

Open Letter

12 February 2025

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU)

**H.E. Teodoro Obiang Nguema
President of Equatorial Guinea**

**H.E. Miguel Ntutumu Evuna
Permanent Rep. of Equatorial Guinea to the AU
Chairperson of the AU PSC in the month of February
Addis Ababa**

Excellencies,

Subject: Urgent actions proposed for the AU PSC Heads of State and Government convening on the DRC Crisis at the 38th AU Summit.

We, the undersigned Congolese, African and International organizations, write to you to respectfully urge the Heads of State and Government attending the AU Peace and Security Council meeting scheduled for 14 February 2025 on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to take decisive actions, including setting clear timelines for the proposals outlined in this letter.

We applaud the efforts by the AU in response to the recent outbreak of the violence in Goma, DRC. We acknowledge efforts by the PSC to convene the Emergency Ministerial meeting held on 28 January 2025 and the resultant [Communiqué](#), mandating the AU Commission to immediately deploy a fact-finding mission on the ongoing crisis in Eastern DRC. We also note the efforts so far of the AU Commission Chairperson, Mr. Moussa Faki, to engage with the joint SADC-EAC Summit on the DRC crisis convened on 8 February 2025 which called for the cessation of hostilities and an immediate ceasefire; restoration of essential utilities and supply lines for food and other essential commodities to ensure humanitarian support; and peaceful resolution to the conflict through the Luanda/Nairobi process.

The armed conflict between the “Mouvement du 23 Mars” (M23), supported by the Rwanda Defence Forces (RDF), and the armed forces of the DRC (FARDC), supported by its allies, including armed groups, since the resumption of armed activities of the M23 at the end of 2021, has resulted in serious Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law violations, which may amount to international crimes, including sexual and gender-based violence, and forcible transfer and displacement of civilians.

We, the signatories, are very concerned by the situation of the civilian populations, including women and children, many of whom have been killed, injured or displaced by the fighting. We have recently received troubling reports of hundreds of women and girls being raped and subsequently killed during the prison break from Munzenze prison in Goma, when M23 entered Goma on 27 January 2025.

The humanitarian situation in North and South Kivu is very dire, where humanitarian corridors to deliver aid and allow civilians to flee are blocked by the fighting, while the needs of the civilian population are very high. Human rights defenders, as well as humanitarian actors, in the region are being targeted by both sides of the conflict, and many have been forced to stop their very essential activities of documenting and denouncing Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law violations, and of f Humanitarian assistance.

Further to the efforts witnessed so far we opine that more can be done by the African Union to catalyse a more effective response to the crisis and advise that the AU PSC Heads of State and Government meeting ensures:

- 1) That the AU Commission Chairperson briefs the Heads of States** during this special PSC sitting on steps taken to implement the decision of the Ministerial meeting **on the deployment of a fact-finding mission to Eastern DRC, including specific timelines** for ensuring the fact-finding is operational and reporting back to the Council.
- 2) The AU PSC Heads of States and Governments set a clear time frame for the rolling out and operationalisation of the fact-finding mission and in any event the mission to commence in the month of February 2025.**
- 3) Develop specific modalities of how the AU effectively collaborate** with the SADC-EAC mediation and other mechanisms that are engaged in seeking to resolve the crisis.

Considering the over [30 years of endless violence affecting the Congolese people](#), we, the signatories, urge the African heads of States and Government, as well as other actors and decision makers investing in the resolution of the crisis to go beyond statements and intensify efforts to influence and exert pressure to immediately end the fighting and protect civilians. A lasting solution, addressing the root causes of the armed conflict, must be found to this regional crisis in the interest of the civilian population.

Further, our organisations urge the AU PSC Heads of State and Government to use their full influence to ensure all parties to the conflict uphold International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law. The ongoing violence has resulted in grave violations, including targeted killings, forced displacement, and sexual and gender-based violence, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is imperative that these violations are met with firm condemnation and concrete actions to protect civilians and hold perpetrators accountable. In this regard, we call on the AU PSC to:

1) End the violence and strengthen peacekeeping efforts:

The governments of the DRC and Rwanda, alongside the M23 and other armed groups, including FDLR, must immediately cease hostilities and commit to dialogue. Existing peacekeeping forces must be adequately resourced with a clear mandate to protect civilians, secure humanitarian corridors, and safeguard human rights defenders.

2) Protect and support human rights defenders and civil society:

Human rights defenders and civil society organizations are essential in peacebuilding and accountability efforts. The AU must ensure their protection and full participation in all stages of conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery. Secure mechanisms should be established to support their documentation of violations and advocacy for justice, truth and reparations for victims. Civil society must be actively involved in mediation and reconstruction efforts to ensure sustainable peace.

3) Ensure accountability for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law violations:

When the AU Fact-Finding Mission is established and finds that violations have been committed, ensure that accountability is pursued, particularly for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, within the AU Human Rights and accountability mechanisms that enable meaningful participation of victims and survivors and engagement with civil society, to hold perpetrators accountable.

4) Facilitate humanitarian aid and safe passage for civilians:

Humanitarian corridors must be secured to allow aid to reach affected populations and ensure civilians can safely flee the violence. The AU should work with humanitarian organizations to remove obstacles preventing the delivery of critical assistance.

5) Protect and empower women:

Specific protection measures for women and girls should be implemented, including safe zones, access to healthcare, and psychosocial support for survivors of SGBV. Women must be included in peace negotiations, conflict resolution, and post-conflict recovery to ensure their voices are represented in decision-making.

While we acknowledge the efforts made by the AU and its partners thus far, it is clear that the magnitude of the crisis requires immediate and more comprehensive measures. We respectfully submit our strongest appeal for urgent action and sincerely look forward to your decisive response.

Sincerely,

List of signatories :

- Association Tchadienne de Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (ATPDH)
- Action des Chrétiens pour l'abolition de la Torture en RDC (ACAT – RDC)
- African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies (ACJPS)
- Association africaine de défense des droits de l'Homme (ASADHO)
- Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF)
- Comité National Femme et Développement (CONAFED)
- Confédération Nationale des Producteurs Agricoles du Congo (CONAPAC)
- DITSHWANELO, the Botswana Centre for Human Rights
- Filimbi, mouvement citoyen
- Groupe Lotus
- Haki Zangu Asbl, HaZa RDC
- Fédération Internationale des ACAT (FIACAT)
- Fédération Internationale pour les droits Humains (FIDH)
- La Nouvelle société civile congolaise
- Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
- Ligue des Electeurs
- Ligue ITEKA
- Mensen met een Missie

- Observatoire Congolais des Droits de l'Homme (OCDH)
- Observatoire des Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda (ODHR)
- Observatoire Mondial contre la Torture (OMCT)
- Organisation Guinéenne de Défense des droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (OGDH)
- Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)
- Protection International
- Sudan Human Rights Monitor (SHRM)
- TRIAL International
- Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice