



STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) SPECIAL ENVOY FOR LRA ISSUES AT THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY: NEW YORK, 20 NOVEMBER 2013

Mr. President,

I would like, first of all, to thank Your Excellency for giving me the opportunity to address this august body. I would also like to thank the members of the Security Council for their unanimous support and encouragement for the work we are doing to put an end to the activities of the LRA.

Further to my statement in the United Nations Security Council in June 2012, on the progress by the African Union, in the operationalization of its Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), I would like to highlight to the Council the subsequent progress made by the AU, in coordination with the Troop Contributing Countries, with the support of the U.S Special Forces, European Union as well as the UN Offices and Missions on the ground.

You may recall that, in January 2013, the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM) adopted the key mission documents for the Regional Task Force (RTF), namely the Strategic Directives, Concept of Operations, Standard Operating Procedures for the Handling of Persons suspected of involvement in LRA Activities, and Rules of Engagement. Later in February, the Congolese Armed Forces handed over to the RTF a contingent of 500 troops in a ceremony which the Special Representative of the Secretary for Central Africa, Mr. Abou Moussa, and I witnessed in Dungu, on 13 February 2013. These two events marked the end of the first phase of the operationalization of the Regional Task Force, the military component of the AU-led Regional Cooperation for the elimination of the LRA.

However, it was difficult to enter into phase 2, commencement of military operations, due to serious logistical challenges faced by the contingents from the Central African Republic

(CAR), DRC and South Sudan. This left the Ugandan contingent, supported by the U.S Special Forces, to continue conducting counter-LRA operations in the CAR until July. They, nonetheless, achieved several major successes which included the killing of 9 LRA fighters, reception of 14 defectors, recovery of 17 modern fire arms and 4 traditional weapons, 1,429 ammunitions, and 6 pieces of ivory.

The above momentum suffered a major set-back following the coup d'état which took place in Bangui on 24 March 2013. The then prevailing situation generated tension between Seleka and the RTF, forcing the latter and the U.S Special Forces to suspend operations in CAR. Meanwhile the LRA exploited the lull in operations to re-organize, step up cross-border movements between DRC and CAR, and carry out attacks on villages and displace civilians in Mbomou and Haut Mbomou Prefectures of CAR.

The situation was further complicated by the attack in Obo town, on 24 May 2013, by a group of 87 armed Arrow boys from Tumbura, Western Equatoria State (WES) of South Sudan. The RTF apprehended 42 of the attackers, and handed them over to the ICRC for repatriation to South Sudan. By July the RTF had repatriated 80 civilians, including the above Arrow Boys.

The Obo situation regenerated the tension between Seleka and RTF, with the authorities in Bangui agitating to deploy Seleka troops in Obo, Haut Mbomou Prefecture, which was being controlled by the RTF. However, through my joint diplomatic efforts with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Central Africa, Mr. Abou Moussa, mutual trust and confidence were built between the leadership of the CAR and the AU, and the tension was diffused. We also obtained an official commitment from the Head of the Transition in CAR, Mr. Michel Djotodia, for the continued implementation of the RCI-LRA, including the resumption of RTF military operations in the country.

Meanwhile, between July and August, the various contingents of the RTF underwent retraining and counter-LRA combat rehearsals, facilitated by the U.S Special Forces. On the diplomatic front and working in close cooperation and coordination with the USA, I managed to

obtain a green light from the DRC authorities for the RTF to conduct cross-border operations against the LRA on the Congolese territory.

I am happy to inform the Council that, the above developments, together with the extension of the U.S training and logistical support to all the RTF Contingents, paved way for the resumption of military operations in CAR by the RTF, on 9 August 2013, and the operationalization of the Congolese as well as the South Sudanese contingents in September. Henceforth, the RTF, with a current total strength of 3,114 men, comprising 29 HQ staff, 2,000 Ugandan soldiers, 500 South Sudanese, 500 Congolese, and 85 Central Africans, resumed operations against LRA in CAR on 9 August 2013. The operations are on-going, on a high tempo and with intense intelligence collection, destruction of LRA camps and denying them permanent bases in all the Sectors.

The current military pressure has kept the LRA, including its leader Joseph Kony, on the run. This heightened pressure forced the LRA to try its time-tested tricks of buying time by duping the CAR authorities into “negotiations” to purportedly allow Kony and his LRA to “surrender” and re-settle in Nzako, CAR. According to the RTF, Kony only used that window of opportunity to cross many of his fighters and relocate them further up to north-eastern CAR. The RTF will, therefore, not relent on the military pressure against the LRA until Kony and his top Commanders surrender or are removed from the battlefield. The current momentum needs to be sustained with adequate funding and logistical support to enhance our objective of eliminating the LRA. Funding for, and equipping of the RTF HQ with robust communication remain critical requirements for facilitating them to effectively plan, coordinate and monitor the on-going operations in all the sectors.

I wish to seize this opportunity to convey the appreciation of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to the LRA-affected Countries, the U.S Administration, European Union and the UN for their active engagement on the LRA issue.

I thank you.

