
Paris Conference on Africa's Great Lakes Peace Ends Amid Renewed Tensions



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Kinshasa, October 31— A high-level Paris conference aimed at advancing peace and stability in Africa's Great Lakes region concluded Thursday with little progress, as violence, political

mistrust, and competing regional agendas overshadowed diplomatic efforts. The meeting focused on the ongoing crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where fighting continues despite multiple mediation attempts.

Initially envisioned as a major peace summit, the conference drew limited high-level participation, with only DRC President Félix Tshisekedi and Togo's Foreign Minister Robert Dussey—representing the African Union—attending in person. Other countries, including Rwanda, sent foreign ministers or envoys. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot warned that conflict is again spreading across the Congolese, Rwandan, Burundian, and Ugandan borders, threatening regional stability.

Decades of unrest in eastern DRC continue to pit Kinshasa against the M23 rebel group, which the government accuses Rwanda of supporting—allegations Kigali denies. The rebels, now part of the Congo River Alliance, control key cities including Goma and Bukavu, establishing parallel administrations and worsening humanitarian conditions.

During the conference, French President Emmanuel Macron announced a €1.5 billion (US\$1.74 billion) aid package for humanitarian support, including reopening Goma airport for relief flights. However, critics questioned the feasibility of the plan, noting that the airport remains under rebel control. Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe dismissed the pledge as

“disconnected from realities on the ground.”

Barrot clarified that France’s initiative complements the ongoing Doha mediation process, led by Qatar, aimed at fostering dialogue between the DRC government and the rebels. Yet mutual distrust persists, with both sides accusing each other of ceasefire violations.

According to United Nations figures, over 2.4 million people have been displaced in 2025 alone, while nearly six million Congolese remain internally displaced and 27 million face food insecurity.

Despite renewed promises, hopes for lasting peace in the Great Lakes region remain fragile.