

Statement by Mr D Mashabane, Deputy Permanent Representative of South Africa to the United Nations during the Security Council Debate the Lord's Resistance Army and the United Nations Office for Central Africa

29 June 2012

Mr President, we thank your delegation for facilitating this discussion today. My delegation wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr Abou Moussa, for his comprehensive briefing on the United Nations Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). We also thank the Special Envoy of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on the LRA issue, Ambassador Francisco Madeira for his useful briefing to the Council.

Regarding the situation in Central Africa, we are pleased with the continued efforts by the political leadership of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to address the threats affecting their sub-region as witnessed at the Summit meeting held in January.

South Africa commends the excellent economic growth rates registered by the countries in the region, despite the current difficult economic and financial climate. This notwithstanding, efforts must be employed to ensure that this growth translate into alleviating poverty and benefit the majority of the vulnerable and marginalised communities.

We remain convinced that economic development and security are mutually reinforcing and we therefore commend the work of UNOCA in supporting states of the region in strengthening conflict prevention, peacebuilding and cross border threats.

We particularly commend the countries in the region for conducting their elections in a peaceful manner. As noted by the Secretary General, the concern remains that election related violence could be a source of instability in the absence of transparent legal, participatory and inclusive processes.

Mr President,

We are equally concerned about the impact of insecurity in the Sahel and the fallout from the Libyan crisis on both peace and stability as well as socio-economic development of the Central African region. The proliferation of weapons and spread of transnational organised crime and terrorist groups continues to pose a threat to the security of the region. Equally worrying in this regard is reports that Boko Haram are now operating beyond the borders of Nigeria.

Mr President,

My delegation is pleased with the high level of cooperation taking place between UNOCA and UNOWA as well as other UN presences in the region in addressing the common security and socio-economic challenges of the sub-region. The lessons learnt could enhance greater effectiveness and

efficiency of both regional presences. This collaboration has also extended to other regional bodies such as ECCAS, ECOWAS and the Gulf of Guinea Commission to address maritime security challenges facing the region.

UNOCA has an important mandate in working with the UN Peacekeeping Missions in the affected areas, the United Nations Office to the African Union, and the AU to facilitate cooperation and countering the threat posed by the LRA. Collaboration with the relevant regional and sub-regional organisation is of paramount importance. Over the last year, the UN and the AU have undertaken a number of joint initiatives, including visits to countries affected by LRA activities. These collaborative approaches have assisted the two organisations in strengthening the international resolve to combat the scourge of the LRA.

Mr President,

The activities of the LRA remain a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region with grave humanitarian consequences. South Africa is concerned about the devastating effects of this armed group and its continued activities in a number of African countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, South Sudan and the Central African Republic. The brutality of these activities continues to haunt thousands of innocent civilians, including women and children and has resulted in massive displacement of people and an acute humanitarian crisis.

South Africa commends the ongoing military cooperation between the countries affected by LRA activities in addressing this challenge. In this regard, my delegation 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. This initiative would, *inter-alia*, strengthen the operational capabilities of the countries affected by the atrocities of the LRA and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to affected areas. *Ambassador Madeira has elaborated on the modalities of this initiative*

It would be vital for the international community to provide all necessary support to the RCI-LRA, particularly in logistical, financial and technical terms so as to facilitate the effective functioning of the different components of the Initiative, as well as to build capacity of the armed and security forces of the affected countries.

Mr President,

We reaffirm that military action against the LRA should be conducted in a manner to minimise injury to civilians and should be in compliance with applicable international law, including international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

South Africa wishes to underscore that these military operations should be part of a broader strategy that should include granting of amnesty, policies for facilitating defections and reintegration and arresting LRA commanders

indicted by the ICC. In this regard, we welcome the arrest of a senior commander of the LRA, Ceasar Acellam.

Finally Mr President,

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the work done by SRSG Abou Moussa and his team and we wish him well in his ongoing endeavours. For UNOCA to be able to implement all its plans and programs for the region, it is important that it be allocated with necessary resources it needs.

My delegation supports the Presidential Statement which will be adopted by Council shortly.

I thank you.