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## **ITUC-Africa Statement on the Escalating Conflict in Goma, DRC: A Call for Immediate Action to Halt the Conflict and De-escalate Violence and Engender Peace**

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa [www.ituc-africa.org](http://www.ituc-africa.org)) strongly condemns the ongoing violence leading to hundreds of deaths, including those of peacekeepers and citizens and a humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where M23 rebels have seized control of the city. The escalating conflict has not only deepened the suffering of the Congolese people but has also disproportionately impacted workers, particularly women, children, and the youth, who form the backbone of the nation's labour force.

As an organisation committed to the rights and welfare of workers across Africa, ITUC-Africa is gravely concerned about the deteriorating conditions civilians face. The forced displacement of over a million people, the destruction of livelihoods, and the targeting of key infrastructure—including hospitals, markets, and schools—have plunged workers into a state of desperation. The people of Goma, already burdened by poverty and economic instability, are now faced with the grim reality of joblessness, food insecurity, and lack of access to healthcare. Women, who form a significant portion of the informal economy, have lost their means of livelihood and survival. At the same time, children and young workers are increasingly vulnerable to recruitment by armed groups.

### **An Urgent Clarion and Passionate Call to All Stakeholders**

ITUC-Africa calls upon all actors involved in this crisis—both directly and indirectly—to take immediate and genuine action to halt the suffering of the Congolese people and restore peace. Specifically, we demand the following:

#### **1. To the Government of the DRC**

- Ensure the protection of civilians, particularly workers, women, and children, who have been disproportionately affected.
- Take immediate, necessary, and lawful measures to restore law and order in Goma and surrounding areas so displaced people can return safely to their homes and workplaces.
- Commit to a genuine national dialogue that prioritises the concerns of all Congolese citizens, including the employer organisations and workers' unions, in resolving the underlying issues of governance, economic justice, and national security.

#### **2. To the M23 Rebels**

- Immediately cease hostilities and withdraw from Goma and other affected surrounding areas to prevent further humanitarian suffering.
- Respect international humanitarian law, including protecting civilians and workers, and allow humanitarian access to those in need.
- Engage in meaningful negotiations towards a peaceful resolution of grievances rather than perpetuating cycles of violence.

### **3. To the Government of Rwanda**

- Cease any military support to the M23 rebels, as repeatedly alleged by credible international reports.
- Resist and desist from efforts and utterances to heighten tensions connected to the conflict.
- Engage constructively in and commit to genuine dialogue and diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions with the DRC and support regional peace efforts.
- Cease the Rwanda Defence Force's overt or covert participation in and support of the M23 group in the conflict in the DRC.

### **4. To the East African Community (EAC), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and the African Union (AU)**

- Intensify diplomatic efforts to ensure an immediate and lasting ceasefire and a sustainable political solution to the crisis.
- Hold all parties accountable, including external actors fueling the conflict, by imposing sanctions on those violating peace agreements.
- Deploy additional peacekeeping and humanitarian missions to protect civilians, particularly the most vulnerable, including workers.
- The African Union should devise and deploy urgent and pragmatic rapprochement to douse tension and possible diplomatic strains between and among leaders of governments connected directly and remotely to the Goma crisis. This crisis **MUST NOT** de-escalate to a regional war.

### **5. To the United Nations (UN)**

- Strengthen MONUSCO's mandate to effectively protect civilians and intervene in areas where civilians, workers and communities are under attack.
- Hold all perpetrators of human rights violations accountable and ensure justice for affected persons, workers and families.

### **6. To Global Powers, including the United States, European Union, United Kingdom and France**

- Pressure all parties, including Rwanda and the DRC, to initiate peace talks and halt military escalation.
- Resist and desist from overt and covert efforts to take sides and fuel the conflict with the motive to benefit from critical mineral extractions, as current agreements and deals with parties to the crisis suggest.
- Ensure that trade in Congolese critical minerals is not fueling the conflict by enforcing strict supply chain transparency measures on multinational companies benefiting from the illegal exploitation of resources.

## **End the Cycle of Violence and Exploitation**

This conflict is not just about territorial control; it is deeply tied to the exploitation of the DRC's vast mineral wealth, which should benefit the people of Congo rather than fuel war and suffering. ITUC-Africa demands a global response that prioritises the well-being of the DRC's people, workers, families, and communities over corporate and political interests.

We commiserate with the families that have lost loved ones in this violent conflict resurgence in the DRC, including families of peacekeepers from different nations. We will continue to cherish and appreciate their supreme sacrifices and memories.

African workers stand in solidarity with the people of Goma, the families, all workers and communities affected by this senseless but avoidable violence. It is time to end war and rein in impunity by demanding and ensuring accountability. We restate our commitment to advocating for and contributing to restoring lasting peace, dignity, and economic justice for all Congolese people, families and workers. We call on people of goodwill and the global human community to stand with us as we demand an end to the violent conflict in the DRC.

Issued on behalf of the teeming members and leaders of the ITUC-Africa by:



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**General Secretary**  
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