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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
559TH MEETING

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
24 NOVEMBER 2015

PSC/PR/BR.(DLIX)

PRESS STATEMENT

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The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 559th meeting held on 24 November 2015, received a briefing from the Commission on the implementation of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA). Council also took note of the statements made by the representatives of Gabon, as Chair of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan, as member countries of the RCI-LRA, as well as by those of the United States of America (USA), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU).

Council recalled its earlier pronouncements on the issue of the LRA, including communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DVII) adopted at its 508th meeting held on 18 May 2015.

Council welcomed the progress made to date in the fight against the LRA, thanks to the efforts deployed within the framework of the RCI-LRA. At the same time, Council noted that the LRA continues to pose a serious threat to civilian populations in the south-eastern parts of the Central African Republic (CAR), the north-eastern part of the DRC and parts of South Sudan, and that this situation was compounded by the volatile security environment in those areas. Council expressed serious concern about the poaching of elephants in the Garamba National Park of the DRC by the LRA. In this regard, Council called upon the international community to deploy additional efforts and resources in order to curtail the LRA supply chain.

Council commended the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) of the Regional Task Force (RTF), the military arm of the RCI-LRA, for their efforts, and urged them to sustain their pressure on the LRA, to expedite the elimination of the group. Council appealed to them to fulfill their pledges in terms of troops to be deployed, to enable the RTF to reach its authorized strength of 5,000, as well as to address the operational challenges facing some of the contingents, including the lack of communication equipment.

Council requested the Commission to take all necessary steps to enhance the effectiveness of the RTF, including the immediate deployment of an RTF Liaison Officer to the Joint Intelligence Operations Centre (JIOC) in Dungu, DRC, in order to strengthen coordination and information sharing with other counter-LRA stakeholders in the DRC, including the UN.

Council welcomed the joint efforts by the AU Special Envoy for LRA Issues, Lt. Gen. (Rtd.) Jackson Kiprono Tuwei, and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa (UNOCA), Abdoulaye Bathily, in sustaining the commitment of the RCI-LRA member states and the international community to eliminate the LRA. In this respect, Council noted with satisfaction the meeting between the AU Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative, on the one hand, and the Ugandan Minister of Defense, on the other hand, in Kampala, on 7 September 2015, the holding in Entebbe, Uganda, from 8 to 9 September 2015, of the bi-annual technical meeting of the LRA focal points, and the joint mission undertaken by the Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative to Kinshasa and Dungu, Lower Uele, in the DRC, from 17 to 20 November 2015, to consult with the Congolese authorities and other stakeholders, as well as to inspect the DRC contingent of the RTF.

Council welcomed the visit undertaken by the AU Special Envoy to Sudan, from 12 to 15 September 2015, as a follow-up to the invitation extended by Sudan on 14 May 2014 to verify allegations on the presence of LRA elements in the Kafia Kingi area, as well as to the consultations between the Special Envoy and the Sudanese delegation to the second meeting of the Heads of Intelligence on Security Services of the East Africa Region, in Kampala, from 14 to 15 July 2015. Council noted that the visit made it possible to further enhance coordination in the regional efforts to eliminate the LRA and to agree on practical steps regarding the way forward. Council encouraged the Commission and the relevant Sudanese authorities to ensure an effective follow-up of the said measures.

Council reiterated the AU's gratitude to the Government of the USA for its sustained support to the RTF, through the US Special Forces. Council also expressed appreciation to the UN peacekeeping missions operating in the RCI-LRA mission area, particularly the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO), for their support to the RTF Headquarters in Yambio, South Sudan, and to the DRC contingent of the RTF, respectively. Council called for enhanced coordination with the UN Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), on the one hand, the RTF contingent in Obo, South Eastern CAR, and the AU Mission for CAR and Central Africa (MISAC), on the other. Council further expressed appreciation to the EU for its financial contribution to the RCI-LRA and called on all partners to pursue and enhance their support to the AU-led efforts in the fight against the LRA.

Council underlined the importance of initiating the required steps for the rehabilitation of the LRA affected areas, and reiterated its request to the Commission to ensure the follow-up of the relevant provisions of communiqué PSC/PR/COMM.(DVII).