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DRC Summary 28 April 2025

The DRC government will begin legal proceedings against former president Joseph Kabila (2001-2019) for allegedly supporting the Rwanda-backed M23 rebels operating in the country's mineral rich east. In a ceremony at the United States (US) Department of State on 25 April, the governments of Rwanda and the DRC commit to drafting a peace agreement aimed at ending decades of conflict between the two neighbouring countries. The US chargé d'affaires and acting ambassador to Angola, James Story, says on 3 April that Washington remains committed to the Lobito Corridor.

DRC suspends former president Joseph Kabila's political party

The government of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)** will begin legal proceedings against former president **Joseph Kabila** (2001-2019) for allegedly supporting the **Rwanda**-backed **M23** rebels operating in the country's mineral-rich east.¹ Kabila, who had been living in self-imposed exile, crossed into the M23-controlled city of **Goma** from neighbouring Rwanda on 18 April, angering the Congolese government.² The DRC's justice ministry on 19 April announced that it would initiate legal action against Kabila, while the interior ministry suspended his party, **Parti du Peuple pour la Reconstruction et la Démocratie (PPRD)**, for its "*ambiguous attitude*" towards the M23's occupation of DRC territory.³ The justice ministry said it would seize Kabila's assets in the DRC and has placed travel restrictions on unnamed Kabila associates.⁴ Interior minister **Jacquemain Shabani** said in a statement published on social media that the DRC government condemned Kabila's

"deliberate choice to return to the country through the city of Goma under control of the enemy, which curiously assured his security".⁵

M23 rebels captured Goma with Rwandan support in a deadly battle in January and have continued to expand their territory in eastern Congo, leading to international condemnation and sanctions. Speaking on the matter, Kabila's long-time adviser, **Barnabe Kikaya Bin Karubi**, said in a statement on 20 April that the former president remains committed to the future of the country and stands with all citizens who seek a prosperous, peaceful and united nation.⁶ Kabila's office criticised the government's lack of progress in bringing to an end the conflict in the east despite several ongoing peace talks:

"The Congolese people cannot wait indefinitely while regional and international initiatives stall without tangible results."⁷

Kabila's return to the DRC adds a layer of complexity to the crisis in the eastern region. While Kabila says he has returned to help bring an end to the fighting in the country, his decision to arrive first in the rebel-controlled Goma adds credence to allegations of his complicity in the M23's ongoing offensive.⁸ Tshisekedi has previously accused Kabila of supporting the rebellion and "*preparing an insurrection*".⁹ The government's swift and comprehensive response to Kabila is not surprising, given

¹ Aljazeera, 20 Apr 2025

² BBC, 20 Apr 2025

³ Aljazeera, 20 Apr 2025

⁴ Bloomberg, 20 Apr 2025

⁵ Interior ministry, 20 Apr 2025

⁶ Bloomberg, 20 Apr 2025

⁷ Bloomberg, 20 Apr 2025

⁸ The Sub-Saharan Security Review, 22 Apr 2025

⁹ Bloomberg, 20 Apr 2025

that some believe his return will have a “*galvanising effect*” on the M23.¹⁰ While it is unclear whether Kabila is aiming to reclaim power in the DRC or simply re-entering its political scene, his considerable influence and wide-reaching political and military ties pose a direct threat to President **Félix Tshisekedi**’s (2019-present) increasingly fragile rule.¹¹

Rwanda and DRC commit to drafting peace deal

In a ceremony at the **United States (US) Department of State** on 25 April, the governments of Rwanda and the DRC committed to drafting a peace agreement aimed at ending the decades of conflict between the two neighbouring countries.¹² DRC foreign minister **Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner**, and her Rwandan counterpart, **Olivier Nduhungirehe**, signed the “*declaration of principles*” with US secretary of state **Marco Rubio** as a witness.¹³ According to the signed declaration, the DRC and Rwanda committed to drafting an initial peace agreement no later than 2 May.¹⁴

According to the state department, Wagner and Nduhungirehe committed to “*mutual recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity*” and agreed to address security concerns, facilitate the return of displaced people, support the **United Nations (UN)** peacekeeping mission in DRC and promote regional economic integration.¹⁵ Wagner said the development means “*there is hope for peace*” but earning peace will require seriousness, sincerity and transparency.¹⁶ Nduhungirehe noted that the declaration paves the way for a definitive peace agreement, partly because the US is throwing its support behind the peace negotiations that are being overseen by the **African Union** and the government of **Qatar**.¹⁷ Speaking to reporters following the signing, Rubio told reporters that,

*“It’s a declaration that establishes a fundamental understanding of regional governance, security, economic frameworks, to end the fighting.”*¹⁸

Rubio said peace will pave the way for greater US and Western investment in the region, which will lead to economic opportunities and prosperity.¹⁹ This development comes a few weeks after Tshisekedi requested an urgent meeting with US President **Donald Trump** (2025-present) to offer the US exclusive access to critical mineral and infrastructure projects in exchange for security assistance (see *ARC Briefing DRC Mar 2025*).²⁰ Talks between the two countries are ongoing.

