreign armed groups is a key driver of the various conflicts between the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. In the case of Rwandan and Burundian armed groups, political action has also insufficiently acknowledged their dependence on support from refugee populations, which also constitute one of their main reasons for existing.[77]

Despite this intensive diplomatic activity, the conflict worsened, with the M23 expanding its territorial control amid mounting evidence of substantial Rwandan military support. Kinshasa consistently refused to engage in dialogue with the M23 while intensifying its criticism of Kigali for supporting the movement. As the FARDC failed to halt the M23's advances, government forces turned to local armed groups and mercenaries for assistance from early 2023.

[77] Interview with a member of a delegation, 18 February.

The two tracks were pursued largely in sequence rather than in parallel. The political track made no further progress after the Nairobi III dialogue meetings in December 2022. Deployment of an EAC force under the military track began slowly in November 2022 and was almost complete by May 2023. This brought a temporary period of relative calm for much of 2023, with little movement along the front lines.

From the outset, a disconnect emerged between the EACRF and the DRC government over the interpretation and implementation of the force's mandate. Political dynamics within the EAC had changed considerably following William Ruto's election as president of Kenya. President Kenyatta had developed friendly relations with President Félix Tshisekedi through political alliances forged since 2018. The arrival in power of William Ruto, regarded as closer to Rwanda, further complicated matters. This fuelled reservations in the DRC and complicated the deployment of Kenyan forces with an offensive mandate. The Congolese government expected the force to join it actively in operations against armed groups, particularly the M23. The EAC and troop-contributing countries — with the exception of Burundi, which aligned itself with Kinshasa — had more limited ambitions and viewed the force as an interposition force. Ultimately, the DRC government refused to extend the force's mandate beyond its first year after realising that the EACRF would not undertake offensive operations. By 2024, it had become clear that the Nairobi Process had stalled and escalation had resumed.

As the analysis below will illustrate, these developments rapidly eroded the parties' confidence in the Nairobi Process amid shifting regional dynamics. The subsequent phase was characterised by limited engagement from most actors, often driven more by the need to demonstrate formal support than by any firm belief in the process's viability. Nevertheless, the process continued to occupy a substantial share of diplomatic space and attention.

Objectives and structure

The Nairobi Process aimed to restore peace and stability in eastern DRC. It focused on dialogue with domestic armed groups and creating the conditions for their disarmament, while deploying a regional military force (EACRF) to support stabilisation. It operated under a mandate from the EAC heads of state and was aligned with Chapter 23 of the EAC Treaty and the EAC Protocol on Peace and Security.

The political track was led by the EAC Facilitator, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, who engaged with armed groups and civil society during three rounds of "consultations". The Facilitator was supported by a secretariat comprising Kenyan diplomats and technical personnel delegated by all EAC member states. The DRC also participated in the secretariat, primarily in a liaison capacity.

The military track was implemented by the EACRF, under Kenyan command, comprising troops from Burundi, Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda.

In theory, the process's political track was due to resume following the formalisation of an "EAC–SADC framework" at a joint summit in February 2025. It has since been incorporated into the African Union-led process. Given that the Nairobi Process could re-emerge in some form in the near term, it is particularly important to examine the design flaws and other difficulties that marked its implementation during its initial phase. The analysis below shows that several of these constraints were closely linked to the regional political context and that these factors remain largely relevant today.

Analysis

The Nairobi Process has struggled to make significant progress. Its political track lost its momentum once the DRC government refused to negotiate with the M23, whilst the military track failed to contain the group's advances despite the deployment of the EACRF. Not only has the process been complicated by contextual developments, but it has also suffered from a long list of structural flaws. As such, it serves as a useful benchmark for assessing current and future mediation efforts.

On a conceptual level, the Nairobi Process overlooked the main drivers of a conflict that was, ultimately, regional in nature. As mentioned earlier, the political track quickly shifted to discussions with local armed groups (and them alone). This approach rendered the process largely obsolete, as these groups are more symptoms than causes of the wider regional conflict, which centres on the persistence of cross-border armed groups, refugee populations and competition between regional leaders. As one interviewee put it bluntly, "The refugee issue has not received the attention it deserves. The FDLR and the M23 will find it difficult to recruit if these refugees are given a real prospect of returning through a serious process."[78]

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This lack of relevance became evident shortly after the process began, as evidenced by the attitudes of most of the stakeholders. Whether it was the political dynamics within the EAC, the Facilitator, the Congolese government, armed groups or international donors, the testimonies were consistent: no one really showed any conviction or strong commitment, and key stakeholders were sometimes absent during the dialogue activities. This created another problem: the Nairobi Process took up a great deal of diplomatic space and attention.

The significance of the Nairobi process made sense at the outset, as a necessary effort to bring about regional stabilisation following the DRC's accession to the EAC. Unfortunately, it presented itself as a new initiative, disconnected from the structures, achievements,

[78] Interview with a member of a delegation, 18 February 2026.

mandates and agreements of established mechanisms such as the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region (PSCF) (methodological lesson 3). These mechanisms were admittedly largely inactive, but unlike the Nairobi Process, they take into account the main drivers of the armed conflicts that have affected the Great Lakes region for decades. Similarly, the old agreements concluded with the various armed groups were not systematically reviewed.[79] Consequently, this largely irrelevant initiative, to which very few actors were genuinely committed, ended up taking centre stage, diverting political attention from the need for a much more comprehensive solution aligned with the region's numerous existing mechanisms. This also encouraged a phenomenon of "forum shopping".

The process was not facilitated by a changing regional context either. The first half of 2022 was marked by a clear rapprochement between Uganda and Rwanda, and the DRC lost the support of Kenya as a key ally within the EAC following the Kenyan presidential elections in August of that year. Consequently, the EAC quickly became the wrong vehicle for leading a DRC-centred peace process. SADC countries became increasingly involved, both politically and militarily. The rivalry between the two regional blocs did not facilitate the coordination that was nevertheless essential between the various initiatives. This coordination was necessary because the EAC initiative lacked the capacity and leadership required to manage conflicts between member states. The fact that the M23 was largely a proxy force of Rwanda became the "elephant in the room" that could not be addressed, and was subsequently relegated to another process – the Luanda Process. Attempts by the ICGLR and the AU to bridge the gap between these blocs (such as the Luanda quadripartite meeting on 27 June 2023) were not successful.

More specific, process-related issues often concerned roles, leadership and capacity. Although nominally under the leadership of the EAC, the initiative relied heavily on Kenyan involvement at the head of the secretariat. Nevertheless, several people involved explained that the structure lacked capacity and expertise, which led to greater involvement from the United Nations.[80] Whilst confidence in the process remained low, funding also became an issue.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the failure of the military track, and more specifically the objective of neutralising cross-border armed groups, generally referred to as "negative forces". The creation of the EACRF has consolidated the deployment of regional armies in eastern DRC, targeting their respective armed opposition groups. At the time of writing (June 2026), thousands of Burundian and Ugandan soldiers are still in the process of "neutralising" RED-Tabara and the ADF respectively. Alongside its proxy, the M23, the RDF is unofficially involved in similar actions against the FDLR. However, years of military operations do not appear to have reduced the insecurity caused by these groups. On the contrary, they have amplified a vicious circle in which Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda support their neighbours' armed opposition groups, for offensive or defensive operations, thereby giving new impetus to these groups and de facto perpetuating the status of eastern DRC as a battleground for regional elites (political lesson 3).

[79] Interview with an actor involved in the mediation process, 17 February 2026.
[80] Interviews with people involved in the process, May 2022 and February 2026.

06 Lessons learnt from past peace processes

Political lessons

1. Direct, secret and closed-door negotiations between the leaderships of the DRC and Rwanda have historically made it easier to achieve short-term results than official mediation has, but these results have not proved to be sustainable. Such agreements reflect the balance of power and interests between the main parties at the time of negotiation. As soon as these underlying dynamics shift, the agreements quickly collapse, due to a lack of sufficient institutional mechanisms and political commitment to adapt to them. Two aggravating factors contribute to the fragility of these and other agreements: i) insufficient support from a broad range of political actors and local intermediaries; ii) a lack of long-term commitment from external actors and mediators, who tend to lose interest in the complexities of implementation and monitoring once the main conflict appears to have been resolved.

2. The use of financial and cooperative leverage by major donors, including the United States and the European Union, over neighbouring countries, particularly Rwanda, has a significant impact on peace processes. However, economic sanctions and other restrictive measures that are not part of a clearly defined and sustained political strategy have only a limited or temporary impact.

3. Bilateral agreements that establish a temporary status quo are unable to address the structural causes of the conflict, which are often of a national and regional nature. The refusal or inability of previous mediators to explicitly incorporate or challenge the red lines and interests of Burundi, the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda have not been helpful in achieving lasting negotiated settlements.

4. In a regional context where authoritarian and highly militarised political regimes remain the norm, persistent instability and conflict are structural features. In these circumstances, inclusive community representation may have only a limited impact.

5. The mobilisation and coordination of the international community are essential not only for the initial pressure but also for long-term follow-up — which requires creativity to find politically realistic solutions rather than replicating the structures of the past.

Methodological and operational lessons

1. The tendency to run parallel processes without clearly defined boundaries or coordination between them encourages forum shopping, exhausts limited (financial) resources and increases the likelihood of spoilers emerging.

2. At the same time, major multilateral processes that are not accompanied by complementary parallel initiatives have historically failed to promote peace. The institutionalisation of regular (bilateral) channels between the four countries in the sub-region (Burundi, DRC, Rwanda, Uganda) and of informal communication channels facilitated by trusted third parties (Qatar, the United States, the African Union) constitutes a more effective and less costly means of advancing mediation. Nevertheless, bilateralism also has its limitations: in a climate of deep mistrust between states in the region, it can fuel suspicion. Consideration should therefore be given to integrating these processes into a regional framework involving three or four countries, for example by expanding the CEPGL.

3. Mediation and stabilisation processes that are not based on a thorough understanding of the causes and dynamics of the conflict and of existing structures are likely to fail. This knowledge must come from both the mediator's own team and external analysts. It must also be firmly grounded in the lived experiences of local populations and extend beyond the perspectives and interests of political or institutional elites. This requirement also highlights the importance of systematic documentation: recording all stages, obstacles and working methods to improve collective memory.

4. The absence of binding measures or incentives to ensure political follow-up on agreements — particularly institutional reforms — is a key factor in the failure to implement peace agreements. The importance of monitoring mechanisms is often overlooked during negotiations.

Structural lessons

1. Persistent regional divisions hinder a lasting resolution of conflicts in the DRC: i) direct and indirect conflicts between the four countries of the Great Lakes region (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda); ii) interregional competition between East Africa (EAC or ICGLR) and southern Africa (SADC), often driven by regional powers, namely Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Angola and South Africa; iii) competition within regional blocs.

2. Processes focused on armed groups sometimes paradoxically lead to the creation of new armed groups seeking to benefit from the peace dividend.

3. To minimise the risk of sabotage by political leaders often inclined to prioritise their own interests, and to address the lack of good faith in implementing agreements, it is important to have sufficient knowledge of the actors involved in the conflict, their methods and their degree of responsibility.

07 Recommendations

Political recommendations

1. To ensure long-term stability in the DRC and the region, the mediation process should adopt a more inclusive approach in both its design and implementation. This requires meaningful consultation with and involvement of key political actors and different sections of society, paying particular attention to the participation of women and youth and incorporating their concerns into discussions and decision-making mechanisms. This approach should, however, aim for inclusion that is both meaningful and legitimate (see the section "Inclusivity of the peace processes" above).
2. To be more effective, financial and cooperative leverage should form part of a broader peacebuilding approach that addresses the causes of conflicts and incorporates political approaches to resolving them.
3. To secure neighbouring countries' support and improve the prospects for long-term stability, mediation must explicitly take into account — or seek to redefine — the interests, concerns and red lines (political, economic and security-related) of neighbouring countries and the DRC, with a view to aligning their interests within a regional framework.
4. To make agreements inclusive and sustainable, complementary processes must be established at the local and interstate levels. Local processes can address internal causes of conflict, such as land issues, identity, communal violence and sexual violence, which are often sidelined. This work, however, requires independent funding and trained personnel with a clear mandate to prevent it from being held hostage to diplomatic deadlock.
5. To ensure the sustainability of international efforts, these efforts must be built around the objectives of stability, peace, stronger democracy in the sub-region and economic development.

Methodological and operational recommendations

1. New mediation initiatives should seek to align with previous initiatives and build on their achievements.
2. Diversify mediation channels by complementing multilateral and interstate dialogues with measures to:
   - Integrate mechanisms for local ownership and consultation into high-level mediation;
   - Decentralise certain components of peace processes and promote negotiation mechanisms rooted in local communities to strengthen the participation and representation of women, men, young people and other social groups.

   Such an approach would help address the internal and external causes of the conflict and ensure that an agreement's provisions concerning the local situation are feasible, particularly regarding the return of refugees, land issues and local power-sharing arrangements.

3. Precede formal mediation with a preparatory phase that includes an in-depth conflict analysis drawing on diverse governmental and non-governmental sources, to develop an accurate picture of stakeholders' interests and understand the different narratives and root causes at the regional, national and local levels.

4. Devote equal attention to mechanisms for monitoring agreements and systematically evaluate them to identify ways to strengthen them and ensure continued follow-up.

Structural recommendations

1. Peace processes must be grounded in a truly regional political and economic approach involving, at a minimum, the four countries of the sub-region (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda). This approach should respect each country's internal balances and interests and promote mutually beneficial political, economic and security cooperation. Avoid processes that favour certain countries at the expense of others. Promote holistic approaches combining security, justice, education, governance and access to economic opportunities, while addressing the complex structural roots of conflicts.

2. Prevent this situation by developing a dynamic, participatory mapping exercise (workshops, forums, surveys) to build an accurate, evolving picture of armed and non-armed actors, their areas of influence, membership, aspirations, constraints and demands. Ensure meaningful community representation at all levels of decision-making and create spaces for young people active in peace and non-violence movements, so as to avoid rewarding young people who engage in violence and are marginalised within their communities.

3. Countering sabotage may require combining coercive measures with positive guarantees that go beyond the usual rhetoric about the benefits of regional cooperation. This requires a long-term strategy grounded in a realistic understanding of political systems and elite interests. Build a process that strengthens institutions, public accountability and citizen participation, so that elite interests do not hold the peace process hostage.

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Annex

Annex 1 – Laws, agreements and declarations

- Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement for the DRC and arrangements for its implementation, Lusaka, 10 July 1999.
- Informal Consultation between the "Political Opposition" and "Civil Society" Constituencies in the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations, Brussels meeting, 1 5–17 January 2002, Conclusions.
- Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pretoria, 16 December 2002.
- Inter-Congolese Dialogue, Pretoria Political Negotiations, Memorandum on Army and Security, Pretoria, 6 March 2003.
- Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations, Sun City, 2 April 2003.
- Dar es Salaam Declaration on Peace, Security, Democracy and Development in the Great Lakes Region, November 2004.
- Declaration of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), 2004.
- Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, December 2006.
- Joint Communiqué of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Government of the Republic of Rwanda on a Joint Approach to Ending Threats to Peace and Stability in Both Countries and the Great Lakes Region, Nairobi, 9 November 2007.
- Resolutions of the Conference on Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu Provinces, 2008.
- Statements of Commitment for Peace in North and South Kivu, Goma, 23 January 2008.
- Peace Agreement between the Government and the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP), Goma, 23 March 2009.
- "Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the Region", February 2013.
- ICGLR–SADC Joint Final Communiqué on the Kampala Talks, Nairobi, 12 December 2013.
- Declaration on the Commitments of the March 23 Movement at the Conclusion of the Kampala Dialogue, Nairobi, 12 December 2013.
- Declaration of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the Conclusion of the Kampala Talks, Nairobi, 12 December 2013.

Annex 2 – Chronology of mediation in the Great Lakes region (1990–2026)

Date	Event
24 April 1990	Start of the democratisation process in the DRC.
October 1990	Start of the Rwandan civil war; the RPF enters from Uganda.
March–August 1993	Masisi war.
April 1994	Start of the genocide in Rwanda.
September 1996	Start of the First Congo War.
17 May 1997	Laurent-Désiré Kabila takes power in Kinshasa.
2 August 1998	Start of the Second Congo War.
18 April 1999	Signing of the Sirte Peace Agreement (DRC, Uganda, Chad, Eritrea, Libya): "The DRC will be encouraged to engage in a national dialogue between all parties to the conflict." Also: "All parties undertake to refrain from any action aimed at overthrowing the government in power in the DRC."
10 July 1999	Signing of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (Angola, DRC, Namibia, Rwanda, Uganda and Zimbabwe; witnesses: Zambia, UN, SADC and OAU).
November 1999	Establishment of MONUC.
15 December 1999	Appointment of Sir Ketumile Masire as Facilitator of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue by the Organization of African Unity (OAU).
28 August 2000	Signing of the Arusha Agreement (Burundi).
19 June 2000	The government seals off the Facilitator's office in Kinshasa.
19 October 2000	The Congolese government rejects the Facilitator.
16 January 2001	Assassination of Laurent-Désiré Kabila; his son Joseph Kabila takes office on 26 January.
15 February 2001	Lusaka: summit of the signatories to the Lusaka Agreement; Joseph Kabila accepts the Facilitator.
18 March 2001	Kinshasa: Facilitator Masire visits and meets President Kabila.
2 April 2001	Appointment of Professor El Hacen Ould Lebatt as the Facilitator's representative in Kinshasa.
4 May 2001	Lusaka: signing of the "Declaration of Fundamental Principles for the Inter-Congolese Negotiations" by the government, the MLC, the RCD and RCD-K/ML. Recognition of the opposition's and civil society's freedom to select their representatives for the negotiations, and adoption of consensus as the basis for all decisions.
17 May 2001	Law No. 001-2001 of 17 May 2001 on the organisation and operation of political parties and groupings, authorising the resumption of their activities subject to conditions.

Date	Event
20–24 August 2001	Gaborone: preparatory dialogue and adoption of an "Act of Commitment / Republican Pact"; 74 delegates representing the government, the MLC, the RCD, RCD-K/ML, the political opposition and civil society. Establishment of a Republican Pact Monitoring Committee with two members per delegation. The final communiqué adds good governance and truth and reconciliation to the agenda.
15–21 October 2001	Addis Ababa: official opening of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue.
3 December 2001	The Facilitator announces that the dialogue will resume in Sun City in January 2002.
7–8 December 2001	Abuja: informal inter-Congolese negotiations mediated by Ibrahima Fall, UN Assistant Secretary-General, with Ambassador Mogwe and Professor El Hacen Ould Lebatt as observers; inclusive participation and the orderly withdrawal of foreign troops.
11–12 December 2001	Nairobi: meeting of the Republican Pact Monitoring Committee.
15–17 January 2002	Brussels: round table entitled "Informal Consultation between the Political Opposition and Civil Society Constituencies in the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations".
January–February 2002	Start of the rebellion led by Patrick Masunzu / Republican Federalist Forces (FRF).
25 February–19 April 2002	Sun City: Inter-Congolese Dialogue (Sun City I). Five commissions: Defence and Security: General Abubakr (Nigeria). Political and Legal Affairs: Moustapha Niasse. Humanitarian, Social and Cultural Affairs: Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. Peace and National Reconciliation: Professor Albert Tévoédjré. Economic and Financial Affairs: Ahmed Ould Abdallah. Mbeki Plan I / Mbeki Plan II.
8 April 2002	Official arrival of President Thabo Mbeki.
26 April 2002	Announcement of the establishment of the "Alliance for the Preservation of the Inter-Congolese Dialogue" (ASD), chaired by Étienne Tshisekedi (UPDS), including RCD-Goma, FONUS and others.
12 June 2002	Appointment of Moustapha Niasse as the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, assisted by Haïle Menkerios.
9 July 2002	Durban: establishment of the African Union (AU). South African President Thabo Mbeki becomes its first chair (July 2002–July 2003). Meeting between Joseph Kabila and Paul Kagame, with Mbeki and Kofi Annan.
30 July 2002	Pretoria: "Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of the DRC and the Republic of Rwanda on the Withdrawal of Rwandan Troops from DRC Territory and the Dismantling of the ex-FAR and Interahamwe in the DRC".
6 September 2002	Luanda: agreement between the governments of the DRC and the Republic of Uganda on the withdrawal of Ugandan troops from the DRC, cooperation and the normalisation of bilateral relations; agreement drawn up on 15 August 2002.

Date	Event
12–13 October 2002	Agreement between the DRC and Burundi on the withdrawal of Burundian forces from the DRC.
26 October 2002	Start of informal consultations in Pretoria, led by Moustapha Niasse and Minister Sydney Mufamadi; agreement on the "1 + 4" formula, initially proposed by President Museveni.
17 December 2002	Pretoria: signing of the Global and Inclusive Agreement on Transition in the DRC.
6 March 2003	Pretoria: signing of several documents: The transitional constitution. The memorandum on military matters. The memorandum on security matters during the transition.
1 April 2003	Sun City: adoption of the transitional constitution, promulgated on 4 April 2003.
2 April 2003	Signing of the Final Act of the Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations.
7 April 2003	Joseph Kabila is sworn in as president for the transitional period.
10 April 2003	First meeting of the International Committee in Support of the Transition.
27 April 2003	Arrival of the RCD-Goma delegation in Kinshasa; public announcement of the end of the war and freedom of movement throughout the country.
May 2003	Withdrawal of Ugandan troops from Ituri and violence in Bunia.
6 June 2003	Deployment of the EU's Operation Artemis in Bunia, Ituri.
19 June 2003	Bujumbura: Act of Commitment on the cessation of hostilities in North and South Kivu (government, RCD-G and RCD-K/ML).
29 June 2003	Second Memorandum on Army and Security, mediated by Moustapha Niasse, General Baril and the South African government.
30 June 2003	Mbandaka: decree announcing the composition of the transitional government, for a maximum of three years.
September 2003	Several RCD-Goma commanders refuse to travel to Kinshasa to join the FARDC and receive their new postings; rejection of military integration ("brassage") by Laurent Nkunda, Eric Ruhorimbere and Elie Gisondo.
27 November 2003	Pretoria: summit to follow up on the July 2002 agreement; agreement on a Joint Verification Mechanism to verify the disarmament of ex-FAR and Interahamwe members still in the DRC and the absence of Rwandan troops on Congolese territory, with AU involvement and MONUC support.
December 2003	Laurent Nkunda establishes "Synergy for Peace and Concord" (SNPC) in Bukavu, with an office in Goma.
February–March 2004	First Bukavu crisis (Jules Mutebutsi).
April 2004	Washington, DC: start of the tripartite process.
26 May–9 June 2004	Second Bukavu crisis (Mutebutsi and Laurent Nkunda).

