

REGIONAL PEACEBUILDING COMMITTEE MEETING
[Uganda, Sudan, Congo & Central African Republic]
Held in Juba 29th Sept – 2nd October 2009

JUBA COMMUNIQUE' 1

Preamble

The destruction by the LRA conflict continues to escalate in the face of a stalled Peace process. The growing tendency to resort to military strategy tends to result in a backlash and increased attack by LRA on the civilian communities. Yet the staggering humanitarian crisis unfolding as a result is not being adequately addressed.

There is an urgent need to find a sustainable solution to the conflict and address its consequences. We believe that organized civil society groups, traditional leaders and leaders – in each of the affected countries – and in concert with one another and respective governments, have essential roles to play.

The Regional Peacebuilding Committee constituting of civil society members; including the Cultural Institution of Ker Kwaro Acholi, traditional leaders and elders of Southern Sudan communities, religious leaders drawn from Uganda, Sudan, and DRC, out of two preparatory meetings held in Uganda. The express mandate of the Committee is to map out strategies and follow-up on key concerns relating to conflict in the region. The Committee met in Juba on 2 October 2009, and noted with utmost urgency and concern, the ongoing carnage, social disruption, displacements and gross human rights abuses caused by the LRA and the continued hunt for them.

Key Concerns

The Committee meeting in Juba therefore deliberated on the following key issues:

1. **Protection:** regardless of the political process made, all parties must take into account protection of innocent civilian and prevention of human suffering manifesting in physical torture, denial of basic socio-economic services like health, education, destruction of economic infrastructure, displacement (80,000 in Sudan, 540,000 in DRC, estimated 30,000 in CAR, and some 200,000 in Uganda, and 10,500 DRC & CAR refugees in Southern Sudan). The plight of women and children still in LRA captivity needs to be addressed.
2. Experiences from northern Uganda indicate that intervention that lacks effective civilian protection mechanisms tend to result in a backlash from the LRA. For example, Operation Iron Fist in Sudan and Lightning Thunder in DRC resulted into increased humanitarian catastrophe. The ICC arrest warrants generally made dialogue more difficult. The draft bill before the US Senate, names the 'Lord's Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009', shows confidence in the regional security

forces doing what they have so far failed to do, that is, end the LRA conflict by military means.

3. **Humanitarian:** the humanitarian crisis unfolding as a result of the war is escalating the suffering of people in hard-to-reach areas of CAR, DRC, and South Sudan. This is manifested in physical and mental anguish reverberating across the region. Most efforts seem to be focused on fighting at the expense of addressing the humanitarian crisis conditioned by the war.
4. **Changing nature and content of the LRA:** the conflict that started in Uganda, moved to the Sudan, DRC and more recently to Central African Republic, making LRA a regional problem, composed of abducted people from this region. Yet most of the intervention strategies are country specific—for example, the intended outcomes of the Juba Peace Talks focused on Uganda; the amnesty process is in Uganda but not extended to Sudanese and Congolese. There is no collective regional mechanism to address the conflict.
5. **Political will:** We noted with concern that there is fading political will among governments in the region and the international community to pursue the peace process.
6. The upcoming elections in CAR, DRC, Uganda and Sudan may distract attention of the governments from expeditiously addressing issues of the conflict and other broader governance concerns in the region.

The Committee resolved as follows:

- 1) Renew commitment to peaceful resolution of the LRA conflict that has transcended international borders with devastating effects on the people.
- 2) Concerned governments should guarantee protection of civilian population and address the dire humanitarian catastrophe, now unfolding in the region as a direct result of this continued conflict.
- 3) The concerned governments, office of the chief mediator, and civil society should work towards re-establishing contact with the LRA leadership with a view to fast tracking a return to the peace process.
- 4) The Office of the Chief Mediator should regroup and push forward the uncompleted Juba Peace Process by employing strategies that will involve all parties previously left out including the governments of Khartoum, DRC and CAR, and communities.
- 5) We implore the government of Uganda to take responsibility and implement the Juba Peace Agreements.

- 8) Implore the UN, AU, governments of the region to come up with a regional strategy of addressing the conflicts in the region.
- 9) Organize a peace conference for a broader consensus building about rejuvenating the peace process by drawing on crucial actors hitherto left out. ie. CAR, DR Congo, and Khartoum.
- 10) We implore governments and international community not to lose focus on the peace process.

Signed:

His Grace Archbishop John Baptist Odama,
Acholi Religious Leader's Peace Initiative-Uganda,
Chairman-Regional Peacebuilding Committee.

His Grace Archbishop Paulino Lokudu,
Catholic Diocese of Juba-South Sudan
Vice Chairman-Regional Peacebuilding Committee

His Highness Rwot David Onen Acana II
Paramount Chief, Ker Kwaro Acholi - Uganda
Advisor to Regional Peacebuilding Committee

Tshibanda Lepira Cecile,
Catholic Women Association - DRC;
Member-Regional Peacebuilding Committee