

Statement by Ambassador Jeffrey DeLaurentis, U.S. Alternate Permanent Representative to the United Nations for Special Political Affairs, At a Security Council Briefing on UNOCA/LRA

New York, June 29, 2012

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Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you Special Representative Moussa and African Union Special Envoy Madeira for your statements this morning.

Mr. President, the Lord's Resistance Army has plagued Central Africa for far too long. The United States commends SRSG Moussa and the UN for the comprehensive regional strategy to address the threat posed by the LRA once and for all. The real test of this strategy will be whether it translates into concrete action on the ground. The United States encourages UN missions in the region to help implement the strategy and calls on other nations to address the gaps and areas for improvement outlined by the UN.

The United States, in partnership with the African Union and the UN, supports the governments of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Uganda in their efforts to apprehend Joseph Kony and top LRA commanders. Two months ago, President Obama announced that the United States will continue the deployment of a small number of U.S. military advisors who are assisting the CAR, DRC, South Sudanese and Ugandan forces to pursue the LRA in protecting local populations. We welcome the significant progress made in weakening the LRA and commend Uganda on the capture of LRA senior commander Ceasar Acellam last month. The number of people reported killed by LRA attacks is low compared to previous years and most attacks are focused on looting food and supplies. This suggests that the LRA is in survival mode.

Nevertheless, we must not forget that the LRA has been weakened before and resurged when pressure on it was reduced. Since the majority of reported LRA attacks and abductions occur in the DRC, MONUSCO's efforts in coordination with the Congolese government to increase focus on the LRA and help protect civilians are especially critical. More must be done to ensure that the LRA cannot gain breathing room in any part of the region. A future free of the LRA will require the continued resolve and stronger collaboration of regional governments, and we welcome the AU's initiative to assist in fostering increased cooperation.

Along with military pressure, the United States believes that encouraging and helping members of the LRA surrender is critical to weakening the organization. BINUCA, MONUSCO and UNMISS have already begun to expand DDRRR activities across all LRA-

affected areas. In the weeks since Ceasar Acellam's capture, a few LRA fighters have peacefully surrendered. The U.S. is working with UN missions and military forces in the region to expand communications, including through distributing leaflets and radio broadcasts urging LRA fighters to defect. We join regional governments in calling on remaining fighters and abductees in the LRA to surrender peacefully and return home. To assist in this effort, the United States is funding programs to address the psychological and social needs of former abducted children and to help them reunite with their families and communities.

As we support the region's efforts to dismantle the LRA and rehabilitate its abductees, we must continue to support the communities under siege by the LRA threat. The UN's strategy rightfully puts an emphasis on the protection of civilians and humanitarian response. The United States funds programs to help LRA-affected communities develop protection plans and connect with other communities. We also provide humanitarian assistance targeting 240,000 people across the LRA-affected region.

Mr. President, UNOCA has a difficult set of challenges to address beyond the LRA. Piracy and armed robbery at sea affect the peace and security of West and Central Africa. We are pleased to see that UNOCA and the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) are making progress on the Council's request earlier this year to support States and sub-regional organizations in convening a joint summit on piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea and in developing a comprehensive strategy to address this threat.

In conclusion, we want to commend the thousands of United Nations peacekeepers, observers, and humanitarian and human rights workers for their dedication and sacrifice as they work to promote peace in Central Africa.

Thank you.

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