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SECURITY COUNCIL ISSUES PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT DEMANDING IMMEDIATE END

TO ATROCITIES BY LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Members Hear Briefing by Special Representative Of Secretary-General, African Union Chair's Special Envoy on LRA Issues

Demanding an immediate end to the atrocities perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Central Africa, the Security Council today encouraged all Governments in the subregion to work together, through a recently launched regional initiative, to fight the scourge.

In a statement read out by Wang Min (China), its President for June, the Council urged international support for the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative officially launched in March 2012 against the LRA, which is notorious for kidnapping thousands of children and forcing them to become either soldiers or sex slaves.

Commending continuing efforts by the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda to protect civilians from the group and apprehend its leaders, the Council welcomed the capture of senior LRA commander Caesar Acellam by the Uganda People's Defence Forces in May 2012. It also called on all States to cooperate with the Ugandan authorities and the International Criminal Court in implementing the arrest warrants for Joseph Kony and two other senior LRA leaders on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and enlistment of children through abduction.

The Council stressed the need for continued coordination between peacekeeping missions, as well as humanitarian, development, gender, child-protection and military actors in the subregion in order to protect civilians from attacks by the LRA. It underlined the need for all military action against the group to be conducted in compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. The Council also encouraged remaining LRA fighters to leave its ranks and participate in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement process for former fighters, citing the programmes of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) in that regard.

Preceding the issuance of the presidential statement, Council members heard a briefing by Abou Moussa, the Secretary-General's Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union on LRA Issues.

Mr. Moussa explained UNOCA's coordinating role in the regional strategy, describing the latter's aims, components and processes, as he presented the Secretary-General's latest report on the Office and the fight against the LRA. "The strategy must only represent the beginning of vigorous attention by the Council to address the LRA issues in order to put an end to these atrocities once and for all," he emphasized. Its success would depend on cooperation among all stakeholders and on the mobilization of resources to address funding gaps.

Mr. Madeira said that among the major objectives of the African Union-led initiative were to strengthen the capacity of LRA-affected countries to respond effectively to and neutralize the threat, to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the affected communities, and to create an

environment conducive to the stabilization and rehabilitation of the affected areas. The objectives, particularly those relating to humanitarian assistance, civilian protection, disarmament and demobilization support for ex-combatants and the long-term recovery needs of affected persons, were in harmony with the goals of the United Nations system on the ground.

Calling for financial, material and logistical support for those efforts, he said that, in order to be effective, national operational units required concrete support in terms of training, harmonized communication systems, food rations, medical support, air and ground mobility, munitions, fuel, lubricants and other necessities. He called on the Council to follow the African Union's lead and declare the LRA a terrorist organization, and to consider modalities for enhancing its support to African Union-led international efforts by adjusting the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions in LRA-affected countries.

Following those briefings, Council members acknowledged the continuing threat posed by the LRA, with many strongly condemning its brutality and welcoming regionally led efforts to eliminate the threat once and for all. They also expressed strong support for UNOCA's coordinating role in that effort and in fostering Central African regional cooperation to face numerous other challenges, including piracy and the continuing negative impacts of the Libyan crisis.

"Mr. Kony and his band of barbarians must be neutralized," said Central African Republic's representative, describing the suffering that the group had wrought in his country. Pledging an untiring national fight against the LRA and welcoming the assistance from the United Nations, the United States, European countries, the African Union and many others in attempting to resolve the situation, he called for the further mobilization of the international community "to put an end to this affront to a civilized world".

Also speaking today were representatives of the United Kingdom, South Africa, India, Morocco, Azerbaijan, Portugal, Germany, Togo, United States, Colombia, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Guatemala, France and China.

The meeting began at 9:50 a.m. and ended at 12:20 p.m.

Presidential Statement

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/17 reads as follows:

"The Security Council strongly condemns the ongoing attacks carried out by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in parts of Central Africa, which pose a continuing threat to regional security. The Council reiterates its grave concern at the atrocities committed by the LRA, which have serious humanitarian and human rights consequences, including the displacement of over 445,000 people across the region.

