

**Testimony**  
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**U.S. Department of State**  
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Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Corker, and members of the Committee: Thank you for the invitation to testify today on the recent progress in and continuing challenges facing the African Great Lakes region and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and our comprehensive efforts to support the region in resolving the root causes of conflict and instability.

As you know, the security and humanitarian situation in the DRC has long been one of the most volatile in Africa. An estimated five million people have lost their lives since 1998, millions more have been displaced, and billions of dollars have been spent trying to stabilize the region. Looking at the region today, however, I am cautiously optimistic about the road ahead, while recognizing that a myriad of challenges still stand in the way of lasting peace and stability.

The highest levels of the U.S. government are committed to helping the DRC and the Great Lakes region permanently break the cycle of violence and realize its democratic and economic potential. President Obama's and Secretary Kerry's appointment of a full-time special envoy is a testament to their commitment to maintaining high-level attention on this region. On my own part, I have made seven trips to the region in six months, meeting repeatedly with heads of state, civil society, and our donor partners to bring sustained attention and a comprehensive approach to resolving the crisis in the Great Lakes. Today, we are seeing progress in addressing the threat from armed groups and in furthering the regionally-led peace process. We are also seeing the region's attitude towards the United States improve in recognition of our consistent high-level engagement.

**Situational Update**

The last time the State Department testified on the DRC in December 2012, the country was consumed by the M23 rebellion and the capture of Goma had raised grave doubts about the ability of the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, called MONUSCO, to protect civilians against the threat of armed groups. I can thankfully report that the outlook today is very different. In response to combined

military and political pressures, the M23 was defeated and formally ended its rebellion last November.

Three key developments contributed to the military defeat of the M23. First, the DRC government put in place more operationally effective and accountable military officers in the embattled region of North Kivu, helping to overcome previous reluctance by the DRC military, or FARDC, to pursue the M23. Second, last March, the UN Security Council approved the establishment within MONUSCO of the first regionally-led, 3,000-troop-strong Intervention Brigade, or IB, composed of troops from Tanzania, Malawi, and South Africa. We strongly supported this more explicit Chapter VII mandate in an effort to increase MONUSCO's capability to protect civilians by more robustly targeting armed groups. The IB provided critical support to the FARDC and helped to successfully protect civilians and defend Goma during the M23's attacks last year. Third, as the UN Group of Experts and other reporting indicates, outside support to the M23 decreased toward the end of the rebellion. We believe this was in part the result of sustained, high-level diplomatic and financial pressure on Rwanda to cease support for the M23.

The political resolution of the M23 rebellion, on the other hand, came via the Kampala Dialogue, successfully facilitated by Uganda in its role as chair of the regional organization the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, or the ICGLR. While the Kampala Dialogue started in December 2012, it lagged for months in large part because of the lack of sufficient military pressure on and continued external support to the M23. However, the talks gained traction last fall when the M23 was forced to drop its more unrealistic demands in the face of increased military pressure from the FARDC and MONUSCO. The Ugandan government's continued engagement throughout this period also is commendable; had they given up when talks lagged, we might have seen a very different outcome.

I also believe the eventual success of the Kampala Dialogue was a result of the added participation of a set of five international envoys -- UN Special Envoy Mary Robinson, the Special Representative of the Secretary General Martin Kobler, Special Representative for the African Union Boubecar Diarra, Senior Coordinator for the European Union Koen Vervaeke, and me. Prior to last September, the international community had not participated in the Kampala Dialogue, or even been allowed in the room during the substantive negotiations. This changed last September, when during the envoys' first joint-trip to the region, we met with the DRC and the M23 delegations in an effort to overcome the stalemate in the talks and pressure the parties toward an internationally acceptable

outcome. We subsequently made repeated trips to Kampala, engaging directly with the parties over the contents of an eventual peace arrangement. I believe the active participation of the envoys was a key turning point in the Kampala Dialogue.

The Kampala Dialogue concluded on December 12, 2013, with the M23's and the DRC government's signing of their respective Nairobi Declarations, which among other things, set out the conditions for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the M23 into Congolese society, and called for those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity to be held accountable. Unlike previous agreements between the DRC government and rebel groups that failed to hold up over time or achieve lasting stability, the Nairobi Declarations do not grant blanket amnesty to the M23 for mass atrocities and do not provide for the reintegration of the M23 as a group into the DRC military. The Declarations have yet to be fully implemented, however, and M23 fighters and leaders remain spread out in Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC. Thus, while the official end of the M23 rebellion is promising, the long-term success of the declarations will be dependent on the parties' prompt and full implementation of their commitments, as well as the cooperation of neighboring countries in supporting the implementation of these commitments.

