

**Statement by Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative, at the
UN Security Council briefing on UNOCA/LRA, on 29 June 2012**

Thank you, Mr. President.

At the outset, I would like to thank you for organizing this meeting to discuss the activities of UNOCA, particularly in the context of the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). I would also like to thank SRSG Abou Moussa and Ambassador Madeira for their briefings. We have taken note of the Secretary General's reports on UNOCA and the LRA, and on a regional strategy for the LRA-affected areas.

Mr. President,

2. Countries in Central Africa are making steady progress to overcome the negative effects of decades of instability and conflicts. The region has seen overall political stability. Timely elections have been held in several countries, which have further strengthened democratic institutions. Countries are pursuing economic reforms, which have resulted in robust economic growth in the region. They are also cooperating with regional and foreign partners in addressing their common challenges like proliferation of weapons, transnational organized crimes and terrorism. The African Union (AU) and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) too have continued to play a crucial role in addressing these problems in partnership with UNOCA and UNOAU.

3. Despite these positive trends, Mr President, the region continues to grapple with effects of conflicts of the past. Overall socio-economic indicators still remain poor and the precarious security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel is adversely impacting on the region. The activities of terrorist groups such as Boko Haram, armed groups and transnational crime networks, illicit drug trafficking, and maritime piracy and robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea continue to threaten the security and stability of the region.

4. Mr. President, it is in this context that the activities of UNOCA assume significance, particularly in the areas of conflict prevention, early warning and addressing socio-economic challenges. We commend UNOCA and SRSG Abou Moussa for their active engagement with national governments and with regional and sub-regional organizations. UNOCA should further strengthen this collaboration and assist the efforts of governments and organizations in the region so that regional cooperative frameworks developed to deal with these common challenges are fully implemented.

5. The focus of this Council should lead to galvanizing the international community to provide adequate resources for the national and regional endeavours, particularly in strengthening of national capacities with regards to civil administration, police and security forces, SSR and DDR processes and socio-economic development. Given the fragility of political institutions in several countries, it is also important for the

national and regional authorities to pay attention to the need for inclusive political processes, including electoral reforms.

Mr. President,

6. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is a major threat to maritime navigation, and trade and economic activities in several countries in Central and West Africa. We have noted the progress made towards a coordinated approach to address this problem, including the establishment of a Multinational Coordination Centre for Maritime Safety and Security in Equatorial Guinea. We hope that the proposed summit-level meeting will be held soon to work out a regional strategy.

Mr. President,

7. It is a matter of serious concern that LRA activities have increased this year, particularly in the Central African Republic and the DRC. The LRA remains a potent threat and its criminal activities have uprooted over 445,000 persons from their communities in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. While countries like Uganda with support from regional and foreign partners have undertaken a number of measures to address the challenge posed by the LRA, a lot still remains to be done. In this connection, we have taken note of UNOCA's efforts and the launch of the AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative against the LRA earlier this year. We hope that the AU will continue to work closely with the affected countries so that the Regional Task Force may be expeditiously deployed in the three identified sectors.

8. We agree with the Secretary General's view that any effective strategy on the LRA should focus on strengthening the capacity of national authorities, including their security forces, to expand the authority of the state, and focus on overall socio-economic development in the affected areas. International humanitarian, development and peacebuilding assistance to the LRA-affected areas should address the underlying causes for activities of armed groups. The national programmes for disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration (DDRRR) activities should be supported with provision of adequate resources and be reinforced by a long-term plan for employment generation among the affected communities. It is also important that serious efforts be made to eliminate the remaining active groups and target the leadership of the LRA to bring them to justice. External assistance to the affected countries should be apolitical in nature and respect national sovereignty in policy as well as operational matters.

9. In this connection, it is important that UN Missions in the region should not be burdened further without augmentation of their resources in man and material. Without commensurate increase in resources, expansion of Mission mandates will not result in operational effectiveness.

10. In conclusion, Mr. President, India stands ready to contribute to efforts to address the challenges of countries of Central African region, particularly in the fields of capacity building and human resource and socio-economic development.

I thank you.

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