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Wednesday, 20 November 2013, 10 a.m.

New York

President: Mr. Liu Jieyi (China)

Members:

Argentina	Mrs. Perceval
Australia	Ms. King
Azerbaijan	Mr. Mehdiyev
France	Mr. Araud
Guatemala	Mr. Rosenthal
Luxembourg	Ms. Lucas
Morocco	Mr. Laassel
Pakistan	Mr. Masood Khan
Republic of Korea	Mr. Oh Joon
Russian Federation.	Mr. Iliichev
Rwanda	Mr. Gasana
Togo.	Mr. Menan
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
United States of America.	Mr. DeLaurentis

Agenda

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas (S/2013/671)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Central African region

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas (S/2013/671)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): Under rule 39 of the Council's rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Abou Moussa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, to participate in this meeting.

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/2013/671, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army.

I now give the floor to Mr. Moussa.

Mr. Moussa (*spoke in French*): I have the honour and privilege to introduce the fifth report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and on the Lord's Resistance Army-affected areas (S/2013/671).

In terms of peace and security, the situation in Central Africa is dominated by concerns about growing instability in the Central African Republic and the proliferation of armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Those two situations are being followed closely by this body.

In the Central African Republic, the security, humanitarian and human rights situation is deteriorating rapidly and significantly, while the political transition arrangements remain fragile. The recent increase in sectarian violence is particularly alarming. There is an urgent need to address this crisis before it spirals out of control and leads to further loss of life.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, while the defeat of the Mouvement du 23 mars by the Congolese Armed Forces and the United Nations peacekeepers was a victory in and of itself, a peace agreement has still not

been signed, and several other rebel groups continue to operate in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and to threaten local communities with impunity.

The fifth report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/671) provides an overview of the political and security situation in the subregion of Central Africa. It also highlights the current challenges threatening the peace and security of States and the subregion, and the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Member States and subregional organizations in response.

(spoke in English)

While the specific issues are detailed in the report, I would like to highlight three key threats with which the Central Africa subregion is currently confronted.

First, insecurity and instability in the Central African Republic continue to have security and humanitarian implications for that country's neighbours. The inability of a central State authority to control elements of Séléka has led to border tensions between the Central African Republic and Cameroon, and to border closures that reduce bilateral vital economic activity. Flows of refugees from the Central African Republic into neighbouring countries are straining the capacity of a subregion already struggling to cope with multitudes of displaced persons. The potential for the crisis in the Central African Republic to spill over into the wider subregion is real.

Secondly, transnational crime remains a serious challenge to the security of Central Africa. In the Gulf of Guinea, piracy and armed robbery now occur with higher incidence than in the Gulf of Aden off the Somali coast. Pirates and armed robbers have thrived in these inconsistently controlled transboundary waters, increasing the growth of cross-border criminal networks and threatening the economic security of West and Central Africa. On land, resource-rich areas in the remote border regions of the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo continue to be exploited to support various forms of illicit trade, including poaching.

Thirdly, Central African countries are vulnerable to destabilization from looming threats posed by terrorism and extremism outside the immediate subregion. Chadian peacekeepers, deployed to support the African-led and subsequent United Nations missions in Mali, have been the target of recent terrorist attacks

in Tessalit. The recent joint visit of the Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank to the Sahel highlighted the security concerns on the very doorstep of Central Africa. The Nigerian-based militant group Boko Haram has exploited the porous and poorly secured border between Nigeria and Cameroon, and just last week abducted a French Catholic priest in northern Cameroon. Conflict between the Nigerian army and Boko Haram has driven an estimated 8,000 Nigerian refugees into Cameroon, among whom are suspected insurgents.

How has UNOCA supported the subregion in addressing these considerable challenges? UNOCA continues to prioritize its engagement with the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), which remains committed to playing an important role in the subregion on security issues. ECCAS troops remain on the ground in the Central African Republic, and the ECCAS-appointed mediator, President Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, has remained engaged in addressing the crisis. ECCAS was reinvigorated by the appointment in August of Secretary-General Ahmad Allam-Mi. UNOCA's close collaboration with ECCAS allowed us to facilitate increased dialogue between that institution and the African Union over the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic.

On the critical issue of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, UNOCA, together with the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA), has been a consistent and driving force behind the collective efforts of numerous stakeholders. As a result, Central African Heads of States and Government, along with their counterparts in West Africa, acted decisively by agreeing to adopt the Yaoundé Declaration establishing a coherent interregional approach for combatting maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. This milestone achievement reflects the existing cooperation among coastal States and landlocked States, as well as three subregional organizations, across the two subregions to address a pressing common security concern. The subsequent activities to operationalize the strategy reveal sustained political will to meet commitments and an affirmation of the collaborative, interregional process for doing so.

In our role as secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC), UNOCA has continued to shape and guide the deliberations of Member States

on key security challenges in the subregion. During the thirty-sixth session of the Committee in Kigali, UNSAC member States agreed that poaching, or the illegal killing of elephants for the sale of ivory, was a direct threat to the security of their States. They decided to retain the subject as a standing agenda item during all future meetings of the Committee.

On the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), I can report that our joint diplomatic efforts with Ambassador Madeira, the African Union Special Envoy for the Lord's Resistance Army issue, have ensured continuing regional cooperation among the governments of LRA-affected countries. In particular, the operations of the African Union Regional Task Force resumed in August in the Central African subregion, while the Democratic Republic of Congo lifted border restrictions for Regional Task Force operations conducted by foreign contingents.

With the critical support of United States military advisers, Regional Task Force contingents are now fully operational. Military operations have degraded the LRA and limited it to pursuing survival tactics. However, recent attacks in South Sudan attributed to the LRA are a reminder that the group remains a serious and unpredictable threat to communities throughout the subregion. We must therefore remain vigilant and continue making progress on the implementation plan for the UN regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the LRA, which remains the guiding framework for our collective efforts.

For the coming period, UNOCA will continue its institutional strengthening work with ECCAS in the area of mediation. We will continue leading on the issue of maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea, working closely with our colleagues in UNOWA, the three subregional organizations and international partners, to operationalize the decisions of the Yaoundé Summit. Together with the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force, we will advance the development of a counter-terrorism strategy for Central Africa.

Given the linkages between youth unemployment, peace and security, UNOCA will — together with the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the International Labour Organization — finalize a proposal and mobilize the resources required to convene a regional youth employment forum. We will identify areas

for cooperation with concerned Governments on the issue of poaching. At the same time, we will continue undertaking country assessment missions so that we will remain well placed to identify emerging threats and their regional implications.

On the LRA, UNOCA will continue its close and fruitful partnership with the African Union in achieving progress in a number of areas. We will update the regional strategy implementation plan, with a view to identifying the most critical needs and funding gaps. We will enhance the existing coordination mechanisms in order to ensure that our collective efforts have the greatest impact. We will work with our partners to identify long-term stabilization activities, and our efforts will be facilitated by a recent World Bank preliminary assessment in LRA-affected areas. Finally, we will focus on further strengthening regional cooperation by organizing a high-level summit on the LRA issue.

On issues such as the situation in the Central African Republic, maritime insecurity and the LRA, Central African countries have demonstrated a determination to act collectively. A visa-free travel regime, set to go into effect in January 2014 in five of the six countries of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, reflects the gravitational pull towards greater subregional integration. Those are encouraging trends that should be sustained.

Lastly, UNOCA will capitalize on those positive developments by redoubling its efforts to advance subregional security in close collaboration with Member States and subregional organizations.

I thank the members of the Security Council for their steadfast support to UNOCA.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Moussa for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I would particularly like to thank Special Representative Moussa for his statement this morning and for the continued work of United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) on these issues.

The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has blighted the heart of Africa for over 20 years, and it remains a violent threat to civilians across Central Africa. The

United Kingdom condemns in the strongest terms the human rights abuses that the LRA continues to commit.

But progress against that scourge is being made. As Special Representative Moussa has told us this morning, the concerted efforts of the affected countries, the African Union (AU), the United Nations and other partners, have substantially weakened the LRA. A permanent eradication of the threat that they pose is closer now, we believe, than ever before, but that goal can be achieved only through sustained regional and international focus.

Progress is being made in implementing the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and reduce the impact of the activities of the LRA. However, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa must continue to use its coordination role to deliver across the entire strategy. The regional strategy and the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative against the LRA are both essential in ending the LRA threat. It is important that Special Representative Moussa and African Union Special Envoy for the Lord's Resistance Army Madeira continue to encourage the full implementation of both. All regional Governments should fulfil their commitments under the Regional Cooperation Initiative and take measures to ensure that the Lord's Resistance Army is not able to operate with impunity in their territory.

The United Kingdom has provided UNICEF with funding to protect women and children in LRA-affected areas, but we believe more funding is needed. We urge members of the international community to contribute resources to ensure that the protection of civilians is at the forefront of counter-LRA efforts. Countries affected by the LRA would benefit from establishing standard operating procedures for the reception and handover of LRA women and children to civilian women and child-protection actors.

Cross-border cooperation among the United Nations Missions in the LRA-affected countries must be enhanced. The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan should develop and adopt common standard operating procedures and swift information-sharing so they can anticipate LRA movements and imminent threats better than they can currently do.

The United Nations, the AU and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) must continue to work together to maintain a clear picture of the LRA's current capabilities and areas of operation. More also needs to be done to investigate the LRA's possible sources of financing, including their alleged involvement in elephant poaching and related illicit smuggling. Cutting off the LRA's last remaining source of finance could be the thread that finally unravels that deplorable group.

I also want to discuss UNOCA's broader role in the region. UNOCA is playing an important coordinating role between the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union to tackle the crisis in the Central African Republic and further work on maritime security, as Special Representative Moussa has set out for us. The United Kingdom wants to ensure clarity on the UNOCA's achievements. UNOCA must continue to add real value to regional and subregional efforts at a time when resources are tight and demands on the United Nations system are so high. In particular, criminality in the Gulf of Guinea threatens economic development, peace and security in the region and has a wider impact on international trade, energy, security and stability.

UNOCA ably supported ECCAS, the Economic Community of West African States and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea on the Heads of State summit on maritime security held in Yaoundé in June, as we have heard. The code of conduct concerning the repression of piracy and the agreement among regional States to work together to tackle maritime crime is an important step forward. UNOCA should continue to work with the regional economic communities and regional States as they work to implement the code.

The main focus of UNOCA's work should continue to be on reducing the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army. For too long, the LRA has stifled the potential for progress and development in Central Africa. The United Kingdom therefore stands by and will continue to support the work of Special Representative Moussa and Ambassador Madeira and their offices in bringing an end to the LRA threat once and for all.

Mr. DeLaurentis (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative Moussa for his briefing and for all his efforts on behalf of stability and peace in the Central African region.

Since its founding, more than a quarter century ago, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been a constant source of terror and suffering. Tens of thousands of Africans have died because of its rapacious violence, and countless young people have been compelled to serve as underage soldiers and sex slaves.

We commend the progress achieved against the LRA over the past several months and welcome the renewed vigour with which a number of regional and international partners have taken on the LRA threat. We would all like to see the day when Joseph Kony and those indicted with him are brought to justice and we can pronounce the LRA a thing of the past. Important gains are being made, but that day of reckoning is not yet here and experience warns that we should take nothing for granted.

For our Government, what makes the LRA threat a key issue on the Council's agenda is our belief that, with sustained engagement, it is now within the international community's reach to eliminate the LRA threat entirely. It is essential, therefore, that we remain united in our determination to crush the LRA, which has proven its willingness to wait out the international community and to exploit to its advantage every opportunity to regroup, such as the increased instability in the Central African Republic over the past year. We cannot allow the LRA to believe that it will get a reprieve to continue intimidating and terrorizing local populations in countries where institutions are already fragile, governance is weak and the scale of human suffering is high.

Success in those efforts will have ramifications that extend beyond the LRA. Indeed, coordinated efforts against the LRA by regional States, the African Union (AU), the United Nations and the entire international community serve as one of the best models of an African-led security initiative, bolstered by international support, bilateral partners, the Security Council and civil society. My Government specifically commends the AU Regional Task Force's armed contingent from Uganda, the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo and South Sudan for ramping up operations and increasing their cooperation in recent months. Their efforts have placed unprecedented pressure on the LRA, reducing the number and intensity of attacks, fragmenting its forces, encouraging defections and shrinking by 25 per cent the size of the population displaced by LRA-related violence over the past year.

The United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) has the vital job of coordinating United Nations activities in the region. We urge the Secretariat to provide Special Representative Moussa with the necessary staff and support, including at least one full-time staff member dedicated to counter-LRA efforts within UNOCA. We also commend the Special Representative and AU Special Envoy Madeira for their diplomatic efforts to ensure the resumption of Task Force operations in the Central African Republic, along with more wide-ranging efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Their partnership is not only crucial to the success of counter-LRA efforts overall, but also provides a useful model for collaboration between the AU and the United Nations.

We also encourage the United Nations Missions in the South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to work more closely with the AU Regional Task Force to protect civilians, provide logistical support and persuade LRA members to lay down their arms. The United States is fully committed to doing its part, and will continue to provide military advisers, airlift support and civilian protection assistance to counter-LRA efforts. We are proud of the contribution that our special forces and other military and civilian personnel are making to the joint effort, and hope that partners such as the European Union will also maintain their backing for the AU Regional Task Force.

As the LRA threat diminishes, we cannot turn our backs on the communities that have been terrorized by it for so long. We should begin planning now for the day after that on which Joseph Kony and the LRA are a thing of the past. We are concerned about reports that several international aid organizations have withdrawn from LRA-affected areas in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that regard, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Bank will be crucial to support for the recovery of LRA-affected populations. The International Working Group on the Lord's Resistance Army, co-chaired by the United States and the European Union, recently identified telecommunications, road rehabilitation and support for civil society as priority areas for support for recovering communities. We call on global donors to contribute to those efforts.

As Special Representative Moussa has rightly pointed out, the LRA does not operate in a vacuum, and a number of pressing issues that affect the region as a whole also merit our attention. The most worrying

aspect is the ongoing security, human-rights and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic. The United States Government remains committed to finding a speedy solution that will allow for the protection of civilians, the restoration of security and State authority and humanitarian access in that country. We believe that adherence to the February 2015 election cycle laid out in the Libreville agreements remains critical to the long-term success of stabilization efforts in the Central African Republic. We also note that close cooperation between the AU Regional Task Force and any AU peacekeeping mission deployed in the Central African Republic will be essential.

UNOCA's efforts to combat disturbing regional trends such as the threat of terrorism, increased trafficking in conventional weapons, ivory poaching and a surge in piracy through the Gulf of Guinea are also welcome. My Government strongly supports efforts by UNOCA to mobilize regional action on those issues.

In conclusion, I note that we are in the midst of a pivotal moment in the Central African region. If today we apply the necessary forethought to invest adequate attention and resources in a number of crises brewing across the region, whether they involve the LRA, the broader human-rights and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic or preventing the scourges of terrorism and piracy from taking deeper root, we have a real opportunity to save countless lives and precious resources, and to help to usher the region towards the stability and prosperity that its people deserve.

