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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, P.O. Box: 3243 Tel.: (251-11) 5513 822 Fax: (251-11) 5519 321  
Email: [situationroom@africa-union.org](mailto:situationroom@africa-union.org)

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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
AFRICAN UNION-LED REGIONAL COOPERATION INITIATIVE FOR THE ELIMINATION OF THE  
LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY**

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to communiqué PSC/PR/COMM. (CCCXXI) adopted by Council at its 321<sup>st</sup> meeting held on 22 May 2012. In that communiqué, Council renewed the mandate of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA) for one additional year. The report provides an update on the steps taken towards the operationalization of the RCI-LRA, the operations of its various components, the activities of the African Union (AU) Special Envoy for the LRA Issue and interaction with the United Nations (UN), as well as on efforts to mobilize international support. It concludes with observations on the way forward.

**II. OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE RCI-LRA**

2. During the reporting period, the Commission continued to make sustained efforts towards the implementation of the RCI-LRA. As Council is aware, the RCI-LRA brings together the countries affected by the activities of the LRA, namely the Central African Republic (CAR), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Sudan and Uganda. Its components include the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM), chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and comprising the Ministers of Defense of the affected countries, to ensure strategic level coordination; the Regional Task Force (RTF) composed of units provided by the affected countries, with a brigade-size strength of 5,000 troops; and the RTF Headquarters (HQs), including the Joint Operation Centre (JOC), based in Yambio, South Sudan.

3. At its first meeting, held in Addis Ababa, on 8 May 2012, the JCM agreed on a number of steps to operationalize the RCI-LRA. These related to the adoption of the command and control architecture of the RTF, the timelines for the commencement of critical activities, the delimitation of Sectors and the development of a concept of operations (CONOPS), as well as to the coordination between the RTF and international stakeholders, notably UN missions and offices on the ground.

4. During the period under review, significant progress was made in generating the troops required for the operations of the RTF. So far, the member countries have been able to generate a total of 3,350 troops, contributed as follows: CAR, 350 soldiers; Uganda, 2,000; South Sudan, 500; and DRC, 500. These troops operate in the three following Sectors: Dingu, in the DRC; Nzara, in South Sudan; and Obo, in the CAR. The RTF HQs, including the JOC, is fully operational since February 2013. Comprising 29 officers from the CAR, DRC, South Sudan and Uganda, the RTF HQs operates under the command of Brigadier General Dick Prit from Uganda. Over the past months, the RTF-HQs has coordinated a number of activities to track the LRA elements, mainly in CAR, within the Obo Sector. Furthermore, the RTF HQs inspected troops earmarked for the Initiative in South Sudan and the DRC, to verify their operational readiness, including their equipment and logistical capabilities.

5. However, the evolution of the situation in the CAR since the resumption of hostilities by the Seleka rebel group, in December 2012, has negatively impacted on the implementation of the RCI-LRA. The CAR Armed Forces (FACA) Unit that was deployed in Obo as part of the RTF disintegrated. In addition, since the the unconstitutional change of government in the CAR, on 24 March 2013, there have been incessant threats and provocation by Seleka elements against the RTF Unit in the Obo Sector. This situation compelled the RTF troops to suspend counter-LRA operations and regroup in defensive positions, while awaiting the outcome of consultations between the Commission and the *de facto* CAR authorities.

6. Another worrying development relates to the attack in Obo town, on 24 May 2013, by an armed group originating from South Sudan. A combined force of the RTF and CAR gendarmerie neutralized the attackers, capturing 43, seven of whom later died while in the custody of the gendarmerie. The incident generated tension in Bangui, as Seleka forces are agitating to deploy in Haut Mbomu, while the previous Government had authorized the RTF to conduct counter-LRA operations and protect the local population in that area. Likewise, there is tension between the CAR population in Obo and their neighbors from the Western Equatoria State of South Sudan as *a result* of the same incident.

7. The process of developing and finalising the mission documents of the RCI-LRA has been completed. Following a review of the documents during the meeting of the Chiefs of Defense Staff of the affected countries held in Bangui on 20 December 2012, the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the JCM, held in Addis Ababa on 15 January 2013, approved the Strategic Directives, the CONOPS, the Rules of Engagement (RoE) and the Standing Operational Procedures (SOPs) for the handling of persons suspected of involvement in LRA activities. This effectively marked the completion of phase 1 of the operationalization of the RTF and paved the way for phase 2, which is devoted to the enhancement of the ongoing military operations against the LRA.