"The Security Council strongly condemns the continued violations of international humanitarian law and the abuses of human rights by the LRA. The Security Council condemns further the recruitment and use of children, killing and maiming, rape, sexual slavery and other sexual violence, and abductions. The Council demands an immediate end to all attacks by the LRA, particularly those on civilians, urges LRA leaders to release all those abducted, and insists that all LRA elements put an end to such practices, and disarm and demobilize.

"The Security Council welcomes the development of the United Nations Regional Strategy to Address the Threat and Impact of the Activities of the LRA and takes note of the five strategic areas of intervention identified in the strategy, developed in close collaboration with the African Union (AU), United Nations missions and country teams in the LRA-affected areas, and affected Central African States. The Council urges the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), the United Nations political and peacekeeping missions in the region and other relevant United Nations presences to support the implementation of the strategy, as appropriate and within the limits of their mandates and capacities, and calls on the international community to provide assistance as possible to advance these strategic goals.

"The Security Council welcomes the strong collaboration between the United Nations and the AU in addressing the LRA threat, and encourages its continuation. The Council encourages the AU's Special Envoy, Francisco Madeira, and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Central

Africa and Head of UNOCA, Abou Moussa, to continue to work together with the Governments of the region to strengthen further their cooperation.

“The Security Council commends the continued efforts undertaken by the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Republic of South Sudan and Uganda to apprehend top LRA commanders and to protect civilians from the LRA threat. The Council welcomes the capture of the senior LRA commander, Caesar Acellam, by the Uganda People’s Defence Force on 13 May.

“The Security Council welcomes the official launching of the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative (AU RCI-LRA) against the LRA on 24 March 2012, including a Joint Coordination Mechanism, a Regional Task Force and a Joint Operations Centre. The Council encourages all Governments in the region, working through this Initiative, to renew and strengthen their collaboration to end the LRA threat. The Council also calls on the AU, the LRA-affected States and the international community to work together to secure the necessary resources for successful implementation. The Council welcomes the AU’s ongoing efforts to increase tactical coordination, information-sharing, and joint planning between the relevant militaries through the Regional Task Force, based in Yambio, South Sudan.

“The Security Council underlines the primary responsibility of States in the LRA-affected region to protect civilians and calls upon them to take all appropriate measures in this regard. The Council notes the important role being played by United Nations peacekeeping missions in the region in protecting civilians and stresses the need for continued coordination and information-sharing between these missions. The Council stresses the importance of coordination among humanitarian, development, gender, child protection, peacekeeping and military actors in the region. The Council recognizes the challenges the Governments in the region face and urges the international community, in coordination with the AU and the United Nations, to continue to strengthen the operational capabilities of countries participating in the regional task force initiative in order to conduct effective operations against LRA and better protect civilians. The Council underlines the need for all military action against the LRA to be conducted in compliance with applicable international law, including international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and to minimize the risk of harm to civilians in those areas.

“The Security Council encourages the remaining LRA fighters to leave the group’s ranks and participate in the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration (DDRRR) process. The Security Council emphasizes its support for continued efforts across the affected countries to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate former LRA fighters back into normal life. The Council acknowledges the important ongoing efforts under MONUSCO’s DDRRR programme to encourage and facilitate further LRA defections. The Council urges MONUSCO to continue to work with BINUCA, UNMISS, and other United Nations actors in the LRA-affected region to help implement a coordinated region-wide effort to promote defections and support the DDRRR efforts across the LRA-affected area. The Council calls on international partners to provide strategic support.

“The Security Council recalls the International Criminal Court’s arrest warrants for Joseph Kony and two other senior LRA leaders on charges of, inter alia, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape and the enlistment of children through abduction, and calls upon all States to cooperate with the Ugandan authorities and the International Criminal Court in order to implement those warrants, and to bring to justice those responsible for the atrocities. The Council recalls its statement of June 2006 (PRST/2006/28) and reaffirms the vital importance of promoting justice and the rule of law, including respect for human rights, as an indispensable element for lasting peace.

“The Security Council commends efforts by international donors to provide humanitarian assistance to LRA-affected populations in CAR, DRC and the Republic of South Sudan. The Council reiterates the need for an enhanced, comprehensive, and more regional approach to the humanitarian situation, including assistance to victims of sexual violence and other attacks and reaffirms the requirement for all parties to promote and ensure safe and unhindered access for humanitarian organizations to the civilian population, in accordance with international law, including applicable international humanitarian law, and guiding principles of humanitarian assistance.