Date	Event
10–11 June 2004	Attempted coup in Kinshasa.
25 June 2004	Abuja: Kabila–Kagame meeting facilitated by President Obasanjo, chair of the AU Peace and Security Council; agreement on a Rwanda–DRC Joint Verification Mechanism.
22 September 2004	New York: the DRC and Rwanda sign the terms of reference for a Joint Verification Mechanism, with the UN and AU as witnesses. First meeting in Kigali on 5 October 2004.
13 August 2004	Gatumba massacre, near the Burundi–DRC border.
October 2004	Strengthening of MONUC's mandate and establishment of its Eastern Division.
26 October 2004	Kigali: signing of the "Tripartite Plus Commission" agreement between the DRC, Rwanda and Uganda under US auspices, with MONUC as an observer, alongside the EU and Burundi, to address security problems along their shared borders; establishment of an Intelligence Fusion Cell (IFC) in Kisangani.
7 September 2005	Arrest warrant issued for Laurent Nkunda.
18–19 December 2005	Referendum on the Constitution of the DRC's "Third Republic".
18 February 2006	Entry into force of the DRC Constitution.
26 July 2006	Establishment of the National Congress for the Defence of the People (CNDP) by Laurent Nkunda, partly on the basis of his SNPC; military wing: Congolese National Army (ANC), led by Bosco Ntaganda.
June 2006	Deployment of EUFOR in Kinshasa.
30 July 2006	First round of presidential elections and legislative elections.
29 October 2006	Second round of presidential elections and provincial elections.
25 November 2006	Sake crisis, North Kivu; pressure on Goma.
6 December 2006	Joseph Kabila takes office as elected president.
15 December 2006	Nairobi: ICGLR Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region (Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Republic of the Congo, DRC, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and South Sudan).
31 December 2006	Kigali: agreement between CNDP leader Nkunda and General John Numbi on "mixage".
January–February 2007	Incidents in Bas-Congo involving Bundu Dia Congo.
14 March 2007	Pinga, North Kivu: establishment of the "Coalition of Congolese Resistance Patriots" (PARECO).
April–May 2007	Offensive by mixed brigades against the ex-FAR/Interahamwe (FDLR).
May 2007	End of "mixage".

Date	Event
16 May 2007	Announcement of an intercommunal round table for North and South Kivu at a Council of Ministers meeting.
25 May 2007	Elected representatives from North and South Kivu announce a boycott of parliamentary sessions.
8 September 2007	Ngurdoto Agreement, Tanzania, on bilateral cooperation between the DRC and the Republic of Uganda.
August 2007	CNDP–FARDC clashes.
9 November 2007	Nairobi: DRC–Rwanda Joint Communiqué on a joint approach to ending threats to peace and stability in both countries and the Great Lakes region; witnesses: UN, EU and United States.
1 December 2007	The DRC government submits a plan for the disarmament of the ex-FAR/ Interahamwe.
3 December 2007	Start of the FARDC offensive against Laurent Nkunda's CNDP; failure of the military option.
5 December 2007	Addis Ababa: US-chaired meeting of the Tripartite Plus Commission; reaffirmation of the Nairobi Joint Communiqué.
16 December 2007	Goma: establishment of the Nairobi Joint Monitoring Group on the ex-FAR/ Interahamwe (FDLR), comprising the DRC, Rwanda, MONUC and international partners: South Africa, Belgium, Canada, United States, France, United Kingdom, SADC, AU and EU.
20 December 2007	Presidential Ordinance No. 07/075 convening the "Conference on Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu Provinces", under presidential patronage and chaired by Father Malu Malu.
24 December 2007	CNDP unilateral ceasefire.
27 December 2007	Inaugural ceremony of the "Conference on Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu Provinces".
6 January 2008	Government ceasefire.
6–23 January 2008	Goma: "Conference on Peace, Security and Development in North and South Kivu Provinces". Signing of the Statements of Commitment for North and South Kivu provinces.
2 February 2008	Ordinance No. 08/008 on the organisation and operation of the "National Programme for Security, Pacification, Stabilisation and Reconstruction in North and South Kivu Provinces", known as the "Amani Programme"; six-month renewable term, with Father Malu Malu as programme coordinator. National mechanism for monitoring and implementing the Goma Conference's resolutions and recommendations.
4 February 2008	Goma: launch of the Joint Technical Commission on Peace and Security, comprising representatives of the government, armed groups and international partners.
10 February 2008	Establishment of an ad hoc ceasefire monitoring mechanism chaired by MONUC.

Date	Event
11 February 2008	Ordinance No. 08/017 of 11 February 2008 establishing and regulating the organisation and operation of the Steering Committee for implementing the DRC's plan to eradicate the presence of foreign armed groups on Congolese territory, pursuant to the DRC–Rwanda Joint Communiqué of 9 November 2007.
24 May 2008	Arrest of Jean-Pierre Bemba in Brussels under an ICC warrant.
26–28 May 2008	The Congolese government invites FDLR leaders to Kisangani to discuss arrangements for the demobilisation and repatriation of their combatants.
28 August 2008	Renewed CNDP–FARDC clashes.
17 September 2008	Agreement between the government and MONUSCO on joint operations against the FDLR.
1 October 2008	CNDP declaration calling on Congolese people to rise up "to initiate the process leading to the overthrow of the government"; rejection of the Amani process and demand for negotiations with the government at a neutral venue.
October 2008	Rwanda–DRC bilateral "4 + 4" mechanism to normalise relations between the two countries.
October 2008	The FARDC leave Goma; on 29 October, Nkunda declares a unilateral ceasefire.
3 November 2008	Announcement of the appointment of President General Olusegun Obasanjo as UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region.
7 November 2008	Nairobi: extraordinary ICGLR summit on the security situation in the DRC. Appointment of former President Benjamin Mkapa as facilitator on behalf of the ICGLR and AU. Establishment of a Nairobi-based monitoring mechanism and process chaired by President Mwai Kibaki, with a team of facilitators comprising President General Olusegun Obasanjo, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy, and President Benjamin Mkapa.
9 November 2008	SADC summit endorses the ICGLR summit and offers to send a regional force to North Kivu if required.
16 November 2008	Jomba: meeting between General Nkunda and Facilitator Olusegun Obasanjo.
4 December 2008	Letter from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), requesting the deployment of an EU multinational force modelled on Operation Artemis in Ituri in 2003, pending deployment of the additional personnel authorised by the Security Council.
4–5 December 2008	Joint communiqué of the DRC–Rwanda 4 + 4 Commission announcing joint operations against the ex-FAR/Interahamwe (FDLR), implementing the agreement of 9 November 2007.
8 December 2008	Nairobi: start of dialogue between the DRC and the CNDP, co-facilitated by Presidents Olusegun Obasanjo (UN) and Benjamin Mkapa (ICGLR, AU), followed by talks in Goma.
10 December 2008	Kigali: meeting of the Tripartite Plus Mechanism.

Date	Event
12 December 2008	Report by the UN Group of Experts on the DRC increases pressure on Rwanda.
14 December 2008	Haut-Uélé: joint FARDC–UPDF Operation Lightning Thunder against the LRA, continuing until 15 March 2009.
5 January 2009	Bosco Ntaganda announces that he has replaced Laurent Nkunda as leader of the CNDP.
16 January 2009	Goma: Ihusi Agreement between the DRC government, Rwanda, the CNDP and PARECO. Bosco Ntaganda announces that the CNDP and the DRC government have reached an agreement.
16 January 2009	Bwiza: CNDP declaration ending the war, issued by Bosco Ntaganda / Sultani Makenga. "The immediate placement of all CNDP combat forces at the disposal of the High Command of the Armed Forces of the [DRC], with a view to their integration into the national army."
20 January 2009	Launch of joint FARDC–RDF Operation Umoja Wetu ("Our Unity") in North Kivu against the ex-FAR/Interahamwe (FDLR); one-month duration, with a joint command and operational planning structure in Goma and a limited MONUC presence.
22–23 January 2009	Laurent Nkunda arrested by Rwanda.
22 January 2009	National Assembly President Vital Kamerhe issues a statement expressing concern about the President's decision to allow RDF soldiers to enter the DRC for joint operations without prior notification to Parliament.
26 January 2009	The FARDC begin the accelerated integration of the CNDP and other armed groups into their ranks. Newly integrated units are deployed under Operation Kimia II in North and South Kivu.
31 January 2009	Addis Ababa: second extraordinary summit of ICGLR heads of state and government on the security situation in the DRC.
4 February 2009	CNDP declaration confirming the end of hostilities and its transformation into a political movement. It calls for the resumption of talks with the government, amnesty for CNDP members and the establishment of a new ministry of internal security and intercommunal relations.
4 February 2009	The DRC defence minister presents a revised FARDC reform plan.
5 February 2009	FDLR President Ignace Murwanashaka proposes direct political negotiations with Rwanda and a peaceful settlement of the conflict.
25 February 2009	End of Operation Umoja Wetu; start of planning for joint FARDC–MONUC Operation Kimia II against the FDLR.
27–28 February 2009	Facilitator Obasanjo meets delegations from the DRC government and the CNDP, which submit a draft peace agreement for his consideration.
18–23 March 2009	Goma: talks on agreements between the DRC and the CNDP under the auspices of the co-facilitators.
23 March 2009	Peace Agreement between the DRC Government and the CNDP ("M23").

