

UGANDA

External relations

(OUG_1) IRIN – 19/10

Uganda's mediation to end the fighting in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) between government troops and M23 "mutineers", which has caused large-scale population displacement, has come into question.

At their eighth summit in Kampala in August 2012, International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) heads of state and government mandated Uganda as its current chair to facilitate dialogue between M23 fighters (former DRC national army soldiers who mutinied in April) and the DRC government. It has since established contact with M23 and dialogue has been ongoing, according to a Ugandan government statement.

However, analysts are skeptical and doubt Uganda's impartiality and credibility in facilitating the talks, given its alleged support and arming of M23 in its six-month fight against government troops in DRC's North Kivu Province. Uganda denies giving any support to M23.

"It's within the context of ICGLR for Uganda to facilitate the dialogue. But there is confusion. You can't facilitate talks on the one hand, and on the other you are being accused of arming and supporting rebels," Philip Apuuli Kasaija, an associate professor of political science at Makerere University, told IRIN.

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(OUG_2) Reuters – 22/10

Uganda said on Monday it would stop mediating in the conflict between the Democratic Republic of Congo and M23 rebels if the U.N. Security Council endorsed accusations that Uganda was supporting the rebels.

"We have contacted the U.N. via our diplomats in New York because we want to know whether what the media wrote about is true," junior foreign minister Asuman Kiyingi told Reuters. "If the U.N. confirms its experts wrote these outrageous falsehoods, then we'll withdraw from our mediation role in the conflict between Congo and the M23 rebels." Kiyingi said the allegations were already undermining the perception of Uganda as a neutral mediator.

The Ugandan government has already denied it supports M23, calling the allegations "rubbish, rubbish, rubbish."

Uganda has been spearheading faltering efforts by a regional body, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), to put together a 4,000-strong force to neutralize M23 and police the border between Congo and Rwanda.

U.N. peacekeeping chief Herve Ladsous told reporters at the United Nations in New York on Monday that no countries bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo would be contributing troops to such a force. "There is a military assessment team that is meeting in Goma so we have to wait for their recommendations," Ladsous said. "It is still being worked upon but we expect some results in the next few days." "Of course the devil is in the details and we would have to look very closely at the composition of that force, at its command and control mechanisms, how to coordinate with (U.N. peacekeepers) and agree on very specific objectives," he said.

Kiyingi said Uganda would stop its mediation role even if the United Nations did not endorse the accusations but still imposed sanctions on M23 leaders. "We cannot try to bring two parties to the table to talk when one is under sanctions and the other is not," he said.

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