Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the Commission issued the following statement today:

"I have been following the latest developments in the Eastern DRC with great concern. I call on the M23 to immediately stop the military offensive against the city of Goma. Any support to the M23 in violation of the sanctions regime and the arms embargo must stop.

All parties must allow unrestricted humanitarian access to those in need. I and my colleague Kristalina Georgieva are very worried about the humanitarian consequences of this new spate of violence. We are particularly preoccupied by the fate of more than 70,000 internally displaced persons who have started leaving the camp of Kanyaruchinya, north of Goma. The European Commission stands by its humanitarian partners to help them deliver essential aid.

It is also important to encourage the MONUSCO to play an active role in the crisis according to its mandate. Its role is vital for the protection of civilians and no action intended to undermine MONUSCO’s work should be tolerated.

I call on all stakeholders, including neighbouring countries, to take all necessary steps to avoid a further deterioration of the situation and to prevent the conflict from spreading.

I look forward to discussing at tomorrow's Foreign Affairs Council how to avoid further escalation, while promoting a sustainable solution in the longer term."

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