“The Security Council requests that the Secretary-General keep it informed on the activities of UNOCA, the progress of implementation of the Regional Strategy and the efforts being undertaken respectively by missions in the region and other relevant United Nations agencies to that end, including through a single report on UNOCA and the LRA to be submitted before 30 November 2012.”

Background

Before the Council was the latest Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (document [S/2012/421](#)), dated 11 June and covering the period starting 4 November 2011.

In it, the Secretary-General reports a resurgence of attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the Ugandan rebel group notorious for abducting children to train as fighters and sex slaves in South Sudan, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He calls on the international community to support implementation of a coordinated regional strategy to address the threat by providing the necessary resources to support efforts by national authorities, the African Union and international partners.

The report notes that, after a lull in LRA raids during the second half of 2011, attacks against civilians rose again in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with 53 incidents reported in the first quarter of 2012. As of 31 March, more than 445,000 people had been displaced or were living as refugees due to LRA activities in those two countries and in South Sudan, with an estimated 341,000 persons displaced internally in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Orientale Province alone.

In the report, the Secretary-General says he is encouraged by the growing cooperation among stakeholders working to eliminate the threat. In March, the four countries affected by the LRA's activities launched a joint military task force to pursue the rebel fighters. A regional strategy for international humanitarian and development assistance, as well as peacebuilding in areas affected by LRA violence, is being finalized under the coordination of Abou Moussa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), and Francisco Madeira, the African Union Special Envoy for the LRA.

He goes on to note that the United Nations presence in the LRA-affected countries, including the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), together with the Organization's country-team partners, are developing a regional strategy to expand disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration initiatives throughout the LRA-affected areas.

The report also states that piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea remain a major challenge to the countries in the region, and calls on partners to continue to support the efforts of affected States to address this "most worrisome phenomenon" promptly and effectively. On other UNOCA-related issues, the Secretary-General says he is encouraged by the efforts of a growing number of States in the region to improve their electoral rules and procedures so as to allow broader popular participation. He calls for the remaining legal and administrative gaps to be filled to ensure transparent, participatory and inclusive elections.

Commending the subregion on impressive economic growth rates in the past year, he says the challenge now is to translate that growth into tangible gains for the majority of people, and to alleviate poverty without discrimination. UNOCA stands ready to support efforts in that regard, he states, further encouraging States in Central Africa to strengthen their national human rights architecture, and to continue to seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Welcoming the recent decision by the Lake Chad Basin Commission to combat the threat posed by Boko Haram, he encourages member countries of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa to deliver on their commitment to work together to establish a coherent strategy against illicit arms and ammunition in the subregion. The United Nations remains ready to assist subregional efforts to enhance peace and security, and to mobilize international support, he says.

The Secretary-General's report concludes by welcoming efforts by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community to put mechanisms in place for integration and cross-border cooperation, including those promoting the free

movement of peoples throughout the subregion. As noted by the member States themselves, however, implementation of the relevant protocols needs to be accelerated, he says.

Briefings

ABOU MOUSSA, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, introduced the report, saying that for more than one year, UNOCA had worked in close collaboration with ECCAS, its member States and other partners on the subregion's numerous problems. It had also successfully facilitated the functioning of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, as well as working on piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, with subregional partners. In addition, the Office had been working with partners in the subregion on the major challenge of ensuring that its rich reserves of natural resources benefitted the majority of the population.

Turning to the LRA, he recalled his warning last November that the group still posed an active threat to the subregion's people. A strategy developed since then focused on supporting full implementation of the African Union's Regional Cooperation Initiative; enhancing efforts to promote the protection of civilians; expanding disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration activities to cover all LRA-affected areas; promoting a coordinated humanitarian and child protection response in all those areas; and supporting the Governments of the affected countries in the fields of peacebuilding, human rights, rule of law and development, in order to enable them to extend State authority across their respective territories.

