



AFRICA/CONGO DR - The UN condemns the recruitment of child soldiers in Kivu

Kinshasa (Agenzia Fides)-The United Nations Mission in Congo (MONUSCO) has condemned the forced recruitment of civilians, among whom there are several children, on behalf of guerrilla groups (especially the M23) operating in Kivu (east of the Democratic Republic of Congo).

"More than 100 cases of forced recruitment of civilians by the M23, including 26 children, have been documented since April 2012," reads a statement released on August 7 in Kinshasa. "Some reports say the number could be much higher." According to MONUSCO since the beginning of 2012 "more than 150 children have been recruited in the east of the Country, both from the M23, and other armed groups, such as Mayi Mayi fighters, the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)."

The M23 lined up at about 30 km from Goma, capital of North Kivu.

According to agency sources a few miles from rebel positions in the village of Kanyaruchinya, the population of the area fleeing the fighting have taken refuge in a Catholic church and a school.

On the political-diplomatic front, the summit in Uganda of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (CIRGL) has begun, to discuss the sending of a "neutral force" to hunt down armed groups in the eastern DRC and to control the border with Rwanda. This Country has been accused of supporting the M23 and of illegally exploiting natural Congolese resources. According to the Congolese newspaper "Le Potentiel", under the cover of the M23, Rwanda has installed an administration extension in Rutshuru (North Kivu).

In the meeting in Kampala different positions on the composition of the "neutral force" also emerged: the government of Kinshasa would also like it to be constituted by soldiers of Countries outside the CIRGL while Rwanda wants it only formed by members of the Conference. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 08/08/2012)