Mr. Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abou Moussa for his comprehensive briefing and for presenting the Secretary-General's report (S/2013/671) on the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and on the areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The complex political, security and humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic continues to have an adverse impact on the stability and security of the entire Central African subregion. We note with serious concern the deteriorating situation in the country due to increasing violence, widespread criminality, the circulation of weapons and rising numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. The negative impact of the crisis on the region and various regional processes, including efforts to address the threat

posed by the Lord's Resistance Army, require the swift implementation of all transitional arrangements and the urgent restoration of the rule of law and the reinstatement of constitutional order in the country.

We commend the mediation efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) aimed at solving the crisis, and the support that other regional institutions have provided to ECCAS. Azerbaijan welcomes the decision of the African Union Peace and Security Council to authorize the deployment of an African-led international support mission in the Central African Republic, as well as resolution 2121 (2013), adopted by the Security Council last month.

The multifaceted challenges destabilizing the Sahel region require a comprehensive and multidimensional response at the national, regional and international levels. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel creates a solid framework for addressing the drivers of chronic instability in the region. Special emphasis must be placed on enhancing coordination and mobilizing resources to promote inclusive economic growth in the Sahel. We therefore welcome the Secretary-General's continuing engagement, including through his recent mission to the region, aimed at galvanizing international support for the affected countries.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea represent another serious threat to the security and economic development of the Central African subregion. We fully subscribe to the Secretary-General's call for implementing the decisions adopted at the Yaoundé Summit of Heads of State and Government on Maritime Safety and Security on 24 and 25 June, which will pave the way for strengthening subregional and interregional cooperation in order to enhance maritime security in the region.

We note with concern the growing menace that poaching and illicit trading in ivory pose to sustainable peace and stability in Central African States. Such cross-border criminal activities, which have reached alarming levels, are among the major sources of financing for various transnational criminal networks and armed groups, including the LRA. The military and other radical measures taken by individual ECCAS member States against wildlife traffickers should be complemented by stronger regional collaboration and international assistance.

We welcome the overall progress in combating the Lord's Resistance Army and the decrease in its attacks, owing to resolute action by LRA-affected countries and to operations carried out by the African Union Regional Task Force, as well as the continuing international donor contributions. Nevertheless, the group remains a serious threat and a source of insecurity in Central Africa. The goal of totally eradicating that menace necessitates the full and uninterrupted implementation of the United Nations and African Union LRA-related initiatives. The attention of the Governments concerned, and the international donor assistance, should continue to focus on strengthening individual and collective response capacities, addressing long-term development needs, providing humanitarian assistance to the affected areas and promoting return and recovery programmes there.

I wish to conclude by expressing our full support for UNOCA's activities and underlining its important contribution to the advancement of peace and security in Central Africa. Its increased cooperation with regional and subregional arrangements is critical to tackling the problems and challenges engulfing the region.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Abou Moussa, for his briefing.

Thanks to renewed military operations by the Regional Task Force of the African Union (AU) and the support of the international community, the territory controlled by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is shrinking. Reports of continued defections from the LRA are also encouraging. In order to accelerate this trend, disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement programmes need to be effectively implemented in the affected areas, with adequate financial support. The Republic of Korea appreciates the coordinating role played by United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa for the counter-LRA regional strategy, undertaken in cooperation with United Nations missions and regional organizations.

To bring to an end the atrocities committed by the LRA in Central Africa, active cooperation among LRA-affected countries is critical. We expect the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan and South Sudan to fully support the collective efforts for the success of cross-border operations against the LRA. It is also of concern that the armed groups are often sustained by poaching and

the illicit trade in wildlife. Even more troubling is the fact that these illegal activities feed on rising youth unemployment and pose a potential threat to peace and stability in the region. In this regard, we commend the efforts of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community to revive the regional economy.

The Central African Republic is becoming a potential safe haven for the remaining LRA operatives. Gross human rights violations continue and transitional authorities seem unable to stop them. The priority should therefore be to protect civilians and provide humanitarian assistance to those in urgent need. We in the Security Council should continue to encourage the Central African Republic authorities to actively cooperate with the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) and the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic to restore public order and end impunity.

Last month, the Council enhanced BINUCA's mandate. The report of the Secretary-General before us (S/2013/671) suggests various options to support the Central African Republic. We look forward to closed consultations in this regard in the days to come.

Regarding piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, we commend the Yaoundé Summit convened in June, which laid the groundwork for a regional strategy. We hope that regional leaders will translate their resolve into concrete follow-up measures. Lastly, we appreciate the continued efforts of Special Representative Abou Moussa and his staff, who are working in a challenging environment.

Ms. King (Australia): I would like to thank Special Representative Moussa for his briefing today. This is an important opportunity for the Council to discuss all the critical challenges facing the Central African Region and the important role of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in addressing them. I would like to focus my remarks on three interrelated issues: addressing the crisis in the Central African Republic, maintaining momentum on efforts to permanently eradicate the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and supporting UNOCA and regionally led efforts to address other challenges to Central Africa's peace and security.

First and foremost, we must address the deteriorating security situation and grave human rights and humanitarian crisis in the Central African

Republic. We have heard stark warnings of increasing interreligious violence in the Central African Republic and the risk of the situation spiralling further out of control, with devastating consequences for the country itself and, as Mr. Moussa has said, potentially the wider region as well. The crisis demands an urgent and comprehensive response, and the Council must fulfil its commitment to considering all potential options to stabilize the situation.

Australia strongly supports the implementation of resolution 2121 (2013), which strengthened the mandate of the United Nations Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA). We must now consider the options put forward by the Secretary-General on international support for the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) and the potential transition to a United Nations peacekeeping operation. In our view, form should follow function; we should take forward the option or options that will best address the situation in the Central African Republic now and in the longer term. We should maintain momentum in the coming weeks in order to respond swiftly. We know that the cost of inaction will be unacceptable.

Secondly, we must maintain momentum to permanently eliminate the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army. We know all too well that the LRA thrives in security vacuums and in environments of weak or absent State authority. The total breakdown in security and law and order in the Central African Republic has given the LRA room to operate.

We welcome the resumption of the activities of the Ugandan contingent of the African Union (AU) Regional Task Force. Yet the LRA has had an opportunity to regroup by retreating into rural areas beyond the Regional Task Force's area of operations. This only underscores the importance of increasing coordination between the Regional Task Force, MISCA and BINUCA.

The threat posed by the LRA is diminished but not extinguished. Earlier this week, we heard concerning reports from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) of suspected LRA attacks and abductions in Western Equatoria — the first in South Sudan in over two years. A resumption of LRA activity was observed in north-east DRC earlier in November, breaking two months of relative calm. Arrest warrants issued in July 2005 by the International Criminal Court against

Joseph Kony and other senior LRA remain unexecuted eight years on.

Enhanced regional and international efforts to combat the LRA have yielded positive results. We commend the African Union Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army and the significant progress made in operationalizing the AU Regional Task Force. As the Secretary-General's report notes, military operations have degraded the LRA and its ability to establish bases, reduced the number of attacks, and increased pressure on LRA combatants to defect. We need to seize the current opportunity to put an end once and for all to this abhorrent group and to the atrocities it has committed against civilians.

Additional efforts are clearly needed to enhance the implementation of the United Nations regional strategy. UNOCA has an importance coordinating role to play in helping to translate the strategy into tangible results on the ground. This requires the full commitment of all stakeholders, the LRA-affected countries — which have primary responsibility — regional organizations, the entire United Nations system and international partners. As the LRA's tactics continue to evolve, cross-border coordination and information-sharing are all the more important to enhance the protection of civilians, in particular women and children, who have suffered greatly at the hands of the LRA. The United Nations peacekeeping and political missions in the region — the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNMISS and BINUCA — have a vital role to play in this regard, and should further enhance their cooperation with the AU Regional Task Force.

