

**ADDRESSING THE CONFLICT IN EASTERN CONGO:
URGENT APPOINTMENT OF A UN/AU SPECIAL ENVOY**

The conflict in eastern Congo is now at a critical juncture with M23's recent capturing of the city of Goma in Congo's North Kivu Province. Recent reports suggest that, despite its ongoing denials, Rwanda has continued to provide military, logistical, and political support to M23, emboldened by the failure of the international community to hold it fully accountable for its aggression. The government of Congo has continued to demonstrate an inability to deal with the threat on its eastern borders, as a consequence of its failure to initiate necessary reforms of its weak and undisciplined army as well as other critical institutions. The UN peace-keeping mission, known as MONUSCO, despite its repeated assurances that Goma would not fall, has once again failed to protect the population of a large urban center from falling in the hands of notorious human rights abusers. Meanwhile, since the onset of the M23 rebellion in April 2012, more than 650,000 people have been displaced in eastern Congo due to the ongoing conflict.

We believe that it is imperative to initiate a credible internationally facilitated political process that is focused during its first phase on an immediate cessation of hostilities, but in the longer-term also addresses the systematic drivers of conflict in the region. The aim of such a process must be a sustainable departure from the cycle of violence and regional interference that has defined the conflict for much of the last decade.

Efforts to achieve a durable peace in the region must be led, not by those who continue to perpetuate the conflict, but rather by a credible independent facilitation process with the commensurate experience, legitimacy and stature to elevate the negotiation above the current regional mistrust, and bring the necessary parties into a constructive dialogue. This should be done under the joint auspices of the United Nations and the African Union, as recommended at the recent high-level meeting on the DRC held at the United Nations on September 27, 2012. We call on the Security Council to request the Secretary-General, to reach out immediately to the African Union with a view toward appointing an Envoy or Panel in a matter of days, or to the Secretary-General to do so of his own initiative.

We also call on the Security Council and the African Union to condemn in unequivocal terms Rwanda and the M23 for their actions and to immediately apply sanctions against all the individuals identified in the most recent Group of Experts report as having violated the U.N. arms embargo on Congo, including the Rwandan military and political officers who have been supporting and directing the M23. We also call on bilateral donors to Rwanda to continue and expand the suspension of all aid programs that are not explicitly directed to the humanitarian needs of the Rwandan civilian population.

We the undersigned groups strongly reiterate the attached brief and recommendations, which we have distributed widely among senior policymakers in governments and international institutions in October 2012. We believe now, as we believed then, that military solutions alone will not resolve this crisis and that a new political process is needed to prevent further violence in the region.