

STATEMENT BY AMBASSADOR HARDEEP SINGH PURI, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE,
ON BRIEFING: UN OFFICE FOR CENTRAL AFRICA/LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY AT THE
UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL ON NOVEMBER 14, 2011

Thank you, Mr. President.

1. First of all, I would like to thank you for organizing this timely meeting to discuss an important problem faced by countries in Central Africa. I also would like to thank SRSG Abou Moussa for his comprehensive briefing on the activities of UN Office for Central Africa and ASG Taye Brook Zerihoun for presenting the Secretary General's report on the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA).

Mr. President,

2. The countries in the region, after decades of instability and conflicts, are moving towards democracy and development. The governments have shown tremendous resolve and determination to handle their problems individually and collectively through regional cooperation and assistance of international community, led by the United Nations. Several countries are conducting democratic elections largely on their own, have undertaken economic reforms and initiated measures to improve the capacity of their security and police forces.

3. In this process of transition, it is natural that the countries are faced with several challenges, including remnants of past conflicts. It is critical that the international community continues to assist the nation building efforts of the countries in the region. It is also important that the international assistance not impinge on the national ownership and sovereign functions of the states.

Mr. President,

4. UNOCA with its mandate to help prevent conflict and consolidate peace in Central Africa has started its work on a positive note. The countries in the region, as Secretary General's report states, have warmly welcomed UNOCA's establishment and have started taking active interest in its work. Activities of UNOCA during the last six months have been able to create a positive environment paving the way for regional cooperation on important issues. The region faces several challenges such as the issue of small arms, organized crimes, drug trafficking, illegal exploitation of mineral resources, governance issues and, of course, the problem of the LRA.

5. The effective functioning of UNOCA would greatly help this Council in addressing these issues, many of which have a regional dimension and require a regional approach for their lasting resolution. The focus should be on finding local solutions to problems involving governance, capacity building, security and transnational crimes. Towards this end, creating synergy with other UN offices such as UNOWA and UNOAU would greatly

benefit UNOCA in its endeavour. These UN offices should work closely with the AU so as to channelize regional initiatives more effectively into their programmes.

Mr. President,

6. Given the past devastation caused on the social fabric of the countries in the region, the threat of the LRA cannot be neglected. Even though the measures taken by Uganda in cooperation with its neighbours have helped contain the problem, the LRA remains a potent threat and continues to indulge in various crimes against innocent civilians. As indicated in the Secretary General's report, even with its reduced strength of some 500 combatants, the LRA, with its leadership at large, continues to pose a serious threat to peace and security, given its ability to move freely and carry out operations across borders in several countries of the region. The inhuman acts inflicted by the LRA on local communities have resulted in large scale displacement and uprooting of communities. While long term solution to this problem is to extend the reach of the law enforcement agencies of the States and focus on development in the affected areas, it is important that serious efforts be made to eliminate the remaining active groups and target the leadership of the LRA to bring them to justice.

7. While UNOCA has a critical role to play in coordinating the UN efforts in assisting the national governments in their fight against armed groups, including the LRA, it is necessary for the international community to strengthen the capacity of the countries in the region, particularly of their armed forces and other law enforcement agencies, to take the lead in combating the LRA. Towards this end, we welcome the initiatives of the African Union to appoint a Special Envoy on the LRA and establishment of a regional intervention force. We have already seen in AMISOM that the AU is capable of mounting such a force with the assistance of the international community and hope that these initiatives will bear fruits soon. We have also taken note of individual efforts made by several countries to assist the countries in the region in building capacity to fight the LRA. Such assistance should be apolitical in nature and respect national sovereignty in policy as well as operational matters. In addition, assisting the affected communities to overcome the trauma of displacement and social stigma should also become an immediate priority. And, to this end, it is important that the affected communities are reintegrated by provided with necessary financial resources for economic development.

8. In conclusion, Mr President, let me state that the long-term socio-economic development and broad-based inclusive political systems are the key to addressing the threats posed by armed groups, including the LRA. We hope the countries in the region and the Au would work towards that end. India is committed to cooperation with our African partners, including with African Union and other sub-regional organizations. We have announced credit lines of US\$ 5 billion for the next three years as well as a number of projects designed for human resources development in African countries, including the pan-African e-network project. We hope that these projects will strengthen the national capacities to meet the development aspirations that would also

help address security problems, including by the LRA.

9. And finally, we support the Presidential Statement that is proposed.

Thank you.

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