

EN

ANNEX

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe

Exceptional Assistance Measure regarding the Democratic Republic of Congo

1. IDENTIFICATION

Action:	Peace and stabilisation efforts for Eastern DRC and the region.
Action Reference:	NDICI CR 2023/10
Cost:	EUR 10 000 000 (European Union (EU) contribution).
Budget Line:	14 02 03 10
Duration:	Maximum 18 months. The authorising officer responsible may decide to extend this period twice by a further period of up to six months, up to a total maximum duration of 30 months, under the conditions laid down in Article 23(6) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947.
Lead service:	FPI

2. ACTION SUMMARY

This action will provide flexible assistance and support to the ongoing peace processes both within the Democratic Republic of Congo and the surrounding region, such as, but not limited to, the Nairobi Process. The action will provide support to peace and mediation efforts between the parties, with a specific focus on facilitating processes, as well as bringing in local and regional expertise able to work on peace and mediation efforts directly with armed groups, state institutions, and civil society actors. Building on existing EU and international efforts, this action will also support the local reintegration dimension of the new Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)¹ programme to allow ex-combatants to re-integrate into their communities and build alternative livelihoods with the intention of providing a direct linkage between the political negotiations with the armed groups and its implementation on the ground. Finally, given notably increased tensions on social media and with a view to the upcoming elections, the action will also support efforts to prevent electoral violence with activities focusing on the reduction of hate speech and disinformation.

¹ Commonly known as P-DDRCS: Demobilization, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilization Program (P-DDRCS) for ex-combatants.

3. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

3.1 BACKGROUND

The situation in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is one of the worst political, security and humanitarian crises in the world today. It disproportionately affects women and children. There are more than 6 million internally displaced persons in the country which also hosts over half a million refugees while more than a million Congolese have fled across the border to neighbouring countries. Last year alone, more than half a million people were displaced due to clashes between the army and the M-23 and other non-state armed groups. The conflict is also a major reason for the increased food insecurity in the DRC, with 24.5 million Congolese acutely food insecure at the beginning of 2023. Against this backdrop, general elections are planned for December 2023, which could further increase instability in the country. In response to the worsening situation, a series of regional initiatives to de-escalate and address the crisis were developed. Angola, as chair of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), mandated by the African Union, has facilitated discussions between DRC and Rwanda (Luanda Process). In parallel, Kenya, in the context of the East African Community (EAC) and with former Kenyan President Kenyatta acting as facilitator, has launched a multilateral initiative for the stabilisation of eastern DRC (Nairobi Process). The latter focuses firstly on inter-Congolese dialogue with local armed groups with a view to their joining into a new demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) programme and secondly on the mobilisation of a new military regional force in the East with the support of EAC member states. The P-DDRCS program (*Programme National du Désarmement, Démobilisation, Relèvement Communautaire et Stabilisation*) is based on key fundamental principles, which reflect many of the lessons learned from the last three iteration of DDR in DRC. The process must be voluntary, decentralised and community based.

Finally, as a result of the existing tensions in DRC, hate speech and misinformation are getting more and more alarming. Hate messages and fake news targeting local communities continue to spread, both online and offline, with negative consequences for the civilian population overall especially in the run up to elections.

3.2 RATIONALE FOR CRISIS RESPONSE ACTIONS UNDER THE RAPID RESPONSE PILLAR OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT

The security situation in Eastern DRC has rapidly deteriorated and, considering the current ongoing peace process in the region, the EU should strategically leverage those processes, in order to achieve a political settlement that is amenable to long term conflict transformation. This constitutes an exceptional and unforeseen situation in the sense of Article 4(4)(a) of the NDICI Regulation. An adequate response cannot be provided under any other European Union Instrument due to the urgency with which the funds are required and due to available resources already being firmly committed.

Annex IV, paragraph 1, second paragraph, points (a), (h) and (q) of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 specifically provides for the use of the NDICI rapid response pillar to (a) support, through the provision of technical and logistical assistance, for the efforts undertaken by international, regional and local organisations and by State and civil society actors in promoting confidence-building, mediation, dialogue and reconciliation, transitional justice, women's and youth empowerment, in particular with regard to community tensions and protracted conflicts;

(h) support for civilian measures related to the demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants and their families into civil society, and where appropriate their repatriation, as well as measures to address the situation of child soldiers and female combatants, and (q) support for measures to promote the development and organization of civil society and its participation in the political process, including measures to enhance the role of women in such processes and measures to promote independent, pluralist and professional media.

