



PUBLIC APPEAL

7 February 2025

APPEAL FROM FOCCISA TO THE AFRICAN UNION - SPECIFICALLY THE PRESIDENTS OF DRG, RWANDA AND SOUTH AFRICA

The Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), expresses profound sorrow and deep concern over the escalating conflict in the eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), particularly the city of Goma. The recent surge in violence has led to devastating consequences for innocent civilians, which we unequivocally condemn as egregious violations of human rights.

Reports indicate that the M23 rebel group, with alleged support from external entities, has seized control of Goma, resulting in a wave of terror and widespread atrocities. We have received reports that hospitals are overwhelmed with casualties, and there are numerous accounts of vulnerable civilians - including women and children - suffering from gunshot wounds, sexual violence, and other forms of unthinkable brutality. Such actions are in direct opposition to the sanctity of human life and dignity that we, as the faith community, seek to uphold for all people, according to the Word of God.

FOCCISA is further saddened by the loss of peacekeepers who have bravely served in the region. South Africa has reported the tragic deaths of 14 of its soldiers in recent clashes around Goma and peacekeepers from both Malawi (3) and Uruguay (1) have also been killed. These individuals sacrificed their lives in the pursuit of peace, and we honour their commitment and bravery.

In light of these distressing developments, we have received, with relief, the news of the Joint Summit between SADC and the East African Community scheduled to take place in Tanzania from 7-8 February 2025. This is a welcome development, and we call upon Presidents Felix Tshisekedi (DRC), Paul Kagame (Rwanda) and Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa) to contribute significantly towards the success of this joint Summit which must produce a ceasefire now.

As faith leaders, we are guided by the teachings of Scripture, which call for peace and the protection of the vulnerable. The Bible reminds us in Matthew 5:9, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God." This passage underscores our collective responsibility to pursue peace and safeguard the well-being of all individuals.

Therefore, FOCCISA appeals for the following:

- 1. All armed groups involved in the conflict** to immediately cease hostilities, respect international humanitarian law, and ensure the safety and dignity of civilians.

2. **Presidents Felix Tshisekedo (DRC), Paul Kagame (Rwanda) and Cyril Ramaphosa (South Africa)** must agree to set aside their respective differences and commit to lead SADC / East African Community Summit in the pursuit of a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire.
3. **Regional bodies such as the African Union (AU)** to actively support the outcomes of the SADC / East African Community Summit and facilitate political structures that will deliver the protection of human rights.
4. **The international community** to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to those affected and to support initiatives aimed at conflict resolution and sustainable development in the region.
5. **Faith communities and civil society organisations** to continue advocating for peace, offering support to victims, and fostering reconciliation among conflicting parties.

At a time like this, let us unite in prayer and action, striving for a future where peace prevails across Africa, and the rights and dignity of every individual are upheld.

Ends

About FOCCISA:

The Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA) is a fellowship of Christian Councils of Churches in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region which provides a forum to facilitate consultation, networking and cooperation of the churches in the SADC Region, in order to deal with the resolution of regional crises. Currently FOCCISA is comprised of:

- Botswana Council of Churches
- Christian Council of Lesotho
- Christian Council of Mozambique
- Christian Council of Tanzania
- Council of Christian Churches in Angola
- Council of churches in Namibia
- Council of Churches in Zambia
- Council of Eswatini Churches
- Malawi Council of Churches
- South African Council of Churches
- Zimbabwe Council of Churches

The forum serves to coordinate and exchange views by its members in the region, by revitalising the role of media and communication in promoting and strengthening democratic consciousness values, good governance and civic awareness against social evils like corruption, nepotism, discrimination in all its forms and in particular against women and the marginalisation of the poor. The work of FOCCISA is founded on the Gospel of salvation, liberation, justice and reconciliation, as re-affirmed by Jesus Christ.