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5415th Meeting* (AM)

UGANDA'S FOREIGN, DEFENCE MINISTERS BRIEF SECURITY COUNCIL,

CALL FOR STRONG MEASURES TO DISARM LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

**Emphasize Importance of Regional Approach,
Including Adequate**

**Mandate for UN Missions in Sudan, Democratic
Republic of Congo**

Ugandan Defence Minister Amama Mbabazi called upon the Security Council this morning to support strong measures, including an adequate mandate for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS), to forcefully disarm the Lord's

Resistance Army (LRA) and send a message to the rebel group's supporters that such backing would not be tolerated.

In a joint briefing with Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa, he said that on 30 March the Ugandan Government had held a useful interaction in Kampala with members of the Security Group on the LRA, including the Core Partners (United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Norway and South Africa), and representatives of the United Nations Department of Political Affairs, MONUC and UNMIS, on the LRA question.

He said Uganda hoped to engage the Congolese and Sudanese Governments in the near future, and emphasized the importance of developing combined regional efforts, with the support of the international community, to disarm, capture or arrest indicted LRA terrorist leaders and hand them over to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

Among his country's proposed elements of the way forward, he said, was the early conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, similar to the one Uganda had with the Sudan, in which the Uganda People's Defence Force (UPDF) would be allowed to enter Congolese territory and hunt down LRA terrorists under the close supervision of international bodies like MONUC.

Another proposal involved the establishment of a regional mechanism that would include the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, the Sudan, MONUC and UNMIS, he said, adding that his country had already set up a team to be part of such a mechanism. A final proposal would involve exploring the possibility of mandating a country or regional power to deal with the LRA question, as had been the case with the French-led Operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Australian-led International Force for East Timor (INTERFET).

Describing the LRA as a threat to regional peace and security in Uganda, the Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he said his country's struggle against that and other foreign-supported negative forces had been long and tedious. The LRA was part of Uganda's post-colonial history covering the Idi Amin and Milton Obote regimes. Since 2002, military pressure by the UPDF had degraded its strength of about 5,000 (3,000 armed) in 2002 to an estimated strength of about 500 (120 to 150 armed) in 2005 under Joseph Kony and Vincent Otti.

While the LRA had been severely degraded and on the verge of defeat, Uganda was very concerned that it was slowly rebuilding its capacity and using the Garambe National Park as a safe haven, he said. Already recruiting through abductions in southern Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it could grow, reorganize and become a stronger potential threat to regional peace and security in Uganda, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. MONUC had initially engaged the LRA by escorting them across the Congolese border in 2005. Unfortunately the rebel group had returned to Garambe, leading to the deaths of eight Guatemalan peacekeepers in January 2006.

Earlier, Mr. Kutesa described the Joint Monitoring Committee and Emergency Plan for Humanitarian Intervention to be launched in Kampala by President Yoweri Museveni on 26 April. They would work in areas of northern Uganda affected by LRA activities. The Joint Monitoring Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, would be a small and effective body comprising about 20 representatives from the Government, the United Nations and civil society organizations. Among other things, it would be tasked with identifying, discussing and monitoring issues related to the Emergency Action Plan for Humanitarian Intervention in LRA-affected areas.

He said the Joint Monitoring Committee would also advise the Government, key partners and other stakeholders; establish benchmarks and mobilize resources for the implementation of the Humanitarian Action Plan; and ensure implementation of relevant decisions by various ministries and institutions. The Committee would be mandated to monitor reconciliation processes at various levels and ensure implementation of the plan, to ensure enhanced protection of internally displaced persons; provide basic social services; reduce morbidity and mortality among the displaced; and provide strong support for their return and reintegration.

In consultation with the United Nations and the Core Partners Group, the Government had also established a small regional security group to deal with the LRA, he said. The group would focus on regional military mechanisms involving Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, as well as MONUC and UNMIS, to disarm the LRA based in southern Sudan and Garambe National Park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It would also facilitate cooperation with the International Criminal Court to execute warrants of arrest against the LRA leadership and engage in the consolidation of the dialogue between the Government and middle-level LRA commanders, to ensure a peaceful resolution of the conflict in northern Uganda.

He said the Government was currently working with development partners on a comprehensive peace, recovery and development strategy in northern Uganda, which would focus on peace, recovery, post-conflict reconstruction and development. Its plans included a pledging donor conference on the Recovery and Development Plan for Northern Uganda; arrangements to provide a specific budgetary allocation to northern Uganda; an increased civilian police presence and a strengthening of the civilian justice system; the strengthening of the UPDF's capacity to wipe out LRA remnants and protect camps for internally displaced persons, as well as resettlement areas; and strengthening Government leadership in delivering social services.

Referring to a report by a number of non-governmental organizations operating in northern Uganda entitled *Counting the last 20 years of war in Northern Uganda*, released at the beginning of April, he said it described a litany of failures by the Government and the international community to protect civilians in the camps and to resolve the LRA conflict peacefully, while alleging that there were more deaths in northern Uganda than in Iraq. However, the report failed to appreciate improvements in some areas.

For example, 40 to 60 per cent of internally displaced persons in the Teso and Lang'o subregions had been resettled, he pointed out. As security around internally displaced persons camps had improved, those camps were decongested, allowing for better provision of social services and more access to land. Immunization levels stood at over 90 per cent. Also, the non-governmental organization report used figures from a flawed survey on mortality rates in the camps. A credible team had now been established to review that document and provide more accurate baseline data. The UPDF had ensured that 232 camps were not only guarded, but also received relief supplies.

The meeting began at 10:10 a.m. and ended at 10:45 a.m.

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