Finally, we must support UNOCA and regionally led efforts to address other, often-related challenges to Central Africa's peace and security. One such challenge is the issue of poaching and trafficking of wildlife in the Central Africa region, which has reached alarming levels, as noted in the Secretary-General's report. Aside for the ecological impact and cruelty of these practices, such illicit activities are used to finance transnational criminal networks and armed rebel groups, including the LRA. It is increasingly viewed by countries of the region as a threat to their security. We therefore encourage further regional and international efforts to address poaching. We welcome the assistance being provided by UNOCA to regional efforts to address this and other challenges facing Central Africa. I would like to underscore Australia's belief in the important role

that UNOCA has to play in conflict prevention, early warning and mediation.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Australia's full support for Special Representative Moussa and UNOCA in all their efforts.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Abou Moussa for his briefing and the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/671).

Many challenges undoubtedly remain in Central Africa, as mentioned by Mr. Abou Moussa, including ever-increasing acts of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which remains fragile despite the victory over the Mouvement du 23 mars. I will focus my remarks on two topics: the Central African Republic and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

With regard to the Central African Republic, I would like my statement to be heard as a warning, given the exceptional seriousness of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, and as an appeal. I believe that no one can underestimate the risk of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, which could lead to killings and violence on a massive scale if the international community does not intervene. I can only advise participants in this meeting to meet the representatives of the humanitarian agencies and entities of the Organization or of non-governmental organizations who are courageously working in the Central African Republic.

If they were to do so, they would all hear horrific reports of the situation of the population, who are terrorized and at risk from gangs of bandits — let us be frank — and, at the same time, from being immersed in interreligious violence. The Christians are afraid of the Muslims. The Muslims are afraid of the Christians. They are both made up of militia who, of course, blindly engage in violence, the primary victims of which are civilians, including women and children. We must act and respond very swiftly in order to prevent the worst, which unfortunately happened 20 years ago on that same continent.

I have said that the humanitarian situation is extremely dangerous. The entire Central African population, half of which is made up of children, is affected. More than 1 million people suffer from food insecurity and 400,000 have been displaced. There are almost daily cases of extortion, violence and killings

in a country where the State no longer exists. There is no State whatsoever. There are no longer any State authorities. There are only militia, who are making their own laws. So we must act. My statement is also an appeal to the international community.

I am well aware that the Central African Republic is a country that is not well known. We do not often think about it and is not often on the front pages. Nevertheless, today, an extremely serious tragedy is taking place there. It is not only a moral tragedy, which would be sufficient to mobilize us, but also a tragedy that may have repercussions for the stability of the entire region. We have already seen incidents reported on the border between the Central African Republic and Cameroon. So there is the risk of the Central African Republic becoming a failed State in Central Africa and a centre of instability for all States of the region.

The States of the region have responded. We must of course commend the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union. Those States decided to deploy the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic. They therefore deserve the support of the United Nations and, of course, the bilateral support of all relevant States. At the initiative of France, the Council will have the opportunity to consider in detail the resources that could be used to support that force and to find a lasting solution to the crisis in the Central African Republic. As I have said, all those humanitarian, political and security challenges require all actors to cooperate. In that regard, UNOCA must work with regional and subregional organizations.

Having talked about the the Central African Republic and tried to convince participants and my colleagues of the seriousness of the situation there, I will now turn to the other major focus of my colleagues' statements, that is, the Lord's Resistance Army. Here, I can only reiterate what has already been said, namely, that I am very pleased with the recent progress in combating that armed group, whose cruelty and violence are extreme. We therefore encourage relevant States and partners to continue along that path in order to put an end to the threat.

The offensive launched by the African Union against the LRA is a reality. We have said that. The African Union's Regional Task Force to fight the LRA has proved its effectiveness. Here, we should of course commend Uganda and other contributing regional

countries for their commitment. We must now ensure that the LRA does not benefit from a security vacuum to prosper. Another issue linked to the situation in the Central African Republic is to ensure that the western part of the country does not become a safe haven for LRA terrorists.

At the same time, we must not forget the need for justice. We must bring to justice the principal Lord's Resistance Army leaders, in particular Joseph Kony, and encourage all States concerned to increase their cooperation and collaboration with the International Criminal Court in that regard. Measures to protect civilians must of course be strengthened. That means further sharing of information and intelligence among regional United Nations operations and offices and between the Organization and the African Union regional force. Access and humanitarian assistance to those areas affected by the the Lord's Resistance Army, which are often by definition very isolated and remote, must also be made possible as soon as possible.

France supports all efforts through its contribution to the African Peace Facility of the European Union. With regard to the Central African Republic, members know that France is present in Bangui and will strengthen its presence in order to provide effective support to the African force. It will also support LRA-affected States bilaterally.

The LRA-affected States have a leading role to play, together with the African Union, in the fight against that group. Let us stand by their side.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (*spoke in French*): We would like to thank Mr. Abou Moussa for presenting the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/671) and, in that regard, reiterate Togo's support for his work as Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in a very difficult situation.

The report before us clearly notes that some Central African countries have continued their efforts to strengthen stability, democracy, the rule of law and the political and economic governance. The holding of calm legislative, parliamentary and local elections in Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon are a testimony to that. The same goes for the military defeat of the Mouvement du 23 mars in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, where that rebel group has committed many atrocities and seriously violated human rights and international humanitarian law.

The hope for the unprecedented peace in that part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, marked by almost two decades of recurring and very bloody tragic conflict, is clearly the result of the new strategy of the United Nations and regional countries to establish lasting peace, security and cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes Region.

We therefore hope that the talks in Kampala will bring about the signing of a peace agreement to put an end to the conflict once and for all by ensuring accountability for the perpetrators of human rights violations and international humanitarian law in line with the 14 November presidential statement (S/PRST/2013/17).

While there is now a wave of optimism in some countries of the region, others, such as the Central African Republic, continue to face tragic situations and many security and humanitarian challenges. Indeed, since the forceful seizure of power by the Séléka rebellion, chaos has reigned in Central African Republic. The current situation, which is marked by communal and interreligious clashes, leads us to warn that if the international community does not intervene in the most robust possible way, the Central African Republic risks falling into total anarchy.

Given that situation, we commend the work of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the African Union, the United Nations and other actors and partners of the Central African Republic to enhance security for civilians, howsoever slightly, and provide the required humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons. Moreover, we believe that a return to constitutional order through the holding of free and democratic elections within a reasonable time frame is one way for the Central African Republic to emerge from crisis, and we express our gratitude to all those working to that end.

Moreover, the decision to deploy the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA), and most importantly the adoption by the Council of resolution 2121 (2013) shed light on the measures taken by the international community to face the threat of the destabilization of the entire region if instability and violence were to take root in Central African Republic.

However, given the current situation, it goes without saying that MISCA will not be effective without the strong financial and logistical support of the United Nations, in particular, and of the international community. Such support must become a reality. In this respect, my country aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of France on the situation in the Central African Republic.

As confirmed by the Secretary-General in his report (S/2013/671), the efforts of the international community have certainly weakened the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), but that armed group still has the capacity to cause problems, especially in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. In the Central African Republic in particular, the prevailing situation has had a negative impact on the fight against the LRA, which has concentrated most of its fighters there, posing an even greater threat to the civilian population, especially women and children. An attack by that armed group was even witnessed in South Sudan, although the country had seen no LRA attack since the second half of 2011.

