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REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF
THE AU-LED REGIONAL COOPERATION INITIATIVE AGAINST THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY



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LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY**

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Council may recall that, at its 295th meeting, held on 27 September 2011, it was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security on the activities relating to the AU-led regional cooperation initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Council, on its part, requested the Commission to submit to it a report on the implementation modalities of the main mechanisms provided for in the AU regional cooperation initiative, to enable it to authorize the envisaged operation, in accordance with the relevant provisions of decision Assembly/AU/Dec.369 (XVII) adopted by the 17th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 30th June to 1st July 2011.

2. The present report is submitted in pursuance of the request contained in the press statement of the 295th meeting of Council. It provides an overview of the steps taken so far by the Commission pursuant to the relevant decisions of the AU policy organs, outlines the implementation modalities of the regional cooperation initiative and concludes with observations on the way forward.

II. REGIONAL MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AND SUBSEQUENT FOLLOW-UP STEPS

3. In the Plan of Action adopted at its Special Session on the Consideration and Resolution of Conflicts in Africa [SP/ASSEMBLY/PS/MAP(I)], held in Tripoli, Libya, on 31st August 2009, the Assembly of the Union called upon the countries of the region to renew their efforts, including military action, to neutralize the LRA and bring to an end its atrocities and destabilizing activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Southern Sudan and Central African Republic (CAR). As a follow up to the Tripoli Plan of Action, the 15th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, held in Kampala, Uganda, from 25 to 27 of July 2010, requested the Commission, as soon as possible, to organise action-oriented consultations among the countries affected by the activities of the LRA and other interested parties, with a view to facilitating a coordinated regional action in the face of the threat posed by this group [Dec. Assembly/AU/Dec.294(XV).2].

4. It was against this background that a regional ministerial meeting was convened by the Commission in Bangui, CAR, from 13 to 14 October 2010. The meeting, which was chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, brought together all the countries affected, namely, CAR, DRC, Sudan, including the then Gouvernement of South Sudan (GoSS), and Uganda; it was also attended by the relevant regional organizations, as well as by the United Nations and other international partners. The conclusions adopted by the meeting provided for action-oriented steps in a number of areas: military and security; humanitarian, development and other related aspects; and international support and assistance. The Bangui meeting also requested the Chairperson of the Commission to appoint a Special Envoy to coordinate the overall efforts on LRA and facilitate international engagement. It

agreed on a follow up mechanism, through the regular convening of meetings at ministerial level.

5. On the margins of the 4th meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Defense, Security and Safety (STCDSS), held in Addis Ababa, the Commission organized consultations at expert level among the affected countries, on 5 December 2010, to exchange views on the follow-up to the Bangui Conclusions. The Commission submitted a draft concept note on the way forward, which was finalised following further input from the affected countries.

6. Subsequently, the Commission dispatched a joint technical assessment mission (TAM) including experts of the affected countries, to assess the situation on the ground. The mission was undertaken from 16 March to 5 April 2011. It consulted with officials from each of the countries affected by the LRA activities, visited proposed locations for the Joint Operations Centre (JOC) and the Regional Task Force (RTF), and met with partners to seek their assessment of the security and humanitarian situation and garner support for the initiative.

7. The second regional ministerial meeting of the affected countries was held in Addis Ababa on 8 June 2011, to examine the report of the joint TAM. The meeting considered and adopted the report of the Chiefs of Defense Staff, who met earlier. It defined the strategic end state of the envisaged operation as follows: *"Elimination of the LRA, leading to the creation of a secure and stable environment in the affected countries"*. It agreed on the various aspects of the regional cooperation initiative, namely the political process; the mandating process; the end-state of the operation and its strategic objectives; the components of the initiative, i.e. the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM), the RTF, including the JOC, and the appointment of the Special Envoy. The meeting also agreed on the core elements of the mission support concept. Finally, the meeting constituted an Integrated Core Planning Team (ICPT), including officers from the Commission and the affected countries, to provide a detailed mission plan covering all phases of the operation. The meeting agreed that the envisaged operation shall be an AU authorised mission with international support.

