



CARSOC-IRSC



**Center for Support to the Strengthening
of Civil Society and Good Governance in
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**SUSTAINABLE PEACE PROGRAM IN EASTERN
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (PROPAD)**

**A NEW PARADIGM FOR SUSTAINABLE
PEACE IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION**

**PROJECT <<CITIZEN DEBATES FOR
SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE GREAT
LAKES REGION >>**

Duration : 2026 – 2030

1. CARSOC, in partnership with the Institute for the Reconstruction of Congolese Society (IRSC), proposes a new paradigm for building sustainable peace in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly in the Kivu provinces, which have been victims of armed conflict for nearly three decades involving neighboring countries—either as direct perpetrators and actors or as decisive supporters of local armed groups.

This paradigm is grounded in the imperative of promoting mutual acceptance and peaceful coexistence among the populations and leaders of countries in the Great Lakes region, primarily Rwanda and Burundi, by strengthening consensus on the issues of territories, populations, and resources, which constitute the root causes of recurring conflicts.

2. Indeed, regional economic integration alone as a solution to these conflicts—through the sharing of resources (as exemplified by the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries – CEPGL)—has failed in the past because it ignored the other two critical dimensions: territories and populations.

This perspective also helps explain the capture of the city of Uvira by the ACF/M23, a Rwandan proxy, shortly after the signing in Washington on 4 December 2025, under the auspices of President Donald Trump, of the DRC–Rwanda Peace Agreement and, more importantly, the Regional Economic Integration Framework, from which Rwanda would stand to benefit the most economically.

3. It is also reasonable to consider that, given the current and future needs of Rwanda and Burundi—stemming from their small territorial size, poverty, and overpopulation—which strategically position them as permanent security threats to the DRC, sustainable peace would emerge if these three countries were able to integrate into a common territorial, demographic, and state space for their mutual and harmonious development.

It is foreseeable that such a scenario may eventually materialize, possibly by force when the DRC becomes capable of doing so—either to neutralize this threat or to avenge the humiliations suffered over the past three decades. Rwanda, which currently holds military superiority among the three countries, is well aware of this prospect and should rationally prepare for it.

4. The new paradigm for sustainable peace in the Great Lakes seeks to avoid such an outcome. Moreover, this paradigm could, on the one hand, alleviate Congolese fears of the balkanization of the DRC, and, on the other hand, mitigate Rwanda's territorial claims over the Kivu provinces.

4. The new paradigm for sustainable peace in the Great Lakes seeks to avoid such an outcome. Moreover, this paradigm could, on the one hand, alleviate Congolese fears of the balkanization of the DRC, and, on the other hand, mitigate Rwanda's territorial claims over the Kivu provinces.

5. The following question underpins the new paradigm and will serve to interrogate—and potentially catalyze—the willingness of all parties to mutually accept one another and live together peacefully:

“What benefits could a common citizenship within a federation or confederation integrating (the provinces of) the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi bring to each of these three current States?”

6. The dissemination of this paradigm, based on the above question, aims to foster substantive debates that will lay the groundwork for its acceptance by the civil societies of the three countries—beginning with that of the DRC, which is the primary victim of the conflicts.

It is hoped that these debates will subsequently rise (or run in parallel) to the level of political actors in the respective countries. Promoting these debates within the international community also constitutes a key objective.

7. The summary document (downloadable at www.changecongorc.org) outlining this paradigm has already been shared:

- a. With several Congolese Members of Parliament and Senators;
- b. With major Congolese civil society actors, including the leaders of the two major churches in the DRC (Catholic and Protestant), as well as the Technical Secretariat of the “Social Pact for Peace and Peaceful Coexistence in the DRC and the Great Lakes Region”, so that the document may be debated within the framework of the forthcoming inclusive dialogue;
- c. With certain international organizations working in the field of peace promotion worldwide.

8. The Project “Citizen Debates for Peace in the Great Lakes” will consist of fostering, mainstreaming, and sustaining (2026–2030) debates on this new peace paradigm among members of civil society (individuals and organizations, farmers and academics) and political actors in the DRC, Rwanda, and Burundi, as well as among members of their respective diasporas worldwide.



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