

DRC

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Defense chiefs from southern Africa and Africa's Great Lakes region have recommended the replacement of the UN peace mission (MONUSCO) in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) with an African force, a top military chief said here on Wednesday.

Gen. Aronda Nyakairima, Ugandan defense chief, told reporters here that the military chiefs from the regional blocs of the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) met over the weekend and recommended to the African Union (AU) that the operation of the UN force be halted for its failure to protect Congolese. "We are recommending that Africa takes over MONUSCO. We put in a brigade, they give us assets and we do our job regional forces have been good at doing other than these international forces which come from outside the continent and they do not know what they are doing," he said.

Gen. Aronda said that following a recommendation by the ICGLR summit last year to deploy a Neutral International Force (NIF) to fight negative forces in the eastern DRC, some members of the UN opposed the idea and instead said the NIF should be integrated into MONUSCO. "We will not accept the UN position of being integrated. It is up to the AU to communicate to UN. We want nothing less than taking over MONUSCO," he said. Aronda said the defense chiefs decided that the regions stick to their original proposal of deploying the NIF. He said the outcomes of the chiefs meeting will be forward to the AU Summit which kicks off in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa over the weekend.

Great Lakes region leaders are critical of MONUSCO accusing it of looking on as hundreds of thousands of Congolese are made homeless and others fleeing to neighboring Rwanda and Uganda.