Similarly, the continuation of the positive momentum gained from the end of the M23 rebellion is dependent on the region's implementation of the broader Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework Agreement, signed a year ago by the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and an unprecedented ten other countries in the region, and signed by the UN, the AU, the ICGLR, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as guarantors. We believe the Framework, which sets out commitments by the DRC, the region, and the international community, provides the Great Lakes with the best opportunity to resolve the root causes of conflict, if participating governments maintain the political will necessary to implement their commitments.

### **Next Steps**

Looking forward, there are three key next steps to building on recent progress in the DRC and to preventing backsliding. I list these not in order of priority, as all three are equally important and must be pursued simultaneously. The first is following-up on the Kampala Dialogue with the full implementation of the Nairobi Declarations. Second is the advancement of the Framework peace process, including through broader political dialogue between and among key

signatory states. And third, and perhaps the most challenging, is undertaking domestic reforms within the DRC.

## **I. Follow-up to the Kampala Dialogue**

On the Nairobi Declarations, the DRC government has already fulfilled one of its primary commitments by promulgating the recent amnesty law, which grants amnesty for the act of insurrection on a case-by-case basis to those individuals who renounce rebellion. The law does not grant amnesty for war crimes, crimes against humanity, sexual violence, the recruitment of child soldiers, or other human rights abuses. The envoys played a key role during the Kampala Dialogue in ensuring that unlike previous peace arrangements, the Nairobi Declarations do not provide for impunity, which has in the past sown the seeds for future rebellions.

In this same vein, I was encouraged, during my trip to the DRC last month, to hear a variety of Congolese officials express support for mixed chambers— hybrid courts to be staffed by both Congolese and international jurists and support staff. I was told repeatedly that the necessary legislation is slated for the March session of Parliament, although it remains to be seen whether Parliament and the President will, indeed, exhibit the political will necessary to establish the courts. We believe that the international community could play an important role in assisting the Congolese to establish a mechanism with the requisite expertise and independence to investigate and bring to justice perpetrators of mass atrocities. In the meantime, we continue to urge the DRC government to further reform its judicial sector to fight impunity, including increasing the capacity for fair and speedy trials, deploying additional trained jurists, and improving its prison and detention facilities and witness protection program.

The next important step in implementing the Nairobi Declarations is ensuring that the hundreds of Congolese ex-M23 combatants currently spread out across the DRC, Uganda, and Rwanda, complete the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process, or DDR. We are actively engaging the highest levels of the DRC government and MONUSCO regarding the urgency of implementing an effective DDR plan. We are concerned that, while the DRC government passed a DDR plan in December 2013 and promulgated a budget for it on February 1, details on the operational plan and implementation are still lacking, particularly with regard to community reintegration programs, a critical component to end the cycle of violence. During my recent trip, I visited one of the identified DDR sites. While the buildings were more or less ready to house people, the processing procedures and the programs for those ex-combatants brought to the sites was

unclear. The lack of funding and preparation by the DRC government and the resulting concerns of the international community are also stalling MONUSCO's ability to provide logistical support for DDR. This is complicating and delaying the DDR process for not just the M23, but for the dozens of other armed groups in eastern DRC that have surrendered in the wake of the M23's defeat. Rwanda and Uganda, which combined are hosting and feeding upwards of 2,000 ex-M23 combatants, are also unlikely to transfer these combatants back to the DRC in the absence of an established DDR program.

Particularly worrisome is how unclear the DDR process is to those ex-combatants who are to go through it. This lack of information and resulting skepticism is keeping some armed groups, who might otherwise demobilize, in the bush. Some armed groups are even sending low-level fighters to surrender in order to learn what is being offered through the DDR program. The DRC government has an unprecedented opportunity to capitalize on the willingness of thousands of current and ex-combatants to demobilize; however, if the government does not act soon, it risks having these ex-combatants regroup or join other armed groups. On the flip side, were the DRC government to institute an effective DDR program, it would be one of the best vehicles for drawing out defections from other armed groups and preventing the recycling of combatants.

While the DRC works to implement DDR, Rwanda and Uganda still have a responsibility for maintaining effective control over the M23 ex-combatants, which they accepted onto their respective territories. They have a responsibility under the Peace, Security, and Cooperation Framework to not support armed groups, and in turn not to allow these ex-combatants to slip out of their containment camps and back into the DRC potentially to regroup or join other armed groups still operating in the DRC. This is especially the case for the M23's most notorious leaders, many of whom face arrest warrants in the DRC, are subject to a worldwide travel ban, and under U.S. and U.N. sanctions. It is critical that Uganda and Rwanda uphold their commitments to turn over the M23 leaders responsible for human rights violations to the DRC so that they can be held accountable for the international crimes they have committed.