Date	Event
25 March 2009	Vital Kamerhe resigns as president of the National Assembly.
15–16 April 2009	Goma: UNHCR–DRC–Rwanda tripartite meeting to assess the situation of tens of thousands of Congolese refugees still living in Rwanda and Rwandan refugees in the DRC.
7 May 2009	Promulgation of the Amnesty Law covering acts of war and insurrection committed in North and South Kivu between June 2003 and the date of promulgation (Law No. 09/003 of 7 May 2009).
15 June 2009	Registration of the CNDP as a political party (Registration Order No. 032/2009).
29 June 2009	Presidential Ordinance No. 9/051 establishing the Stabilisation and Reconstruction Programme for Areas Emerging from Armed Conflict (STAREC); expanded geographical coverage encompassing North Kivu, South Kivu, Maniema, former Katanga (Tanganyika) and former Orientale Province (Haut-Uélé, Bas-Uélé and Ituri).
8 July 2009	End of the Amani process.
6 August 2009	Goma: meeting between Presidents Kagame and Kabila, the first bilateral summit between the two countries since the 1996–1997 war.
November 2009	Arrest of FDLR leaders in Germany: President Ignace Murwanashyaka and Vice-President Straton Musoni.
1 January 2010	Operation Amani Leo against the ex-FAR/Interahamwe (FDLR).
17 February 2010	Kigali: signing of the Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Rwanda, the Government of the DRC and UNHCR on the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees living in Rwanda.
April 2010	Enyele rebellion in Équateur Province.
2 June 2010	Assassination of human rights defender Floribert Chebeya in Kinshasa.
June–August 2010	Joint UPDF–FARDC Operation Rwenzori against Uganda's ADF-NALU rebels in North Kivu.
1 July 2010	MONUC becomes MONUSCO.
11 December 2010	The CNDP, led by Jean-Marie Runiga, joins the Alliance for the Presidential Majority (AMP).
20 January 2011	Constitutional amendment introducing a single-round presidential election (Law No. 11/002 revising certain articles of the DRC Constitution of 18 February 2006).
28 November 2011	Presidential and legislative elections, held in a single round.
21 December 2011	Joseph Kabila is sworn in for his second elected term.
9 May 2012	Matata Ponyo appointed prime minister.
May 2012	Establishment of the M23.

Date	Event
July 2012	Thomas Lubanga sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment for recruiting child soldiers in Ituri; first ICC conviction.
October 2012	The UN Security Council announces its intention to impose sanctions on M23 leaders and those violating the DRC arms embargo. The UN Group of Experts states that Rwanda and Uganda are supplying the M23 with arms and support.
15 November 2012	Renewed M23–FARDC fighting leads to the fall of Goma on 20 November.
9 December 2012	Start of the Kampala negotiations between the M23 and the DRC government.
24 February 2013	Addis Ababa: Framework Agreement on Peace, Security and Cooperation for the DRC and the Region.
12 March 2013	Luanda: establishment of the "Tripartite Joint Cooperation Mechanism" to facilitate implementation of the Framework Agreement (South Africa, Angola and DRC).
15 March 2013	Agreement between the M23 and the government following an assessment of the implementation of the agreement of 23 March 2009.
18 March 2013	UN: appointment of President Mary Robinson as Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region.
24 March 2013	Oyo: meeting on implementation of the Framework Agreement between President Denis Sassou N'Guesso of the Republic of the Congo, acting as mediator, Joseph Kabila, Paul Kagame of Rwanda and Yoweri Museveni of Uganda.
28 March 2013	New York: Resolution 2098 (2013) extends MONUSCO's mandate and establishes a Force Intervention Brigade within MONUSCO.
12 December 2013	Nairobi declarations following the Kampala dialogue: ICGLR–SADC Joint Declaration on the Kampala Dialogue (Museveni / Banda). Government declaration (Foreign Minister Raymond Tshibanda). M23 declaration (Chairman Bertrand Bisimwa).
11 February 2014	Law No. 014/006 granting amnesty for acts of insurrection, acts of war and political offences committed between 18 February 2006 and 20 December 2013.
18 April 2014	FDLR letter to regional actors, including SADC, and the UN announcing its willingness to surrender and demanding an inter-Rwandan dialogue as a condition for laying down arms; reiterated in a letter to the Security Council on 4 August.
11 June 2014	FARDC–RDF clashes in the Kibumba border area, North Kivu.
26 June 2014	Rome: at the initiative of US Special Envoy Feingold, the team of special envoys and representatives, accompanied by a Congolese delegation, meets FDLR representatives under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio. The envoys and representatives reiterate their demand for complete and unconditional FDLR disarmament.
2 July 2014	Luanda: meeting of ICGLR defence ministers urging the FDLR to lay down their arms within six months; mid-term review scheduled for October.

Date	Event
14 August 2014	ICGLR mini-summit in Luanda issues a six-month ultimatum to the FDLR to lay down their arms and decides on military operations against the group if no progress is observed at the October mid-term review.
17–18 August 2014	SADC summit confirms the decision of the Luanda mini-summit.
September 2014	Start of Operation Sukola II in Masisi, Rutshuru and Walikale, focused on the FDLR between 2014 and 2022.
14 December 2014	Protocol signed by the DRC and Uganda, in the presence of the ICGLR and SADC, on the voluntary and transparent repatriation of former M23 members from Uganda to the DRC.
12 May 2015	Extraordinary meeting of ICGLR defence ministers recommends continued military operations to neutralise the FDLR, focusing on its command structures; establishment of a DRC–Uganda–UN–ICGLR mechanism to expedite M23 repatriation, including consideration of relocation to a third country outside the region; and rapid repatriation of demobilised FDLR members in the three transit camps in the DRC.
27–28 May 2016	Joint assessment organised by the MNS with representatives of the DRC government and the M23 on implementation of the Nairobi agreements and repatriation of former M23 combatants.
27–28 June 2016	Joint assessment organised by the MNS with representatives of the DRC government and the M23 on implementation of the Nairobi agreements and repatriation of former M23 combatants.
18 October 2016	Signing of the Political Agreement on the Organisation of… [entry incomplete in the source].
Early 2017	Sultani Makenga re-establishes an M23 presence in the DRC in the DRC–Rwanda–Uganda border area, around Mount Sabinyo and Virunga National Park (VNP).
19 October 2017	Eighth meeting of the Framework Agreement's Regional Oversight Mechanism, Brazzaville: agreement to reactivate the monitoring mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed FDLR combatants in three transit camps (Kanyabayonga, Kisangani and Walungu) and former M23 members in Rwanda and Uganda, to be completed by 20 October 2018.
12 February 2018	Incidents between the M23 and the FARDC near a mountain in Virunga National Park; mutual accusations of violations of the Rwanda–DRC border and a request for an Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism (EJVM) investigation.
15 May 2018	Goma: AU–UN launch of the monitoring mechanism for the repatriation of disarmed FDLR combatants and former M23 members.
December 2018	Arrest of Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Pierre Nsekabano, deputy head of FDLR intelligence, and extradition to Rwanda.
30 December 2018	Presidential, national and provincial elections.
24 January 2019	President Félix Tshisekedi sworn in.

Date	Event
6 March 2019	Rwanda's foreign minister accuses Uganda of supporting the FDLR and RNC and announces the closure of the Rwanda–Uganda border.
25 March 2019	President Félix Tshisekedi visits the Rwanda Genocide Memorial.
31 March 2019	Elections held in Beni and Butembo, North Kivu, and Yumbi, Équateur.
18 September 2018	Neutralisation of "General" Sylvestre Mudacumura, FDLR military commander, by the FARDC with RDF support.
28 October 2019	Joint roadmap for activities relating to the repatriation to the DRC of former M23 combatants in Rwanda; Jean-Marie Runiga's faction and DRC and Rwandan military intelligence services.
9 November 2019	Neutralisation of "General" Jean-Michel Africa (Juvénal Musabimana), commander of RUD-Urunana, by the FARDC.
9 November 2019	Agreement on major road networks, trade and investment during President Tshisekedi's state visit to Uganda.
28 February 2020	Death of General Delphin Kahimbi, head of FARDC military intelligence; his arrest had been ordered by the DGM on 20 February 2020.
28 September 2020	Start of the controversy surrounding the rural municipality of Minembwe, South Kivu, following the installation of a Banyamulenge mayor.
October 2020 – April 2021	Secret DRC government–M23 talks: Claude Ibalanky (MNS) and Gilbert Kankonde, interior minister until April 2021; M23 delegation: Lawrence Kanyuka and Bosco Mberabagabo (Castro).
20 July 2020	Reported FARDC–M23 incidents in Virunga National Park, Rutshuru, North Kivu, near Mikeno volcano in the border area; MONUSCO reinforcements deployed and cordon-and-search operations in Bunagana.
2–25 November 2020	National consultations organised by President Tshisekedi.
18 November 2020	Cooperation agreement between Congolese state-owned mining company Sakima SA (Société Aurifère du Kivu et du Maniema) and Dott Services Ltd (Uganda) on 3T minerals in Maniema Province.
19 February 2021	Dott–Sakima implementation agreement on Punia Kasese Mining (PKM): 70 per cent Dott / 30 per cent Sakima (Exploitation Pétrolière du Congo); exploitation of 3T minerals at seven sites in Maniema Province.
26 April 2021	The National Assembly adopts Prime Minister Sama Lukonde's government programme (2021–2023), with stabilisation of the east as its main priority.
3 May 2021	State of siege declared in North Kivu and Ituri; provincial and territorial administrations replaced by military and police officers. Military governors assume command of military operations in both provinces.
3–6 May 2021	Goma: meeting of experts from the Contact and Coordination Group (CCG) on eradicating negative forces operating in eastern DRC (ADF, FDLR, RED-Tabara and FNL).

Date	Event
9 May 2021	UPDF delegation visits Beni for security discussions; establishment of a joint operations centre to coordinate operations against the ADF.
11–12 May 2021	President Tshisekedi visits Uganda for President Museveni's swearing-in ceremony.
27 May 2021	Foreign Minister Christophe Lutundula visits Entebbe to sign agreements on Ugandan road construction in North Kivu, approved by the Ugandan cabinet in October 2020. Ugandan construction company Dott Services is to receive UPDF protection. Kasindi–Beni–Butembo road. Bunagana–Rutshuru–Goma road.
16 June 2021	Bilateral meeting between Félix Tshisekedi and Yoweri Museveni at the Mpondwe / Kasese border; official launch of the North Kivu road project.
25–26 June 2021	Bilateral meetings between Félix Tshisekedi and Paul Kagame in Rubavu and Goma. Agreements on investment promotion and protection, avoidance of double taxation, combating tax fraud and tax evasion, and an agreement between Sakima SA and Rwandan company Dither Ltd.
25–26 June 2021	Bilateral discussions between FARDC and UPDF defence chiefs in Beni, covering the ADF and security for the North Kivu road project.
4 July 2021	Ordinance No. 21/038 establishing and regulating the organisation and operation of the Disarmament, Demobilisation, Community Recovery and Stabilisation Programme (P-DDRCS); the new national DDR programme, combined with STAREC, the stabilisation programme for the east.
5–6 July 2021	Bujumbura: meeting of intelligence and security chiefs from CCG countries; adoption of a two-year action plan on cross-border armed groups.
13 July 2021	President Ndayishimiye's bilateral visit to Kinshasa: agreements on security cooperation, joint operations against armed groups operating in the DRC and economic cooperation, including railways and trade. DRC support for Burundi's bid to join SADC; Burundi supports the DRC's accession to the EAC.
5 November 2021	FARDC defence chief visits Entebbe and signs memoranda of understanding on joint FARDC–UPDF operations.
7–8 November 2021	FARDC reports of clashes with the M23 in Tchanzu and Runyoni, Rutshuru, North Kivu, and in Jomba groupement. On 8 November, the M23 denies involvement, stating that it is in talks with the DRC presidency and referring to FARDC provocations.
10 November 2021	FARDC defence chief visits Kigali for talks on security cooperation. Rwanda's defence ministry communiqué refers to reports of M23 clashes.
16 November 2021	ADF / ISCAP bombing in Kampala.
20–21 November 2021	M23 attack on Virunga National Park facilities in Bukima.
25 November 2021	President Kagame visits Kinshasa for the "Summit on Positive Masculinity".

Date	Event
30 November 2021	Launch of Operation Shujaa: joint UPDF–FARDC operations against the ADF in North Kivu, later extended to southern Ituri.
13 December 2021	Kigali: signing of a DRC–Rwanda memorandum of understanding on police cooperation, including a Goma-based joint operations centre.
20 December 2021	Violent demonstration in Goma against the "deployment of Rwandan police in Goma".
20 December 2021	Deployment of Burundian forces (FDNB) in South Kivu, targeting RED-Tabara forces.
22 January 2022	Muhoozi Kainerugaba visits Rwanda and meets President Kagame.
31 January 2022	Reopening of the Rwanda–Uganda border, closed since 27 February 2019.
9 February 2022	ICJ judgment on reparations in Armed Activities on the Territory of the Congo (DRC v. Uganda): US$325 million in compensation for the 1998–2003 war.
24 February 2022	Tenth meeting of the PSCF Regional Oversight Mechanism, Kinshasa.
28 March 2022	Major M23 attack on Bunagana, repelled with limited UPDF support.
28–29 March 2022	North Kivu's military governor accuses Rwanda; the Rwandan ambassador to the DRC is summoned and the ICGLR's EJVM is asked to investigate the allegations.
29 March 2022	MONUSCO helicopter shot down in North Kivu; hit from an M23-controlled area.
8 April 2022	The DRC formally joins the East African Community (EAC). First conclave of what becomes the Nairobi Process (Kenyatta, Tshisekedi, Kagame and Museveni).
20 April 2022	MNS head Ibalanky visits Kampala for talks with the M23, to continue in Nairobi.
21 April 2022	Nairobi: second conclave meeting (Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda); agreement that deployment of a regional force "must begin immediately", under DRC leadership, and on a consultative meeting with armed groups in Nairobi.
23 April 2022	M23 excluded from the Nairobi Process and declared a "terrorist group" by the Kinshasa government.
24 April 2022	President Paul Kagame's first visit to Uganda in four years, for Muhoozi Kainerugaba's birthday.
8–9 May 2022	Meeting of armed group leaders near Pinga, Masisi, North Kivu, initiated by Guidon's NDC-R and attended by Nyatura FAPC, Nyatura Abazungu, APCLS, the FARDC and two FDLR representatives; emergence of the "Wazalendo".
21–23 May 2022	President Tshisekedi visits Burundi.
23 May 2022	Rwanda reports that FARDC rockets have struck its territory.
26 May 2022	DRC Foreign Minister Lutundula accuses Rwanda of attacking Rumangabo military camp.
27 May 2022	The Rwandan government accuses the DRC of collaborating with the FDLR.