However, we welcome the fact that progress has been made in recent months in the fight against the LRA. Among those advances, we would cite the operationalization of the Regional Task Force and the approval granted to the South Sudanese army to track LRA fighters within the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The results obtained thus far show that if the various stakeholders involved in this struggle, including donors and the international community, were to deploy greater financial and logistic efforts, the LRA would be totally destroyed.

However, if that struggle is to be successful, the Chief of the LRA, Joseph Kony, and his principal lieutenants must be caught and brought to justice. To that end, it remains essential that all States of the region enhance their cooperation in executing the international arrest warrants issued against these criminals. Their arrest would also allow for a rapid surrender of fighters, who should thereafter be supported through a properly managed process of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and reintegration.

Despite the efforts made and tangible results achieved here and there, the Central African region still faces substantial challenges. Sea piracy is without a doubt among such challenges. We welcome the efforts being made by the countries concerned in that respect,

with the support of various partners, and believe that the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa should be afforded the appropriate support to promote a rapid implementation of the regional strategy against that phenomenon.

We also express our serious concern about the poaching and killing of elephants and other wildlife that are taking place in some countries of the region. Obviously, the sale of ivory and other products from such poaching is a primary source of financing for the activities of criminal groups and rebels. We believe that the fight against that growing phenomenon must involve actions upstream and down. In other words, urgent measures must be taken not only in countries where poaching is rampant, but also in countries of transit and destination for the products of poaching. In this respect, we call upon the States concerned to strengthen their cooperation in the fight against such acts and to enhance, without delay and with the support of partners, security measures in parks and other protected areas where these animals live.

In that regard, we welcome the decision of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, at its thirty-sixth ministerial meeting held in Kigali from 20 to 23 August, to include the issue of the fight against poaching on the agenda of its next meeting. We further welcome the launch, at the high-level meeting co-hosted by Gabon and Germany, on the sidelines of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session, a three-year fundraising programme to fight poaching and illegal trafficking in endangered species. The combination of all those initiatives will surely curb that phenomenon, which not only threatens the survival of protected species but above all feeds conflict in the region.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting today. I also thank Mr. Abou Moussa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) for his briefing. I take this opportunity to commend UNOCA for its consistent efforts and involvement in all regional initiatives aimed at restoring peace and stability in the Central African region.

As it is at the heart of the continent, the Central African region may be a yardstick for the situation in Africa. The subregion is faced with extreme cases of ineffective State authority over some territories

and porous borders. That is particularly true for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. The region is plagued by uncontrolled armed groups, including terrorist movements like the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), gangs of thugs like the ex-Séléka and the "anti-balaka", but above all, the genocidal movement called the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), which continues to spread and propagate its genocidal ideology 19 years after the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

We have heard the statement made by our colleague the French representative. He warned all of us of what is going on in the Central African Republic, where Muslims and Christians are killing each other. The Council can imagine what having the FDLR in that melting pot would mean.

Days ago, we all heard on the news that armed groups from the Central African Republic carried out an attack in Cameroon. That just proves the dangers posed by those armed groups not only to the countries they operate in, but also to neighbouring countries. Therefore, we can never overemphasize the need to eradicate those negative forces. Moreover, it is unfortunate that, during the reporting period, as highlighted by the current report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/671), the subregion was dominated by the further deterioration of the overall situation in the Central African Republic.

That being said, we commend the newly awakened spirit of ownership and cooperation among regional leaders. That was exhibited by the pledge of \$50 million in support of the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in the Central African Republic made by the Heads of State at the extraordinary summit of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), held on 14 June in Libreville. It was also demonstrated by the outcome of the 36th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Rwanda in August, which also discussed the situation in the Central African Republic. We take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the African Union (AU), ECCAS and the United Nations, through the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic and UNOCA, in the search for a lasting solution to the current crisis in the Central African Republic.

Rwanda further welcomes the decision of the Heads of State of CEMAC to abolish visa requirements for nationals of the six CEMAC countries, effective 1 January 2014. We believe that this is a major milestone towards regional integration and economic cooperation. If the people of the Central African region are to fully benefit in a timely manner from that new development, there is a need to stabilize the entire region, and especially to curb the activities of all negative forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

The Secretary-General's report reveals that despite combined efforts, the Lord's Resistance Army remains a major security, humanitarian and human rights threat. Although the figures released by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs show a decline in the total number of LRA incidents, the related killings, abductions and massive displacement of civilian populations remain concerning.

We strongly condemn the continued violations committed against children by the LRA and its use of rape, sexual slavery, sexual violence and forced recruitment of child soldiers. We commend the successful efforts of the African Union Regional Task Force military operations to weaken the LRA. In that regard, we congratulate the troop-contributing countries, especially Uganda, on their efforts.

We remain gravely concerned by the humanitarian situation of over 350,000 displaced persons in LRA-affected countries, and urge the international community to maintain its support in favour of the displaced populations. We call for increased humanitarian assistance to those who are most vulnerable, and urge the Central African Republic authorities to assume their primary role in providing security and safety to displaced persons. In that regard, we call on the Central African Republic to allow and facilitate, as appropriate, access by humanitarian agencies to those who have been most affected.

Poaching in the Central African region has increased to worrying levels. At the 36th ministerial meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Rwanda in August, it was revealed that the region had lost 70 per cent of its elephants in the past 10 years. It is worth noting that poachers and armed groups use sophisticated weapons acquired from the income generated from the illegal ivory trade to kill

innocent civilians and destabilize nations. That is why the practice remains a serious security threat to affected countries in the region and hence requires increased determination on the part of regional actors, in coordination with the countries of destination, which are located mainly outside the continent.

Let me conclude by thanking the European Union and the United States for their invaluable support of the implementation of the AU Regional Cooperation Initiative against the Lord's Resistance Army. We also welcome the pledges made by Luxembourg and the United Kingdom towards the implementation of the United Nations regional strategy. We call upon other bilateral and multilateral partners to join regional efforts in the fight against one of the most criminal and brutal armed groups of recent decades. Rwanda remains confident that with ongoing, sustained regional and international efforts, the LRA and its notorious commanders may be living their last days.

Mr. Laassel (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I, too, wish to thank Mr. Abou Moussa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I welcome Ambassador Madeira, Special Envoy of the African Union (AU) on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) issue. We applaud the efforts of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and its commitment alongside the subregional organizations to bolstering the security and institutional capacities of the States of the region.

My country welcomes the joint and individuals efforts undertaken by countries of the Central African region to address multiple regional challenges. The agreement made within the Central African Economic and Monetary Community to waive visa requirements, starting in January 2014, is an important sign of those States' willingness to collectively face security and economic challenges affecting development.

Mr. Abou Moussa, in his comments, and the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/671) describe the challenges to the region resulting from instability in the Central African Republic and the spread of rebel groups to the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as the insecurity resulting from the situation in the Gulf of Guinea and the Sahel region — all of which demand a coordinated, urgent response of the international community.

The situation in the Central African Republic continues to unravel, especially at the security and

humanitarian levels. There is a risk of dangerous consequences affecting the country and the entire region if the situation is not brought under control as soon as possible. To that end, we welcome international and regional efforts aimed at rapidly restoring stability in the Central African Republic and the region.

The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has played an exemplary role through its efforts to mitigate the crisis in Central Africa at the political and security levels by strengthening the Central Africa Multinational Force. It is essential that UNOCA continues to strengthen its cooperation with ECCAS aimed at resolving the conflict in the Central African Republic, especially concerning all issues of common interest. In that context, we welcome the meeting between Mr. Abou Moussa and Mr. Ahmad Allam-Mi, whose nomination as Secretary-General of ECCAS we applaud. Moreover, we commend the efforts of UNOCA, as the secretariat of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, in organizing the 36th ministerial meeting of the Advisory Committee in Kigali, in August.