Once that strategy was endorsed, the United Nations and its partners would need to agree on an implementation plan, he continued. "However, the strategy must only represent the beginning of vigorous attention by the Council to address the LRA issues, in order to put an end to these atrocities once and for all," he emphasized. Its success would depend on cooperation among all stakeholders and the mobilization of resources to address funding gaps. In spite of the recent capture of one of its senior commanders and its significantly diminished capability, the LRA remained extremely dangerous, he warned, appealing to the Council and the wider international community actively to support the regional strategy. He also stressed the need to investigate the sources of the LRA's funding, pledging that UNOCA would continue its support for all initiatives to foster peace and security in the subregion.

FRANCISCO CAETANO JOSE MADEIRA, Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union on LRA Issues, said that, although successive military operations had largely disabled the group's command-and-control structure, its ability to commit atrocities against civilians remained undiminished. The Secretary-General's report accurately depicted the current situation. However, there had been efforts by some key partners of the African Union in the fight against the LRA, he noted. The ongoing United States-backed military operations, especially in the Central African Republic, had sustained the pressure on the LRA, keeping the rebels constantly on the run.

Those operations had contributed to the 12 May capture of the self-styled Major General Caesar Acellam, one-time number four leader in the LRA command hierarchy, he continued. They had also contributed to the capture of two LRA combatants by Central African Republic troops on 22 May and the killing of two combatants on 16 June, an operation during which seven formerly abducted civilians had been rescued. Furthermore, MONUSCO, the United States Government and various non-governmental organizations were supporting those actions with psychological operations in the form of "come-home" radio messages and air-dropped leaflets in local languages aimed at encouraging mass defections among LRA elements.

He said that, when fully operational, the African Union-led regional initiative was expected to bolster those efforts, particularly through military operations to heighten pressure on the LRA. That would lead to more captures, surrenders, defections and eventual elimination of the entire group. Since 2010, the European Union had been providing funds in support of the African Union's efforts towards the group's elimination, he noted. The initiative's major objectives were strengthening the capacity of LRA-affected countries to respond effectively to and neutralize the LRA threat, facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected communities, and creating an environment conducive to the stabilization and rehabilitation of the affected areas. Those objectives — particularly those relating to humanitarian assistance; civilian protection; disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, rehabilitation and resettlement support to former combatants; and long-term recovery needs — resonated with those of the United Nations system on the ground.

A key component of the African Union initiative, he said, was the Joint Coordination Mechanism, an ad hoc political body comprising defence ministers of the LRA-affected countries and chaired by the regional body's Commissioner for Peace and Security. Its role was to deal with the overall political aspects, provide strategic direction and coordinate with all stakeholders in the fight against the LRA. Another component was a 5,000-strong force headquarters at Yambio, South Sudan, and three operational sectors at Nzara in the same country, Dungu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Obo in the Central African Republic. However, effective implementation of the initiative was being undermined by certain critical challenges, he said, noting that appeal was being made for international support.

The challenges involved the predictability of financial and material resources, as well as logistical support, he continued. Operational units required concrete support in terms of training, harmonized communication systems, food rations, medical support, air and ground mobility, munitions, fuel and lubricants, among other things. Recalling that the African Union Peace and Security Council had declared the LRA a terrorist organization on 22 November 2011, requesting the Security Council to do likewise, he said the latter should consider modalities for enhancing its support to regionally led international efforts by adjusting the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions in LRA-affected countries.

Statements

PHILIP PARHAM (United Kingdom), encouraging UNOCA to continue its coordination role in countering the LRA threat, condemned in the strongest terms the rebel group's violations of international law, and affirmed that removing that threat was critical for the establishment of a stable environment in the subregion. A unified response was required from all stakeholders, he said, welcoming the African Union's efforts in that regard. Calling for the full deployment of troops as quickly as possible, he urged UNOCA to submit a complete costed plan for a full and effective response. He also welcomed the expansion of the demobilization programme across the subregion and encouraged the reinforcement of preventive efforts to stop instability from erupting into conflict. He also called for a continuation of the fight against piracy.

