



IPI POLICY FORUM

FROM UGANDA TO THE CONGO AND BEYOND: PURSUING THE LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY

When:

Monday, December 7, 2009, 12:30-2:30pm

Where:

Trygve Lie Center for Peace, Security & Development
International Peace Institute
777 United Nations Plaza, 12th Floor
(Corner of 1st Avenue and 44th Street)

Transcript edited by IPI

Warren Hoge: Good afternoon. I'm Warren Hoge, IPI's Vice President and Director of External Relations, and I'm happy to welcome you here to this policy forum based on the new IPI report: *From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army*.

The report is some weeks away from appearing in its formal bound version, but you have pdf versions here in the room on your chairs and on the credenza on the side, and it is already published on our website, www.ipinst.org.

The conflict that the report discusses is one that, for nearly a quarter of a century, has denied the most fundamental justice of peace and security to millions of people across four countries in East-Central Africa: Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, and Sudan.

It has provoked military campaigns with fearsome names like "Operation: Iron Fist" and "Operation: Lightning Thunder." It has required mediation from four other African countries: Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa. It has shown the futility of pursuing political solutions by military means, and worst of all, it has victimized tens of thousands of innocent civilians who have faced mass violence and the destructive so-called "structural violence" of forced displacement.

In addition, it has also undermined confidence in the potential of dialogue and negotiation to find accord, and it has exposed the relative ineffectiveness of outside powers like the United States and outside organizations like the United Nations. It has, finally, produced a dramatic example of the stark choice facing those who believe in formal international justice and an end to impunity for massive human rights crimes, yet worry that trying to bring to justice the perpetrators of those crimes will upset peace processes, since those processes may require the cooperation of the same people who are under indictment.

If I could take a moment to mention the work of IPI in this area, we have a research program here called Peace and Justice that examines that very conundrum, and we

have our Africa program that ensures that much of our research, publishing, and convening work is taken up with Africa, and in particular, with the protection of civilians there.

We also, of course, spend a lot of our time developing policy advice and suggestions that are focused on the United Nations, and the new IPI report suggests that the UN might have a critical role in promoting new peace initiatives in the region. It recommends too that the UN moves swiftly to name a successor to former Mozambican President Joaquim Chissano, who stepped down on June 30th when his mandate as UN Special Envoy for LRA- affected areas came to an end.

The report examines most closely the three-month multi-pronged offensive against the Lord's Resistance Army called "Operation: Lightning Thunder" that ended in March and the unraveling of the once promising but ultimately unsuccessful peace talks that were held in Juba in South Sudan.

Where, the report asks, does this record of repeated failure leave the multiple would-be peacemakers now?

To answer that question and others, we have today a first rate panel starting with our speaker and the author of the IPI report, Dr. Ronald R. Atkinson. He is coordinator of the African Studies Program at the University of South Carolina, and his full biography and those of our two discussants are in your program notes.

Following Dr. Atkinson's presentation, we will hear from Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda, who before becoming Uganda's permanent representative to the United Nations in January 2009, was the head of his country's delegation to the Juba peace talks.

Following Ambassador Rugunda will be Dr. Suliman Baldo, director of the Africa program at the International Center for Transitional Justice here in New York.

We are really pleased to have the three of you here, and Dr. Atkinson, as someone who spent more than 30 years as a foreign correspondent and editor, I want to commend you for a report that is readable, thorough, and fair. Others should feel free to disagree with that assessment, but to this reader, it plays no favorites and pulls no punches. So, Dr. Atkinson, would you start us off please?

Ronald Atkinson: Thank you, Mr. Hoge, for that kind and generous introduction. I would also like to thank Adonia Ayebare, acting director of IPI's Africa program, for first broaching the idea for this paper in a meeting earlier this year in Kampala, and thank you also for being here, Adonia.

I'm honored to have such distinguished discussants for this session. Dr. Suliman Baldo, acting director of the highly respected International Center for Transitional Justice, and Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda. As Mr. Hoge noted, prior to his appointment to his current position at the UN, Ambassador Rugunda was the head of the Uganda delegation to the Juba Peace Talks, where he was a consistently committed, effective, and positive presence in what were very difficult talks.