Date	Event
28 May 2022	Malabo: extraordinary AU summit; Congolese Foreign Minister Christophe Lutundula openly challenges Rwanda over its support for the M23. Angola mandated by the AU Summit to lead mediation.
15 June 2022	The DRC decides to suspend bilateral agreements signed with Rwanda.
20 June 2022	Nairobi: third conclave (Ndayishimiye, Tshisekedi, Kenyatta, Kagame, Kiir, Museveni and the Tanzanian ambassador to Kenya); agreement on the chiefs of defence's preparatory plans for EACRF deployment.
6 July 2022	Luanda Tripartite Summit adopts a detailed ICGLR roadmap for the pacification process in eastern DRC; start of the Luanda Process.
11 July 2022	Rwandan intelligence delegation visits Kinshasa and meets President Tshisekedi on FDLR–FARDC collaboration.
22 July 2022	Twenty-second EAC Summit: Article 4 of the EAC Protocol on Peace and Security invoked for the Nairobi Process; President Uhuru Kenyatta appointed Facilitator to oversee implementation. Establishment of a special fund for the Nairobi Process. Decision to "rapidly deploy a joint regional force in eastern DRC".
15 August 2022	FDNB presence in South Kivu acknowledged; cooperation with the FARDC.
22–24 August 2022	CCG meeting / fifth meeting of intelligence and security chiefs from CCG member states, Kampala.
22 September 2022	French President Macron brings Presidents Kagame and Tshisekedi together in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. Also in September: meetings in Paris between DRC and Rwandan intelligence officials, facilitated by French intelligence services.
22 October 2022	Reopening of the Rwanda–Burundi land border, closed since 2015.
29 October 2022	Rwanda's ambassador to the DRC, Vincent Karega, declared persona non grata.
12 November 2022	Arrival in Goma of the first Kenyan EACRF personnel.
26 November–6 December 2022	Third round of inter-Congolese talks under the Nairobi DDR process.
8 December 2022	The DRC government publishes its White Paper on Rwandan Aggression against DRC Territory, covering 21 November 2021–8 December 2022.
10 December 2022	Kinshasa: signing of joint venture agreements with the United Arab Emirates to establish Primera Gold and Primera Metals (3T metals).
8 January 2023	President Kagame threatens to expel Congolese Tutsi refugees.
27 February 2023	In Geneva, President Tshisekedi announces that he has asked UNHCR to revive tripartite talks with Rwanda on the return of the respective refugee communities.
23 March 2023	FARDC–M23 ceasefire.
8 May 2023	SADC summit approves deployment of a SADC force in eastern DRC.

Date	Event
15 May 2023	Tripartite ministerial meeting under the February 2010 Tripartite Agreement.
22 May 2023	Law No. 23/014 establishing the Armed Defence Reserve in the DRC (RAD).
26–27 June 2023	Tripartite technical meeting on voluntary refugee returns, Rwanda–DRC. An estimated 208,455 Rwandan refugees in the DRC, including 76,353 registered. 82,724 Congolese refugees in Rwanda.
27–28 August 2023	Burundi President Ndayishimiye visits Kinshasa; signing of a bilateral defence agreement.
5 September 2023	EACRF mandate extended for three months.
October 2023	Resumption of FARDC–M23 hostilities.
19–20 November 2023	US Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines visits Rwanda and the DRC; establishment of a Joint Intelligence Exchange Cell (Rwanda–DRC–United States).
21 November 2023	Announcement formally prohibiting FARDC cooperation with the FDLR.
23–24 November 2023	Tripartite dialogue on refugee returns, Nairobi.
11 December 2023	The United States negotiates a temporary ceasefire between the FARDC and the M23/RDF.
8 December 2023	End of the EACRF mandate.
15 December 2023	Nairobi: establishment of the Congo River Alliance (AFC), led by former CENI head Corneille Nangaa Yobeluo; the alliance includes the Banyamulenge movement Twirwaneho. The DRC recalls its ambassador to Kenya.
15 December 2023	Start of SAMIDRC deployment in North Kivu.
20 December 2023	Presidential, legislative and provincial elections. Elections are not held in Masisi and Rutshuru territories, North Kivu, or Kwamouth, Maï-Ndombe, where voters could not register for security reasons.
28 December 2023	End of the temporary ceasefire between the FARDC and the M23/RDF.
11 January 2024	Closure of land borders between Burundi and Rwanda; suspension of diplomatic relations.
20 January 2024	President Tshisekedi sworn in for a five-year term.
21 March 2024	General Muhoozi Kainerugaba appointed Chief of Defence Forces (UPDF).
21 March 2024	First foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
6 May 2024	General Muhoozi visits Kasindi, North Kivu, and meets FARDC Chief of Staff General Tshiwewe.
5 July 2024	Two-week humanitarian ceasefire in eastern DRC negotiated by the United States, extended until 3 August 2024.

Date	Event
18 July 2024	Kampala: meeting between an M23 delegation and Jean-Bosco Bahala, P-DDRCS coordinator; Bahala dismissed on 23 July 2024.
25 July 2024	US sanctions against the AFC and its affiliates, the M23 and Twirwaneho.
26 July 2024	EU restrictive measures against nine individuals linked to the FDLR, ADF, M23 and other groups, and one entity, the AFC, including its leader Corneille Nangaa.
30 July 2024	Second foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
1 August 2024	Reaction to the Luanda meeting and ceasefire: "The AFC/M23 hereby emphasises that it is not automatically bound by the conclusions of meetings it did not attend."
4 August 2024	Ceasefire in eastern DRC under the Luanda Process.
6 August 2024	UN Security Council Resolution 2746 (2024) on MONUSCO support for SAMIDRC.
7–8 August 2024	Meeting of Rwandan and DRC experts facilitated by Angola's foreign ministry under the Luanda Process. Harmonised plan for FDLR neutralisation. Development of a disengagement plan for the forces.
11 August 2024	Kigali: President Kagame sworn in for a five-year term.
20–21 August 2024	Third foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
29–30 August 2024	Rubavu: meeting of the Luanda Process technical commission.
31 August–3 September 2024	Luanda: meeting between the Angolan facilitators under the Luanda Process and an M23 delegation.
5 September 2024	Uganda arrests an M23 recruiter.
14 September 2024	Fourth foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
19 September 2024	Kinshasa: Angolan foreign minister visits and meets President Tshisekedi.
12 October 2024	Fifth foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
19 October 2024	Contacts between President Lourenço and Presidents Tshisekedi and Kagame.
22 October 2024	Letter from FDLR President Victor Byiringiro to President Lourenço.
30 October 2024	President Tshisekedi visits Uganda.
30–31 October 2024	Addis Ababa: third DRC–Rwanda–UNHCR tripartite meeting.
30–31 October 2024	Luanda: intelligence experts agree on the CONOPS and the composition of the Expanded Ad Hoc Verification Mechanism (MVA-R).
31 October 2024	Concept of Operations for the harmonised plan for FDLR neutralisation and force disengagement; lifting of Rwanda's defensive measures.
5 November 2024	Goma: establishment of the MVA-R under Angolan command, in the presence of the foreign ministers of Angola, the DRC and Rwanda.