8. On 24 April 2013, in Addis Ababa, the Commission convened the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the JCM, to review the implementation status of the RCI-LRA. The meeting was held against the background of the above-mentioned developments in the CAR. In this respect, the JCM expressed grave concern over the volatility of the situation in CAR and its impact on the RCI-LRA operations, as well as at the likelihood of confrontations between the RTF contingent in the Obo Sector and Seleka rebel elements, due to provocations from the latter. The JCM noted that phase 1 of the RCI-LRA had been completed, as the RTF forces were deployed and the key mission documents adopted. The JCM further noted the difficulties facing some of the RTF contingents, particularly in the area of logistics. It urged the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) to demonstrate further commitment by providing critical minimum support to their respective contingents. It also urged the Commission, with the support of partners, to fast track the setting up of the requisite infrastructure to facilitate coordination between the RTF HQs and the Sectors, as well as coordinate information collection, analysis and sharing through the deployment of intelligence officers from the RTF HQs to the Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) in Dungu and the Counter-LRA Operation Fusions Centers (COFCs) established by the US Military Advisors in Nzara and Obo.

9. Steps have been taken to follow up on the conclusions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> JCM meeting. The JIOC in Dungu is now providing information to the RTF-HQs on a regular basis. However, the logistical support pledged by some of the RCI-LRA member countries to enhance the effectiveness of their contingents is yet to materialize. For its part, the Commission has submitted to the European Union (EU) a new request for funding under the African Peace Facility (APF). At the time of finalizing this report, the EU was reviewing the request.

### **III. ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIAL ENVOY AND COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS**

10. Over the past months, my Special Envoy for the LRA Issue, Francisco Madeira, has continued his interaction with the different stakeholders in order to enhance the effectiveness of the RCI-LRA. In this respect, he has continued to work closely with the UN Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of the Libreville-based UN Office in Central Africa (UNOCA), Abou Moussa, who is coordinating UN efforts on the LRA issue.

11. In June 2012, the Special Envoy briefed the UN Security Council, in New York, on the progress in the implementation of the RCI-LRA. He seized the opportunity of his presence in New York to attend the meeting of the International Working Group on the LRA, which is a consultative forum bringing together the AU, the UN, the EU and some of its Member States, the USA and the World Bank, in order to harmonise and coordinate international efforts on the issue of the LRA. In July 2012 and February 2013, a joint technical meeting involving LRA focal points and experts in the AU and UN system was held at Entebbe, Uganda, under UNOCA auspices, to develop a regional strategy on the LRA. The focal points/experts finalized work on the programmatic document, implementation matrix and a communication strategy.

12. In October 2012, the Special Envoy undertook a mission to Khartoum. The objective was to seek the cooperation of Sudan in the implementation of the AU-led RCI-LRA, notably through measures to prevent any attempt by the LRA to enter the Sudanese territory. The Sudanese authorities expressed their commitment to extend the necessary support and cooperation to the AU-led efforts. The Special Envoy is planning to undertake a follow-up mission to Sudan.

13. In November 2012, the Special Envoy led an AU delegation to Washington to participate in a Global Summit on the LRA organized and hosted by Invisible Children, in collaboration with two US international NGOs, Enough and Resolve. The Summit helped to enhance international momentum against the LRA. It also strengthened collaboration between the Commission and the above-mentioned NGOs on counter-LRA issues.

14. Following the unconstitutional change of Government in the CAR, my Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative undertook a joint mission to South Sudan, DRC, and Uganda, from 26 March to 4 April 2013, to re-evaluate progress on the implementation RCI-LRA and the way forward concerning the commencement of operations by the RTF. The mission received strong support from the concerned Governments and international partners in those countries.

15. In early May 2013, and as a follow-up to the conclusions of the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the JCM, the Special Envoy visited Bangui, where he met with the *de facto* authorities to discuss

the continuation of the RCI-LRA operations in the CAR. The *de facto* authorities pledged to respect the CAR obligations under the RCI-LRA and to not interfere with the operations of the RTF. Further to the 24 May incident referred to above, the Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative undertook another visit to Bangui, from 6 to 7 June 2013. They met again with the *de facto* authorities and re-emphasized the need for them to respect their commitments to not interfere in the RTF operations and threaten its troops in the Obo Sector.

#### **IV. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT TO THE RCI-LRA**

16. The implementation of RCI-LRA is made possible thanks to the support received from a number of partners. From the very start of the Initiative, the EU provided funding under the APF. These resources are used for the operations of the RTF HQs, the functioning of the JCM Secretariat in Bangui and the activities of the Special Envoy, as well as for other related tasks. Furthermore, the US military advisors in the region have been actively supporting RTF operations in the Obo Sector, in terms of logistics, information-sharing and operational planning, through the COFCs in Obo and Nzara.

17. The RCI-LRA also benefits from UN Support. At strategic level, and as indicated above, the AU and UN are collaborating closely in the overall coordination of the counter-LRA operations, particularly through the joint initiatives of the AU Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative. At operational level, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) provides logistical support to the RTF HQs staff, particularly in terms of air transportation to and from Juba and Yambio, while the UN Stabilization Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) is extending operational support to RTF contingent in the Dungu Sector. The RTF and Commission are also working closely with the UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) in the planning and support process for the RTF and on related issues. The Commission continues to make efforts to mobilize further support from the UN pursuant to the relevant Council's decisions and conclusions of the JCM meetings. Hence, in February 2013, the Commission submitted a formal request to the UN to seek assistance for critical requirements for the RTF. The Commission continues to engage the UN on the issue.

