

By Ali Twaha

Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have agreed on steps to expand cross-border trade, advance power projects and tighten security co-operation during a three-day Joint Permanent Commission (JPC) meeting that ended in Kampala on Sunday.

The two neighbours committed to practical measures that move beyond managing threats from armed groups toward building economic ties along their 877-kilometre border.

Uganda's exports to the DRC topped \$800m in the 2025/26 financial year, with total bilateral trade near \$1b.

REGIONAL CONNECTIVITY

Officials signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Standard Gauge Railway connectivity, finalised technical deals for one-stop border posts and set a joint roadmap for the Ruzizi III hydropower project plus electricity links from Uganda's grid to Goma.

They also launched a joint certification system for conflict-free minerals and operationalised a committee for the Virunga National Park ecosystem. Trade targets now sit at \$1.5b by 2028.

John Mulimba, the state minister for Foreign Affairs in charge of regional affairs, said the talks will see great

UGANDA, DRC **AGREE** ON POWER LINKS



Minister John Mulimba



Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, Congo's foreign affairs minister

◀ **One-stop border posts **expected to** cut trade costs.**

improvements in trade and security relations between DRC and Uganda.

JOINT ROADMAP

"We have moved from simply stabilising our common border to actively connecting our two nations.

We have established a joint roadmap for the Ruzizi III Hydropower Project and the exploration of the Semliki River Basin. The agreement on cross-border electricity interconnection between the Ugandan grid and Goma will quite literally power the next phase of our development," he said.

"The Sectoral Technical Committees will reconvene in Beni this October and our Permanent Secretaries have 90 days to report on our progress. We will not allow these resolutions to gather dust; we will see them through."

CONGO IS **OPTIMISTIC**

Thérèse Kayikwamba Wagner, the DRC Congo's minister of foreign affairs and International Co-operation, said there will be improvement in trade across more than 13 sectors, from big-ticket trade to everyday issues facing border communities, such as fisheries.

"This was not an occasion to sign a further number of agreements. It's about making a real difference in the lives of our respective people. We are two people who are separated by borders, granted, but of course we share a lot more than just these borders," Kayikwamba said. Irene Batebe, Permanent Secretary at Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development, said the DR Congo remains Uganda's largest trading partner.

Mulimba said the Busanza-Bunagana and Mpondwe-Kasindi one-stop border posts will cut trade costs. Other infrastructure plans include the Kasindi-Beni-Bunia road.

COMPLEMENTARY ECONOMIES

John Leonard Mugerwa, who headed the Ugandan delegation, said, "Cross-border commerce has created opportunities for businesses, supported livelihoods and contributed significantly to regional economic integration. The continued movement of goods, services and

people between our countries demonstrates the complementary nature of our economies and the enormous potential that still exists for greater collaboration."

Officials plan to remove non-tariff barriers, harmonise customs and protect business communities. The Special Economic Zone at Mpondwe is seen as a test case.

Uganda and Congo have a history of co-operation on issues from refugee management to joint military operations against groups like the Allied Democratic Forces.