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After a long meeting, Ramaphosa and Kagame agree a political solution is best in DRC

Після довгої зустрічі Рамафоса та Кагаме дійшли згоди, що політичне рішення найкращим вирішенням конфлікту на сході ДРК

Президент Руанди Поль Кагаме та президент Південно-Африканської Республіки Сиріл Рамафоса провели тригодинну зустріч за зачиненими дверима в Кігалі. Це була перша пряма взаємодія з того часу, як війська САДК на чолі з Південною Африкою були розгорнуті в ДРК. Вони погодилися, що політичне рішення було б найкращим вирішенням конфлікту на сході ДРК, де зараз дислокуються південноафриканські солдати. С. Рамафоса сказав, що відколи він вступив на посаду, він і П. Кагаме працювали над поліпшенням відносин між двома країнами, які не завжди були добрими.

<https://www.news24.com/news24/africa/news/after-a-long-meeting-ramaphosa-and-kagame-agree-a-political-solution-is-best-in-drc-20240408>

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and SA President Cyril Ramaphosa had a three-hour closed-door meeting in Kigali over the weekend.

They agreed that a political solution was the best for the eastern DRC conflict, where South African soldiers are now deployed.

SA and Rwanda's relationship has occasional "wrinkles", Ramaphosa said.

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and President Cyril Ramaphosa agreed they would prefer a political solution to - rather than military action around - Rwanda's disagreement with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The two leaders had a relatively long closed-door meeting in Kigali on Saturday - their first direct engagement since SADC troops, led by South Africa, were deployed to the DRC.

Their public remarks after the meeting gave some sense of how it went.

In an address marking 30 years since the start of the Rwandan genocide, the morning after meeting Ramaphosa, Kagame said there were "too many actors, even some from Africa, getting directly involved as tribal politics is given renewed prominence, and ethnic cleansing is prepared and practised".

"What has happened to us? Is this the Africa we want to live in? Is this the kind of world we want?"

Rwanda accuses the DRC of supporting Hutu elements that oppose Kagame's government - and say they fear South African troops will effectively be fighting alongside those insurgents.

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Ramaphosa said that since he had come into office, he and Kagame had been working on improving relations between the two countries, which hadn't always been great.

He said:

It is a relationship that is in existence, like relationships between countries, sometimes they face challenges, they wrinkle up and those wrinkles will be straightened up.

Some of the "wrinkles" include Rwandans needing to apply for visas to visit South Africa, something Ramaphosa said he and Kagame had agreed to resolve as "soon as possible", without giving a timeline.

Ramaphosa added that the two leaders agreed that peace through silencing the guns was what was needed in solving the impasse between the DRC and Rwanda.

"We both agreed that peace was an essential component fostering the development of this part of the continent and that in doing so we should bring the conflicts that are happening in the eastern part of the DRC to an end.

"There are a number of forces that operate in this area (North Kivu) and we agreed that a peaceful political solution is the best option to any military action."

He also revealed that he had spoken to former president Thabo Mbeki in Kigali about the DRC crisis on how to deal with it.

"All of us, in our discussions, expressed a deep yearning for a peaceful political solution to the challenges being faced [in the DRC]. I leave Rwanda with a renewed, bigger intention to find a solution that could lead to a political solution."

President of Madagascar Andry Rajoelina (2nd L), First Lady of Madagascar Mialy Rajoelina and President of South Africa Cyril Ramaphosa look on as members of the Rwandan Military Band carry wreaths during the commemorations of the 30th Anniversary of the 1994 Rwandan genocide at the Kigali Genocide Memorial in Kigali on 7 April 2024. (Luis Tato/AFP)

For all the talk of peace in Kigali, though, in Kinshasa, the DRC maintained there would be no negotiations before the M23 rebels leave DRC territory.

Rwanda wants SAMIDRC shunned

South Africa is leading the SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC), joined by Malawi and Tanzania.

They have been fighting in the DRC's North Kivu since December last year, to Rwanda's displeasure.

Most recently, Kigali wrote to the United Nations Security Council, advising it not to support the SAMIDRC logistically or technically because that could spark a regional war.

Rwanda's main worry is that the DRC government is fighting alongside remnants of the genocide perpetrators, known by their French name, Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda, or FDLR.

FDLR moved to eastern DRC after the 1994 genocide, when Kagame's forces, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), seized power.