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PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL
321ST MEETING
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA
22 MAY 2012

PSC/MIN/(CCCXXI)
Original: English

**REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNIQUÉ PSC/PR/COMM. (CCXXCIX) OF THE
299TH MEETING OF THE PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL ON THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 299th meeting, held on 22 November 2011, Council authorized, as an AU initiative with the support of the international community, the implementation of the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), for an initial period of six (6) months. The Initiative is mandated to: build the operational capacities of the countries affected by the atrocities of the LRA; establish an environment conducive to the stabilization of the affected areas, freed from the atrocities of the LRA; and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the affected areas. Council requested me, in close consultation with the countries affected by LRA activities, to take the necessary measures to facilitate, the establishment of the components of the RCI-LRA, namely the Joint Coordinating Mechanism (JCM), the Regional Task Force (RTF), and Headquarters of the RTF, including the Joint Operations Center (JOC).

2. This report gives an account of the status of operationalization of the RCI-LRA, as well as the consultations held with the affected countries and with international partners. It concludes with recommendations on the way forward.

II. ACTIVITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RCI-LRA

3. On 23 November 2011, following the 299th meeting of Council, I appointed Mr. Francisco Madeira, Special Representative for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and Director of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT), as my Special Envoy for the LRA issue, with the task of monitoring the implementation of the overall strategy to fight against this group. Mr. Madeira began by consulting the affected countries as well as international partners.

a) Interaction with the affected Member States and the neighboring countries

4. Immediately after his appointment, my Special Envoy undertook several missions to countries affected by the LRA atrocities, accompanied by the UN Special Representative in charge of the LRA issue, Mr. Abou Moussa. Thus, from 3 to 6 January 2012, they traveled successively to Bangui, Central African Republic (CAR), Juba, South Sudan, Kampala, Uganda, and Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Through these visits, they expressed the commitment of the AU and the UN to pool their efforts together to fight the LRA and to mobilize further the affected Member States for the effective implementation of RCI-LRA.

5. On 25 March 2012, my Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative visited the Headquarters of the RTF, in Yambio, South Sudan, and the Nzara sector Headquarters, also in South Sudan, where the Ugandan troops are deployed. From 11 to 13 April 2012, the Special Envoy and the Special Representative traveled to Kinshasa to meet with the Congolese political authorities, and to Dungu, also in the DRC, to visit the sector headquarters where the DRC troops would be deployed. From 14 to 15 April 2012, they visited Obo, in CAR, which will host the headquarters of the sector assigned to the Central African troops, and Bangui, for consultations with CAR officials.

6. From 23 to 25 April 2012, the AU Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative also visited N'djamena, Chad. During the visit, the Chadian authorities, including President Idriss Deby Itno, expressed their readiness to support the RCI-LRA and to cooperate fully in the efforts to arrest Joseph Kony in case he or his combatants enter Chadian territory. A visit is planned to the Sudan as soon as a date is agreed to with the Sudanese authorities.

b) Interaction with the partners

7. In the establishment of the RCI-LRA, the Commission has maintained close contact with the European Union (EU), which provides financial support for the operationalization of the Initiative. Furthermore, EU officers and staff participated in field missions to Juba, from 15 to 20 January 2012, and in the work of the Integrated Planning Team (IPT) established by the Peace and Security Department. Furthermore, during his different visits to the countries affected by LRA atrocities and the neighboring countries, my Special Envoy met with EU representatives.

8. Both Council and the UN Security Council have stressed the importance of close interaction between the AU and the UN in the operationalization of the RCI-LRA. It is in this context that my Special Envoy and the UN Special Representative have undertaken a number of joint missions, as mentioned above, and carried out other related activities, particularly the official launching of the RCI-LRA in Juba, on 24 March 2012, and the meeting organized by the AU and the UN, which brought together the partners involved in the efforts to fight the LRA, in Addis Ababa, on 29 February 2012, followed by the meeting to prepare the Draft Overall Strategy against the LRA, held in Entebbe, Uganda, on 22 and 23 March 2012. The United Nations has been requested to give logistical support for the full operationalization of the RCI-LRA.