DOCTOR MASHABANE (South Africa) welcomed efforts by the region's countries to face their multiple problems, and called for further efforts to ensure that their natural resources benefited their populations. He expressed concern about the consequences of the Libyan conflict, including the proliferation of weapons and the activities of armed groups. UNOCA's coordination role was extremely important, particularly in respect of the brutal activities of the LRA, he said, welcoming the African Union's strategy in that regard. The Security Council must deal with the group as a terrorist organization, and the international community must provide all necessary support to regional initiatives. He stressed that all action against the LRA should be carried out in compliance with international law and in support of efforts to bring to justice suspects indicted by the International Criminal Court.

HARDEEP SINGH PURI (India) affirmed the importance of UNOCA's activities in the context of the many challenges faced by countries in Central Africa, particularly in the areas of conflict prevention, early warning and socio-economic challenges. The Office should further strengthen its collaboration with national Governments and regional organizations while strengthening its efforts to ensure that regional cooperative frameworks were fully implemented. The Council, in turn, should take the lead in galvanizing the international community to provide adequate resources for national and regional endeavours, particularly in strengthening national capacities in civil administration, police and security forces, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation processes and socio-economic development.

Given the fragility of political institutions in several countries in the area, he said, it was also important for national and regional authorities to pay attention to the need for inclusive political processes, including electoral reforms. Given the threat of piracy, India hoped that the proposed regional summit would be held soon to work out a regional strategy on that issue. As for the LRA, he notes the continuing threat posed by the group and expressed hope that the African Union would continue to work closely with the affected countries so that the Regional Task Force might be expeditiously deployed. The international strategy should focus on strengthening the capacity of national authorities in the areas of security and overall socio-economic development in LRA-affected areas. Such assistance should be apolitical in nature, and respect national sovereignty in policy, as well as operational matters.

MOHAMMED LOULICHKI (Morocco) said that, despite the positive gains in the effort to counter the LRA's activities, that group continued to destabilize and destroy lives in Central Africa. Close cooperation between States in the subregion and the international community, while respecting international humanitarian law, would thwart the group's ability to create instability, he said, adding that protecting civilians must be at the centre of any effort to tackle the LRA. The success of the disarmament and demobilization process, as well as the prosecution of the group's leaders should continue to be one of the priorities of affected countries and the international community. Noting the five pillars of the strategic action plan, including the importance attached to socio-economic development, he said his country would continue to support the subregion's countries in key areas such as health. Through its large contingent in MONUSCO, Morocco would contribute to the protection of civilians and the provision of health services, he said.

SAMIR SHARIFOV (Azerbaijan) welcomed the positive developments recorded during the reporting period, but noted that activities such as those of Boko Haram and other groups had made West Africa the most active subregion on the continent in recent times. However, regional and national initiatives to enhance maritime safety in the Gulf of Guinea had helped. Turning to the LRA, he expressed deep concern about the atrocities committed by the group and the threat that it represented to regional security and stability. Azerbaijan welcomed the development of the United Nations Regional Strategy on the LRA and appealed for the necessary funding. Stressing the importance of further strengthening cooperation among LRA-affected countries, he said various programmes to reduce poverty should be implemented by their Governments with donor assistance. Even successful national efforts would not succeed unless supported by the United Nations and the broader international community, he added.

JOÃO MARIA CABRAL (Portugal) strongly condemned the LRA'S continued violations of international law, firmly urging the group to end those practices, release all abducted persons, and to disarm, demobilize and surrender. He also encouraged all States to cooperate in order to implement the International Criminal Court arrest warrants aimed at bringing LRA leaders to justice. It was crucial that all actors continue to engage until the threat was removed, he said, welcoming the Regional Strategy and stressing the crucial importance of its implementation, including full implementation of the African Union initiative. He encouraged countries of the subregion to further strengthen their cooperation so as to fulfil all objectives of the Regional Strategy. He also underlined the importance of sustaining the Security Council's close engagement on the issue, and pledged his own country's continued engagement. He affirmed the importance of UNOCA's close coordination with the African Union and other subregional organizations on security issues. He also reiterated Portugal's strong support for UNOCA's efforts to help prevent new conflicts, resolve existing ones by peaceful means, and promote democratic governance.