Moving the hundreds of current and expected ex-combatants through the first stages of DDR will potentially take at least a year, with the reintegration phase taking considerably longer, all at considerable expense. It also will require the full cooperation of the neighboring countries where the ex-combatants are currently quartered. While the onus is on the DRC government to fund and implement

DDR, donors should consider supporting DDR efforts as part of our broader efforts towards security sector reform and stabilization.

The final phase of DDR – reintegration – is arguably the most challenging as it requires extended efforts to help ex-combatants return to civilian life as well as help the communities to which they return. Within such communities during this period, there are serious risks of increases in domestic violence and trauma among those who suffered violence during the conflict. Restoring state authority, increasing employment opportunities, working to prevent gender-based violence, and building social cohesion in communities who are integrating ex-combatants is critical to the success of DDR.

## **II. Framework Peace Process**

Beyond the Nairobi Declarations, the Great Lakes region needs to continue robust implementation of the broader Framework peace process. We commend UN Special Envoy Robinson's oversight of the process and are encouraged by the signatories' development of regional and international benchmarks and the establishment of a Women's Platform to support the Framework, recognizing that women's continued involvement in the peace process will be critical to its success. We believe, however, that fulfilling the Framework's overarching objectives will also require key signatories to undertake a broader political dialogue aimed at resolving the regional root causes of conflict.

While many of the challenges in the DRC are strictly domestic, there are regional root causes to the country's chronic instability. The DRC has experienced two devastating regional wars within the past 20 years, suffered from the region's use of proxy forces, and is losing substantial revenue in the illegal exploitation of its natural resources. The resulting refugee flows and ethnic tensions do not recognize borders. These complex regional factors necessitate a transparent and in-depth dialogue between and among the DRC and key neighbors, conducted under the auspices of the Framework.

With this in mind, I believe one of the most promising signs in the Great Lakes region is the budding dialogue taking place under the stewardship of Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos, who assumed the chair of the ICGLR on January 15 of this year. During his first day as the ICGLR chair, President dos Santos convened the Presidents of the DRC, Rwanda, Uganda, and South Africa to discuss the FDLR, an armed group led by Rwandan genocidaires which has plagued eastern Congo and Rwanda for more than a decade. My fellow envoys

and I, as well as regional leaders, saw in this meeting the potential start to the needed broader dialogue. Participating presidents were particularly complimentary of dos Santos' role in the process. We strongly support and encourage Angola's role in facilitating a regionally-owned and initiated dialogue within the context of the Framework and stand ready to support President dos Santos in furthering it. We hope the ICGLR mechanism under Angolan leadership will expand to cover issues such as the return of M23 combatants from Rwanda and Uganda, border security, ethnic tension, domestic challenges to the voluntary and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons, and regional economic cooperation. We welcomed Angola Foreign Minister Chicoti's recent trip through the Great Lakes region and Angola's pledge of financial support to the ICGLR Executive Secretariat to strengthen its technical and organizational capacity, as indicators of Angola's commitment to its new role as Chair of the organization.

The Framework peace process has the potential to not only resolve security matters but to also boost regional economic cooperation and development. We welcomed the World Bank's announcement last year of \$1 billion for Great Lakes projects that promote regional economic development and integration and contribute to peace building, and support UN Special Envoy Robinson's efforts to boost private sector investment. We are hopeful that the budding ICGLR dialogue can further regional development and integration by building trust and helping to overcome trade barriers. Development supports stability by creating employment and improving livelihoods, which in turn provide incentives to discourage continued ethnic conflict and the rise of new armed groups. We are also encouraged by the array of initiatives underway to combat the illegal trade of natural resources. The combination of ending illegal and increasing the legitimate trade in natural resources will help restore government revenues and assist the DRC to assert authority over its borders, territory, and natural resources such as minerals, wildlife, and timber. These steps will help create a climate more conducive to investment and assist the DRC in working with its neighbors on longer-term regional development and integration.

### **III. Domestic Challenges in the DRC**

While the end of the M23 rebellion was a critical step, many challenges remain on the DRC domestic front. The government still has a long way to go to stabilize and secure its country, including improving governance and expanding state authority across the territory, increasing democratization, ensuring that upcoming elections are credible, and accelerating real security sector reform. A series of attacks around the country on December 30, 2013, including at the airport

in Kinshasa, the increase in attacks by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in the east, and the recent violence in the Katanga province, underline the continued volatility inside the Congo.

As a first step, the DRC government, with MONUSCO's support, needs to follow-up its defeat of the M23 by applying equal military pressure on other armed groups, starting with the FDLR and the ADF. The M23 was the largest and most militarily capable armed group, so defeating it was no small feat and was understandably a priority for the DRC. However, there is a plethora of other armed groups that continue to prey upon the population, undermine state authority, complicate the DRC's relations with its neighbors, and illegally exploit the country's natural resources. The internal displacements and humanitarian consequences caused by these armed groups make sustainable development in the region virtually impossible.

