

## **Joint Statement on the Continuing Crisis in LRA-Affected Areas**

*Civil Society Outcome Document*

September 30 – October 1, 2013

*We, representatives of civil society organizations from countries affected by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) as well as Europe and the United States, gathered together for the first time in Brussels from September 30 to October 1, 2013 and dedicated to the pursuit of lasting peace in the region,*

Express the urgent and continuing need for strengthened efforts to address the crisis caused by LRA attacks and their ripple effects in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic (CAR), and South Sudan, as well as their legacy in northern Uganda;

Celebrate signs of tentative progress by local, regional, and international interventions in reducing LRA violence against civilians and encouraging voluntary defections of LRA fighters and abductees;

Note that decreased overall levels of violence have not led displaced populations to return to their homes, and that the uniquely brutal and unpredictable nature of LRA violence remains a source of severe trauma and the disruption of basic livelihood activities in an already deeply impoverished region;

Express grave concern about the isolated increase in deadly LRA attacks in CAR, where political upheaval and instability is providing increased opportunities for the LRA and other armed groups to operate and commit more atrocities with impunity;

Note that insecurity caused by LRA activities has served to mask and enable criminal activities by other groups, including state actors, poachers, and others;

Underscore that lasting security can only be achieved through the extension of accountable state institutions – which are particularly weak or altogether absent in LRA-affected areas of DRC, CAR, and South Sudan – and sustainable economic development in all affected areas;

Commit, through ongoing partnership with each other and advocacy with our respective governments and the international community, to continue seeking the implementation of a coherent and well-coordinated set of measures that can end atrocities by the LRA and other armed groups and provide durable protection and long-term recovery for affected populations; and

Urge political leaders to immediately adopt the following steps as the most pressing priorities to achieve these goals.

*To improve immediate protection of civilians from continued attacks by the LRA and other armed groups:*

The African Union (AU), with support from the European Union (EU) and other international donors, should strengthen the capacity of the AU Regional Task Force (RTF) through logistics

support and training for all countries involved with an aim toward unified command and coordinated action to pursue LRA groups and protect civilians;

In CAR, following the overthrow of the national government and escalation of rampant abuses by armed groups and general insecurity,

- International donors and the UN should provide urgent support to the establishment of the Mission of International Support to Central Africa (MISCA) and assign officials to liaise between MISCA and AU RTF forces; and
- The African Union, Government of Uganda, and authorities in CAR should work to improve coordination of efforts to address the LRA threat in Haut Mbomou Prefecture, where the AU RTF has been given authority, while also extending access for AU RTF forces to all areas of LRA operation in the country;

In DRC, where the majority of populations displaced by LRA-related insecurity reside yet security threats have been met with very limited response by Congolese and UN forces, the Government of DRC and UN should:

- Insist that Congolese and MONUSCO forces react proactively to pursue LRA and other armed groups following suspected attacks on civilians;
- Permit the formation of local civilian defense groups in LRA-affected areas of DRC, ensuring adequate oversight from local authorities and without providing them with arms or other direct material assistance; and
- Improve civilian-military cooperation at the local level to curb abuses by some members of the Congolese military and other armed actors;

In South Sudan, where communities continue to live in fear of a resumption of LRA attacks, AU, US, national, and local authorities should continue collaborating to provide protection of civilians; and

In all LRA-affected areas, donors and other stakeholders should support the extension and professionalization of community early warning systems based on local protection committees and communications infrastructure such as roads, HF radio, and mobile telecommunications.

*To facilitate the safe defection and reintegration of LRA fighters and abductees back to their home communities and strengthened resilience for affected populations:*

All actors involved in efforts to encourage and facilitate peaceful defection from and engagement with LRA members should intensify these efforts and ensure they are extended to all areas of suspected LRA activity, as major gaps persist in both CAR and DRC;

International donors should fund the implementation of a regional and/or country-based assessment of the needs and capacities in LRA-affected areas of DRC, CAR, South Sudan, and northern Uganda, related to reintegration of former LRA combatants and rehabilitation of both former combatants and receiving communities;

Based on the outcomes of the aforementioned regional assessment, international donors should fund the implementation of a community-based regional reintegration strategy, coordinated by an overarching body, which:

- Prepares “receiving” communities for reintegration through the creation of safe reporting sites, community sensitization programs, and training and capacity building for local civil society;
- Provides immediate support to returnees, including trauma counseling, medical support, and immediate material support, including through the development of and support to rehabilitation centers in each affected country;
- Provides for the immediate needs of “receiving” communities, through resilience training and community sensitization programs;
- Provides long-term support to returnees, including education, vocational training, and human rights training; and
- Provides long-term support to “receiving” communities, including reconciliation programs, human rights training, peace-building activities, income-generating activities, infrastructure repair, and assistance with a return process for those who are displaced.

*To promote regional cooperation among state authorities, security forces, civil society organizations, and civilian populations across all affected areas:*

We applaud the efforts by the AU, UN, and US to promote a comprehensive cross-border response to the LRA crisis, and encourage continued efforts to strengthen and implement these respective initiatives fully;

National authorities from each affected country should:

- Meet regularly under the auspices of the African Union to harmonize regional efforts to address LRA-related insecurity;
- Maintain diplomatic and consular missions in each other’s countries to improve political coordination and facilitate free movement of goods and people; and
- Improve joint efforts to address insecurity and promote economic integration and development, including through the auspices of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region;

The EU, which has made important investments in supporting the AU and other initiatives benefitting LRA-affected communities, should build on these efforts and:

- Extend financial and political support to the AU Special Envoy and RTF;
- Establish and monitor clearly set and pre-agreed benchmarks for the effectiveness of the AU strategy and RTF forces, including on issues of civilian protection and human rights monitoring;
- Develop its own regional strategy that identifies how EU missions in each affected country can fill key gaps in existing efforts, including community-based reintegration programs, infrastructure development, and training of security forces;
- Ensure EU delegations and member state embassies in each LRA-affected country urge national authorities to assume responsibility to protect their citizens from LRA violence; and
- Urgently establish a donor working group on CAR.

Signed the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2013 by the individuals and organizations below.

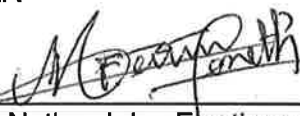
**Central African Republic:**



Alexis Mbolinani, JUPEDEC

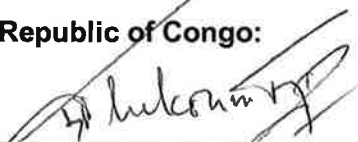


Eliane Berthe Mokodopo, ICGLR



Fulgence Zeneth, Observatoire National des Elections

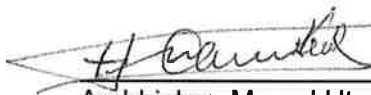
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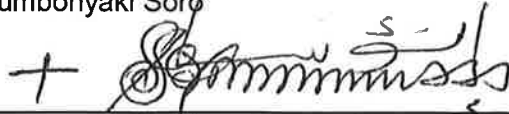
**South Sudan:**



Veronica Anni Michael, Self-Help Women's Association

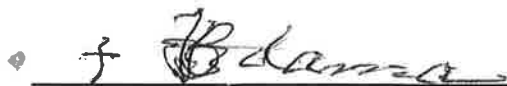


Fr. Mark Kumbonyaki Soro

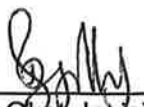


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