PETER WITTIG (Germany) said the unspeakable humanitarian impact of the LRA did not depend on its size but on its massive use of violence, which demanded an urgent, comprehensive, coherent and coordinated response. As Chair of the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, Germany pledged to ensure a close follow-up to the plight of the abducted, he said, adding that a lasting solution to the LRA threat required both a military response, in compliance with all relevant international law, as well as enhanced humanitarian and development aid. Stressing the responsibility of countries in the subregion to end the threat, he encouraged them to further strengthen their collaboration and invest all necessary resources. He welcomed United States support to the affected countries, and called on the latter to develop reintegration strategies that would encourage LRA defections.

Regarding armed groups created to protect civilians, he said everything should be done to ensure that the weapons provided to them did not become magnets for LRA attacks and add to arms proliferation in the subregion. Welcoming the collaboration between UNOCA and the African Union in anti-LRA efforts, he encouraged clear planning so that needs for additional support could be assessed. He also encouraged the African Union to prioritize civilian protection in its strategies. He also welcomed cooperation among United Nations missions in the area, encouraged swift implementation of the resulting joint strategy and called for further international support for all efforts against the LRA, while describing Germany's contributions.

EDAWÉ LIMBIYÉ KANDANGHA-BARIKI (Togo) welcomed the establishment of a regional peace and security structure in Central Africa, but stressed that there was still serious concern about instability in many areas. He called for renewed dialogue, between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, in particular, over conflict in the eastern part of the former country, and for demobilization programmes in that area to be intensified. Regarding piracy, armed robbery and illicit

trafficking in weapons, he said robust responses and close collaboration were needed. Describing continuing LRA atrocities, he encouraged the countries involved not only to coordinate in facing the security threat, but also to join together in mitigating the humanitarian situation in Central and East Africa. He welcomed the institution of the early-warning systems and the arrest of one of the group's senior leaders. Its principal leaders must answer for their actions before the law, although an amnesty would be understandable for lower-level members, he added.

JEFFREY DELAURENTIS (United States) welcomed the significant progress made in weakening the LRA, pointing out that the number of people reported killed in attacks by the group in 2012 was low compared to those of previous years. That suggested that the LRA had been weakened and was in "survival mode". Nevertheless, it had been weakened in the past only to come back strongly, she cautioned, noting that, since most LRA activities were now in MONUSCO's area of operation, that Mission needed to be able to take action against the group. Greater efforts must be made to ensure that it had no "breathing room" in any part of the region, she emphasized.

Welcoming the African Union initiative against the LRA, she said that alongside military pressure, encouraging the group's members to surrender was critical to weakening it. In the weeks since the capture of Caesar Acellam, a few other fighters had surrendered, she noted, adding that her country was working with the United Nations to expand communications in LRA-affected States, including the use of leaflets urging defections by members of the group. To assist in that effort, the United States was also funding programmes to address the psychological needs of young former combatants while providing humanitarian assistance across all the LRA-affected countries.

NÉSTOR ALZATE (Colombia) said that, despite the significant progress that Central Africa had made in recent years on cross-border problems, national authorities needed support for the establishment of programmes that would enable them to address the various issues that could jeopardize the entire subregion's security and stability. Colombia supported close coordination within the United Nations system as essential to ensuring that "delivering as one" could be made real. The LRA continued to pose a threat to peace and security in Central Africa, and its activities continued to have devastating effects on the subregion's peoples and States. It was one of history's worst armed groups, he said, adding that Colombia welcomed the African Union's support in meeting the challenge posed by the group. Now was the time for a sustained and comprehensive implementation of the strategy initiated by the regional body. Its implementation would require long-term commitment and resources, and particular attention must be paid to addressing the living conditions of those in the LRA-affected areas.

RAZA BASHIR TARAR (Pakistan) said the cross-cutting challenges described in the report showed that they called for greater coordination at the regional and subregional levels. UNOCA's work remained important in terms of mediating and providing good offices, coordinating United Nations system responses to challenges and strengthening the capacity of subregional organizations to address peace and security challenges. The threat posed by the LRA called for coordinated regional and international efforts, based on a comprehensive approach and addressing not only security and justice questions, but also the long-term development needs of the LRA-affected areas.