Those talks began in July 2006, mediated by the semi-autonomous government of South Sudan to end what was then 20 years of war in northern Uganda. In February 2008, after more than a year and a half of those difficult and protracted and halting negotiations, delegations and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army/Movement and the government of Uganda signed off on a comprehensive final peace agreement. The rebel leader, Joseph Kony was scheduled to add his signature two month's later on

April 10th. He failed to do so. A month after that, he was to meet a delegation of religious, cultural, and political leaders who he had invited to discuss issues that led him to refuse to sign. He failed to appear. Nearly 6 months then passed without further progress.

Then, in November 2008, stakeholders involved in the Juba Peace Process met in Kampala. Those present included Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and government ministers, members of the two negotiating teams, representatives of Parliament, civil society, organizations and donor governments, Dr. Riek Machar, Vice President of the Government of South Sudan and chief mediator in the Juba Peace Talks, and Joaquim Chissano, former President of Mozambique and UN Special Envoy for LRA- affected areas. At the end of the meeting, Machar and Chissano co-signed a communiqué, giving Kony a deadline of 30 November to sign the agreement. Kony signaled a willingness to do so, and a November 29-30 meeting was set up for him to sign. Once again, he failed to show up. Two weekends later, on Sunday, December 14, 2008, one week shy of a year ago today, the Uganda People's Defense Forces (UPDF) began bombing LRA camps in Garamba National Park in Northeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The rebels had first established a base in Garamba in 2005 and then largely relocated there during the course of the Juba talks. The air attacks were meant to be a surprise opening of a multi-pronged offensive against the LRA codenamed, as Mr. Hoge said, "Operation: Lightning Thunder." The operation officially ended three months later on March 15, 2009, when the UPDF began an abrupt 8-day process of withdrawal from the DRC.

The paper that I'm outlining today in the time that I have available does three things: First, it places "Operation: Lightning Thunder" in historical context by presenting background to, and then an overview of the Northern Uganda War and the Juba peace talks. This constitutes a significant part of the paper itself, which as an historian, I felt was essential. Today, in my limited time, I'll only highlight a few aspects of that background, but I would urge those of you who are interested to look over that part of the paper.

Second, the paper revisits and critically assesses the officially acknowledged three months of Operation: Lightning Thunder, about which, again today, I'll only have time to emphasize a few points. In fact, as the paper notes, the operation did not really end in March 2009 but continues unofficially and in different ways up to today, with UPDF pursuing the LRA in Northeastern DRC and neighboring areas of South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

I'll note in conclusion today two reports that have come out since I submitted this paper a few months ago and also some information that I just obtained last week about the most recent LRA or almost certainly LRA attack in South Sudan, an attack in Boro Medina and western Bahr el Ghazal in the very far north of western Sudan, of South Sudan.

The third and final part of the paper explores what might come next, again, as Mr. Hoge mentioned, that could contribute to peace and stability in northern Uganda and the wider region of which it's a part. Again, I'll outline these briefly, and hopefully, we'll be able to elaborate during the question and answer session.

But first, some historical background, and I want to focus on seven points, and I'll try and do this fairly quickly. T

The northern Uganda war, which began in 1986, less than a generation removed from colonial rule, has roots that can be traced back to the colonial era. British

colonial rulers in Uganda, with little basis in history or culture, erroneously stereotyped northerners in general and the people of Acholi, the epicenter of the war, in particular, as militaristic, and especially suited to be soldiers. Just as importantly, colonial policy favored development of the southern regions of the protectorate and neglect of the north, leading to an economic imbalance that helped push Acholi and other northerners into the army and police forces. Thus, an originally mythical colonial stereotype merged with colonial policy to produce a pervasive real life pattern.

Second, this colonial legacy was not only continued after Uganda's independence in 1962 but intensified. Ethnic stereotyping and an ethnicized military and politics, while its particular forms have varied over the last 40-some years, and from regime to regime, have marked post-colonial Uganda up to the present. This foregrounding of politicized ethnicity is not meant to convey a reductionist or otherwise simplistic view of ethnicity. The political calculations are privileged individuals and elite groups as they compete to gain or maintain power and access to resources, and wealth lay behind the manipulations and use of ethnicity in the military and elsewhere in Uganda's post-colonial politics. By themselves, the existence of ethnic and regional identities and differences, both as imagined in people's minds and experienced in their everyday lives, do not cause political struggle in Uganda or anywhere else. Instead, such identities and distinctions serve as tools or weapons, as potent and dangerous blunt instruments to rally political support by refining, essentializing, and often demonizing the other and negative ways. Such manipulations reach their most dangerous level when negative characteristics of political or military opponents are cast in ethnic or regional terms and generalized as essential truths about entire regions and societies. Unfortunately for Uganda, this dangerous blunt instrument has been employed by every post-colonial administration, stoking ethnic and regional differences and tensions in the process, and helping to produce a post-colonial Uganda that has not yet had a peaceful transition of power from one government to another.

