

February 10, 2026

Remarks By Congressman Chris Smith

This hearing: **Advancing Peace in DRC and Rwanda through President Trumps Washington Accords** will come to order.

My engagement in supporting peace between Rwanda and DRC—like my good friend and former colleague Ambassador Tony Hall who will testify today—spans more than three decades, from a focus on the 1994 Rwandan Genocide to the current "Washington Accords".

This skillfully and brilliantly brokered peace deal signified a new era in the region, one where peace through strength is brought to bear to end the lengthy, bloody, and costly conflict.

Bringing both parties to negotiate at the same table was historic in itself—the first time in modern history where such progress has been made on this conflict. Yet the deals that have been agreed to, and the economic and security benefits they will unleash for DRC, Rwanda, and the United States, are extraordinary.

Ensuring that all sides follow through on the commitments made at the signing in December is not only in the U.S. national interest but above all for the millions of people who have suffered and continue to suffer in the war. This is for the present and future generations of Congolese and Rwandan children, and for the memory of the six million dead from this decades-long conflict, a human toll that is both staggering and intolerable.

The urgency of this mission was brought home to us with devastating clarity just days ago. The cowardly attack in Kisangani serves as a grim reminder that peace has enemies. This violence, targeting a city that has long yearned for stability, was a calculated attempt by spoilers to shatter the hope generated by these Accords. It underscores exactly why this hearing is

necessary. We cannot allow the progress we have made to be hijacked by those who profit from chaos.

Regrettably, past hearings have revealed that the international and U.S. response has often been half-hearted and indifferent, especially in the face of such violence. Today, things are changing; under President Trump and his cabinet's leadership, the response is strong, sustained, and durable.

I have called this hearing today because there continue to be spoilers to the peace process . The Kisangani attack is a symptom of this lingering rot. Our goal today is to ensure that all parties and all people understand the benefits of the Washington Accords and that the governments of Rwanda and DRC are clear on the steps that must be taken to get there.

The incentives are spelled out clearly in the Regional Economic Integration Framework, mandating that DRC and Rwanda develop a structured roadmap for economic integration—covering mineral supply chains, infrastructure, energy, and tourism.

Critically, the Washington Accords include a four-phase “concept of operations” that both parties agreed to. This is essential for Rwanda agreeing to pull its troops back, but only if the DRC follows a synchronized schedule to eliminate the FDLR militia. While the FDLR's genocidal ideology continues to be Rwanda's primary national security concern, we also expect M23 and Rwanda to take measures to demobilize combatants under their control.

Durable peace cannot be built by governments alone. It requires the moral authority and ground-level engagement of civil society, particularly faith-based groups as I described in my [House Resolution 586](#). Their networks provide the truth-telling we need to ensure that the benefits of peace reach the poorest, rather than just enriching the powerful.

As such, we must recognize the indispensable role of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO) and the Church of Christ in Congo (ECC), together with the African Union. Time and again, when political solutions faltered, CENCO and ECC stepped in. We remember their pivotal

leadership in brokering the Saint-Sylvestre Agreement on New Year's Eve 2016, which prevented the total collapse of the state, and the 2025 Social Pact for Peace and Living Together to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis and violence in the region.

Today, as we implement the Washington Accords, groups like CENCO and ECC are not just observers, they are key at facilitating an inclusive national dialogue in DRC—that includes *all the actors* of civil society movements, religious confessions, political parties, and armed groups—to promote social cohesion, national unity, and principles of good governance.

In fact, I just met with their leadership—Monsignor Donatien Nshole and Pastor Eric Nsenga—this morning. I hope that this national dialogue will start this month with the assistance of the Chair of the African Union and President of the Republic of Angola, President Lorenzo. It would demonstrate a commitment to peace.

It is critical that voices are heard and respected and that the personal security of civil society actors are protected.

As we implement these agreements, the United States is also breaking its dependence on minerals that finance the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)—often extracted through forced labor including the exploitation of children—and stopping indirectly supporting the CCP's efforts to fuel instability and regional conflict in Africa.

President Trump's Executive Order for '[Immediate Measures to Increase American Mineral Production](#)' was a crucial step toward strengthening our domestic supply chains as is the Washington Accords.

In 2023 and 2025, I held hearings highlighting that the greatest beneficiaries of the conflict and critical minerals system—China's state-owned mining companies—remain silent, refusing to confront an undeniable reality: from dirt to battery, from cobalt to cars, the entire supply chain is built on violence, exploitation, and corruption. This must change—and the time for change is now.

In response to these challenges, I reintroduced [H.R.2310](#), the *COBALT Supply Chain Act*, which ensures that goods made using or containing cobalt refined in the People's Republic of China do not enter the United States market under the presumption that the cobalt is extracted or processed with the use of child and forced labor in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Washington Accords is a culminating event designed to end suffering and war.