III. DECISION OF THE MALABO SUMMIT ON THE LRA ISSUE AND SUBSEQUENT MEETING OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL

8. In line with the Conclusions of the second regional ministerial meeting, I briefed the 17th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, in Malabo, in June/July 2011, on efforts taken to operationalise the regional cooperation initiative on the LRA. The Assembly welcomed the steps taken, expressed its full support to the Conclusions of the ministerial meeting, and requested Council swiftly to authorize the proposed operation in all its components, including the RTF, the JOC and the JCM. It further requested the United Nations and other AU partners to support the initiative, including through financial and logistical supports.

9. At its 295th meeting, Council congratulated the affected Member States for the cooperation they have developed among themselves, as well as for their collaboration with the Commission, in implementing the relevant AU decisions on the LRA. Council also commended the Commission for the steps it has taken. Having expressed deep concern at the continuing criminal activities of the LRA and its devastating effects on local populations,



as well as on regional security and stability, Council stressed the need for the affected countries to persevere in their efforts. As indicated above, it also requested the Commission to submit to it a report on the implementation modalities of the main mechanism provided for in the regional cooperation initiative, to enable it to authorize the envisaged operation.

10. The 5th annual meeting of the National and Regional Focal Points of the African Centre on the Study and Research on Terrorism, held in Algiers, from 30th October to 1st November 2011, also discussed the issue of the LRA. It highlighted the threat posed by the LRA. It should be recalled that, in Bangui, the regional ministerial meeting requested the adoption of measures to declare LRA a terrorist group, in accordance with relevant AU instruments.

IV. INTERACTION WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

11. Since the onset of the regional cooperation initiative, the Commission has endeavoured to mobilise support from the international community. The European Union (EU) has been closely associated with the AU efforts. Under the Early Response Mechanism (ERM) of the African Peace Facility (APF), the EU provided funding for the initial phase of the implementation of the regional cooperation initiative against the LRA.

12. The Commission participated in the meeting convened in Washington, on 27 June 2011, by the International Working Group on LRA, which is chaired by the World Bank and includes a number of international organisations, including the EU and the UN, as well as the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR). The aim of the meeting was to share information on the LRA, discuss progress made in addressing the problems posed, and identify opportunities for cooperation and coordination.

13. Furthermore, the Commission addressed the two meetings of the Security Council devoted to the issue of the LRA, on 21 July and 14 November 2011. At its meeting of 21 July, the Security Council adopted a press statement in which its members, *inter alia*, strongly condemned the ongoing attacks carried out by the LRA; commended the important efforts that are being undertaken by the militaries of CAR, DRC, the Republic of South Sudan and Uganda, to address the threat posed by the LRA, and emphasized the importance of sustained coordinated action by these Governments; encouraged the UN Secretary-General to provide support to the AU Commission, through the planning process for the implementation of the relevant AU decisions on the LRA; and requested the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), in collaboration with the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU), to engage with the AU to facilitate cooperation between the UN and the African Union on issues related to countering the threats posed by the LRA. At its meeting of 14 November, the Security Council, *inter alia*, encouraged the AU to implement its comprehensive strategy to tackle the threat posed by the LRA.

14. The Commission also took part in the meeting of the ICGLR held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 9 September 2011. The objective of the meeting was to share information on the activities of the negative forces in the region, including LRA activities, and to develop joint operational plans to enhance cooperation and unity of efforts within the region and beyond. The meeting took note of the AU initiative against the LRA, expressed the full support of the ICGLR countries, and emphasized the need for effective support by the international

community. The meeting recommended that similar initiatives be facilitated by the AU against the other negatives forces in the Great Lakes region.

15. Finally, the AU is also in regular contact with the US Government, notably through the US Mission to the AU. In mid-October 2011, the US Government announced that it has sent a small number of military advisers to the region to assist the forces that are pursuing the LRA and seeking to bring top commanders to justice. The US Government indicated that these advisers, who will not engage LRA forces unless necessary for self-defence, would work with regional partners and the AU in the field to strengthen information sharing, enhance coordination and planning and improve the overall effectiveness of military operations and the protection of civilians. This decision is one component of the US comprehensive strategy to address the LRA threat, in accordance with the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Act signed in August 2011.

