



Security Council

Seventieth year

7572nd meeting

Tuesday, 8 December 2015, 10.20 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President: Ms. Power (United States of America)

Members:

Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
Chad	Mr. Gombo
Chile	Ms. Sapag Muñoz de la Peña
China	Mr. Zhao Yong
France	Mr. Bertoux
Jordan	Mrs. Kawar
Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
New Zealand	Mr. Taula
Nigeria	Mr. Sarki
Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2015/914)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (S/2015/914)

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Abdoulaye Bathily, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, and Mr. Jackson K. Tuwei, Special Envoy of the African Union for Lord's Resistance Army Issues.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Tuwei, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Nairobi.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/914, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

I now give the floor to Mr. Bathily.

Mr. Bathily: I have the honour to present the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/914) on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA). The report before the Council outlines the main threats to peace and security in Central Africa, and provides an update on the activities undertaken by UNOCA in the past six months, in consultation with Member States, United Nations entities and subregional organizations.

The recent spate of violence that erupted in September in the Central African Republic has generated additional refugee populations within the region and gross human rights violations against local populations, particularly in Bangui. The intercommunal violence has also further weakened the national reconciliation process and increased the proliferation

of small arms and gang-related criminality. In that context, Pope Francis' visit to the Central African Republic on 29 and 30 November, which I witnessed, was timely. His message of peace and his prayers in Catholic churches and Muslim mosques were embraced by the population and welcomed as symbols of hope. Now more than ever, it is critical to accelerate the pace of implementing the recommendations of the Bangui Forum for National Reconciliation — over which I presided — in particular with respect to security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

It is also critical for the presidential and legislative elections to take place peacefully to conclude the transition. In that regard, on 25 November President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, in his capacity as Chairman of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), convened an Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which I attended. The Assembly endorsed the revised electoral calendar and took note of the remaining gap in the electoral budget. The Gabonese Republic and the Republic of Equatorial Guinea announced new pledges, which fill the financial gap. Together with earlier contributions made by Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo, ECCAS is the second-largest contributor to the country's electoral budget after the European Union.

Boko Haram remains a critical threat to stability, peace and security in the region. The terrorist group has stepped up its attacks against civilian and military targets in the Lake Chad Basin area, notably in Cameroon and Chad, leading to a further deterioration in the security, economic, humanitarian and human rights situations. The proximity of other regional conflicts near the Lake Chad Basin region, combined with the risks of radicalization and the chronic poverty of already marginalized populations, remains a serious concern. The influx of refugees into the Lake Chad Basin region has overstretched Government capacities and further limited service delivery in the affected areas. The refugee situation comes in addition to a significant number of internally displaced persons and returnees who require immediate assistance.

Boko Haram has been weakened as a result of the intensified military campaign led by countries of the Lake Chad Basin, and has started resorting to attacks against soft targets. The ongoing efforts to operationalize the Multinational Joint Task Force

underscore the commitment of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and Benin to coordinating action to fight Boko Haram. It is our sincere hope that a joint summit of Central and West African Heads of State and Government, to explore concrete ways to address the root causes of terrorism and radicalization, will take place without further delay. At the request of the Secretary-General, his Special Representative for West Africa and I will continue to engage in consultations with the States concerned and regional bodies in that regard.

In addition, the Secretary-General has called for all counter terrorism operations to fully comply with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee laws. He has also welcomed the adoption, on 26 November, by the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa of an integrated regional strategy on counter-terrorism and the non-proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Central Africa, and its plan of action.

The support of international partners remains crucial in the fight against terrorism, radicalization and armed violence, as such assistance contributes substantially to reducing the burden on the States affected. While there is a need to continue to support the Multinational Joint Task Force, early recovery and development activities should also be supported as part of a holistic approach to countering radicalization in the region.

While killings and attacks perpetrated by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have diminished, the LRA continues to pose a threat to regional security, particularly to populations in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The security and humanitarian crisis triggered by the LRA's activities, including looting and abductions, should not be underestimated. The LRA has adapted to our strong collective response by keeping a low profile, buying time and taking advantage of coordination gaps. The armed groups hope that fatigue and competing priorities will weaken our resolve to finish the job. We must not fall into that trap.