The agreement is a major step in the right direction and US involvement, as well as its possible issuance of sanctions on illicit behaviour, could lead to further progress. However, delays in reaching a final peace deal could result in further deaths and displacement. The **United Nations (UN)** warned on 27 March that a record 28 million people face acute hunger in the DRC, driven by escalating conflict between the government and M23 rebels in the east.²¹ The M23’s rapid advance this year has left more than 7,000 people dead, displaced thousands more and given the rebels control of vast mineral-rich hubs of **Goma (North Kivu Province)** and **Bukavu (South Kivu Province)**.²² With these key cities still under M23 control and any possible delays in concluding a final deal, the humanitarian toll could increase, deepening instability in an already unstable region. Should this agreement yield tangible results, these negotiations would be viewed as an important milestone in ending this deadly conflict.

¹⁰ The Sub-Saharan Security Review, 22 Apr 2025

¹¹ The Sub-Saharan Security Review, 22 Apr 2025

¹² Bloomberg, 25 Apr 2025

¹³ Reuters, 25 Apr 2025

¹⁴ Aljazeera, 25 Apr 2025

¹⁵ US State Department, 25 Apr 2025

¹⁶ Bloomberg, 25 Apr 2025

¹⁷ Bloomberg, 25 Apr 2025

¹⁸ US State Department, 25 Apr 2025

¹⁹ Bloomberg, 25 Apr 2025

²⁰ Mining Weekly, 5 Mar 2025

²¹ United Nations, 27 Mar 2025

²² DRC, Rwanda and Qatar joint statement, 18 Mar 2025

US remains committed to the Lobito Corridor

Senior adviser for Africa at the US state department, **Massad Boulos**, said in an online briefing on 17 April that the US could provide funding to companies operating in the DRC through the **Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM)** and the **US International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)** as part of a potential critical minerals partnership.²³ Boulos said these financial institutions would support the **Lobito Corridor**, a major rail-infrastructure initiative linking the DRC, **Zambia** and **Angola** to the **Atlantic Ocean** through a port in Angola.²⁴ Last year, the US committed \$533m to finance the Lobito Corridor. Boulos further noted that the major project is progressing considerably on the Angola side and the US is now in discussions with the DRC government to work on several projects, including highways, railways and power projects.²⁵

Boulos' announcement comes weeks after the US chargé d'affaires and acting ambassador to Angola, **James Story**, said on 3 April that **Washington** remains committed to the Lobito Corridor, signalling a bright spot in trade with Africa facing painful tariff increases.²⁶ While travelling on the train that runs from the Lobito port to the cobalt and copper mines in the DRC, Story told reporters that the US is "*here to show our commitment to these projects*" and will continue working with its partners.²⁷ He also indicated that he was in contact with the **White House** and State Department "*every day*" and both are committed to the project.²⁸ The US embassy, which was leading a tour along a section of the 1,344-km line running through Angola, was joined by 15 ambassadors, the majority of whom were from Western countries.²⁹ Story's comments came a day after Trump on 2 April announced sweeping import tariffs, including for the three African countries hosting the Lobito Corridor – DRC, Angola and Zambia.³⁰ However, the White House emphasised that those tariffs exclude copper, energy and critical minerals that are not available in the US.³¹

Boulos' and Story's confirmations this month that the US remains committed to funding the Lobito Corridor is a major development with significant geopolitical ramifications. This is the strongest indication yet that the Trump administration intends to continue supporting the key initiative that was the flagship of former US president **Joe Biden's** (2017-2021) push to counter **Chinese** influence in **Africa**. Backing the Lobito project will help Washington secure critical minerals – such as cobalt and copper – that are essential to its strategic sectors like technology (such as artificial-intelligence data centres), automotive manufacturing and defence.