Welcoming the United Nations Regional Strategy, as well as the African Union regional cooperation initiative, he said their successful implementation would hinge on the availability of timely resources, as well as the building of military capacities in the LRA-affected countries. The international community should assist in those areas, in line with the priorities identified by the African Union, as well as the principle of national ownership, he said, pledging that his own country would continue to support all efforts towards durable peace and stability in Central Africa.

NIKITA ZHUKOV (Russian Federation) said he shared the assessments and conclusions of the Secretary-General's report, and welcomed the cross-border cooperation among countries in the subregion on the security challenges facing them, including the continuing negative consequences of the Libyan crisis. He also welcomed, in that context, the Kinshasa Convention and other regional initiatives to control arms and armed groups, as well as regional efforts to combat piracy. Affirming the Russian Federation's concern about the LRA, he called for a comprehensive approach that would include security, developmental and outreach efforts, assisting in the extension of State authority to all areas, as well as demobilization programmes. He welcomed the wide cooperation of stakeholders in combating the group, as well as the regional strategies of the African Union and the United Nations. Noting the contribution of UNOCA, he said it had a key role to play in preventing conflict in the subregion and strengthening cooperation among countries there in facing their numerous challenges.

GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) agreed that UNOCA had an important role to play in coordinating the countries in the subregion and working closely with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA). Their joint efforts were critical in facing the impact of the Libyan crisis on Northern Africa and other challenges. Describing the brutal impact of LRA activities, he encouraged the authorities of each of the affected countries to collaborate under the African Union and United Nations strategies. Vigorously condemning the rebel group's crimes and expressing solidarity with the victims, he recalled that eight Guatemalan peacekeeping officers had been the victims of LRA attacks in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Hoping for justice in respect of that incident and all other crimes committed by the group, he encouraged all States to cooperate with the International Criminal Court and help bring its leaders to justice.

MARTIN BRIENS (France) welcomed the upcoming summit of Heads of State on piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, expressing hope that its outcome would allow for the development of a regional strategy on piracy. He also reiterated the need for holding free and transparent elections in order to establish lasting peace in Africa. In Central Africa, the LRA remained the subject of much concern, he noted, adding that the new United Nations strategy to tackle the group would allow the Organization to strengthen the coherence and coordination of its activities. United Nations efforts against the LRA must emphasize the protection of civilians and include the establishment of early-warning mechanisms, he said.

Such efforts should also encourage the defection of rebels, he continued, adding that they should also seek to extend demobilization and disarmament programmes to all LRA-affected areas. The reintegration of former combatants should emphasize appropriate welcoming components, and United Nations offices and missions should welcome children formerly involved in combat. At the same time, efforts to apprehend the leaders of the LRA, including Joseph Kony, must be pursued. France provided bilateral support to LRA-affected States, including by contributing military materiel and providing humanitarian assistance, he said, encouraging those States to maintain their efforts with determination.

Council President WANG MIN (China), speaking in his national capacity, said it was gratifying that the overall political situation in Central Africa was currently stable, although efforts to achieve lasting peace still faced many challenges. In particular, the Libyan crisis had led to a proliferation of weapons, he noted, saying his country hoped the international community would pay more attention to the region and provide it with more help. China would play an active role in that regard, he pledged. He went on to state that his country was seriously concerned about the humanitarian problems caused by the LRA in Central Africa. In that regard, China appreciated the regional strategy formulated by the United Nations to address that challenge, and hoped sufficient guarantees would be provided to ensure its success.

The Council then adopted a presidential statement on the agenda item under discussion.

CHARLES DOUBANE (Central African Republic) described the Secretary-General's depiction of the situation in his country as "clear and accurate, saying that since 2008 the LRA had been murdering, raping and pillaging in the Central African Republic, with severe affects on the humanitarian situation, as well as stability. "Mr. Kony and his band of barbarians must be neutralized", he emphasized, saying that would lead to the release of the children now held under terrible conditions. The Central African Republic would spare no effort in working with regional and international partners to end the barbarism, he stressed, welcoming the efforts of the United Nations, United States, European countries, the African Union and many others in attempting to resolve the situation. He called for the further mobilization of the international community "to put an end to this affront to a civilized world".

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