The intensification of cross-border trafficking is a further source of concern. There have been forty-three incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea recorded in the past nine months, exceeding the number of such incidents in the Horn of Africa, which is considered to be the most highly-impacted region of Africa. According to the International Maritime Organization, it is also feared that piracy is spreading throughout Africa's Atlantic coast. We endorse the Secretary-General's call for the implementation of the Yaoundé Declaration adopted in Yaoundé in June.

The level of trafficking and illicit trade in ivory in the subregion is considered among the highest in the region. According to the report of the United Nations Environment Programme, revenue from such illegal activity finances transnational criminal economy, terrorist networks and rebel groups, including the Lord's Resistance Army. In that regard, we commend the decision of the States members of ECCAS to carry out intensive, coordinated action against poaching, which will make it possible to cut off sources of financing to rebel groups and to the LRA.

Security deficits in the Sahel region have also impacted the Central African and Maghreb regions as the firearms of terrorists and foreign combatants

terrorism represent additional threats. In that context, Morocco — which is linked by traditional ties of cooperation and friendship with the countries of the Central African region, the Sahel and West Africa — organized on 13 and 14 November an international ministerial conference on border security in countries of the Sahel and Maghreb regions. The conference concluded with the adoption of the Rabat Declaration on establishing a cooperation network linking border monitoring and security services of the countries of the region, and on sharing experiences in that sphere. The lessons learned in such exchanges could be duplicated in the countries of Central Africa. Morocco will also host the upcoming summit of the Community of Sahelo-Saharan States, which will provide an opportunity to strengthen subregional cooperation and implement decisions taken at prior summits.

With regard to the Lord's Resistance Army, while the reports of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) indicate a reduced number of incidents, the numbers of people who have lost their life and of kidnappings remained high between January and September as compared to the same period in 2012. LRA attacks have created a worrisome humanitarian situation for thousands of internally displaced persons, including 350,000 in the Central African Republic, according to OCHA.

Morocco reiterates its condemnation of the atrocities and violations of human rights committed by the LRA and calls for coordinated cooperation efforts at the regional and international levels to address those plagues. In that regard, we welcome the role played by UNOCA in implementing the United Nations regional strategy for the fight against the LRA. My country, which has long been committed to international efforts in peacekeeping through the presence of its troops in the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic People's Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) in that country, joins with international and regional efforts to halt the scourge of terrorism in Central Africa and the Sahel and will continue to provide the necessary humanitarian and medical assistance within the framework of the MONUSCO mandate.

Finally, we would like to express our support for UNOCA and Special Representative Abou Moussa for their efforts aimed at preventing conflict in Africa.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Abou Moussa for his briefing.

We agree with the concerns expressed today with regard to the negative impacts of the armed conflict in the Central African Republic on the situation in the subregion. While it is true that the crisis in that country stems, inter alia, from illegal flows of foreign fighters and weapons through the porous borders of the Sahel, we also see in it the clear impact of the Libyan crisis. Undoubtedly, the normalization of the military, political and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic is essential for peace, security and stability in the subregion as a whole.

We welcome the intensification of cooperation by interested countries and organizations in combating piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. We attach great importance to the practical implementation of the decisions taken at the anti-piracy summit of States of Central and Western Africa held in June.

Since the beginning of this year, we have noted a general reduction in the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Under pressure from the African Union (AU) Regional Task Force, LRA fighters are keeping a low profile and have split into small groups and staged essentially minor robberies. Among the forms of progress we have seen, we would note a drop from 440,000 to 350,000 refugees and internally displaced persons that have resulted from the activities of criminals in the region.

Nevertheless, bandits have once again reappeared, taking advantage of the absence of State authority in the neighbouring regions of South Sudan and a power vacuum in the Central African Republic. The successful combating of gangs depends first and foremost on coordinated efforts by regional players themselves. Along those lines, we welcome the deployment of the more than 3,000 of the planned 5,000 troops for the AU Regional Task Force.

However, settling this issue through military means alone is impossible. There is a need for a comprehensive approach, including measures to bolster the security services of the countries of the subregion, to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate fighters, to resolve pressing social and economic issues, to provide humanitarian assistance and to strengthen State authority.

In conclusion, we would like to note the contribution of United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa

in collective efforts to ensure peace and security in the subregion. We welcome growing cooperation between the Office and regional partners in such areas as preventive diplomacy, mediation, the provision of good offices, peacebuilding and combating terrorism, piracy and armed robbery on the high seas, as well as the illegal spread of weapons.

Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan): We thank Mr. Abou Moussa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. We deeply appreciate the valuable work being done by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) under his leadership.

The Central African subregion stands at a crossroads today, facing many emerging challenges to its security and stability. The region has been coping with the negative consequences of the fragile security situation in the Sahel, the proliferation of weapons and terrorism, cross-border organized crime, piracy and the threat posed for several years now by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

The principal threat to the peace and stability of the entire subregion emanates from the fast-deteriorating security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic. The near-total collapse of State institutions in the Central African Republic, with the resulting security vacuum, the perpetual and widening cycles of reprisals and increasingly ethnic and religious violence, has led to disastrous repercussions for the country and its neighbours.

The serious problems in the Central African Republic require a unified and well-coordinated regional and international response in order to neutralize the immediate security threats and build the capacity of State institutions. UNOCA has an important role to play in coordinating such regional and international efforts. The Office should evolve with the changing situation in the region. UNOCA's vital role in preventive diplomacy and mediation needs to be strengthened.

There has been a degradation of the LRA as a result of the successful operations conducted by the African Union Regional Task Force, but the fight against the LRA is far from over, as the group continues to brutalize and kill civilians in many areas. It is important that the momentum against the LRA be maintained through sustained political and operational support to the Regional Task Force and through a broader international strategy.

The Regional Task Force continues to lack the critical resources and enablers needed to sustain pressure against the LRA. Those deficits must be redressed as a matter of priority. The implementation of the United Nations regional strategy to address the threat and impact of the activities of the LRA will also require more concerted efforts for resource mobilization and coordination at the regional and subregional levels. The international community also needs to step up efforts to address the humanitarian situation in the LRA-affected areas.

The primary responsibility for protecting civilians against the threat posed by the LRA lies with the regional States themselves. All international efforts are meant to support their efforts and help them build State security institutions.

Addressing the scourge of the LRA requires a comprehensive approach to eliminating and bringing to justice the remaining LRA leadership. In that regard, it is important to continue to build the capacity of the political institutions and judicial systems in the States and areas within those States targeted by the LRA. Political stability and strong national security institutions in the LRA-affected region will prevent the group from taking advantage of the security vacuum, as demonstrated by the recent crisis in the Central African Republic.

Pakistan remains strongly committed to the peace, prosperity and long-term stability of the Central African subregion. We hope that the region will continue to receive the full political support and attention of the international community to address the numerous existing and emerging challenges in the region.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would also like to thank Mr. Abou Moussa, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his presentation of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2013/671).

At the outset, like my colleagues, I would like to highlight the serious situation of insecurity in the Central African Republic, where abuses and violations of human rights are a daily and alarming reality, not to mention the growing tensions and intercommunal strife with religious connotations that is spreading throughout the country.

The estimate of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees shows that some

400,000 people have been displaced from their homes in itself constitutes a desperate plea for help. In addition, the situation has already affected the entire subregion. More than 63,000 people have had to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, generating increased humanitarian problems and needs and causing tensions in bordering countries. While the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic is a positive development, we must recall that the crisis is complex and requires a broad and comprehensive solution that addresses more than just the security situation. The Security Council should consider without delay but in depth what steps to take to stabilize the situation in the country if we wish to avoid irreversible damage and human suffering and loss of life.