V. IMPLEMENTATION MODALITIES OF THE REGIONAL COOPERATION INITIATIVE AGAINST THE LRA

16. As stressed by the ministerial meetings, the regional cooperation initiative is aimed at implementing a comprehensive strategy to address, once and for all, the problems posed by the criminal activities of the LRA. In this context, and in light of the relevant AU decisions and Conclusions of the two regional ministerial meetings, it is proposed that the regional cooperation initiative against the LRA pursue the following objectives:

- i. strengthen the response capacity of the countries affected by the atrocities of the LRA, in order to create inherent capabilities;
- ii. create an environment conducive to the stabilization of the region free of LRA atrocities and inclusive of a political process within the framework of the Juba Agreement, if and when duly signed; and
- iii. facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected areas.

17. Within the framework of the above-mentioned strategic objectives, the initiative will carry out the following tasks:

- i. engage and coordinate all political and strategic activities with the affected countries and other stakeholders;
- ii. enhance political and military cohesion among the affected countries and ensure sustainable political commitment for the achievement of the set objectives;
- iii. support capacity-building for the national units engaged in the LRA operations;
- iv. engage partners for the delivery of timely and coordinated support, notably equipment and logistics, training, mobilisation of resources, including, where applicable, the regular payment of wages;

- v. engage with the UN Security Council to secure, if need be, amendments to the mandates of existing UN operations and facilitate the provision of adequate resources, to enable them extend greater, more flexible and timely support to the operations against the LRA;
- vi. encourage and facilitate joint patrols at the borders of the affected countries, as well as information sharing;
- vii. work with the UN operations on the ground to achieve effective cross-mission coordination and information sharing, as well as deployment of more resources to areas where civilians are most at risk;
- viii. encourage the improvement of communications within the LRA-affected areas, including through cell phones and radio coverage and repair/building of basic infrastructures;
- ix. facilitate an effective psychological operation programme to encourage defections from the LRA, as well as implementation of strategies for demobilisation and community-based reintegration of ex-combatants;
- x. assist in the mobilisation of adequate and coordinated support to affected populations and other groups in need;
- xi. contribute to the improvement and institutionalisation of civil-military coordination, including the provision of escort for humanitarian convoys on request, and deployment of troops to facilitate access to vulnerable communities;
- xii. contribute to the mobilisation of support for early recovery and rehabilitation efforts in LRA affected areas; and
- xiii. ensure the integration of civilian protection in all military and security initiatives to address the LRA problem.

18. As agreed by the Ministers at their second meeting, the command and control structure of the regional cooperation initiative against the LRA shall comprise the following components in order to execute the roles and tasks identified above:

- i. the Joint Coordination Mechanism – Chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, the JCM shall be composed of the Ministers of Defense of the affected countries. The JCM will act as an *ad hoc* structure at strategic level to coordinate the efforts of the AU and the countries affected, with the support of the international partners. More specifically, the JCM shall coordinate all political and strategic activities with the affected countries and other stakeholders, enhance political and military cohesion, demonstrate firm intent and regional ability to achieve the end state of the operation, and coordinate capacity-building for the operational units, with a view to enhancing inter-operability and cooperation. The Secretariat of the JCM will



be located in Bangui and will be coordinated by the AU Special Envoy for LRA, whose task is to provide the overall political and strategic coordination for the operation;

- ii. the Regional Task Force – The RTF shall comprise national contingents from the affected countries, with both tactical combat and support units deployed under the operational command of the RTF Commander. The RTF shall have three sector Headquarters (HQs) located in Dungu (DRC), Nzara (South Sudan), and Obo (CAR). The RTF HQs shall comprise thirty officers and shall be located in Yambio, South Sudan. The key appointments for the RTF HQs have been agreed upon. The RTF HQs shall have appropriate civilian expertise. It shall also designate four liaison officers in the Joint Intelligence and Operations Centre (JIOC), based in Dungu;
- iii. the Joint Operations Centre – The JOC shall be a component of the RTF, and be co-located with the RTF HQs, in Yambio, with a total staff complement of 30 officers. Under the authority of the RTF Commander, it shall perform integrated planning and monitoring of the operation.

19. With respect to mission support concept of the regional cooperation initiative, and as agreed by the affected countries, the following arrangement shall apply:

- i. mobilisation by the AU of voluntary contributions to fund the JCM, the RTF HQs and the JOC, as well as of financial resources, logistics and any other forms of support for the benefit of the other components of the RTF, including the operational units in each of the sectors;
- ii. all the other needs of the mission will be the responsibility of the contributing countries;
- iii. partners' support will be coordinated by the Commission, it being understood that this will not exclude bilateral arrangements between affected countries and partners.

VI. OBSERVATIONS

20. LRA activities remain a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region, with grave humanitarian consequences. As stressed by the first regional ministerial meeting held in Bangui, the LRA has, in recent years, extended its activities, moving from Uganda, where it originally started its attacks, to South Sudan, DRC and CAR. It has continued to carry out atrocities against innocent civilians, in particular children and women, including abduction, murder, mutilation, burning and looting of villages, and destruction of livelihoods. This has resulted in massive displacement and acute humanitarian crisis.

21. I would like to express my appreciation to the countries of the region for the sustained efforts they have made to address the LRA problem. These efforts include the Juba Peace Process, which led to the Final Peace Agreement (FPA), which the LRA leader repeatedly refused to sign – it is important to recall that, as part of the monitoring of the Cessation of

Hostilities Agreement, its Addenda, extensions and amendments, the AU deployed a team of military observers in South Sudan. Mention should also be made of operations “Iron Fist” and “Lightening Thunder”, bilateral consultations, tripartite meetings of the Chiefs of Defense Staff and the establishment of the JIOC in Dungu.

22. I also would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution of the international partners, in particular the assistance being provided on the ground by MONUSCO through its operational support to, and cooperation with, the DRC armed forces and regional efforts at the request of the DRC. Humanitarian agencies also deserve our appreciation for their large-scale mobilisation in order to provide protection and assistance to civilians.

23. It is against this background, and in order to enhance the effectiveness of the efforts of the countries of the region, that the AU policy-making organs urged for renewed efforts, including military actions, to neutralise the LRA and bring its atrocities and destabilising activities to a swift end. Since its launching, the AU initiative has generated high expectations and hope in the affected countries and communities. It has also attracted sustained interest from a number of international partners, including the EU, the US and the United Nations. I would like to reiterate the AU’s appreciation to the EU for the financial support provided for the initial efforts on the LRA issue and for its readiness to provide further funding for the establishment of the JCM and RTF HQs, as well as for the activities of the Special Envoy. I thank the United Nations Security Council and Secretariat for their commitment to working closely and supporting the AU led initiative. I also would like to stress the Commission’s readiness to work closely with the US Government in the context of its recently announced initiative. Furthermore, several civil society organisations and NGOs have also approached the Commission to applaud the decisions taken by the AU and to urge for their speedy implementation.

24. The AU initiative aims to articulate a comprehensive approach to the problem posed by the LRA criminal activities and atrocities. Clearly, it offers the most viable and effective framework for a coordinated and regionally-owned effort to address the challenges at hand. At the time of finalising this report, I was making arrangements for the appointment of the Special Envoy. In line with the request made by the Assembly in Malabo, I recommend to Council to authorize the initiative, as outlined in paragraphs 16 to 19 above, for an initial period of six months, as and “African Union authorized mission with international support”. The funding for the activities of the JCM and the RTF HQs, as well as the office of the Special Envoy, will be ensured through Early Response Mechanism of the Africa Peace Facility, set up by the EU at the request of the AU.

25. I wish to call upon all Member States in a position to do so, as well as AU partners, to support this initiative. In this respect, it is important to engage the Security Council for it to take the steps required, including, if need be, amendments to mandates of existing UN peacekeeping operations on the ground to enable them provide greater, more flexible and timely support to the regional cooperation initiative.

26. I also appeal to humanitarian agencies to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the affected populations. At the same time, efforts should be intensified for early recovery and rehabilitation efforts in the LRA-affected areas. The Commission will step up its efforts and approach relevant international institutions, in particular the African

Development Bank (AfDB) and the World Bank. In so doing, the Commission will closely coordinate its efforts with the United Nations, especially in view of the request made by the Security Council, at its 14 November meeting, for the United Nations to prepare a regional strategy for non-military assistance in the LRA-affected area, with a clear focus on action for the benefit of affected populations, it being understood that such a strategy should complement the AU effort and provide detailed plans for the better protection of civilians, humanitarian assistance and support for ex-combatants and those returning from displacement.