18. Since the inception of the RCI-LRA, the Commission has made sustained efforts to mobilize the broadest possible support in order to effectively operationalize its various components and facilitate the operations on the ground. In its communiqué PSC/PR/COMM. (CCCXXI), Council welcomed the efforts by the Commission to mobilize resources for the RCI-LRA from AU member states, as well as bilateral and multilateral partners. It is against this background that the Commission convened a Support Forum for the RCI-LRA in Addis Ababa, on 24 May 2013. The meeting provided an opportunity to sensitize participants on the efforts undertaken and the challenges encountered. The Commission is planning to further engage Member States and partners in order to mobilize additional financial and logistical support to enhance the RCI-LRA.

#### **V. OPERATIONS AGAINST THE LRA**

19. As stressed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the JCM, the RCI-LRA is facing a number of challenges. Notably, mention should be made here of the persistent difficulties being experienced by some of the RCI-LRA member countries in providing logistical support, including mobility (air and ground), medical support, rations and effective communications,

to their contingents operating under the RTF. Furthermore, the funding for the RTF HQs and the JCM Secretariat lacks the required level of predictability and sustainability.

20. Despite these logistical and financial challenges, the RCI-LRA has made it possible to increase military pressure on the LRA, resulting in a reduction in the group's capability. In May 2012, the RTF operations led to the capture of a senior member of the LRA, Maj. Gen. Caesar Acellam, and the subsequent surrender of many additional fighters. In August 2012, a raid was carried out on the hide-out of Maj. Gen Dominic Ongwen during which the latter was wounded. In January 2013, Joseph Kony's former Chief of Security, Brig. Vincent Okumu Binany, was killed in south-eastern CAR, while leading a group of LRA elements who were transporting ivory to an LRA base. The RTF troops recovered six (6) pieces of ivory.

21. Unfortunately, the current situation in the CAR risks being exploited by the LRA. The group is trying to re-generate its forces and increase atrocities in the region. The *de facto* authorities in Bangui have limited the operations of the RTF troops to the Haut Mbomu Prefecture, leaving out other major LRA operational areas along the rivers of Chinko and Vovodo, all the way to the confluence of the CAR border with Sudan and South Sudan. These areas had been part of RTF operations areas until March 2013. This presents a serious challenge to the continued implementation of the RCI-LRA in that country.

22. Currently, the LRA, with an estimated strength of about 500 fighters, is poaching and trading ivory from the Garamba National Park, in the north-eastern part of the DRC. The LRA elements are also conducting raids on villages and along major trade routes in the north-eastern DRC to loot food stuffs, batteries, clothes and pharmaceutical products. They have continued to abduct civilians in north-eastern DRC and south-eastern CAR to serve as porters, fighters and sex-slaves. The humanitarian consequences of the LRA activities in these countries are of utmost concern.

## **VI. OBSERVATIONS**

23. Since May 2012, considerable progress has been made in the counter-LRA operations. Military pressure on the LRA has significantly increased, resulting in the surrender of some of its elements and the neutralization of key commanders. However, this terrorist group is far from being neutralized and, consequently, renewed efforts are needed to strengthen the effectiveness of the RCI-LRA.

24. I welcome the achievements made so far and express appreciation to the RCI-LRA member countries for their commitment. I urge them to pursue and intensify their efforts. In this respect, I would like to reiterate the AU's deep concern at the prevailing situation in the CAR and its negative impact on the RCI-LRA operations in that country. I would like, once again, to stress the imperative need for the *de facto* authorities in the CAR to comply with the international obligations of their country, notably those relating to the RCI-LRA. I strongly condemn the provocations by Seleka elements against the RTF Unit in Obo.

25. I thank the EU, the UN and the United States for their assistance to the RCI-LRA. I welcome the close coordination and collaboration between my Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative. I call on them to continue their support and appeal to other international stakeholders to join the ongoing efforts in order to help in swiftly ending the atrocities of the LRA and in addressing the needs of the affected areas and populations. The Commission, building on the outcome of the first Support Forum, will step up its efforts and

engagement with international stakeholders. It is equally important that Member States contribute financial and logistical support to the RTF operations. I would like to echo the numerous calls made to this end by Council and other AU relevant policy organs.

26. In view of the continued atrocities of the LRA and the need to effectively bring them to an end, it is critical that the operations of the RCI-LRA be supported and enhanced. Accordingly, I recommend to Council to extend the mandate of the RCI-LRA for one additional year, along the parameters spelt out in its communiqué PSC/PR/COMM (CCXCIX).