I made clear during my recent trip, and I continue to emphasize, that it is essential that the FARDC and MONUSCO, conduct military operations against the FDLR and the ADF. Part of our success in ending outside support to the M23 last fall came from the UN's and the international community's commitment to pursue the FDLR next. While it is understandable that going after an entrenched guerilla group like the FDLR, which is embedded within the population, is more complex and presents greater risks to civilians than fighting the more conventional M23, following-through on this is important to building confidence within the region and maintaining MONUSCO's credibility as an impartial actor. We are encouraged by the DRC government's recent month-long effort to pursue the ADF and initial efforts against the FDLR, and are hopeful that the FARDC and MONUSCO will launch robust operations against the FDLR soon.

These military efforts must also be combined with a comprehensive approach to resolving the threat of armed groups, including the promotion of defections and the demobilization and societal reintegration of those combatants who peacefully surrender through an effective DDR process. We encourage the governments of the DRC and Rwanda to work with MONUSCO to implement this comprehensive approach to ending the threat of the FDLR.

In addition to security, the DRC needs to immediately ramp up its preparations for upcoming elections. While many expect the DRC to hold local elections early next year, the government has yet to approve an elections calendar. Local elections, which have never been held in the country's five decades since independence, will be an extreme logistical challenge in this vast country with



virtually no infrastructure. I have spoken with the head of the DRC's election commission on several occasions and am concerned by the commission's lack of urgency in planning and implementing an effective elections strategy.

It will be a steep uphill climb – for the DRC, the region, and the international community alike – to ensure that these next elections are credible and inclusive. With sufficient attention, coordination, and resources, and political commitment by the DRC government, I believe this goal could be attained. However, the DRC government and donors need to start planning now if we are to avoid a repeat of the seriously flawed 2011 elections, for which neither the DRC nor the international community were adequately prepared. And if we are serious about prioritizing democratization, we should consider identifying additional funds to ensure adequate support for the local, provincial, and national elections expected between now and 2016. We should also position MONUSCO with the mandate and capacity to provide logistical support to the DRC government. These elections will be a critical test for the DRC's political system, in part because President Kabila will have served the maximum two terms permitted by the DRC's constitution.

In addition to elections and DDR, there are many other challenges that the DRC must overcome. One is the ever-present need for security sector reform, or SSR. While the FARDC experienced a commendable victory over the M23, it did so with extensive and robust logistical and military support from MONUSCO. Overall, the FARDC continues to be hampered by ineffective command and control, inadequate leadership, logistical deficiencies, limited resources, corruption and poor military planning capability, in turn inhibiting the government's ability to fulfill its fundamental responsibility to protect its territory and all its citizens. In many instances, the FARDC is itself responsible for horrific human rights abuses against the vulnerable populations it should be protecting.

While we continue to support SSR efforts, the DRC government needs to demonstrate better its own commitment to SSR by ensuring that members of the security forces are professionally trained, adequately paid and supported, respectful of international human rights norms, and held accountable when they commit human rights violations. The Congolese Military Reform budget must also be passed, and the Congolese leadership must finalize the assignments of recently promoted officers to key positions that allow for the military reform plan to be implemented. SSR must also go beyond the military to include police, judicial, and prison reform, and the increased participation of women in all security sectors. Furthermore, reform and stabilization efforts must include strengthening state

institutions and establishing state authority throughout the country, particularly in the territories previously held by the M23 and other armed groups. We were encouraged by the government's initial efforts to restore state services to those areas, and hope to see the expansion of services and improved security conditions across greater swaths of the DRC.

Despite these challenges, I reiterate my previous assertion that I am cautiously optimistic about the road ahead for the DRC and the Great Lakes. As we move forward with the Framework peace process, the international community must not repeat its past mistake of abandoning the region at the first sign of progress or for the next, latest crisis elsewhere in the world. We must ensure sustained high-level attention on the region and be prepared to follow up our words with assistance, particularly with regard to elections, DDR, SSR, and restoring state authority in eastern DRC.

The DRC and the Great Lakes are at a crossroads and the decisions that the Congo, the region and the international community take now will set the trajectory of the next several years in terms of security, good governance, and development. With the Framework peace process, the ICGLR dialogue, and the end of the M23 rebellion, the DRC has a real opportunity to realize the peace and prosperity that has evaded the Congolese people for too long. We urge the international community, the Great Lakes region, and the DRC government to demonstrate the resolve to see the peace process through to the prosperity that we know lies ahead for the Congo.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to answering your questions.