

Forum (Council, Committee, Assembly): [Reform Security Council](#)

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TOPIC 1: The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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I. Introduction to the Topic

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has persisted over several decades, starting with the First Congo War in 1996. Since then, the conflict has caused around 5.5 million deaths, along with devastating humanitarian impacts such as extreme poverty, sexual violence, child and forced labor, and other human rights violations. This long-lasting conflict in the DRC was caused by multiple complex factors mainly associated with the political tension between the support of the rebel groups in the country. The escalation of the conflict was also rooted in the aftermath of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, where nearly two million Hutus crossed the Congolese border due to the Rwandan Patriotic Front's (RPF) victory. With the justification of considering these Hutu extremist migrants as a continuous threat, the Rwandan troops launched an invasion of the DRC, which was then called Zaire. This tension developed further in the country as the March 23 Movement (M23) emerged, followed by the deterioration of the Djugu and Mahagi conflict in the Ituri region recently, displacing more than 881,00 people as of March 2022.

Not only this, highlighting the country's land-locked geographical location surrounded by other African states, the conflict in the DRC has triggered its regional instability, exposing the nearby states to the possible danger of the humanitarian crisis the DRC is facing. Some key states involved in the situation are Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi—being motivated by reasons such as shared border and DRC's natural resources. The complex intertwined nature of the nearby countries, therefore, strongly highlights the significance of resolving the conflict peacefully. Not only this, the fragility of the regional states could expand into threatening international peace and security, which includes the involvement of foreign countries in the conflict caused by the abundance of precious metals and stones in the DRC. As the foreign country maintains a trade relationship with the armed forces to gain access to Congo's natural resources, there have been reports of child labor and other illegal practices in Congolese mines.

Lastly, the conflict in the DRC has been a great case study to evaluate the UN's engagement in these situations. Working over 20 years of trying to keep the peace and cover the fragility of the state, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) has faced various uprisings from the Congolese population. Despite the hard efforts of the UN to reduce the fragility of the state, the people considered the mission to be a failure as it didn't actually resolve the basis of the problem. To specify, no one was held accountable for the crimes and conflict, thus the peacekeepers only protected the people temporarily using military forces and gave a chance for the militant groups to rise repeatedly over the years.

Overall, the conflict in the DRC once again urgently calls for actions taken by other states at an international level to ensure the security and sustainable peace of the civilians of the DRC strongly needed, referring back to the theme of the 2023 November Conference: How do we ensure sustainability through multilateral cooperation?.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Cease-fire

A regulation of military activities to cease all hostilities and armed conflicts for a certain period of time in a given area. This can be decided through negotiations between parties in the conflict. This is also referred to as the term “armistice”, but this means to suspend hostilities over the whole war for an indefinite period of time. A ceasefire can be declared for reasons such as facilitating negotiations, allowing humanitarian aid delivery, or providing temporary relief from hostilities. However, it is important to recognize that a ceasefire cannot be used as a permanent resolution to the conflict but is a temporary measure to prevent the deterioration of the situation.

UN Peacekeeping Force

A force that assists host countries in making peace after conflicts is guided by three basic principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. The major function of this force is to provide security in the conflict zone or elections, assist military personnel, and reintegrate ex-combatants. There have currently been 12 UN peacekeeping operations deployed on three different continents. The UN peacekeeping operations also allow more effective global partnerships between the different parts of the United Nations and the officials of the host country.

Annexation

An act where the possession of a piece of land or a country is taken away by another country. This does not include giving or selling the territory. Annexation usually happens by force or military occupation, but it can also be through methods such as elections or joint congress. In the context of DRC’s conflict, an act of annexation can be observed through Belgium’s colonization of DRC.

Demobilization

A controlled release of troops from armed forces, usually after a conflict. Some key phases in demobilization include the separation of the soldier from their armed group, the formation of the soldier’s new identity, and the reintegration of the soldier into society with economic and healthy social life. Demobilization holds crucial importance in maintaining lasting peace due to the potentially destabilizing role of peace of the ex-combatants.