Date	Event
8 November 2024	US Department of State statement on ceasefire violations in eastern DRC.
25 November 2024	Sixth foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process; ministerial agreement on the CONOPS.
26 November 2024	Virtual foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
27 November 2024	Meeting between Presidents Lourenço and Tshisekedi.
28 November 2024	Meeting between Presidents Lourenço and Kagame.
20–30 November 2024	Arusha: EAC summit calls for a joint meeting with SADC, a coordinated approach and consolidation of ongoing initiatives.
3–6 December 2024	President Biden visits Angola; Lobito Corridor and meetings with the presidents of Zambia and the DRC.
14 December 2024	Seventh foreign ministers' meeting under the Luanda Process.
15 December 2024	Planned summit involving Presidents Tshisekedi, Kagame, Lourenço and Kenyatta; President Kagame cancels his attendance at the last minute.
18 December 2024	Kigali: Angolan foreign minister visits and meets President Kagame.
22 December 2024	Bujumbura: President Tshisekedi visits Burundi and meets President Ndayishimiye.
4 January 2025	New M23/RDF offensive in North Kivu; capture of Masisi Centre.
7–8 January 2025	Luanda: President Ruto visits; agreement on the need for a joint SADC–EAC meeting to consolidate the Luanda Process.
23 January 2025	M23/RDF offensive captures Sake.
26 January 2025	Goma: Angola decides to withdraw its personnel from the verification mechanisms.
27–28 January 2025	Capture of Goma by the M23/RDF.
28 January 2025	Kinshasa: violent protests target several Western and African embassies.
28 January 2025	Emergency online summit of the SADC Organ / troop-contributing countries.
29 January 2025	Twenty-fourth EAC Summit, without the DRC.
30 January 2025	President Lourenço holds talks with Presidents Kagame and Macron.
30–31 January 2025	French foreign minister visits Kinshasa and Kigali.
31 January 2025	Harare: SADC summit.
3 February 2025	AFC announces a humanitarian ceasefire.
8 February 2025	Dar es Salaam: joint SADC–EAC summit.

Date	Event
14 February 2025	1,261st session of the AU Peace and Security Council at heads-of-state level: EAC–SADC–AU coordination mechanism, in coordination with the ICGLR and ECCAS.
16 February 2025	The M23/DRC occupies Bukavu.
11 March 2025	Luanda: President Tshisekedi visits; announcement of direct negotiations between the DRC government and the M23.
13 March 2025	SADC summit formally decides to end SAMIDRC's mandate.
17 March 2025	The M23 announces that it will no longer participate in peace talks in Luanda, in response to international sanctions announced by the EU.
18 March 2025	The Angolan presidency announces that direct talks between the DRC government and the M23 will not take place.
18 March 2025	Doha: meeting between Presidents Tshisekedi and Kagame.
24 March 2025	Luanda: Angola announces the end of its mediation.
24 March 2025	Second virtual EAC–SADC summit; appointment of a panel of facilitators: Obasanjo, Kenyatta, Motlanthe, Samba-Panza and Work-Zewde.
12 April 2025	Appointment of the President of Togo's Council of Ministers, Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé, as AU mediator.
23 April 2025	Doha: signing of a DRC–AFC joint declaration.
25 April 2025	Washington, DC: foreign ministers sign the Declaration of Principles between Rwanda and the DRC.
27 June 2025	Washington, DC: signing of the Peace Agreement between the DRC and Rwanda.
19 July 2025	Doha: Declaration of Principles between the DRC Government and the AFC/M23.
24 July 2025	Addis Ababa: UNHCR–DRC–Rwanda tripartite ministerial meeting.
1 August 2025	Washington, DC: Regional Economic Integration Framework (REIF).
14 October 2025	Doha: agreement on the Ceasefire Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MSCV).
30 October 2025	Paris: Conference in Support of Peace and Prosperity in the Great Lakes Region.
15 November 2025	Doha: "Doha Framework Agreement for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the DRC Government and the AFC/M23".
4 December 2025	Washington, DC: signing of the "Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity between the DRC and Rwanda".
10 December 2025	Capture of Uvira, South Kivu, by the RDF/M23.
17 January 2026	Lomé: high-level meeting on the crisis in eastern DRC.
18 January 2026	RDF/M23 forces leave Uvira, South Kivu.

Annex 3 – List of interviews and focus groups

No.	Date	Interviewee	Sex
1	11 May 2020	Former MONUSCO official	Male
2	17 June 2020	Former mediator in the Kampala dialogue	Female
3	31 March 2022	Former leader of a rebel movement	Male
4	12 February 2026	Former head of a rebel movement's delegation to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Male
5	14 February 2026	Former member of the government delegation to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Male
6	16–17 February 2026	Former director of a Congolese mediation NGO	Male
7	17 February 2026	Former member of the Nairobi Process Facilitator's team	Male
8	18 February 2026	Former MONUSCO official	Male
9	18 February 2026	Former negotiator on the government team in the Nairobi Process	Male
10	19 February 2026	Former member of the mediation team for the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Male
11	19 February 2026	Former negotiator for a rebel movement in several negotiations	Male
12	21 February 2026	Former rebel movement negotiator at the Goma Conference	Male
13	21 February 2026	Former rebel movement negotiator in the Kampala dialogue	Male
14	25 February 2026	Former head of a rebel movement's delegation to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Male
15	25 February 2026	Former delegate of a rebel movement to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Male
16	25 February 2026	Focus group (8 young people from Goma and Kinshasa)	5 men and 3 women
17	25 February 2026	Former negotiator for an armed group at the Goma Conference	Male
18	25 February 2026	Former delegate of the women's constituency to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Female
19	26 February 2026	Former delegate of the women's constituency to the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Female
20	26 February 2026	Focus group (6 women from Goma and Bukavu and 4 from Kinshasa)	6 women

No.	Date	Interviewee	Sex
21	27 February 2026	Former negotiator for a rebel movement in several negotiations	Male
22	27 February 2026	Former assistant to the facilitators at the Goma Conference	Female
23	27 February 2026	Former member of the government team in the Kampala dialogue	Female
24	28 February 2026	Former civil society participant in the Kampala dialogue	Female
25	3 March 2026	Former Ethiopian diplomat	Male
26	12 March 2026	Former member of the facilitation team for the Nairobi negotiations	Female
27	26 March 2026	Former US diplomat	Male
28	27 March 2026	Official in the Office of the UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region	Female
29	28 March 2026	MONUSCO official	Male
30	29 March 2026	MONUSCO official	Female
31	7 May 2026	Former negotiator for a rebel movement at the Inter-Congolese Dialogue	Male

Annex 4 – Participants of the research/practice conference on peace processes in the DRC, Nairobi, 15–16 April 2026

Altiné Traoré	MONUSCO
Amédée Fikirini	Community of Practice on Peacebuilding (CPP)/(Life and Peace Institute)
Christine Pellens	European Institute of Peace (EIP)
Christoph Vogel	Office of the UN Resident Coordinator in the DRC
Claudine Tsongo	Dynamique des femmes juristes (DFJ)
Dohotie Coulibaly	Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General of the Great Lakes Region
Eddy Mbona	EIP
Evariste Mfaume	CPP (*Solidarité des volontaires pour l'humanité*, SVH), reference group
Fred Bauma	Ebuteli (online)
Freddy Nkururiye	Togolese Republic/African Union mediation
Indira Wester	FBA, reference group
Johanna Malm	FBA
Joshua Walker	Independent, research team
Koen Vlassenroot	Ghent University (online)
Marie-Rose Tshite	University of Cincinnati, reference group
Netsanet Tekeda Alemu	African Union Commission
Olivier Baliahamwabo	Embassy of Sweden, Kinshasa
Pacifique Borauzima Buluhukiro	CPP (Interpeace), reference group
Per Bjälkander	FBA
Rigobert Minani	CEPAS, research team
Steven Spittaels	EIP, research team (online)
Tharcisse Kayira	CPP (*Action pour le développement et la paix endogènes,* ADEPAE), reference group
Theresa Pirkl	Office of the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General of the Great Lakes Region
Tristan Terryn	Office of the European Union Special Representative to the Great Lakes Region
Xavier Macky	CPP (*Justice Plus*)

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