A key question remains about where the minerals will be refined – the US or **Europe**. At the moment most of the critical resources from the African region are refined in China, which controls that supply chain. Breaking China's chokehold on those supply chains will be a formidable task for the US and its allies. Meanwhile, the China-backed **Tanzania-Zambia Railway (Tazara)** export route – from **Central Africa** to the **Indian Ocean** – is also being rehabilitated, making faster progress than the Lobito Corridor.³²

²³ E&E News, 17 Apr 2025

²⁴ Bloomberg, 17 Apr 2025

²⁵ Bloomberg, 17 Apr 2025

²⁶ Bloomberg, 3 Apr 2025

²⁷ Mining Weekly, 4 Apr 2025

²⁸ Bloomberg, 3 Apr 2025

²⁹ Mining Weekly, 4 Apr 2025

³⁰ Moneyweb, 3 Apr 2025

³¹ Bloomberg, 3 Apr 2025

³² Africa Confidential, 5 Apr 2025

Planner

2025 (DRC) Constitutional review process to start;

2025 Kinshasa (DRC) Withdrawal of the **Southern African Development Community (SADC) Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC)** peacekeeping forces from DRC;

Chronology

25 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Business Day*. DRC and **Rwanda** will reportedly sign an agreement in the **United States (US)** today to promote peace and economic development;

24 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Al Jazeera*. DRC and **M23** rebels agree on a ceasefire and to move towards a broader peace deal;

20 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Al Jazeera*. DRC suspends the political party of former president **Joseph Kabila** and orders the seizure of his assets, accusing him of high treason over alleged ties to **M23** rebels;

16 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Africa Intelligence*. Congolese tax authorities are claiming around \$4.7 billion from **Switzerland**-headquartered multinational commodity trading and mining company **Glencore's** local subsidiaries;

16 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *SABC*. Fifty-four **African** trade ministers from across the continent meet in Kinshasa and agree to fast-track policies that will promote trade within Africa;

14 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Africanews*. **African Union (AU)** appoints **Togo's** President **Faure Gnassingbé** as the new AU mediator for the conflict in eastern DRC;

14 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Defence Web*. **Southern African Development Community Mission in Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC)** is to withdraw by road through **Rwanda** on a date yet to be announced;

14 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Times Live*. Congolese officials and **M23** rebels' negotiators are reported to have arrived in **Doha (Qatar)** last week to discuss a ceasefire;

9 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Business Live*. Former president **Joseph Kabila** says he will return to DRC from **South Africa**, where he has been living for a year, to help find a solution to the conflict in eastern DRC;

8 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Times Live*. Presidency confirms that three **United States (US)** citizens who have been jailed over a failed coup attempt in 2024 have been handed over to US custody after high-level talks;

8 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *APA News*. **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** confirms it will hold an inter-ministerial task force meeting on Friday to tackle challenges at the **Kasumbalesa Border Post** between the DRC and **Zambia**;

6 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Actualite*. Heavy rains trigger flooding in Kinshasa, killing at least 30 people;

4 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Reuters*. **Rwandan**-backed **M23** rebels in eastern DRC have withdrawn from the strategic town of **Walikale**, describing the move as a goodwill gesture ahead of planned peace talks with the government next week;

3 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *Times Live*. **United States (US)** senior advisor for Africa, **Massad Boulos**, says he and US President **Donald Trump** have agreed on a path forward for the development of the minerals agreement the DRC presented to the US;

1 Apr 2025 Kinshasa (DRC) *RFI*. **Thomas Lubanga**, whom the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** convicted in 2012 on charges of recruiting child soldiers, announces the creation of a new

rebel movement, **Convention for the Popular Revolution**, aimed at overthrowing the **Ituri** provincial government;

28 Mar 2025 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters*. **Qatari** mediators have reportedly hosted a second round of talks between DRC and **Rwanda** and met separately with **M23** rebels to discuss a ceasefire in eastern DRC;

28 Mar 2025 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Defence Web*. **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** reaches an agreement with **M23** rebels to facilitate the withdrawal of the **SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (SAMIDRC)** troops and equipment from **Goma (North Kivu Province)**;

28 Mar 2025 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Reuters*. Government doubles salaries for soldiers and police, in an apparent bid to boost morale as **Rwanda**-backed **M23** rebels advance in the east;

27 Mar 2025 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Mail & Guardian*. Foreign minister **Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner** confirms talks are in progress with the **United States (US)** on a strategic minerals agreement but nothing has been agreed upon yet;

25 Mar 2025 **Kinshasa (DRC)** *Al Jazeera*. Renewed fighting between **M23** and pro-government **Wazalendo** fighters in **North** and **South Kivu** provinces breaks out a day after the **East African Community (EAC)** and **Southern African Development Community (SADC)** hold a summit to address the failing ceasefire in eastern DRC;

24 Mar 2025 **Walikale (DRC)** *Daily Maverick*. The de facto ceasefire between DRC and **M23** rebels seemingly breaks down as **M23** reneges on its pledge to withdraw from **Walikale**;

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