

New Statement by the Enough Project: Averting Renewed Regional War in Eastern Congo
ENOUGH Project
Press Statement
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The offensive by the rebel Laurent Nkundas National Congress for the Defense of People, or CNDP, has dramatically worsened the crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. This latest fighting threatens to once again draw Congos neighbors directly into the fray in a damaging escalation that would effectively undo a six-year regional and international effort to stabilize the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. ()

The situation continues to change by the hour, but Nkundas declaration of a temporary and conditional ceasefire offers a momentary window of opportunity. A senior U.N. envoy must engage the parties to develop a sustained, structured dialogue, sequencing a ceasefire, the withdrawal of forces, and political talks. Support for this process will require forceful and coordinated action by diplomats and their direct engagement with both parties. It is also critical that the U.N. Security Council immediately take steps to bolster MONUC so that it has the political clout and military capabilities to assert itself as a protector of Congolese civilians. MONUC must be prepared to respond forcefully to aggression from any side.

The world must also help ensure an end to impunity for any war crimes and crimes against humanity. When forces loyal to Laurent Nkunda last menaced a major Congolese city, occupying Bukavu in South Kivu in 2004, they engaged in widespread rape and pillage. The fact that no one was held accountable for those crimes has undeniably contributed to behavior around Goma at present.

What the United States must do:

Working with partners in the United Nations, European Union, and African Union, the United States should the following immediate steps to help defuse the current crisis:

1. Speak directly to all parties in the conflict: The Assistant Secretary of State for Africa is in the region and is well placed to support a U.N.-led dialogue between President Kabila and General Nkunda. The United States must also encourage the ongoing discussions between the Congolese and Rwandan governments. A dtente between the two countries is critical for easing tensions in the short-term and dealing with root causes of conflict in the long term.
2. Urge all armed groups and regional governments to avoid cross-border adventurism: The United Nations Security Council should be prepared to enact targeted sanctions against any party that crosses national borders to engage in hostilities.
3. Support MONUCs efforts to fulfill its mandate and protect civilians at risk from violence. The U.S. should use all available resources to support the redeployment of MONUC forces to Goma, and support multilateral efforts to give MONUC the capabilities required for it to ake robust action to protect citizens at risk and deter any attempt to threaten political process by any armed group, as called for by the U.N. Security Council. The European Union, or EU, is best

placed to lead this effort, but the United States military has assets in Uganda and Djibouti that could assist an EU-led effort.

4. Promote accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity: All sides must be held to account for the crimes committed, and the International Criminal Court must work with MONUC to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity by all sides. The United States must also make clear to the Congolese government that the behavior of its security forces during this crisis will weigh heavily in consideration of future foreign aid and security assistance from the United States.

5. Address the long-term problem: Work through the Security Council to assure political and financial support for a sustained international stabilization effort in eastern Congo.

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