

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio,

On June 27, 2025, you participated in the signing of the “Washington Accord” by senior officials from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda at the State Department, followed by a meeting with President Trump in which he called the moment “a glorious triumph for the cause of peace” in the Oval Office. The Accord committed the parties to cease hostilities, respect territorial integrity, stand up a Regional Economic Integration Framework, and cease support of non-state armed groups. Under the Accord, DRC and Rwanda also committed to implementing a Concept of Operations (“ConOps”) under which the DRC is to “neutralize” the FDLR armed group, while Rwanda is to disengage its forces from DRC territory. Separately, the U.S. played a central role in the Doha peace process, which yielded a ceasefire declaration in July and a framework peace agreement between the DRC and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group on November 15. Although the Trump Administration deserves credit for attempting to engage constructively on this crisis, we are concerned by severe flaws in the structure of the peace process:

- The Accord neglects to recognize and address the root causes of the conflict, including poor governance, unresolved citizenship disputes, and entrenched ethnic grievances;
- Core security sequencing was softened from earlier drafts on Rwandan troop withdrawal timelines, prompting uncertainty;
- The agreement prioritized a U.S.-backed regional economic framework, and U.S. officials have further pledged a bilateral minerals investment deal with DRC, tying peace efforts to supply-chain reform and prospective investment – raising concerns that the economic components of the agreement could overshadow its peacebuilding aims.
- The Accord lacks accountability provisions for grave abuses – a missed opportunity to tackle the very impunity that has fueled the recurrence of this crisis.
- Though the elevation of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) as a participant in the M23 ceasefire-monitoring arrangement is critical, this Administration has cut U.S. funding to United Nations peacekeeping efforts, directly reducing the capacity of missions like MONUSCO.

Following the June ceremony at the White House, fighting in eastern DRC resumed almost immediately. Although the lines of the conflict have remained more stable since June, the M23 has continued to seize territory, displacing civilians and entrenching control over swathes of North and South Kivu, while the Congolese army has backed abusive “Wazalendo” proxy militias. As of mid-2025, M23 has reportedly recruited over 7,000 fighters and claim to have recruited many more since. On August 20th, Human Rights Watch and the UN Human Rights Office reported that the M23 killed at least 140 people, and possibly over 300 civilians during counter-FDLR operations in Rutshuru in July 2025. On September 21st, the M23 reportedly captured the South Kivu town of Nzibira after clashes with DRC forces. On October 8th, the Red Cross detailed that after assessing 240 health centers and clinics in North and South Kivu, more than 80% of these health facilities faced medicine shortages. Furthermore, the M23 is strengthening its

political and economic positioning with apparent ambitions to take Uvira, South Kivu's second-largest urban center.

On September 22, 2025, Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi conceded that the Accord has not calmed the conflict, accusing Rwanda of deepening its support for M23 rather than withdrawing. He also cautioned against the impression that U.S. mediation gives Washington a claim on Congo's resources, stressing, "This does not mean that we will auction our mineral resources." On September 24, 2025, the Administration's Senior Advisor for Arab and African Affairs, Massad Boulos, acknowledged in New York that "the fight has not ended" and that agreement implementation had "not fully" begun, while UN Ambassador Mike Waltz warned, on September 30, 2025, that M23 and Rwandan forces were actively obstructing peacekeepers – despite Rwanda having committed under the June 27 agreement to "facilitate and support" MONUSCO's ability to implement its mandate. Meanwhile, on the same day, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC told the UN Security Council that peace remained "mostly a promise," noting continued human rights abuses, including mass killings, forced military recruitment, summary executions, torture, abductions, and sexual violence by M23 and other armed groups. These assessments highlight the continued challenge of implementing the Accord, the need for renewed and focused diplomatic attention, and the dissonance between the Administration's declarations of triumph and the facts on the ground.

We are further concerned that the Administration's June 3rd ill-considered deal with Rwanda – under which Kigali agreed to accept up to 250 third-country deportees from the United States, with U.S. funds provided up front to support implementation – may complicate the diplomatic environment. This new arrangement risks granting Rwanda additional leverage at a moment when Washington is attempting to serve as an impartial mediator between the parties. With deportee transfers already underway, it is unclear how this agreement aligns with broader U.S. engagement in the region, what safeguards govern the use of the funds provided, and whether the deal could inadvertently weaken U.S. efforts to secure accountability, humanitarian access, and compliance from all actors engaged in the conflict.

Given these facts, we hope to receive better clarity on the Administration's assessment of the current conditions of the conflict and next steps. Specifically, we ask:

1. Will the Administration commit to renewed, sustained diplomacy with all relevant parties – including members of civil society, who have been excluded from the Washington and Doha process to date – to address root causes of the conflict and hold armed actors and their supporters accountable?
2. How does the Administration assess the current security and humanitarian situation in eastern DRC, including whether M23 – with the support of Rwanda – has continued to hold or gain territory since the signing of the Washington Accord?
3. What measures has the Department put in place to ensure that the U.S.–Rwanda deportee agreement does not weaken U.S. leverage in the peace process, and how are funds under this arrangement being monitored, restricted, and reported?
4. Will the Administration continue to insist on minerals and commercial frameworks as a precondition to peace?
5. What steps is the Administration taking to ensure that the Washington Accord signatories allow unfettered access for humanitarian and aid organizations?
6. Will the United States support and fund peacekeeping efforts and humanitarian aid in eastern DRC?
7. What measures will the Administration pursue to ensure that future U.S.-backed peace efforts are rooted in long-term diplomatic engagement rather than short-term arrangements?

8. Given the Administration's stated plans to hold a White House event to mark the Washington Accord, what conditions have been met by both signatory parties to warrant the Administration holding such an event?

The initial momentum generated by the Washington Accord and the Doha framework agreement now warrants sustained follow-through and an inclusive process that addresses underlying drivers of instability in the region. U.S.-facilitated efforts to resolve conflicts across the globe require serious, level-headed leadership and thoughtful, consistent diplomacy to foster concrete and lasting commitments. We encourage the Administration to take stock of lessons learned from the Washington Accord process so far and focus upcoming efforts on fostering a sustainable peace between the warring parties that advances both U.S. interests and long-term regional stability.

Sincerely,



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator