

Uganda, DRC deepen ties on trade, security

BY PHILIP WAFULA

KAMPALA. Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have pledged to deepen bilateral cooperation in trade, security, infrastructure and regional integration following the conclusion of the Joint Permanent Commission (JPC) in Kampala on Sunday.

The three-day meeting, co-chaired by Uganda's State minister for Regional Cooperation John Mulimba, and DRC Foreign Affairs minister Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, focused on security, infrastructure, energy, natural resources and sustainable trade.

In his closing remarks, Mr Mulimba said both countries had reaffirmed their commitment to neutralising neg-

ative forces that threaten the safety and stability of citizens in the region, with the implementation of the Luanda Memorandum remaining central to their cooperation.

"Through enhanced intelligence-sharing and joint patrols, we are ensuring that the progress made under regional frameworks is not only protected but made irreversible," he said.

The Luanda Agreement, signed on September 6, 2002, sought to end the Second Congo War and normalise relations between Uganda and the DRC through a ceasefire arrangement aimed at restoring regional stability.

The latest JPC comes at a time when the two countries are intensifying diplomatic and economic cooperation alongside ongoing joint military opera-



Uganda's State Minister for Regional Cooperation, Mr John Mulimba (right), and DRC Minister of Foreign Affairs Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner during the closure of the JPC in Kampala on Sunday. PHOTO/PHILIP WAFULA

tions against armed groups in eastern DRC.

Mr Mulimba described the signing of a memorandum of understanding on

standard gauge railway (SGR) connectivity as a "definitive game-changer for the region".

He added that finalising technical

agreements for the Busanza-Bunagana and Mpondwe-Kasindi one-stop border posts would significantly reduce the cost of trade between the two countries.

The minister said the JPC had also adopted a joint roadmap for the Ruzizi III Hydropower Project and the exploration of the Semliki River Basin.

He said the agreement on cross-border electricity interconnection between Uganda's national grid and Goma City would support the next phase of regional development and industrialisation.

Mr Mulimba further revealed that the two countries had launched a joint committee for the Virunga National Park ecosystem and a certification mechanism for conflict-free minerals.

Ms Kayikwamba proposed the establishment of a committee of experts from both countries to monitor the implementation of agreements adopted during the commission.

"With this conviction, I express hope that the work of this ninth session of the DRC-Uganda Joint Permanent Commission will be a memorable success," the DRC minister of Foreign Affairs said.