Three: from the very beginning, when the first northern Uganda rebel group to fight the Ugandan government and its army, almost as soon as that government came to power in January 1986, the Northern Uganda war has had international dimensions. This has been especially true since the mid-1990s when the LRA began receiving report, support, and sanctuary from the Sudanese government, in return, aiding Khartoum in its civil war against the South Sudanese rebels backed by the Uganda government. More recently, the Northern Uganda war has extended into the DRC and the CAR -- the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central Africa Republic -- becoming part of even more complex, intertwined, regional and international politics and conflict.

Four as in all such wars in the late 20th Century and early 21st Centuries, however, it is civilians who have borne the brunt of the conflict. Many tens of thousands of people: women, men, and children from across the region have been abducted, mutilated, raped, tortured, wounded, and killed. The majority of these have come from Acholi, the long time epicenter of the war. And by mid-2005, some 1.8 million northern Ugandans had been driven from their homes and fields and relocated into squalid disease-ridden internally displaced IDP camps. Almost the same number as in the much more widely known, better known, Darfur. Again, the majority and the earliest of these displaced come from Acholi: more than a million people representing more than 90% of the population in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. Upon visiting northern Uganda during this period and touring the camps, the former UN chief humanitarian officer, Jan Egeland, referred to the situation in northern Uganda as "a human tragedy," "a moral outrage," and "as the biggest neglected humanitarian emergency in the world." The humanitarian emergency only

conveys partially a sense of the long northern Uganda war. It is also part of a deep political crisis in Uganda, a crisis based in part on ethnic stereotyping and ethnicized politics.

Five: in Acholi, the displacement that prompted Egeland's comments, in Acholi was forced displacement, official Ugandan government policy, and much of the time, the forcibly encamped people of Acholi were left with little or no protection from the rebels. In addition, despite promises to the contrary, government provision of basic services: water, sanitation, health care, education, to the camps was inadequate, often woefully so. Violence and abuse were rampant, and government repression common. It was impossible for most households to grow food or make a living in other ways. Huts could be so close together that their thatched roofs touched. Poverty and congestion led to high levels of alcoholism, domestic and sexual violence, and crime. Forced encampment in these conditions meant forced dependency, forced vulnerability, forced humiliation, forced congestion within camps, and forced isolation from outside. The physical, psychological, economic, social, and cultural damage caused by forced encampment is incalculable. Although so too are the many instances of human resilience and strength of will that helped many people to cope creatively and positively with the extreme circumstances forced upon them.

One 2005 study indicates the extreme exposure to violence experienced by the forcibly displaced people of Acholi. Of adults surveyed in camps in 2 of the 3 Acholi districts -- the third district, Pader, was left out because it was considered too unsafe to conduct the research -- over 50% of the respondents in those camps had been abducted at some point during the war. Nearly 40% had had their child abducted. Over 2/3 had witnessed a child being abducted. Nearly half had witnessed a family member being killed. Over half had been threatened with death, and nearly 20% had been physically mutilated, maimed, or otherwise injured. These figures are staggering. But they actually significantly underrepresent the overall violence faced by camp inhabitants. Not incorporating, for example, the domestic violence endemic in the camps, or the evidence of most UPDF violence.

But most of all, these statistics leave out the most pervasive, and ultimately most deadly violence of all, the structural violence that Mr. Hoge mentioned, that resulted from the government policy of enforced encampment. Structural violence is at the center of another study in 2005 by the World Health Organization and the Ugandan Ministry of Health, which estimated that conditions in the camps were resulting in 1,000 excess deaths- a- week. That's the structural violence of camp life, produced a far greater number of deaths than those caused by the LRA, just more quietly and unobtrusively.

