Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on the situation in North Kivu

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 would like to express my strong concerns regarding the escalation of violence in the Goma region and on the border with Rwanda. I deplore the death of a Tanzanian UN peacekeeper and the injuries resulting from fighting with M23 on Congolese territory, and at the same time the civilian victims of shells which landed on the Rwandan city of Gisenyi. I call for an independent investigation by the joint verification mechanism, to determine the origin of shells falling on Rwandese territory.

I offer my sincere condolences to the family of the late Tanzanian peacekeeper, as well as to the Tanzanian authorities. I express my full support to the initiatives of Special Representative of the UN Secretary General Martin Kobler and MONUSCO.

I firmly condemn repeated M23 attacks against both MONUSCO and the civilian population, as well as any attempt to internationalise the conflict. Any direct intervention by DRC's neighbouring countries can only exacerbate the situation.

I call on all concerned parties for restraint, the respect of territorial integrity and the search for a political solution in full accordance with the national and regional commitments contained in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region.

A high-level mission composed of the UNSG Special Envoy, the African Union Special Representative, the US Special Envoy and the EU Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes region, will travel to the region in the coming days."

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P R E S S

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