*BRIEFING PAPER*

*Committee: Crisis*

*Question of provision and delivery of humanitarian support in the current DRC M23 insurgency in Goma*

*Question of halting the current DRC M23 insurgency crisis*

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**Introduction**

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been embroiled in conflict for decades, driven by ethnic tensions, competition over natural resources, and political instability. The resurgence of the M23 insurgency has further exacerbated the humanitarian crisis. The conflict, centred in North Kivu province, particularly around the city of Goma, has displaced thousands and strained regional stability. The crisis poses two critical questions: how to ensure the provision and delivery of humanitarian aid and how to halt the ongoing insurgency. This briefing provides an overview of key elements in this crisis to inform constructive debate and potential solutions.

**Key Terms and Definitions**

1. **Ethnic Groups in Eastern DRC** – The region is home to diverse ethnic groups, including Hutu, Tutsi, Nande, and Hunde, among others, whose historical tensions have contributed to conflict.
2. **M23 (March 23 Movement)** – A rebel group composed mainly of Congolese Tutsi fighters, formed in 2012 and active in North Kivu.
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4. **Goma** – The capital of North Kivu province and a strategic city affected by ongoing violence.
5. **United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO)** – A UN peacekeeping force deployed to maintain stability and protect civilians.
6. **Humanitarian Corridor** – A designated route for the safe passage of aid and displaced civilians.
7. **Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC)** – The national army fighting against M23 and other armed groups.
8. **African Union (AU) and East African Community (EAC)** – Regional bodies involved in mediation efforts.
9. **Rwandan Involvement** – Allegations of Rwanda supporting M23, complicating diplomatic efforts.

**Background and Historical Context**

The DRC has experienced persistent conflict since the mid-1990s, with the First and Second Congo Wars (1996–2003) involving multiple regional actors. Despite peace agreements, the presence of numerous armed groups, including M23, continues to destabilize the region. M23, originally formed by former members of the CNDP (National Congress for the Defence of the People), initially took up arms in 2012, citing the DRC government’s failure to honour the 2009 peace agreement, which promised the integration of CNDP fighters into the national army and political representation for the group’s leadership.. After a military defeat in 2013, the group resurged in 2021, further straining relations between the DRC and Rwanda.

Eastern DRC has been entrenched in conflict due to its vast mineral deposits, including gold, coltan, and diamonds, which have fuelled competition among armed groups and external actors seeking economic gains. Rwanda’s interest in Eastern DRC is also arguably rooted in security concerns and economic motivations. Following the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, during which Hutu extremists killed approximately 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu, many perpetrators fled to the DRC, forming militias such as the FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda). Rwanda has cited the presence of these groups as justification for its involvement in the region, but it has also been accused of exploiting DRC’s mineral wealth and supporting M23 for strategic advantage. The DRC has experienced persistent conflict since the mid-1990s, with the First and Second Congo Wars (1996–2003) involving multiple regional actors. Despite peace agreements, the presence of numerous armed groups, including M23, continues to destabilize the region. M23, originally formed by former members of the CNDP (National Congress for the Defence of the People), initially took up arms in 2012, citing the DRC government’s failure to honour past agreements. After a military defeat in 2013, the group resurged in 2021, further straining relations between the DRC and Rwanda.

**Timeline of Recent Events and Current Crisis**

* **2021** – M23 resurges, attacking FARDC positions in North Kivu.
* **March 2022** – M23 captures key towns, including Bunagana, forcing mass displacement.
* **November 2022** – M23 advances towards Goma, prompting regional intervention discussions.
* **February 2023** – EAC deploys a regional force to stabilize the area.
* **July 2023** – Humanitarian agencies report severe displacement and worsening conditions.
* **December 2023 – February 2024** – Heavy clashes continue despite ceasefire attempts, with allegations of Rwandan military support for M23.

**Key Parties Involved**

1. **M23 Rebel Group** – The primary insurgent faction claiming to defend Tutsi communities in the DRC.
2. **Government of the DRC (FARDC)** – Leading military efforts to suppress M23 and reclaim territory.
3. **Rwanda** – Accused of supporting M23, which it denies; its involvement escalates regional tensions. Reports from the United Nations and independent researchers have cited evidence of Rwandan military aid to M23, including weapons supplies and logistical support, further complicating diplomatic efforts.
4. **MONUSCO** – UN peacekeeping forces mandated to protect civilians but criticized for inefficacy.
5. **East African Community (EAC) Regional Force** – Deployed to maintain peace but facing operational challenges.
6. **African Union (AU) and International Actors** – Engaged in diplomatic mediation efforts.
7. **Humanitarian Organizations (ICRC, UNHCR, WFP, etc.)** – Providing aid to displaced populations despite security risks.

