
OPENING REMARKS

BY

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Your Excellencies the Special Representatives of the Chairperson of the AU Commission to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan,
The Force Commander of the Regional Task Force on the LRA, General LueKy Kidega,
Our LRA Focal Points from member states of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army (RCI-LRA),
Representatives of the UN System, the EU, US, ICRC and other partner institutions;
The Acting Head of the Peace Support Operations Division, General Francis Okello,
I wish to welcome you to the meeting of Experts of the 5th Ministerial Meeting of the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM) of the RCI-LRA.
You may recall that the 4th ministerial meeting of the JCM, took place here in Addis Ababa two years ago in March 2014. Owing to circumstances beyond the control of the AU Commission, the 5th ministerial meeting of the JCM could not place earlier than now. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank our partners, especially, the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), for partnering with the AU Commission for the convening of the 5th JCM.

The 5th JCM is a critical as it will, firstly, redefine the LRA threat level; secondly, highlight the political and diplomatic efforts deployed by the AU and partners in support of the RCI-LRA; Thirdly, review operations of the RTF aimed at eliminating the LRA and finally, assess the achievements, challenges and plans for the stabilization and rehabilitation of the LRA affected areas notably in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan in collaboration with key stakeholders, and map a way forward.

Dear Colleagues,

We need to be mindful that our focus should go beyond the mere apprehension of the LRA leader, Joseph Kony and the elimination of his terrorist group. There is a strong imperative to address the impact of the atrocities that the LRA has committed against the affected communities. In other words, there is a strong need for the stabilization and the rehabilitation of the areas and communities affected by the LRA. We are not simply focussing on eliminating the LRA but also equally on reversing the negative consequences of their criminal activities on society. This means, there is need to continue with the rehabilitation efforts even when the military objective is achieved.

Your input, as LRA Experts, is fundamental in shaping the deliberations of the Chiefs of Defence Forces whose recommendations will in turn inform the final decisions and conclusions of the JCM on the LRA issue, because you are the main actors who interact frequently with the reality of the LRA phenomenon on the ground. The contribution of each one of you, both military and civilian therefore counts because you collectively
constitute an indispensable resource for our principals to give guidance and direction on the LRA conflict.

I therefore wish you fruitful deliberations and declare this meeting of Experts of the 5th Ministerial Meeting of the JCM open.

I thank you.