Six, but structural violence is typically not dramatic, nor even easy to recognize as violence. Moreover, if those in power have an incentive to do so, structural violence is relatively easy to ignore or mask or deny, and this is what happened in what has become the dominant narrative, or what a friend and colleague, Sverker Finnström has called, "the official discourse of the Northern Uganda War." And let me just mention that, before coming here, yesterday I spent two days at the American Anthropological Association meetings in Philadelphia where Sverker Finnström and the book that he wrote on the Northern Uganda War called "Living with Bad Surroundings" was announced as the winner of the Margaret Meade Prize in Anthropology, one of the biggest book prizes in that discipline.

This dominant narrative, or official discourse, consists of two main themes. The first and most prominent of these is the brutal violence and mass abduction of minors perpetrated by the LRA. Second is the notion that the group and its leader, Joseph

Kony, is guided by an incomprehensible and essentially primitive worldview that excludes any meaningful political agenda or even dialogue. There can be no doubt that the LRA, like almost all rebel groups in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, has used horrific tactics to terrify local populations and demonstrate that the government that is supposed to protect them cannot or will not do so. Such tactics, murder, mutilations, looting, burning, and most notably with the LRA, their abduction of many thousands of children and youth, are indefensible. The LRA has done horrible, almost unspeakable things.

But a dominant narrative on the war that focuses so overwhelmingly on this single aspect promotes a simplistic black and white view of the war as essentially good, the Uganda government and army, the International Criminal Court, the U.S., vs. evil, the LRA. This ignores the fundamental complexity of the war and distorts the reality of those caught up in it. Indeed, for many of the people of Northern Uganda, and Acholi in particular, there has been no black and white, no good choice from among the often gruesome violence of the LRA, the often equally extensive and brutal violence of government troops with a typically slower, quieter, but at least equally destructive structural violence of the camps. Moreover, the war, and especially the camps and even exacerbated the old colonial pattern of inequality between north and south. Indeed, Uganda became during the war essentially two separate countries: one included the peaceful and relatively prosperous western and central parts of Uganda with a growing economy that has won much praise for Pres. Museveni, from the world bank, IMF, and other donors, including the U.S. The other has been a war torn, impoverished north.

The seventh and last aspect of the historical background that I'll briefly look at here concerns the Juba peace process from 2006-2008. These talks, mediated by the government, the semi-autonomous government of South Sudan, with strong vested interests in helping negotiating an end to the conflict, were assessed by many, both in and outside Uganda, as offering the best hope to end the war since it began, and as noted above, the rebel and government of Uganda delegations hammered out by early 2008 a comprehensive final peace agreement. In a chapter coming out next year, in a book called *Understanding the Lord's Resistance Army*, I incorporated a phrase that Sverker Finnström and I first used in a Sudan Tribune analysis piece: The Realists in Juba. I end that chapter with the following: "The realists involved in the tough negotiations that made up this process, representations from the GoSS, Government of South Sudan, the Government of Uganda, headed by Ambassador Rugunda, and the LRA/M helped create a space for at least a fragile peace to take root in Northern Uganda and also crafted a blueprint that could serve as the foundations for a lasting, sustainable peace. It was an impressive achievement, and I really do think that they were the realists in this long process. "Operation: Lightning Thunder", some very brief points. The operation was proclaimed from the beginning as a joint operation with the forces of the DRC and South Sudan. It was an overwhelmingly UPDF affair, in fact. With the other two forces and their governments not even notified until the operation had begun, and then playing a minimal supportive role at most.

Two: Despite UPDF and Government of Uganda claims of success, and what counted as success shifted over the course of the operation, this seems a questionable, if not dubious assessment.

Three: If the armies and government of the DRC and South Sudan were not real partners in this endeavor, the new command structure of the U.S. Army, AFRICOM, was an important contributor to Operation: Lightning Thunder.

Four: The Failure to Protect Civilians from a wave of horrific attacks after the UPDF operation began, has been widely acknowledged as an unmitigated disaster, whatever other assessments were made of the operation. These attacks, affecting much of northeastern DRC and nearby areas of South Sudan and CAR have been unprecedented in scope and scale since the LRA established a base in Garamba in Northeastern DRC. During the operation itself, the three months of the operation, official months, months of the official operation, upwards of 1,000 people were killed, hundreds abducted, the figures range widely from 250-870, and up to 200,000 displaced during the three months of the official "Operation: Lightning Thunder", all figures that have continued to climb since, with recent estimates indicating more than a half million people displaced in this region, all outside Uganda, outside Northern Uganda. The UPDF disclaimed responsibility for protecting civilians from LRA reprisals, which anyone who knows anything about the LRA would have expected.