9. The Commission has also maintained close working relationship with the United States with which several consultations have been held. It should be noted that the United States has deployed one hundred military personnel to support regional efforts to fight the LRA. Its support is vital in terms of intelligence. Consultations are also underway for the United States to provide logistical support, particularly in the field of communications.

c) Establishment of the components of the RCI-LRA

10. The process for the establishment of the different components of the RCI-LRA is underway. The RTF headquarters is now operational and the deployment of its different elements will be completed in the next few days. The RTF headquarters will have a total of thirty officers headed by a Ugandan Colonel. Its function is to coordinate the operations of the different sectors in Dungu, Nzara and Obo, and to facilitate the exchange of information and intelligence between the various countries concerned.

11. The secretariat of the Joint Coordination Mechanism is also in place. The Political Advisor to the Special Envoy has been recruited and assumed duty in Bangui in March 2012. The acquisition of the rest of the necessary equipment will be finalized in the coming days and the local staff recruited in order to make the JCM fully operational and autonomous. Meanwhile, the Secretariat of the JCM is supported by the AU Liaison Office in Bangui.

d) Meeting of the Joint Coordination Mechanism (JCM)

12. The first ministerial meeting of the JCM was held in Addis Ababa, on 8 May 2012, under the chairmanship of the Commissioner for Peace and Security, in the presence of Defense Ministers of the affected countries. The meeting was preceded by the meeting of the chiefs of staff of the affected countries, on 7 May 2012, and the AU IPT, on 2 and 3 May 2012. The IPT is responsible for inter-departmental coordination within the Commission to better monitor the activities of the RCI-LRA and give it all the necessary support.

13. In addition to issues relating to the treatment of combatants and collaborators of the LRA, the protection of civilian populations, and cross-border operations, the Defence Ministers adopted a series of measures to make the RTF headquarters fully operational. The Ministers further requested the Commission to convene a support forum comprising the neighboring countries of the affected Member States, and also other AU Member States interested in the LRA problem, as well as bilateral and multilateral partners already involved in efforts against the LRA so as to mobilize support for the RCI-LRA. The conclusions of that meeting are attached herewith as annex.

III. OBSERVATIONS

14. After several months of effort, the RCI-LRA has now entered its operational phase. I wish to express my appreciation to the affected countries and to our international partners, for their commitment and efforts. However, many challenges remain, particularly relating to the mobilization of adequate resources to facilitate effective functioning of the various sectors and the deployment of all troops required for the attainment of the objectives of the RCI-LRA.

15. Consequently, while ensuring the effective functioning of the RTF headquarters, the Commission will pursue its efforts to mobilize greater support from international partners and Member States in a position to contribute to the present efforts. In this regard, the Forum to support the RCI-LRA, whose establishment was decided at the first ministerial meeting of the JCM, will play an essential role for the mobilization of increased support. The Commission is taking the necessary measures to convene quickly a meeting of the Forum.

16. The launching of the RCI-LRA has generated hope among the affected populations. This Initiative is also the subject of sustained interest of international partners. The RCI-LRA is a flexible and original mechanism for pooling resources and capacities of the countries of the region to address the problem of the LRA. No doubt this form of cooperation between countries facing a common threat can usefully be replicated elsewhere on the continent. I recommend to Council to renew the authorization given for the mandate entrusted to the RCI-LRA. Council may also reiterate its appeal to international partners and Member States to provide increased support for the efforts of the RCI-LRA. In this context, Council could request the UN Security Council, in line with its previous statements on the LRA, to authorize the granting of operational support to the RCI-LRA, including by adjusting, if necessary, the mandates of the relevant UN peacekeeping missions in the field. At the same time, affected countries should spare no effort to honor the commitments made, particularly the conclusions of the JCM meeting, in strict compliance with the agreed timetable.