

## **Security Council: Statement by Ambassador Wittig on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)**

*New York, 29 June 2012*

Mr. President,

I wish to thank SRSB Abou Moussa for his briefing. Many thanks also to Special Envoy Madeira for his information on the AU-led regional initiative against the LRA. [I welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of Uganda, the Central African Republic, the DR Congo and South Sudan in today's briefing].

The humanitarian impact of the scourge LRA is unspeakable. It does not depend on its size but on its massive use of violence, including sexual violence against women and children, abductions and horrifying attacks. It has uprooted hundreds of thousands of civilians across the Central African Republic, the DR Congo and South Sudan. The ability of the LRA to operate across national borders, exploiting weak state authority in the region, stresses the urgent need for a comprehensive, coherent and coordinated response. The threat posed by the LRA to regional stability needs to end. The human consequences of the LRA atrocities need to be addressed. The protection of children deserves our special attention as the LRA is synonymous with the brutal abduction and use of children as child soldiers, porters, spies and sex slaves. As Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict we will ensure a close follow-up on the latest report of the Secretary-General on the situation of children and armed conflict affected by the LRA and strive for comprehensive recommendations.

We reiterate that a durable solution to the LRA threat requires both, military efforts carried out in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law ensuring the protection of civilians, and non-military efforts, including enhanced humanitarian aid and development measures.

Mr President,

It is against this backdrop that I would like to highlight three points:

First,

The governments of Uganda, the Central African Republic, the DRC and South Sudan are ultimately responsible for ending the LRA threat and for protecting their civilians. They need to be in the lead. Their political commitment and cooperation at state, military and community level are indispensable. We therefore want to encourage them to make the response to the LRA a national priority, to further strengthen their collaboration and to invest all necessary resources in the implementation of the AU initiative against the LRA. We commend the support that is provided in this regard by the USA to the affected countries.

Successful rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-LRA combatants can promote further defections. We therefore want to also encourage the countries in the region to put in place policies supporting defections including through comprehensive DDRRR programmes, and to ensure a common approach with respect to a legal framework on the treatment of ex-LRA and abductees that have escaped from the LRA.

Second,

We welcome the close collaboration between SRSG Moussa and Special Envoy Madeira in support of the AU initiative against the LRA. We consider the AU involvement to be essential to strengthen coordination, information sharing, and trust among the four militaries of the LRA affected countries.

We also encourage the AU to prioritize protection of civilians and to implement a strategy in this regard. All military efforts against the LRA need to put the protection of civilians, notably also of children, front and centre.

Third,

We strongly welcome and support the UN regional strategy to address the LRA threat. It provides a good basis to improve cross-border mechanisms and regional intermission cooperation in all relevant fields. We commend UNOCA for its leading role in coordinating the strategy and all UN actors for their contributions.

The cooperation between MONUSCO in the DR Congo and UNMISS in South Sudan to extend MONUSCO's regional LRA communication strategy is a good example of enhanced intermission cooperation that is already in place. Further efforts are needed. We therefore encourage the swift implementation of the strategy. This will require the full commitment of all UN actors and external partners.

The successful implementation will also depend on further support by the international community. Germany is committed to contribute to this end. Apart from humanitarian assistance provided to LRA affected communities we will support the expansion of MONUSCO's Standard Operating Procedures for DDRRR across the region. The project will also provide support to sensitize LRA combatants, with the aim of encouraging defections. All activities will also include capacity building of national actors, including civil society.

UNOCA's follow-up on the regional strategy will be important and needs to remain a priority. The Security Council should be kept informed accordingly by a report of the Secretary-General as suggested in the draft PRST prepared by the UK delegation, which we fully support.

Mr. President,

Turning finally to UNOCA's wider role,

We commend SRSG Moussa and UNOCA for their contribution to peace and stability in the Central African region.

We support the work priorities as set out in the report of the Secretary-General, in particular supporting the capacity building of Economic Community of Central African States in the field of early warning and conflict prevention, enhancing maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea and supporting the AU-led efforts to address the LRA threats. These areas should remain at the core of UNOCA's activities.

We welcome the established working relations between UNOCA and the UN regional office for West Africa UNOWA and the envisaged joint initiatives on terrorism and illicit flow of weapons across the two sub-regions.

Given UNOCA's limited resources it will remain crucial to prioritize its work programme and to focus on specific activities.

In closing, I want to express our support for the SRSG and UNOCA, including UNOCA's mandate renewal in August.

Thank you, Mr. President.