



SECURITY COUNCIL - RESEARCH REPORT

Addressing the Escalating Humanitarian Crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Introduction to the Topic:

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is facing one of the world's most severe and protracted humanitarian crises, posing a persistent challenge to international peace and security. Decades of armed conflict, weak governance, political instability, and structural underdevelopment have generated widespread human suffering and regional instability. This crisis is not isolated; rather, it results from interconnected security, political, and economic failures that continue to undermine stability across Central and East Africa.

Millions of Congolese civilians face forced displacement, acute food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, and systematic violence. Armed confrontations between the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and numerous non-state armed groups—most notably the March 23 Movement (M23), alongside various local militias—have intensified, particularly in North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri provinces. These hostilities have resulted in civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and severe constraints on humanitarian access, placing immense strain on national authorities, neighboring states, and the international community, and necessitating sustained engagement by the United Nations Security Council.

Background information

The roots of the humanitarian crisis in the DRC lie in its colonial legacy, post-independence instability, and complex regional geopolitics. Following independence in 1960, the country experienced political fragmentation and weak institutional development. The situation deteriorated significantly after the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, when armed groups and millions of refugees fled into eastern Congo, contributing directly to the First and Second Congo Wars (1996–2003). These conflicts involved multiple state actors, including Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, as well as numerous non-state armed groups. An estimated 5–6 million people died during this period, primarily from conflict-related disease and starvation.

Although the formal conclusion of the Congo Wars reduced large-scale interstate fighting, eastern DRC continues to be affected by the presence of over one hundred armed groups. These groups compete for territorial control, political influence, and access to valuable natural resources such as gold, coltan, cobalt, and diamonds. The illicit exploitation and trafficking of these resources provide sustained financing for armed actors, perpetuating cycles of violence and civilian harm.



The humanitarian consequences are extensive and multifaceted. The DRC hosts one of the largest populations of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) globally, with displacement driven by ongoing conflict, intercommunal violence, and military operations. Displaced populations frequently lack adequate shelter, food, clean water, and sanitation, leaving them highly vulnerable to disease, exploitation, and abuse. Women and children are disproportionately affected, with widespread reports of conflict-related sexual violence, forced recruitment of child soldiers, and violations of international humanitarian law.

Food insecurity remains a critical dimension of the crisis. Armed conflict disrupts agricultural production, markets, and supply chains, while climate-related shocks such as floods and droughts exacerbate shortages. According to United Nations agencies, over 25 million people in the DRC face acute food insecurity, and malnutrition rates among children under five remain alarmingly high. At the same time, the fragile healthcare system struggles to manage recurring outbreaks of cholera, measles, malaria, and Ebola, particularly in insecure areas where access for health workers is limited.

Past UN Actions

For more than two decades, the United Nations has maintained a continuous presence in the DRC, reflecting the international community's recognition of the crisis as a threat to international peace and security.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), established in 2010 as the successor to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), operates under a robust Chapter VII mandate. MONUSCO is tasked with protecting civilians, supporting stabilization efforts, assisting in the extension of state authority, and facilitating the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of armed groups. The Security Council regularly renews and adapts MONUSCO's mandate, with an emphasis on civilian protection, human rights monitoring, and support for peace processes.

In parallel, UN humanitarian agencies—including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Health Organization (WHO)—play a critical role in delivering life-saving assistance such as food aid, healthcare, shelter, education, and protection services.

Despite these efforts, UN operations face significant obstacles. Persistent insecurity, funding shortfalls, logistical constraints, and strained relations between MONUSCO and local communities have limited effectiveness. Furthermore, calls by the Congolese government for a gradual drawdown and eventual withdrawal of MONUSCO raise concerns about potential security vacuums, the capacity of national forces to assume responsibilities, and the sustainability of humanitarian and stabilization gains.

Focus of the Debate

Security Council deliberations should assess whether the situation in the DRC continues to constitute a threat to international peace and security. Delegates should evaluate the effectiveness of existing measures, including MONUSCO's mandate, sanctions regimes, and arms embargoes, with particular attention to civilian protection and humanitarian access.

Debate should also address the balance between respect for national sovereignty and the Council's responsibility to protect civilians, as well as the role of regional cooperation in reducing cross-border instability and preventing further escalation.



Significant Parties

Democratic Republic of the Congo: The Congolese government bears primary responsibility for protecting civilians and reasserting state authority. However, challenges related to limited capacity, corruption, and governance deficits continue to impede progress.

MONUSCO: As the UN's principal peacekeeping operation in the DRC, MONUSCO plays a central role in civilian protection and support for humanitarian operations.

Permanent Members of the Security Council (P5): China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States shape Council outcomes through mandate renewals, sanctions, and diplomatic engagement.

Neighboring States: Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi significantly influence the conflict dynamics through cross-border armed group movements and political tensions.

African Union and Regional Organizations: These bodies support mediation, diplomacy, and regional security initiatives aimed at stabilizing the Great Lakes region.

Humanitarian Agencies and NGOs: International and local organizations deliver essential assistance, often operating under severe security constraints.

Glossary and Key Terms:

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): Individuals forced to flee their homes due to conflict or disaster without crossing international borders.

MONUSCO: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (French acronym).

Chapter VII: Provisions of the UN Charter authorizing enforcement measures to maintain or restore international peace and security.

Food Insecurity: Lack of reliable access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

Militant Organizations: Non-state armed groups engaged in organized violence, often financed through illicit resource exploitation.

Humanitarian Access: The ability of humanitarian actors to reach affected populations safely and without obstruction.

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