

Security Council: UN envoys urge resumption of talks between DR Congo, rebels UN News Centre

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Back from a visit to Africa's Great Lakes region, members of the United Nations Security Council heard today from UN envoys who urged progress in regional peace efforts in the wake of an apparent stall in the so-called Kampala talks between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the M23 rebel group.

"The parties reached consensus on eight out of the 12 articles of the draft agreement under discussion," said the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Great Lakes Region, Mary Robinson, via teleconference. "However, [they] found it difficult to agree on certain contentious and difficult issues that had remained problematic throughout the talks, namely the amnesty, disarmament and integration of M23."

The talks are being held in Kampala under the auspices of the Chairperson of the International Conference for the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, the Mediator, as well as Ugandan Defence Minister and Facilitator, Crispus Kiyonga.

(...)

Mrs. Robinson noted that the parties have agreed to reconvene "soon" to overcome their differences. (...)

During several days of negotiations both sides were able to agree on the following issues: the release of prisoners; the end of M23 as a rebel movement and the possibility to establish itself as a political party; the return and resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs); and the return of extorted and looted properties during the M23's brief occupation of Goma in November 2012.

She said that sides also agreed on the establishment of a national reconciliation Commission; Governance and socio-economic reforms; implementation of the provisions of the March 23, 2009 peace agreement which were partially or not implemented, and, are still relevant; as well as the implementation, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the Kampala Agreement.

Also speaking to the New York-based Council via a teleconference, Mr. Kobler said it was incredible that the "unique opportunity" could not be seized and called on the parties to

reengage with the peace efforts.

“I urge particularly the M23 to use the dynamics of the last few days to more constructively and without delay to sort out in the next few days the remaining issues and bring back peace to the eastern DRC,” said Mr. Kobler, who in addition to being a UN Special Representative is also the head of the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC ([MONUSCO](#)).

The UN envoy said he sought to support efforts towards “only a fair agreement, not necessarily a perfect agreement” and echoed Mrs. Robinson in commending the Government of the DRC and the Facilitator for their “constructive attitudes.”

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Ahead of their briefing, which was preceded by interventions from Council Ambassadors reporting on their visit the Great Lakes region earlier this month, the envoys said in a statement that they were “concerned at the volatility in the region and hoped that additional progress on the significant remaining issues can be made in the coming days.”

They added a warning “against any acts of provocation” and urged the parties “to exert maximum restraint on the ground in order for the dialogue to conclude.”

Also, Mr. Kobler told the Council today there has been a “considerable military build-up” by rebel and DRC Government forces around the key eastern city of Goma. He also cited reports of the M23 forcing young refugee men to join the rebels.

Mrs. Robinson also noted “alarming” reports of military reinforcements around Goma, which only further highlighted the “critical” need for an agreement in the Kampala talks.

Meanwhile, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Hawa Bangura, has told Congolese lawmakers that while progress has been made in combating conflict-related sexual violence, much more needs to be done, particularly to address the scourge in areas where armed groups are present.

“As elected officials of the people of the DRC, you represent those who have suffered this injustice. You have seen and witnessed the pain this scourge has inflicted and continues to

inflict on the people of the DRC on a daily basis,” Ms. Bangura said in her address to the Senate on 18 October.

(...)

In addition, MONUSCO has deplored the lack of progress in prosecuting the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including mass rape, committed in late November 2012 in Minova, South Kivu province, and in neighbouring villages by the FARDC.

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Findings by UN investigators had documented evidence of the FARDC having raped more than 102 women and 33 girls, some as young as six years old, as they fled the advance M23 rebels in country’s restive eastern region last November.

While the report also cited M23 rebels for committing atrocities, it noted that the FARDC committed violations were “perpetrated in a systematic manner and with extreme violence” and may constitute international crimes under human rights law, as well as crimes under Congolese criminal law.

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