**Previous Mediation Efforts**

1. **2013 Kampala Talks** – Led to M23’s temporary demobilization but failed to prevent resurgence.
2. **2022 Nairobi Process** – Attempted peace talks between the DRC government and rebel factions.
3. **EAC and AU Diplomacy** – Regional mediation efforts have led to multiple ceasefire agreements, often violated.
4. **UN Sanctions and Peacekeeping** – Measures imposed on M23 leaders with limited impact on conflict resolution.

**Current Critical Challenges**

1. **Humanitarian Access** – Ongoing violence obstructs aid delivery, worsening displacement and food insecurity.
2. **Regional Tensions** – Allegations against Rwanda hinder diplomatic progress.
3. **Insufficient Peacekeeping Impact** – MONUSCO faces criticism over its limited ability to control armed groups.
4. **Weak Governance and Military Capabilities** – The DRC’s government struggles with internal security management.
5. **Ceasefire Violations** – Previous truces have repeatedly failed, questioning the effectiveness of mediation efforts.

**Recommended Solutions and International Response Mechanisms**

1. **Strengthening Regional Diplomacy** – Establishing a dedicated regional task force within the African Union and the East African Community to oversee ceasefire enforcement and negotiations. Engaging neutral mediators to facilitate talks between the DRC government, M23, and Rwanda.
2. **Enhanced Peacekeeping Strategies** – Reforming MONUSCO’s mandate to include rapid-response units with better intelligence capabilities. Increasing troop deployments in critical areas and improving coordination with regional forces.
3. **Targeted Sanctions and Accountability** – Expanding UN and regional sanctions to include financial networks supporting M23. Strengthening mechanisms for tracking arms trafficking and prosecuting human rights violations.
4. **Humanitarian Assistance Expansion** – Creating demilitarized humanitarian zones under international protection to ensure safe aid distribution. Increasing UNHCR and WFP funding for displaced populations and providing logistical support for aid agencies.
5. **Economic Measures** – Implementing stricter international regulations on the sale of DRC’s minerals to prevent armed groups from profiting. Supporting economic development initiatives to provide alternative livelihoods and reduce reliance on illicit resource extraction.
6. **Strengthening Regional Diplomacy** – Increased engagement from the African Union, EAC, and regional actors to enforce ceasefire agreements and promote dialogue.
7. **Enhanced Peacekeeping Strategies** – Reforming MONUSCO’s mandate or deploying a more effective multinational force with greater enforcement capabilities.
8. **Targeted Sanctions and Accountability** – Imposing stronger sanctions on armed groups and external supporters while improving mechanisms for accountability.
9. **Humanitarian Assistance Expansion** – Establishing secure humanitarian corridors and increasing funding for aid organizations operating in conflict zones.
10. **Economic Measures** – Enhancing oversight on mineral trade to prevent armed groups from profiting from resource exploitation.

**Limitations of the Crisis Committee and Role of the Security Council**

While the Crisis Committee can recommend actions and explore diplomatic solutions, it lacks the authority to enforce military interventions or impose sanctions. Security-related matters, such as peacekeeping mandates and international sanctions, fall under the jurisdiction of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The UNSC is responsible for authorizing peacekeeping missions, imposing sanctions, and taking measures under Chapter VII of the UN Charter when necessary. Therefore, any resolutions requiring direct military or enforcement actions must be referred to the Security Council for approval.

**Conclusion**

Addressing the humanitarian crisis and halting the M23 insurgency requires a multifaceted approach, including improved diplomatic engagement, military de-escalation, and enhanced humanitarian aid strategies. Delegates must consider regional and international cooperation mechanisms to achieve sustainable peace in the DRC. Potential strategies include leveraging the African Union’s mediation framework, strengthening EAC-led peace initiatives, and advocating for an enhanced MONUSCO mandate. Additionally, economic measures such as stricter regulation of conflict minerals and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions between Rwanda and the DRC should be prioritized to create a sustainable resolution.