With regard to illegal elephant poaching and the trafficking of ivory, we share the Secretary-General's concerns that these activities fuel the international criminal economy and finance transnational organized crime and the many armed groups that are active in the region, such as the Lord's Resistance Army. I would also point to the flow of arms and combatants across porous borders from the Sahel region down towards the Central African subregion. Given the information received by Mr. Moussa, and as reflected in the report of the Secretary-General on the existence of "a well-known corridor for illicit trade, passing from Darfur to the Central African Republic" (S/2013/671, *para. 11*), we urge the authorities to take effective measures to close this corridor. The arms embargo and sanctions pursuant to resolution 1591 (2005) must be strictly enforced.

Mr. Michel Djotodia, head of the transitional Government of the Central African Republic, has said that he would take extraordinary measures to remedy the critical situation of former Séléka fighters. I believe that the Security Council should strive to understand what such extraordinary measures would consist of. Influential voices from a number of organizations and States — including Mr. Dieng on 1 November at the Council's Arria Formula meeting — are describing the situation as pre-genocidal.

Argentina welcomes the efforts of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States to fight the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). We commend the work of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) in support of regional efforts to prevent conflict, promote justice and the rule of law, and strengthen peace and security

in countries of Central Africa. We note the optimism expressed in the Secretary-General's report before us (S/2013/671) about the decline in LRA attacks as a result of the regional efforts led by the African Union through the Regional Task Force. However, we must recognize that a number of issues remain pending and topical. Joseph Kony and other LRA leaders continue to evade justice. Attacks, kidnappings and the killing of civilians continue alongside human rights violations, especially against women and children. Impunity cannot be tolerated.

Finally, we call upon UNOCA to pursue its efforts and in particular to support activities to disarm, demobilize, repatriate, reintegrate and resettle LRA elements and to cooperate in ending this threat once and for all through a long-term solution.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Abou Moussa, for his comprehensive briefing, including on efforts to counter the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Significant progress has been made in operations against the LRA. However, the LRA continues to pose a serious threat to the region, especially to civilians. On 7 November, for the first time in nearly two years, attacks were reported in South Sudan. We must therefore redouble our efforts to implement the United Nations regional strategy to counter the threat of the LRA.

We also welcome the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Cooperation Initiative of the African Union against the LRA. Contingents of the Regional Task Force from Uganda, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are now fully operational. We must now mobilize the resources and materiel essential to the effective functioning of the force. In that context, I would like to announce that, following the meeting of the international working group on the LRA in which we participated on 4 October in Brussels and at the request of the African Union, the Luxembourg authorities have decided to provide support for the operation of the headquarters of the Regional Task Force located in Yambio, South Sudan.

It is essential that the United Nations and the African Union continue to work hand-in-hand. Joint missions conducted in the Central African Republic by

the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the African Union, Ambassador Francisco Madeira, are good examples of the synergies that can be created.

Member States of the region also have a role to play. In particular, we encourage them to cooperate in the execution of arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court in July 2005 against Joseph Kony, Okot Odhiambo and Dominic Ongwen. Accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity — including murders, rapes and the recruitment of children — these main LRA leaders must be brought to justice.

Women and children are the main victims of the LRA. In this context, I would stress four recommendations contained in the conclusions on the situation of child victims of the LRA, adopted on 19 April by the Working Group of the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict.

First, it is important that peacekeeping operations and special political missions deployed by the United Nations in the region have sufficient means to protect children. Secondly, the African Union is encouraged to include child protection measures in the activities of the Regional Task Force. Thirdly, the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan are encouraged to develop standing instructions, similar to those adopted by the Uganda People's Defence Force, governing the care of children rescued from the LRA and their delivery to civilian child protection agencies. Fourthly, donors are invited to mobilize resources needed, especially for the reintegration of children formerly associated with the LRA.

I turn now to the situation in the Central African Republic, which is deteriorating continuously in every way, eight months after the Séléka rebels took over. I share the concern expressed by my French colleague. Systematic and gross violations of human rights and international humanitarian law continue to be committed with impunity across the country. We are also highly alarmed by the rising tensions and sectarian violence with religious overtones, which according to some observers, are harbingers of genocide.

The Security Council must act to prevent the worst and decisively support the efforts of the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union in the Central African Republic. We welcome the Secretary-General's report of 15 November

(S/2013/677) detailing the options available to support the African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic, including the option to turn the Mission into a United Nations peacekeeping operation. Luxembourg is ready to contribute actively to discussions for the early adoption of a resolution that could change the situation on the ground, especially in the field of civil protection and the promotion and protection of human rights.

Before concluding, I would like to acknowledge the joint work done by UNOCA and the United Nations Office for West Africa in the fight against piracy in the Gulf of Guinea. This phenomenon is indeed a growing threat to the economies of the States concerned and to trade and international relations in the region. We are therefore pleased that the regional summit of Heads of State and Government on maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, which took place in Yaoundé on 24 and 25 June, was able to establish the foundations for a joint regional strategy to combat that scourge.

Finally, we encourage the Special Representative to continue to support the fight against poaching and ivory trafficking in the region. This is a case of large-scale illegal activities whose proceeds, as the Secretary-General's report points out, are used to finance transnational criminal networks and armed rebel groups, including the LRA. They must be combated effectively if we want to establish lasting peace in Central Africa.

I conclude by commending the draft presidential statement that has been prepared by the United Kingdom. The statement provides the Council an opportunity to reaffirm its determination to combat the scourge of the LRA and to face the serious challenge confronting the Central African region.

Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): Our delegation would like to thank the Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), Mr. Abou Moussa, for his updated presentation of the latest events in the subregion. We also thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2013/671).

It is obvious that the Central African Republic and the potential impact of the crisis on neighbouring countries are at the centre of our concerns in this region, as evident in the reports of numerous violations of human rights and ethnic and religious violence

affecting the civilian population. We hope that, with the adoption of resolution 2121 (2013), it will be possible to start seeing some improvements on the ground.

Clearly, the consequences of the crisis are being experienced at the subregional level. We therefore decisively support UNOCA's efforts in support of the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union in their efforts to plan for and deploy the International Support Mission for the Central African Republic. Moreover, we commend UNOCA's support to initiatives aimed at grappling other regional challenges, specifically piracy and maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea. We think that the cooperation extended by UNOCA for the summit of Heads of State and Government on maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, held in Cameroon in July, was key.

We encourage UNOCA to redouble its efforts to support the different Central African States to address the problem of the illegal exploitation of natural resources, specifically the illegal hunting of elephants. That phenomenon has two alarming consequences that need to be stopped: the poaching of elephants and the use of the proceeds from those illegal activities by international criminal networks and armed groups to finance their activities — profiting from natural resources, such as ivory, whose loss is irreparable. We commend the measures taken by various subregional Governments to end the problem, but they are not enough. We hope that immediate measures will be taken to tackle the issue.

Our delegation believes that it is important for UNOCA to continue to coordinate efforts to build peace in the region, especially in the areas of strengthening institutions, electoral processes, mediation and good offices for conflict prevention. We hope that the next meeting of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, to be held in December, will be successful and that will generate proposals to improve subregional security.

With regard to the ongoing threat of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), we condemn that criminal group's ongoing criminal activities in remote areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan. We welcome the operationalization of the African Union Regional Task Force to whom some credit should be attributed for reducing the number of LRA attacks. Despite its

operational success and reports of weakening of the LRA, efforts must be sustained to completely eliminate this armed group, and especially to honour the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court against Joseph Kony and the other commanders of the LRA for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

We reiterate our support for the United Nations regional strategy. Unfortunately, many of the projects under the strategy do not have the requisite funding. We hope that the international community will continue to support those efforts. Indeed, the strategy includes a tangible plan through which it is possible to address the short and long-term needs of the people living LRA-affected areas.