Disarmament

Collection, documentation, control, and disposal of any weaponry from combatants of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of programs that are responsible for managing arms. However, some safety and security issues to be aware of during the process of disarmament are operations risks that include arms being a threat to civilians/community or the program personnel, fairness, and equal disarmament that includes building neutrality and trust in the process, and technical risks that regards the potential explosiveness/danger the weapons contain itself.

III. Key Stakeholders

Rwanda

As a country with a shared border with DRC, Rwanda has been involved in the conflict in Congo from the very beginning of the First Congo War (1996~1997), primarily with its ethnic tension between the Tutsi and Hutu groups during the Rwandan Genocide as explained in the introduction. Starting from the Second Congo War (1998~2003), Rwanda was also accused of actively supporting rebel groups in Congo, specifically the March 23 Movement (M23) by deploying troops to provide direct military support. This ongoing tension between the two countries provides great significance in addressing this issue as it closely relates to the key issue of human rights violations.

March 23 Movement (M23)

This is a rebel group based in eastern Congo, which includes former National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) combatants. The rebel group M23 is reported for committing inhumane killings, rape, and other war crimes from the early 2010s. M23 has been documented also to have committed 8 killings and 14 cases of rape over a 5 months span from November 2022 to March 2023, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), emphasizing their impact on the humanitarian instability in the country.

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)

It is one of the largest peacekeeping missions in the world with more than 12,000 troops still deployed in the DRC. Its primary aim is to maintain peace and stability in Congo through means such as demobilization, disarmament, and protection of civilians. However, as discussed in the introduction, MONUSCO has been described as a ‘failed’ mission. This is shown through the Congolese citizens' protests that reflect their discontent with the vague improvement in the security and stability of the conflict. In response to the opposition voices, the UN has decided to engage in a planned withdrawal process. On the other hand, some experts view that DRC is still not yet fully prepared with the military to ensure sustained security of its state.

African Union (AU)

The AU has also deployed a peacekeeping mission—the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). It works closely with regional institutions and organizations in order to resolve the conflict effectively.

IV. Key Issues Including Background Information

Political Instability

To pinpoint the exact start of the political instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo proves to be a challenge. Since its decolonization from Belgium in 1960, the DRC never established a coherent, effective, or well-structured government. Due to unstable political structures, the government's collapse was inevitable. Ever since, the appearance of rebel groups, insurgent violence in the East, along with the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide and the First Congo War left devastating consequences, adding to the country's political instability. This lack of internal sovereignty has triggered the DRC's regional instability and will leave impacts on DRC's international cooperation and recognition.

Humanitarian Crisis

During the course of the DRC's conflict, there have been significant human rights violations and humanitarian crises such as displacement, food insecurity, and sexual abuse. Rebel groups like M23 and the Congolese armed forces (FARDC) in the eastern region of the country are largely accountable for these issues. According to the UNHRC, over 880,000 people have been displaced in North Kivu Province since March 2022, and 2.3 million people are internally displaced. The WFP has declared a food security emergency, with 25.8 million people urgently needing food. Lastly, Gender-based violence, particularly sexual abuse like rape, poses a significant threat to DRC civilians, especially women and children. According to the European Parliament's 2014 report attributes half of the reported abuse cases to armies of the rebel groups. The crisis worsens as displaced civilians become more vulnerable to threats.

Resource Exploitation

The Congolese land possesses plenty of natural resources from gold and diamonds to oil, cobalt, and copper. As the demand for these scarce metals has increased over the rapid development of technology, Congo's vast resources have attracted foreign nations, causing external intervention in the conflict. The involvement of foreign powers raised concerns, however, as its relationship was largely based on using the existing armed groups. To exemplify, China has supported the Congolese government with arms in fighting the M23 rebel group and was able to gain mass access to their mines. This restricts access from other countries and the DRC itself, raising threats of inequitable resource exploitation of the dominant country, as well as, potential conflict occurring between foreign states in DRC. Additionally, there have been reports on child labor and other illegal mining practices owned by foreign mines which clearly represent the human rights violations along DRC's natural resources.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
1960, June 30th	<p><u>Independence of DRC</u> DRC was declared independent of Belgium.</p>
1994	<p><u>Rwandan Genocide</u> An event where around 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed. After the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) won over the Rwandan Armed Forces that was governing the country, more than two million Hutu refugees migrated over the eastern DRC's border as a result. However, only 7% of them are estimated as the actual perpetrators.</p>
1996~1997	<p><u>First Congo War</u> Rwanda and Uganda invaded the eastern DRC to eliminate all the remaining perpetrators that crossed the Congolese border in coalition with a Congolese opposition leader Laurent Désiré Kabila. They defeated the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, and Kabila became the president in May 1997. In 1998, Kabila ordered Rwandan and Ugandan forces to leave the country, fearing annexation of the resource-rich country by them.</p>