3.3 RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation measure
Deterioration of the security situation.	High	High	Monitoring of the situation will be ensured to adapt the implementation plans to the changing security situation.
Participants and stakeholders of the peaces processes unwilling to engage in programme activities due to political sensitivities and disagreements with other parties.	Medium	High	Consultation with key stakeholders has been already undertaken and will continue throughout the entire project implementation period. Should a breakdown occur, programme adaptations will be made effective, in addition to strategic meetings to discuss concerns and re-establish commitments to the programme.
Political instability and reshuffling of key government officials after the elections.	Medium	Medium	Engage government entities/offices and institutions rather than individuals on a constant basis, as part of the institutional dialogue between the EU and other parties.

4. OBJECTIVES

4.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The overall objective of the action is to support the ongoing peace processes both within the DRC and the region and to prevent electoral violence.

4.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- 4.2.1 Provide support to peace and mediation efforts in DRC and the region between the parties (including armed groups, state institutions and civil society actors).
- 4.2.2 Support the local reintegration dimension of the new DDR programme (PDDRCS - Programme National du Désarmement, Démobilisation, Relèvement Communautaire et Stabilisation) to allow ex-combatants to re-integrate into their communities.

4.2.3 Support efforts to prevent and mitigate hate speech and electoral violence.

5. ACTION COMPONENTS AND EXPECTED RESULTS

The main expected results/outcomes include:

Expected Result (1): Ongoing peace processes in the region are enhanced, contributing to mitigating violence and conflict in Eastern DRC.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.1.1 Facilitate inclusive and participatory consultations between state authorities, mediation bodies (namely technical secretariats), communities and armed groups involved in peace processes;
- 5.1.2 Provision of technical assistance and logistical support to the involved parties of the peace processes;
- 5.1.3 Support provincial authorities for the elaboration of their own development plans;
- 5.1.4 Support the participation of women in the peace process, including their role as mediators;
- 5.1.5 Disseminate communication and awareness messages on the peace processes.

Expected Result (2): Governments, civil society organisations and local communities are able to implement concrete solutions for the reintegration of former combatants and members of the armed groups into the communities, contributing to the stabilisation of conflict affected areas.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.2.1 Communities and local authorities are supported in order to strengthen their local ownership of the P-DDRCS process, ensuring that activities are properly identified, planned, put in place and supervised by local actors;
- 5.2.2 Support resilience and local rehabilitation initiatives that will strengthen inter and intra-community social cohesion;
- 5.2.3 Logistic support to local communities and ex -combatants for the implementation of the reinsertion process.

Expected Result (3): Risks related to disinformation and hate speech on social media as well as offline are addressed.

Activities (indicative):

- 5.3.1 To mitigate the negative impact of hate speech and information/disinformation contents through a network with the capacity to monitor disinformation and react to it;
- 5.3.2 To implement responses to mitigate the effect of hate speech and harmful content;
- 5.3.3 To support local media and civil society organisations in countering harmful content via their broadcasting networks, social media accounts and WhatsApp groups;
- 5.3.4 To produce public-interest digital and media literacy campaigns.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES

The Commission will ensure that the appropriate EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures².

6.1.1 Grant: direct award (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant

The grant will contribute to achieving the objective 4.2.3 and result 3.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

The type of applicants targeted are non-governmental and not for profit organisations with consolidated experience in DRC, including with experience in addressing risks related to disinformation and hate speech on social media.

(c) Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because **the action entails crisis management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation** at the date of the Financing Decision.

6.1.2 Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity

A part of this action may be implemented in indirect management with an entity which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria: previous and ongoing work on mediation and DRC specifically and capacity to engage with the Congolese authorities at the state and national levels.

The implementation by this entity entails objectives 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 and results 1 and 2.

