



By: TA | AP Brief

Conflict in eastern Congo is escalating



The United Nations' acting top envoy for Congo warned the U.N. Security Council that the **conflict in mineral-rich eastern Congo** is escalating and expanding, with increasing use of heavy weapons and **offensive drones** posing serious risks to civilians.

Vivian van de Perre said that despite the withdrawal of Rwanda-backed M23 rebels and their allies from the town of Uvira under **international pressure** in January, clashes are escalating in the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu between the M23 and Congolese army forces and their supporters.

“The situation in South Kivu remains tense and the renewed hostilities have expanded and shifted the front lines, including toward Burundi’s border, increasing the risk of a regional conflagration,” she warned.

Eastern Congo has been battered by decades of unrest as government forces fight more than 100 armed groups, the most potent being M23, often over access to its **mineral riches**.

M23 fighters made a major advance into the region early last year, seizing Goma and other key cities as they quickly expanded their presence.

Van de Perre, who heads the nearly 9,000-member U.N. peacekeeping force in Congo known as **MONUSCO**, said the situation in Ituri province also “remains alarming,” with numerous casualties from violence linked to one rebel group while another group has been attacking mining sites.

Van de Perre cited two “concerning” emerging elements: the conflict is expanding from North and South Kivu into Tshopo province, and the use of heavy weapons and drones in urban areas poses risks to civilians and civilian infrastructure, which she said includes “recent incidents affecting sites such as Bangoka Airport in Kisangani and in Goma town.”

At the same time, she said, M23 is consolidating parallel administrative structures in areas under its control, which include Goma, “further undermining state

authority and complicating the delivery of humanitarian assistance.”

All agreements must be implemented

Officials from Congo, Rwanda and the United States met in Washington last week and agreed on coordinated steps to **de-escalate tensions** in eastern Congo.

After briefing the Security Council, van de Perre told reporters that the “extremely volatile” situation in the east is why all agreements signed by the parties must be implemented.

The first step should be a ceasefire, followed by the reopening of airports and the restoration of freedom of movement for peacekeepers, she said.

Resolving the conflict in eastern Congo is a matter of highest priority for Trump - Massad Boulos

Massad Boulos, who chaired the council meeting and is a senior adviser to U.S. President Donald Trump on African and Arab affairs, said “MONUSCO remains indispensable to the success of the peace process.”

He said resolving the conflict in eastern Congo is “a matter of highest priority” for Trump. He echoed van de Perre’s call for the parties to stick to their obligations and commitments, including respecting a ceasefire.