Second Congo War

1998~2003

Also referred to as the Great War of Africa where nine different countries fought each other in the Congolese territory. This war was triggered by Kabila allowing Hutu armies to rebuild in eastern Congo, resulting in a joint invasion in 1988 by Uganda and Rwanda. The Congolese government was supported by Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement

1999, August 1st

Agreement between Angola, DRC, Namibia, Uganda, Rwanda, and Zimbabwe to bring an end to the Second Congo War. The agreement addresses issues such as ceasing hostilities, establishing a joint military commission, withdrawing foreign groups, disarming, releasing hostages, and more. The agreement also calls for the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to monitor and investigate regional violations.

The United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC)

1999, November 30th

Mission with the purpose to observe the ceasefire, disengage the forces, and establish liaison with all states in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. This mission was further developed later on in 2010.

Assassination of Laurent Kabila

2001, January 16th

After President Kabila was shot in 2001, his son Joseph Kabila was appointed as the next president. The 2002 Sun City Agreement, the Pretoria Accord, and the Luanda Agreement officially put an end to the war, and Joseph Kabila was elected as the President in 2006.

Sun City Agreement

2002, April 2nd

Agreement that was signed between some parties in the Second Congo War. It was hoped to be the “final act” that ended the four years long war, achieving national unity in the DRC. However, the implementation of the agreement faced several challenges such as the transitional government having internal divisions, the process of disarmament being delayed, and the DRC’s national reconciliation failing to address the basis of the conflict.

United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO)

2010, July 1st

This mission heavily focused on ensuring the protection of civilians, humanitarian personnel, and human rights defenders under various threats and violence, and also supporting the stabilization and peace consolidation efforts of the government of the DRC.

DRC - M23 Agreement

2013, December

A signed declaration that reflects the end of armed activities of the M23, aiming towards long-term stability, reconciliation, and development in DRC. The declaration also includes granting amnesty to former rebels, excluding alleged perpetrators of war crimes, releasing prisoners, and yielding M23’s occupation of Goma.

- 2014 Emergence of Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO)
An armed group that is primarily composed of members of the Lendu ethnic group. This group has been accused of attacking the Hema group, causing various human rights violations. The conflict between these two ethnic groups dates back to Belgium's colonization of the DRC, where certain ethnic groups were favored against others.
- 2021 Ituri and North Kivu Province Conflict
The President of the Republic declared a "state of siege" for the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu to address deteriorating insecurity.

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Political Instability

DRC should be encouraged to take part in regional collaboration and cooperation between neighboring countries, in order to bring political stability. This can be achieved through regional organizations such as the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), or the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). In addition, the government of the DRC can Establish joint border committees that involve representatives from the DRC and neighboring countries to facilitate ongoing communication, address border-related issues, and promote confidence-building measures.

Humanitarian Crisis

One possible solution for this issue is to make the Democratic Republic of Congo open to funding Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to resolve the financial aspect of the humanitarian crisis of DRC. By being financially stable, DRC, with the help of other organizations, will be able to tackle the issue of food shortage. In addition, UN organizations such as UN women intervening in this crisis, will be able to provide prevention, protection, and rehabilitation of the women at risk.

Proliferation of Mining Operations

In order to tackle the issue of the Proliferation of Mining in DRC, the government should strengthen environmental standards and promote sustainable mining practices. They also should advocate for adopting technologies that minimize the environmental impact of mining operations, such as reducing water and energy consumption, implementing mine site rehabilitation plans, and mitigating the use of hazardous substances.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

Delegates are recommended to first research and determine the stance of their respective country delegation towards the issue of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This can be done by conducting in-depth research regarding the history of their assigned country as this would give a clue towards the delegate's perspective. Here, effective research can be performed by using the [UNISMUN country LibGuide](#) and/or AI resources such as [Poe](#), since the delegates are only gaining ground knowledge to build their statement. Although the topic is very much focused on one particular country,

the delegates are reminded to be aware of the possible global implications connected to the conflict. This includes the effectiveness of the deployment of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces, especially relating to the second topic of our committee. Additionally, revisiting our [November conference](#) theme, “How do we ensure sustainability through multilateral cooperation?”, delegates are highly encouraged to research regional countries, or key stakeholders to analyze potential success and threats when having them as allies.

VIII. Bibliography

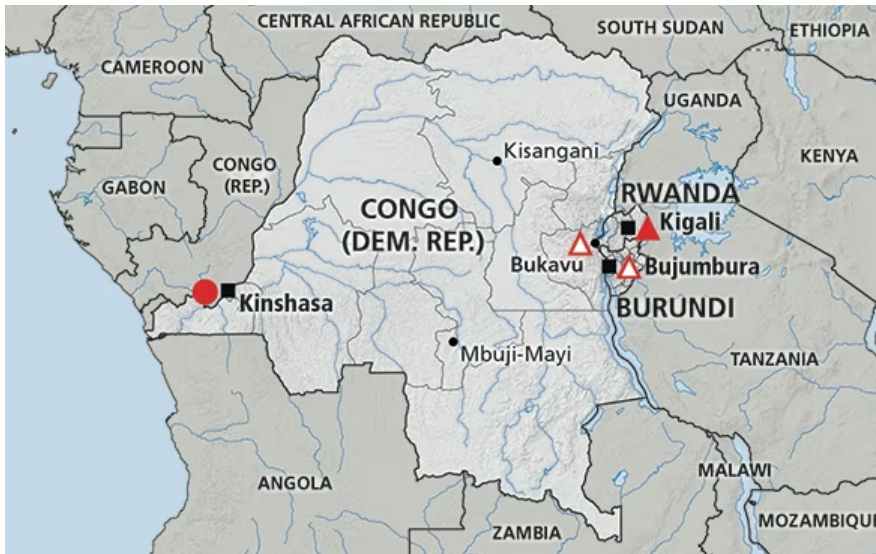
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IX: Additional Resources

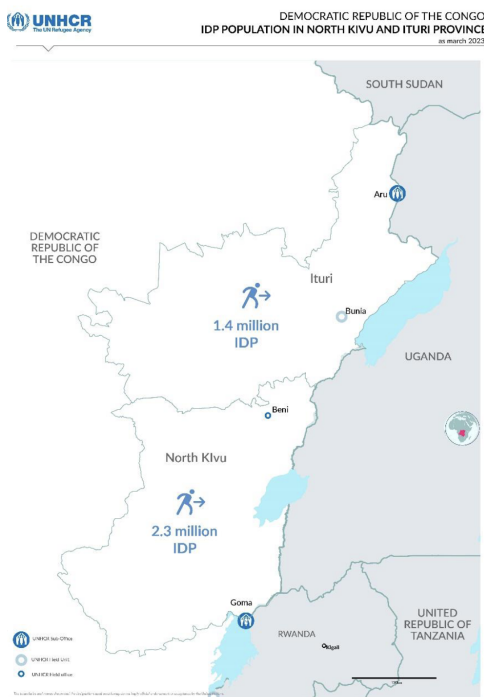
Map/Image

- Map of DRC and its nearby countries



(“The Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo)”)

- Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Population in North Kivu and Ituri Province



(“DRC Emergency Update”)

Videos & Articles

- [The Disturbing Connection Between Your Phone And Violence In The Congo \(CNBC\)](#)
- [UN peacekeeping mission in DR Congo turns deadly \(BBC News\)](#)
- [“Kenya and Angola call on M23 rebels in DRC to move to a military garrison” \(Africa News\)](#)
- [“Eight UN peacekeepers detained over sex abuse claims in DR Congo” \(France 24\)](#)