Exception to the non-retroactivity of costs:

The Commission authorises that the costs incurred may be recognised as eligible as of 1 April 2023 because of the urgency to respond to the needs related to the Nairobi process, technical assistance and logistical support required for conducting their activities on time and with the required quality.

6.1.3 Changes from indirect to direct management mode due to exceptional circumstances

Alternative implementation modality in direct management (for Results 1 and 2) might be applied in case indirect management cannot be implemented due to circumstances outside of the Commission's control.

Justification of a direct grant

Under the responsibility of the Commission's authorising officer responsible, the recourse to an award of a grant without a call for proposals is justified because the action entails crisis

² www.sanctionsmap.eu Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website, it is the OJ version that prevails.

management aid as referred to in Article 195(a) and as defined in Article 2(21) of the Financial Regulation at the date of the Financing Decision.

6.2 INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total European Union contribution under this Financing Decision **will not exceed EUR 10 000 000**. A breakdown among components is provided hereunder, and is indicative.

Indicative budget breakdown

Components	EU contribution (amount in EUR)	Indicative third party contribution, in currency identified
<u>Component 1 (Results 1 and 2)</u> : Support to peace and mediation efforts in DRC and the region between the parties; and support the local reintegration dimension of the new DDR programme (PDDRCS - Programme National du Désarmement, Démobilisation, Relèvement Communautaire et Stabilisation).		
6.1.2 – Indirect management with a pillar assessed entity	9 500 000	NA
<u>Component 2 (Result 3)</u> : Prevent electoral violence with activities focusing on the reduction of hate speech and disinformation.		
6.1.1 – Direct grant (direct management)	500 000	NA
Total	10 000 000	NA

6.3 ORGANISATIONAL SET-UP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The action shall be implemented under indirect management for results 1 and 2 and direct management for result 3. It will be devolved and sub-delegated to the **European Union Delegation in the Democratic Republic of Congo**, with the support of the Commission for the conclusion of the contracts implementing the action.

6.4 PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS MONITORING AND REPORTING

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final report. Each report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (outputs and outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the Logframe matrix. The report shall be laid out in such a way as to allow monitoring of the means envisaged and employed and of the budget details for the action. The final report, narrative and financial, will cover the entire period of the action implementation.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent

monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

6.5 EVALUATION

Having regard to the nature of the action, an evaluation will not be carried out for this action or its components.

The Commission may, during implementation, decide to undertake such an evaluation for duly justified reasons either on its own decision or on the initiative of the partner.

The financing of the evaluation shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.6 AUDIT

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audits or expenditure verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

The financing of the audit shall be covered by another measure constituting a financing decision.

6.7 COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle has adopted a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

It will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union's support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

The 2022 "Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for external actions" reference document shall be used to establish the appropriate contractual obligations.

7. COMPLEMENTARITY, COORDINATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This measure forms part of the broader EU effort to support the relief and stabilisation efforts in Democratic Republic of Congo in line with the recommendations of the recently developed EU Political Framework for Crisis Approach (PFCA) for DRC. The Council Conclusions for a Great Lakes Strategy, as adopted on 20 February, complement the implementation of a PFCA, through a regional approach. With the adoption of a new strategy, the EU reaffirms its commitment and readiness to support the peace, security and sustainable development for the entire region.

This action will complement ongoing and planned engagement of the EU in DRC. Close cooperation and coordination will be sought with other actions, in particular EU funded actions which are and will be implemented in support of the stabilization of the country and implementation of the DDR process.

The EU Delegation in DRC continues to focus on the political dimension of the P-DDRCS and on the reasons for the emergence of these armed groups. The EU continues to also advocate for

the P-DDRCS to continue its structuring at the provincial and local levels, while advocating for a better articulation of the different levels. Two consortia funded by FPI are currently working respectively on social cohesion within communities, and on intercommunity mediation. These two projects therefore have complementary and preparatory approaches in order to be able to conduct the activities of the P-DDRCS in a favourable context, in which communities are fully integrated.

An Electoral Violence Risk Assessment was recently conducted in DRC and the analysis will feed FPI intervention. Other efforts to prevent and mitigate hate speech and electoral violence include political monitoring of the electoral process, political dialogue, interactions with key actors, coordination with Member States and like-minded donors, as well as joint statements and communication on social media.