This is their pattern. When they are attacked or pressured, they strike out against soft targets connected with those who are doing the attacking or the pressuring. The UPDF made no provisions for that protection, and even denied any responsibility for doing so, instead, blaming its faux partners, the FARDC, the Congolese forces, and the SPLA in South Sudan for not doing this. They also blame MONUC, UN forces that have a very limited presence in northeastern Congo. Widespread criticism of this UPDF failure has been virtually unanimous, and this includes five major reports that were done in the months following "Operation: Lightning Thunder", from Human Rights Watch to Conciliation Resources to the ENOUGH project, five major reports, all absolutely castigated the UPDF for their failure to provide for civilian protection, or even plan for such protection.

The final point I'll make about "Operation: Lightning Thunder" briefly is that information obtained from both former UPDF sources, soldiers rather, who were involved in Operation: Lightning Thunder, and former LRA members who have been in touch with the LRA who were there, suggest a process and operation that's very different than the official story that the UPDF and the Uganda government have so far provided. This other version was widely whispered about in Northern Uganda, but it only became public when two articles were published in the highly respected independent newspaper in Uganda, appropriately called *The Independent*.

Okay, just quickly, what next? These are my summary points, and we can talk about them, I hope, during question and answer, the question and answer session.

First, in terms of my own sense of what next, pursuing a military solution of the LRA problem has failed for two decades and is unlikely to be successful now.

Secondly, this leaves the only feasible approach is to attempt to re-establish peaceful dialogue with the LRA.

Three, initiatives to pursue such dialogue will have to come from sources other than the Ugandan government, which rejects this approach, although, as Adonia and I were talking this morning before this session, there was a recent comment by a Ugandan minister at the funeral of Joseph Kony's mother, who died a few weeks ago, suggesting a possible opening for Uganda to resume peaceful dialogue.

Four, whether that happens or not, one such source to pursue these peaceful dialogues could and should be the United Nations.

Five, this would require, among other things, the appointment of a new special envoy whose most immediate and pressing task would be to protect or work to protect civilians while also pursuing avenues for talks with the rebel leaders.

Six and finally, even if established, for such talks to be successful, they will have to deal somehow with the outstanding arrest warrants from the International Criminal Court in a way that the LRA leadership will find acceptable, as unpalatable as that notion might be.

There can be no doubt that Joseph Kony and the other top commanders have committed and ordered gross and horrendous human rights violations. Theoretically and ideally, from perspectives that range from fundamentally moral to narrowly legalistic, formal prosecution, a case can be made, a good case can be made for formal prosecution. But the three LRA leaders under indictment from the ICC have now fought in a conflict, really a series of conflicts, and in countries, encompassing four countries now, that have involved hundreds, even thousands of others, who have committed gross human rights violations, from presidents and generals, to foot soldiers in myriad militias and government forces. How, on the scale of justice, does insisting on the prosecution of these three LRA leaders weigh against the chance to end a conflict that has denied for more than 20 years the most fundamental justice of peace and security to, as Mr. Hoge mentioned, literally millions of people? That's the final argument of my paper.

Now I want to end, really quickly, if I can, with some recent or more recent information -- two reports, and then some information I have about the most recent LRA attacks. The first of these additional reports comes from Professor Philip Alston, rapporteur for the UN in the Congo, and in a report that was issued in October of this year, he has a brief section, it mostly focused on areas farther south in Eastern Congo, but he has a brief section on the areas affected by the LRA. He recounts the numbers killed and displaced, and one of the main arguments of the report is that while this threat continues, the FARDC, the Congolese forces, in their attempts to deal with it, are actually causing more civilian distress and damage than if they... they are the ones causing the most trouble now, the FARDC. He also points out that anyone should have known that civilian protection was needed if "Operation: Lightning Thunder" was going to be undertaken. He acknowledges continuing LRA attacks, but he also acknowledges a number of attacks, a number of robberies, a number of rapes, a number of killings by FARDC forces in northeastern Congo, and he finally acknowledges MONUC's presence is so light on the ground that they really can have almost no impact on what is going on.

The second report comes from the International Crisis Group, and it just came out last month in November, and I'm gratified by the fact that it makes several of the same arguments that the report that I've been summarizing today makes. The International Crisis Group argues strongly that there needs to be re-establishment of dialogue, that a military solution is not working and is unlikely to work. It points out that this will be difficult. It argues for a renewed UN role, central role, leading role in this process.

Finally, a report that I received, and a telephone call just last week about what, as far as I know, is the last major LRA attack into South Sudan, and this occurred in an area called Boro Medina in western Bur El Ghazal, way north, almost up to the Sudan border. It occurred in late October, 48 people were abducted, two policemen and two businessmen killed. After the attacks, a government, a South Sudan government and UN delegation arrived to investigate what happened, they were greeted by the SPLA, given a two hour military parade, and then they were not given permission to talk to any of the people who had been abducted.

The source that I had was able to talk with two of the abducted people, and this is what they told her: First, again, it wasn't absolutely certain it was an LRA attack, but there's all kinds of evidence that it was. The first thing she was told is that when people were abducted, again, 48 were abducted, they were told that they wouldn't be harmed, that they would just be carrying loot.

Two, despite the SPLA claim that they rescued the abductees, that didn't happen. The abductees were freed after they reached a certain point and had carried the loot far enough.

Three, the group was headed by three women, the LRA group was headed by three women. Not typical of the LRA, but certainly not impossible.

Four, the leader of the group had a satellite phone, and while they were leaving South Sudan and back in CAR, she reportedly received a phone call saying the SPLA was on their tail, and that is when they released the people they'd abducted, hid their loot and took off. The group of 40 only had 10 guns, all AK-47s, and they only used 5 bullets in killing the 4 people that they killed while they were on their shopping expedition. The others were carrying sticks and machetes.

That's the most recent report, and one of the things that this indicates, and the LRA now are very scattered, but at least this group's attack suggests that the LRA are not receiving substantial support from Khartoum, that's been reported, or at least suggested in several venues. It doesn't mean they're not, but at least this group, with only one fourth of the group armed at all, and the way they really preserved their ammunition, suggests that that group, at least, was not part of any rearmament that has occurred. Okay, that's it for me.

Hoge: Thank you, Dr. Atkinson. I think those comments reflect the nature of the report, which I said at the beginning pulls no punches. Ambassador Rugunda, we're always happy to have your participation here at IPI, but particularly so today since you had such direct and recent involvement in the efforts to bring peace to this situation, so please, the floor is yours.

Ruhakana Rugunda: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me take this opportunity to first of all thank Dr. Atkinson for a very thorough report and for the book he has written, and really to say that all those who are acquainted with the situation, that is a subject matter for today. I have significantly learned quite a lot from your work and from your presentation. I will make some comments, which will essentially be supplementing what you had said. In some few areas, I may have some difference of opinion, which I will also articulate.

First, in the book, you discuss extensively the Lord's Resistance Army. I would have been happier if you had also given a brief background on how the Lord's Resistance Army came up. I agree, there is reference to it, but the point I'm alluding to is that several rebel groups -- actually you talk of 27 -- but there were also several rebel groups which preceded the Lord's Resistance Army, or if you want, which were precursors of the Lord's Resistance Army, and government of Uganda, new government, which had just taken over power, spent a lot of time trying to contain all these groups.

This brings me to the second point, the relationship between Sudan and Uganda. In your book, you more or less give an impression that there was some kind of tit for tat. Sudan was supporting the Lord's Resistance Army, and the government of Uganda supporting the SPLA. I would like to say, if you go a little in the history, you realize that

perhaps that was not as factual as it is presented, because government of Uganda, then LRA, the army, the movement, captured a power in January '86. Within the three or so months, to create the whole country, we had most of the army, which had been removed, going to the Sudan. The Sudan government disarmed these people, 10,000 of them, approximately 10,000 guns. However, in August, just a few, several months after the capture of Kampala, the Sudanese government, which had disarmed the soldiers of the former government, called them back, rearmed them, and after being rearmed, they came and attacked Uganda at a border post and from that point on, spread to either areas of Uganda, especially Acholi region. Therefore, that's an indication that really, the initial assault was from the Sudan, which rearmed these people who had been disarmed.

The second point I want to make in that respect of the Sudan is that when Museveni took over power, or the movement took over power, the SPLA had no border connection with Uganda. The SPLA was in fact controlling areas neighboring Ethiopia, and during the incursions between the SPLA and the government in Khartoum, hundreds of soldiers belonging to the Khartoum government actually fled into Uganda. Uganda was some kind of safe haven for them. The point I'm making therefore is that Uganda did not provoke the Sudan in this situation.

Now, was Uganda supporting the SPLA or not? As a matter of principle, yes, Uganda supported the right of the people over the Sudan as a whole, including Southern Sudan, to enjoy good governance and their full democratic rights, and Uganda, therefore, recognized the SPLA as a legitimate voice of the people of Southern Sudan in articulating the views of the people of Southern Sudan. In this book, you, which as I said is really very good quality. I'm just highlighting a few areas where there are some differences of opinion. You talk of the national resistance army and movement, explicitly and implicitly emphasizing the Bantu ethnic (if you want to call it) group, and mobilizing along those lines in order to overwhelm the North. Indeed, you say politics has been so characterized by ethnic divisions that that is practically the order of the day.

My response here is that I agree with you that tribalism and ethnic differences play an important role in Uganda and also in Africa. But my contention is that it is not correct to say that the government of Uganda uses ethnic consolidation as a weapon, either during the war of liberation, or during the recent war with Joseph Kony. I'm saying this because, since you say it is explicit, since I've been one of the leaders of the movement in power, and I'm a founding member of that movement, I should have at least once heard this, in either private or public discussion, that we, this group, must do this or that. At no single moment since June 1981, when this movement was started, have I ever heard any reference to that effect by either Museveni, cabinet colleagues, or any of the serious leaders that I can think of. So it is not correct to say that this was a lie. On the contrary, what I have heard, and what has been the policy, because the movement started in Southern Uganda, we must go out of our way to do a lot of work and recruit people in Northern Uganda to ensure that there is national character of this movement. So it's really the question of ethnic politics not being a part. On the contrary, it has been the opposite. In fact, the 10-point program, which you are acquainted with, which was the manifesto of the national resistance movement, and item number 3, or point number 3 highlights the point that national unity and the struggle against sectarian politics shall be the cornerstone of the administration when the movement takes power. This was before the movement took power, and in my view, in practice, this is what was the case even after the capture of power.

The other point you make in your presentation and book is yes, Lord's Resistance Army is a terrible organization that committed heinous crimes, but equally, the

government army did the same. I have here a sharp difference. It's true that in the worst situation, misdemeanor, misconduct, by even the most disciplined army in the world will manifest, because they are working under extreme pressures. You and I are reading stories of what the American army has been involved in, some individuals in Iraq and what the Bush army, and that has been involved in Afghanistan and the like, so under pressure, it's possible for even good soldiers to commit crimes and make mistakes.

The UPDF has survived during the liberation war and after primarily because of the discipline it has exhibited. In fact, during the war in the north, at least 23 soldiers of the UPDF were executed by the UPDF because of indiscipline and because of criminal activity against the civilians. This shows the abhorrence and the great opposition both government and the army have for indiscipline, especially with regard to the civilian population. I know that this has even brought problems between international organizations and the government of Uganda, because of execution, but the government has said, yes we must demonstrate to everybody that it does not pay to use the gun to kill innocent civilians, and this is part of the philosophy of protecting the population from indiscriminate use of the gun by the soldiers.

Therefore, I do not share the view that UPDF has committed anything close to the crimes committed by the Lord's Resistance Army, and in fact that's why many civilians in the north had to run to the camps where UPDF was camping from the Lord's Resistance Army, because they knew they would get protection from the government forces.

A word about the IDPs. You literally, you firmly criticize these camps, these camps, people were forced into camps, and in the same breath, there was significant talk about protection of civilians. The concept of protection of civilians is, in my view, in the African environment, is easier to talk about in New York than to effect in the field. It may be in Uganda, it may be in the Congo, it may be elsewhere, because have numerous scattered people in villages, and to protect them would require massive and unmanageable deployment.

