PRESS RELEASE

The Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Joint Coordination Mechanism of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army concludes in Addis Ababa

Addis Ababa, 23 May 2016 - The Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM) of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord’s Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) took place in Addis Ababa on 20 May 2016.

While reviewing the AU-led counter-LRA strategy, the meeting noted that, whereas the capacity of the LRA has been significantly degraded to the extent of not posing a political threat to any state in the region, the LRA still has a capacity to regroup, rebuild itself and resume atrocities against defenceless civilians, as evidenced by its continued atrocities characterized by raids, looting and abduction of civilians to carry looted items for the LRA, including ivory from elephants poached in the Garamba National Park, DRC.

The meeting called for the sustainment of counter-LRA efforts until the group is eliminated. It, thus, adopted a number of conclusions. Firstly, the meeting requested the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) to renew, at its meeting to be held on the LRA on 30 May 2016, the mandate of the RCI-LRA for further twelve (12) months until 22 May 2017, and further requested the AU Commission to source for funds to support the RTF.

Secondly, it requested the PSC to engage the UN Security Council to consider lifting the Arms Embargo on the CAR to enable the latter to rebuild the capacity of its armed forces to eventually take over from the Regional task Force (RTF) in eastern CAR, adding that the country should be assisted to train and equip a brigade-size force to be incorporated into the RTF.

Thirdly, it requested Uganda to reconsider its timelines of disengaging the UPDF from the RTF to end of May 2017, instead of the end of July 2016 or October 2016 that it has proposed.

Fourthly, it urged the AUC to request the Heads of State of the RCI-LRA member states to meet on the margins of the next AU Summit in Kigali, Rwanda, to review the status of the RCI-LRA.

Fifthly, it welcomed the readiness expressed by the Republic of Sudan to become a full member of the RCI-LRA, and requested the AUC to follow up this pledge.
Sixthly, it tasked the AUC to undertake a number of technical assessment missions aimed at facilitating the reconfiguration of the RTF, providing for a multi-dimensional operation, and to help develop an exit strategy for the RTF.

Seventhly, it called for the enhancement of cooperation and coordination between the RTF and the UN Peacekeeping Missions in the LRA-affected areas in an effort to address the former’s inability to pursue the LRA across borders.

Eighthly, it urged the AUC to increase its engagement with the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the EU and the USAID to build a synergy on the stabilization and rehabilitation of the LRA-affected areas.

Finally, the meeting called on the AUC to intensify efforts aimed at mobilizing additional resources for the RTF and to identify and implement short and long-term early recovery and stabilization interventions in the LRA-affected areas so as to ensure the provision of basic services and infrastructure to the affected communities.

The JCM is a component of the RCI-LRA, chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and comprises the Ministers of Defence of the RCI-LRA member countries as well as the AU Special Envoy for LRA issues. Its primary task is to coordinate efforts of the RCI-Member States and provide political direction on the implementation of the Initiative.

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