UNOCA has continued its active engagement on the LRA issue, including on the implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the LRA. Last September, in close cooperation with the African Union, UNOCA convened, in Entebbe, Uganda, the bi-annual coordination meeting

of LRA focal points. Last month, the African Union Special Envoy for LRA Issues, Mr. Jackson Tuwei, and I undertook a visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to meet with the authorities and other relevant stakeholders to encourage continued commitment to counter-LRA efforts and enhanced coordination, including across borders. We were encouraged by the renewed engagement of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in supporting and cooperating with the AU Regional Task Force in combating the LRA. I welcome Special Envoy Tuwei's briefing to the Council today.

During the past months, the number of cases of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, especially along the Bakassi Peninsula, has increased. In addition to the usual robbery activities, pirates have been committing acts of rape — a new and disturbing phenomenon. Unfortunately, not much progress has been made towards the implementation of the decisions of the 2013 summit at Yaoundé of the ECCAS/Economic Community of West African States, which includes the full operationalization of the Interregional Coordination Centre on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea, as well as its two subregional arms for West Africa and Central Africa. I encourage the African Union to hold as soon as possible the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Security and Development for Africa, originally scheduled to be held in November in Lomé.

Curbing cross-border criminal activities, including the illicit trade in wildlife and natural resources used to support the activities of armed groups such as the LRA, remains a major challenge. In that regard, we welcome the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/314, of 30 July 2015, on tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife, and look forward to its full implementation. UNOCA also stands ready to support Central Africa in the development of a subregional strategy to address the growing phenomenon of poaching.

There are mounting political tensions in the region as several countries in Central Africa enter an electoral cycle that will run up to 2018. In part, such tensions originate from disputes over national Constitutions and a lack of political consensus. I will continue to use my good offices to engage with stakeholders in the subregion to encourage the peaceful resolution of disputes, including through inclusive political dialogue.

In September in Bangui, at a seminar organized by UNOCA, journalists endorsed a code of conduct for media and journalists during the electoral period in Central Africa. I welcome that commitment, which defines the role of the media in the conduct and promotion of peaceful electoral processes in the subregion.

We look forward to the continued engagement of the Security Council in promoting peace and security in Central Africa. UNOCA will continue to work closely with Member States of the subregion towards that important endeavour.

The President: I thank Mr. Bathily for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tuwei.

Mr. Tuwei: I wish to thank the President of the Security Council for granting me this opportunity to brief the Council on the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the progress being made to counter the threat under the African Union-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the LRA. I also wish to thank Mr. Abdoulaye Bathily, Special Representative of the Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa for enabling me to give this briefing via video teleconference.

The LRA remains a threat to vulnerable civilians in the remote parts of the south-eastern Central African Republic, the north-eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The latest information revealed by seven personal body guards of Joseph Kony, who reported to the AU Regional Task Force (RTF) in mid-June 2015, indicates that the strength of the LRA is estimated at 230, made up of about 120 armed fighters — 33 of them newly recruited — and 110 dependants. The main group, under the command of Joseph Kony, continues to operate from safe havens in the extreme north-eastern part of the Central African Republic, outside the reach of the AU RTF. A second LRA group is in the Garamba National Park, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the primary task of poaching elephants for ivory to be delivered to Kony. Meanwhile, a third group is operating in the Central African Republic and serving as a conduit for receiving ivory from the second group and delivering it to Kony.

Currently, the LRA is operating in survival mode, trafficking and trading in gold looted from mines in

the Central African Republic and ivory poached from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so as to sustain itself and its leadership. The LRA uses money obtained from the sale of those items to buy food, arms and ammunition, drugs and other essential items. LRA fighters are continuing to ambush traders and travellers in order to loot food and other essential commodities. It has also continued abductions, mainly in the Haut and Bas-Uélé districts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular to carry looted items but also to serve as sex slaves and fighters.

In the Central African Republic, the number of LRA-related incidents has been relatively low in 2015, due to sustained military pressure by the Regional Task Force, a military component of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the LRA and joint protection measures by local communities with international non-governmental organizations. That reduction is also partly the result of the opportunistic relationship the group has established with ex-Séléka leaders and local communities in order to peacefully obtain food and safe passage from the north-eastern Central African Republic to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and vice versa.

Despite the number of LRA-induced internally displaced persons (IDPs) dropping significantly from about 369,000 in mid-2013 to 131,000 in mid-2014, abductions have remained high in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the number of IDPs and refugees in that country is again increasing, reaching about 200,000 by June 2015, according to an April-June 2015 report of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Therefore, the lives of thousands of civilians in the border areas continue to be at risk due to fear of possible attacks from the LRA. That calls for urgent efforts to address the emerging challenge of civilian displacements.

