

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON THE LRA ISSUE

KISANGANI, 2 - 4 February 2010

FINAL DECLARATION

We, Religious Leaders from regions affected by the LRA issue in Uganda, in Central Africa Republic, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and in South Sudan, gathered in Kisangani from 2nd to 5th February 2010 within the framework of in an International Conference on the LRA issue, under the joint initiative of the Archdiocese of Kisangani and IKV Pax Christi Netherlands;

Concerned and victims of exactions carried out by the LRA in our respective countries;

Bearing in mind the threat to the security of our communities and our States, and especially following the attacks carried out by this group, with unspeakably awful violence and barbarity, triggering humanitarian consequences and endless collateral repercussions in victimized communities;

Given, in light of country by country contextual analysis of our shared experiences during our meeting, that the LRA is not only operational but is also reorganizing itself, opting for new strategies, transforming its identity in a group none the least different from a terrorist group, capable to destabilize countries of the region;

Cognizant of the virulence of the LRA and its regionalization which calls for a holistic approach in its present nature of regional matter cutting across several countries in the region;

In view of the latest developments of this phenomenon in the region which create the need for cooperation between countries and a number of actors in order to identify potential solutions to put an end to the harmful consequences of this armed group in the region;

The updated context analysis on the LRA in the region has enabled us to extract the following points:

- In DRC, over the past twelve months, the LRA issue has undergone unexpected developments, due namely on one hand to not only its accrued and widespread attacks and raids in the Uélé region (massacres, abductions, mutilations, infernos and looting, deportation of children, high scale rape, massive displacements etc) but also collateral impacts of the joint military operation involving DRC, Uganda and Sudan whose results remain elusive in light of evidences of this armed group's nuisance ability and the perpetration of crimes against communities, and on the other hand, because of the lack of support in favor of community security initiatives;
- Similarly, in Soudan, the LRA pursued its attacks and raids against civilian populations in an environment where the institutions in charge of public security are no longer able to deal adequately with this issue, thus allowing for the proliferation of self-defense groups. Moreover, the LRA is perceived to be enjoying the support of the Government of Khartoum.
- In the Central Africa Republic, the LRA invaded the region of Upper Mbomou and the North East of Mbomou, using the same techniques targeting civilian population, terrorizing and creating insecurity in communities, hindering therefore daily activities but also and most importantly hampering assistance to refugees coming from DRC and to its own Internally Displace Persons.
- In Uganda, the action of Religious Leaders united within the "Acholi Religious Leaders Peace initiative" continue to foster dialogue and reconciliation between the various stakeholders, appealing to parties to give peace a chance;
- Keen to contribute, in the same spirit as existing governmental and non-governmental initiatives, with proactive suggestions geared at finding a solution to this complex matter that does not seem to find sustainable solutions.

1. Commitments

- To put in place a permanent consultation platform to follow up on recommendations emerging from this international conference : by building on the case of the Ugandan experience, namely the « Acholi Religious Elders Peace Initiative »;
- To offer a facilitation and mediation platform in affected countries;
- To organize religious activities (prayers, Church Services, reminiscences, retreats, prayer days, fasts etc.) for peace and reconciliation in the region ;
- To establish contact and ensure mediation with LRA local commanders, to persuade them to cease the hostilities, surrender and embark on the process of social reintegration;
- To organize charitable activities in order to alleviate the sufferings of those slightly affected and the victims of LRA;
- To mobilize populations to take charge of the humanitarian needs and in collaboration with authorities, to develop community security mechanisms;
- Advocate and lobby the governments at all levels so as to ensure the protection and security of civilian populations on one hand, and on the other to take decisions aiming at preserving human life which is sacred in a spirit of forgiveness, dialogue and reconciliation.
- To schedule visits to areas affected by LRA's violence;
- Organize exchange meetings and mutual reinforcement visits of Religious Leaders in LRA affected areas;
- To disseminate resolutions of this conference to the grassroots and involve other religious leaders who did not participate to this conference in order to foster reconciliation;
- To invite traditional leaders from our respective countries to subsequent meetings on LRA;
- To put in place dynamic communication and information mechanisms between the various religious leaders;
- To lobby for the completion of the Juba Peace Talks.

2. Recommendations

Following deliberations, Religious Leaders formulated the following recommendations:

To the local community

- To live in hope and in solidarity;
- To be alert in these difficult moments and put in place rapid response community mechanisms;
- Collaborate with the national security forces and denounce any potentially suspect elements in the community;

To LRA leaders

- To stop the killings and atrocities against the populations of these countries ;
- To come back to the negotiations table in order to finalize the Juba Peace Process;

To the national Gouvernements :

- That the Government of Uganda should pursue its efforts for the completions of the Juba Peace Process in order find a durable solution.
- That the Government of the CAR should seriously beware of the threat of the LRA and put in place the necessary military and police apparatus to face this matter;
- That the Government of the DRC, in view of the needs for civilian protection and the obligation to guaranty the security of its populations, ought to adequately defend attacked areas with the support of specialized police units. This could lessen collateral consequences of the military presence.
- That the Government of Soudan should take all the necessary measures to put an end to the existence of the LRA.

At the regional level

- To consolidate our ties through an efficient cooperation and the exchange of information to guaranty community security;
- To encourage democratization and reconciliation in each country of the region and engage in a sincere dialogue between states affected by the LRA.

To the International Community

- To form a Contact Group made of representatives of the United Nations, African Union, USA, United Kingdom and from the four countries affected by the LRA phenomenon in order to elaborate a number of strategies, vital to sustainable peace in the regions;
- To observe and beware of the illegitimate character of the war waved by the LRA whom have relinquished the struggle and armed opposition against the regime in place in their country of origin and to be aware of its consequences;
- Provide accrued humanitarian assistance to populations affected by the crimes and atrocities perpetrated by the LRA;
- Ensure the availability of sufficient financial resources for the reconstruction of areas affected by the LRA;
- Ensure access and open up landlocked affected regions affected by the LRA to step up delivery of humanitarian assistance to displaced persons and victims;
- To extend financial support to governments for the protection of civilian populations affected by the LRA, namely regarding United Nations Missions deployed in their respective countries.

3. Road map (Future steps)

Faced with the current situation and consequences of this matter, religious leaders formed a regional committee and national groups on the LRA issue mandated to implement activities and strategies emerging from this conference and appeal to the support of IKV Pax Christi and other development partners.

Kisangani, 4th of February 2010

RELIGIOUS LEADERS