

JOINT COMMUNIQUE OF THE HIGH-LEVEL TRIPARTITE MEETING BETWEEN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO, THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA AND THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

GENEVA, 15 MAY 2023

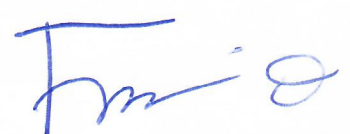
At the expressed interest by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Rwanda, the High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, invited delegations from the two governments to meet in Geneva, Switzerland to discuss perspectives for the voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees in the Republic of Rwanda and Rwandan refugees in the DRC.

The Delegations were led by Honourable Christophe LUTUNDULA APALA Pen'APALA, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Francophonie, DRC; Honourable Marie SOLANGE KAYISIRE, Minister in Charge of Emergency Management, the Republic of Rwanda, and the High Commissioner, Filippo GRANDI.

Also present was a representative of the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Great Lakes Region, Mr. Luc Ngowet, Senior Political Affairs Officer.

The participants in this Meeting concluded as follows:

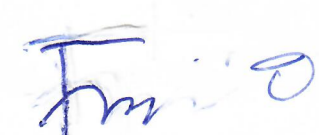
1. **Welcoming** the role played by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in supporting governments to provide protection, assistance, and solutions to refugees in the Great Lakes region and beyond.
2. **Acknowledging** the provisions of the Tripartite Agreements on the Voluntary Repatriation of Congolese and Rwandan refugees signed in Kigali, on 17 February 2010, and practical modalities for the repatriation signed in Goma, on 30 July 2010 by the Governments of Rwanda, the DRC, and UNHCR.
3. **Recognising** the traditional hospitality and generosity of the two Governments and the people of DRC and Rwanda, which have hosted thousands of refugees for decades.
4. **Reaffirming** that, in the pursuit of their international obligations, the Governments of DRC and Rwanda will continue to keep their doors open to those refugees who meet the relevant criteria of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention: as well as relevant national legislation in both countries.
5. **Recalling** the commitment of states to grant UNHCR unrestricted access to refugees who choose to voluntarily return; as well as returnees for purposes of supporting their return and reintegration.



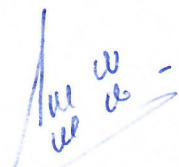
6. **Recognising** the willingness of the DRC and the Republic of Rwanda to create conditions that are conducive to sustainable return and reintegration for their citizens who have taken refuge in either state.
7. **Taking note** of the expressed will of refugees to return to their country of origin.
8. **Affirming** principles relating to return in safety and dignity and recognizing that under no circumstances should return be forced.
9. **Considering** the role which existing regional mechanisms [including the Nairobi and Luanda Peace Processes] can play to support political solutions and the effective protection of civilians, thereby enabling comprehensive, inclusive, and sustainable solutions, including for refugee populations.
10. **Noting** that UNHCR remains available to provide support to the two governments, and to mobilise humanitarian and development partners to support the voluntary return of refugees to their country of origin when conditions are conducive.

The two Governments commit to:

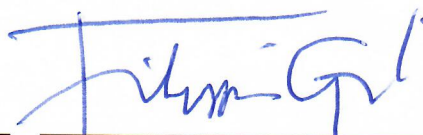
11. **Ensure** the full application of the aforementioned Tripartite Agreements and to honour their respective commitments thereunder.
12. **Engage in** constructive dialogue aimed at creating conditions conducive to the sustainable return of refugees in the two countries.
13. **Recognise** the right to return and uphold the principles of safe and dignified voluntary returns.
14. **Address** potential challenges relating to security for returnees, facilitate the exchange of comprehensive and up to date information on conditions in areas of return, including through sensitisation at the community level, and ensure support for sustainable reintegration.
15. **Ensure** continued access to asylum for those in need of international protection in line with the relevant international conventions.
16. **Convene**, in Nairobi, within one month from the date of issuance of this Joint Communiqué, a technical tripartite meeting to:
 - (i) define the practical modalities for the reactivation of all the commitments and structures contained in the 2010 Tripartite Agreements and, in this regard, develop a comprehensive Road Map for voluntary repatriation.



- (ii) resume the process of the facilitation of voluntary repatriation of Congolese refugees in Rwanda and Rwandan refugees in Congo, in line with the principles and modalities already outlined in the text of the 2010 Tripartite Agreements.



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Pen'Apala Deputy Prime
Minister and
Minister of Foreign Affairs and
Francophonie
Democratic Republic of the
Congo



Filippo Grandi
United Nations High
Commissioner for Refugees



Marie Solange Kayisire
Minister in Charge of
Emergency Management
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15 May 2023 – Geneva, Switzerland