To conclude, we would like to express our concern about the humanitarian situation in LRA-affected areas, including displaced persons and refugees. We commend the work of UNICEF and national and international non-governmental organizations to care for boys and girls who have been rescued and separated from the LRA.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Francisco Madeira, Special Envoy of the African Union for Lord's Resistance Army Issues, to participate in today's meeting.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

At present, the Central African region is experiencing rapid economic growth. The process of regional integration has made positive progress. The situation in the Great Lakes Region has visibly improved, and the fight against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has yielded positive results. Regional countries and organizations have strengthened their willingness and enhanced their capacity to maintain peace and stability. China welcomes all those developments.

However, peace and stability in the Central African region still faces many challenges. China is concerned about the continued volatility in the Central African Republic and the serious humanitarian situation and hopes that the parties concerned in that country will immediately cease all violence and resolve their differences through dialogue and consultation.

Recently, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has made positive progress. We encourage the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries

in the Great Lakes region to seize the current positive momentum, continue to strengthen cooperation and work together towards restoring durable peace, stability and development in the region.

China hopes that the international community, on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of the countries concerned, fully leverages the leadership and coordination abilities enjoyed by the United Nations and the relevant regional organizations, works in synergy so as to jointly fight piracy in the Gulf of Guinea and the terrorist and extremist forces in the Sahel region. Furthermore, the international community should also pay attention to the effect that the situation in other parts of Africa might have on the Central African region, strengthen coordination and adopt a holistic approach in order to address the situation.

China strongly condemns the LRA, which has continued to attack and harass civilians in several countries and calls upon that group to immediately cease its illegal activities, proceed to disarm and take part in the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement programmes.

We commend the efforts by regional countries to fight the LRA forces and to support the ongoing efforts of the African Union to implement the Regional Cooperation Initiative. We welcome the fact that the United Nations has taken the initiative to cooperate with the African Union to fight the LRA and we hope that the international community will be forthcoming in providing financial assistance to the United Nations and the African Union to ensure that the relevant initiatives can be effectively implemented.

Since its inception approximately two years ago, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) has made tremendous efforts in terms of coordination and facilitation to maintain regional peace and stability and to fight the LRA. China expresses its appreciation in that connection. We stand ready to continue to support UNOCA and Special Representative of the Secretary-General Abou Moussa to discharge their mandate and to continue to play a positive and constructive role in maintaining peace, stability and development in the Central African region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to Mr. Madeira.

Mr. Madeira: Let me first of all thank you, Mr. President, for allowing me to address this body. Let me also thank all the members of the Security Council for their unanimous support and encouragement for the efforts that are being made to put an end to the activities of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Further to my statement in the Council in June 2012 (see S/PV.6796) on the progress by the African Union in the operationalization of its Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army, I would like to highlight for the Council the subsequent progress made in the region by the African Union (AU) in coordination with troop-contributing countries, with the support of United States special forces, the European Union and the United Nations offices and missions on the ground, very particularly the efforts deployed by my colleague Mr. Abou Moussa and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).

The Council may recall that, in January, the Joint Support and Coordination Mechanism adopted the key mission documents for the African Union Regional Task Force, namely, the strategic directives, the concept of operations, standard operating procedures for the handling of persons suspected of involvement in LRA activities, and the rules of engagement. Later, on 13 February, the Congolese armed forces handed over to the Task Force a contingent of 500 troops, in a ceremony that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and I witnessed in Dungu. Those two events marked the end of the first phase of the operationalization of the Regional Task Force, the military component of the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative for the elimination of the LRA.

However, it was difficult to enter into the second phase, which consisted of the commencement of a military operation, due to serious logistical challenges faced by the contingents, particularly those from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. That left the Ugandan contingent, supported by United States special forces, to continue conducting counter-LRA operations in the Central African Republic until July. They nonetheless achieved several major successes, which included the killing of 9 LRA fighters, the reception of 14 defectors and the recovery of 17 modern fire arms, 4 traditional weapons, 1,429 pieces of ammunition and 6 pieces of ivory.

That momentum suffered a major setback following the coup d'état that took place in Bangui on 24 March. The then prevailing situation generated tension between Séléka and the Regional Task Force, forcing the latter and United States special forces to suspend operations in the Central African Republic. Meanwhile the LRA exploited the lull in operations to reorganize, step up cross-border movements between Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic and carry out attacks on villages and displace civilians in the Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou prefectures of the Central African Republic.

The situation was further complicated by the attack in Obo town on 24 May by a group of 87 armed Arrow Boys from Tumbura, Western Equatoria state of South Sudan. The Regional Task Force apprehended 42 of the attackers and handed them over to the International Committee of the Red Cross for repatriation to South Sudan. By July, the Regional Task Force had repatriated 80 civilians, including the Arrow Boys.

The Obo situation regenerated the tension between Séléka and the Regional Task Force, commanded by the African Union, with the authorities in Bangui agitating to deploy Séléka troops in the Obo, Haut-Mbomou prefecture, which was being controlled by the Regional Task Force. However, through my joint diplomatic efforts with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, mutual trust and confidence were built between the new leadership of the Central African Republic and the African Union, and the tension was diffused. We also obtained an official commitment from the head of the National Transition Council in the Central African Republic, Mr. Michel Djotodia, for the continued implementation of the Regional Cooperation Initiative, including the resumption of the Regional Task Force military operations in the country. Meanwhile, between July and August, the various contingents of the Regional Task Force underwent retraining and counter-LRA combat rehearsals, facilitated by United States special forces.

On the diplomatic front, working in close cooperation and coordination with the United States of America, I managed to obtain a green light from the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the Regional Task Force to conduct cross-border operations against the LRA on Congolese territory — something that was not happening before. That was a major breakthrough.

I am happy to inform the Council that the developments to which I have referred, together with the extension of United States training and logistical support to all the Task Force contingents, paved way for the resumption of its military operations in the Central African Republic on 9 August, as well as the operationalization of the Congolese and the South Sudanese contingents in September.

Henceforth, the Task Force, with a current total strength of 3,114 men, made up of 29 headquarters staff, 2,000 Ugandan soldiers, 500 South Sudanese, 500 Congolese, and 85 Central Africans who are not members of the Séléka, resumed operations against LRA in the Central African Republic on 9 August. The operations are ongoing, on a high tempo and with intense intelligence collection, including the destruction of LRA camps and denying them permanent bases in all sectors.

The current military pressure has kept the LRA on the run, including its leader Joseph Kony. That heightened pressure has forced the LRA to try his time-tested tricks of buying time by duping the authorities of the Central African Republic into negotiations to purportedly allow Kony and his LRA to surrender and resettle in Nzako. According to Task Force reports we have received, Kony only used that window of opportunity to move many of his fighters and relocate them further up to the north-eastern part of the Central African Republic. The Regional Task Force will therefore not relent on the military pressure

against the LRA until Kony and his top commanders, particularly those wanted by the International Criminal Court, surrender or are removed from the battlefield and taken to the Court.

The current momentum needs to be sustained with adequate funding and logistical support to enhance our objective of eliminating the LRA. I am happy to know that all the members of the Security Council have stressed that aspect. Funding and equipping the Regional Task Force headquarters with robust communications remains a critical requirement in facilitating its ability to effectively plan, coordinate and monitor the ongoing operations in all sectors. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Luxembourg for its very generous gesture to help the headquarters become more operational.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey the appreciation of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, to the LRA-affected countries, the United States Administration, the European Union and the United Nations for their active engagement on ensuring success on the LRA issue.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Madeira for his statement.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.