In an effort to eliminate the LRA, the AU RTF, supported by United States special forces in the Central African Republic and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, continue to conduct operations targeting the top leadership of the group. The operations also focus on the protection of civilians and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need in the affected areas. Those efforts have continued to weaken the LRA and to degrade its fighting capacity.

On the political and diplomatic front, from 12 to 15 September, I led an AU delegation to Khartoum

and engaged with the Sudanese authorities on the LRA problem. The mission was undertaken pursuant to the Government of the Sudan's invitation on 14 May 2014 to the AU Commission and the Peace and Security Council to verify allegations made in the report of the Secretary-General that month about the presence of the LRA in Kafia Kingi (S/2014/319). The trip was also a follow-up to my discussions with the Sudanese Government delegation at the margins of the second meeting of the heads of intelligence and security services of East Africa, held in Kampala in mid-July.

While in Khartoum, my delegation also interacted with the United States chargé affairs, the European Union Ambassador and the Deputy Force Commander of the African Union/United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur. Our engagements have enhanced cooperation between the Government of the Sudan and the AU Commission in confronting the LRA problem, as evidenced by the green light given by the Sudanese authorities for joint fact-finding on the LRA in Kafia Kingi. I commend the Government of the Sudan for that spirit of cooperation against the LRA and assure the Council that the Commission will take all the necessary steps to ensure that the joint mission is undertaken.

Secondly, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abdoulaye Bathily and I have continued to work in close partnership in order to sustain the recent momentum against the LRA. From 17 to 20 November, we undertook a joint mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo where, in Kinshasa, we exchanged views with the Secretary-General of the country's Ministry for Foreign Affairs and with the Minister of Defence, as well as with the Deputy Head of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and MONUSCO's Acting Force Commander.

On 19 November, we met in Dungu, in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with the Commander of the MONUSCO Moroccan battalion, the commander of the Congolese troops in Bas-Uélé, the Assistant Commander of the United States special forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, representatives of the RTF headquarters from Yambio and local authorities in Bas-Uélé. The meetings were an opportunity to obtain a first-hand assessment of the tempo of the ongoing operations as well as the attendant operational and humanitarian challenges on the ground.

We were pleased to note that the forces were actively engaged in operations against the LRA.

Despite its weakened state, the LRA continues to pose a significant threat to the population in the affected parts of the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan — all the more so because of the volatility of the situation in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan and because of other emerging security threats on the continent that continue to provide opportunities for the LRA to survive. Those threats tend to divert our national, regional and international efforts away from the LRA threat. The reported emergence of a new rebellion in South Sudan's Western Equatoria state is already interrupting the delivery of logistics and supplies to the RTF by road from Uganda to the Central African Republic via South Sudan. It also poses a direct threat to the personnel of the RTF headquarters in Yambio. As long as Joseph Kony is in charge of the LRA, the group will continue to exploit such situations to try to survive and rejuvenate itself in alliance with other violent extremist groups or mutate into a regional nuisance, worsening the security and humanitarian conditions.

Our efforts are also being impeded by the inadequacy of troops required for the RTF to track the LRA in a vast territory. The RTF is currently operating at only 50 per cent of its authorized force strength of 5,000 troops. Moreover, some of the contingents are lacking the required logistics to combat the LRA. The existence of armed militia groups such as the ex-Séléka, janjaweed and other poaching groups also constitutes a challenge to counter-LRA operations, as those groups are collaborating with the LRA against the RTF. All those challenges are being compounded by the unpredictability of funds for supporting the fight against the LRA.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation for the cooperation between the African Union and its partners, namely, the United Nations, the European Union and the United States, and call for closer operational coordination as well as mutual support among all the forces engaged in countering the LRA. I appeal to the African Union's partners to enhance their logistical and financial support to the RTF and to devote more efforts to curtailing the LRA's logistic supply chain in order to hasten the end of this terrorist group.

Finally, I request the Security Council to closely monitor the unfolding situation in the Western Equatoria state of South Sudan in relation to the LRA threat, as well as to remain seized of the matter until the LRA is eliminated.

The President: I thank Mr. Tuwei for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on these important topics.

The meeting rose at 10.45 a.m.