So, how do you protect them? The option that was adopted by the government was since when you are in your villages, you are liable to be abducted by UPD – by Lord's Resistance Army, let us make it easier for you to be in areas where you can be protected. I agree with the author that this created their own problems, because too many people assembling in large numbers without adequate preparations, without supplies, without pro hygienic environment, without food, without water, fortunately government embarked on this with the limited resources and met with the international community, governments, and some NGOs, civil society organizations, they came in quickly, and I think they did commendable work. Of course, no one wants to live in a camp! And conditions in the camp have never been comfortable! But I am happy to say that since the war in Uganda literally ended some 2-3 years ago, there has now been movement from the camps. The people are no longer 1.8 million in the camps. As I speak now, we think 5, around 5 or so percent, plus/minus, are still in the camps, and some of those who are still there are there because they were born in the camps, and they are not sure where to go. Some have not gone because there are land disputes. Some are looking for other different areas, so in brief, the issue of the camps was started with good intentions to help the population, and in fact, because of this enormous experience that Uganda has been able to accumulate, I'm sure you are aware that only about 3 weeks ago, 4 weeks ago, there was a major summit in Kampala on internally displaced persons, and as a result, an African convention on the management of internally displaced persons was agreed upon, building partly on the experience that the camp has gained over the years. The intentions of the camps were very positive. What happened in practice, true there were some problems,

security and otherwise, but now that's history, because most of the people have gone back.

Juba talks. I share your views about the Juba talks, it's true they played a positive role, it's true that for the two years I was living in Juba, aiding the government delegation, they were not easy talks. First, it was difficult to know who to talk to. Second, we are not sure whether people we were talking to really had a mandate! We had to go and meet Kony in the bush near Congo/Sudan border. We had three meetings at different occasions, and that's when we were able to be sure that what we were doing had the call, the agreement and the support of Kony and the other leaders. I must say, these talks were not finally concluded, but were very significant, significant because they showed that it is after all possible to meaningfully talk with some representative of the Lord's Resistance Army. Even more so, even more so, when we agreed on the 26th of August, 2006, on the cessation of hostilities agreement, and said all the Lord's Resistance Army fighters who are in Uganda should be free, show where they are, they should be able to walk to the UPDF barracks, that's the government army barracks, or to churches, or to the local leaders, and they should be assisted, we were amazed by the response. Actually, these people suddenly showed up, they went and reported to the government troops, they were given a lot of food and other things, they were given a route where to pass, they went and walked to the Sudan. Their problem was, in fact, carrying all the things they had been given by the government and by the government army. So, since that time, 2006, there has not been any meaningful fighting at all in Uganda, instead, of course, fighting went on in the Sudan, and subsequently from the Sudan, in DRC/Congo, so the talks were very, very useful.

I want to salute the government of Southern Sudan. They did very, very commendable work, because they were a young government, they were able to initiate the talks, they were able to chair the talks, and the whole vice president of the government of Southern Sudan, Riek Machar, was able to spare time and ensure that the talks went on and went on well. A number of ministers were involved, so they were positive talks. Unfortunately, the final peace agreement was not signed. We expected that eventually it will be signed.

Has the door to peace with the LRA been closed? The categorical position is this: the government of Uganda has not closed the door. Even today, Joseph Kony can come and sign the final peace agreement. In fact, the message the government of Uganda has given to Joseph Kony is that, "Joseph Kony, when you are ready to sign, there are two people you should call," and he has the telephone numbers of both of these people. One is President Chissano, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary General. The second is Riek Machar, the chairman of the talks, the chief mediator. Up to now, Kony has not called, but with the refusal of Joseph Kony to sign the final peace agreement, which all of us had even initialed, and President Museveni went to Juba to sign it, but it bounced because Kony refused -- in my view, it would be inconceivable that any government worthy of its salt would fold its arms and say, "Aw, you know, Kony has refused to sign the final peace agreement, what can we do?"

Hence, the action by the government of Uganda, government of Southern Sudan, and DRC Congo, together, to go and hit at Kony and his group. What reason was given? Many reasons are talked about, and you quote the Kony spokesperson in your book, but let me also tell you that one of the main reasons why Kony was attacked was because he was being told that neither Uganda nor the region nor the world would just keep quiet and let him refuse stubbornly to sign the final peace agreement. So he's welcome to come and sign it.

The ICC, in your book, and the indictments, are given as a major problem for this situation. In the negotiations, we agreed, and accountability under reconciliation, that

the Uganda high court was set up, a special division, to try the most serious crimes committed. Judges were even appointed and announced in Uganda. So the court is ready. But Kony did not, of course, respond.

Let me say this, that we believe that the courts in Uganda would be adequate. After all, there is the complementarity provision of the ICC Rome statute, and so long as accountability has been done in a manner that is really acceptable, then the work of the ICC would have been done. The critical point is not the label ICC. The critical point is that justice should be done. In addition, we are not saying justice that is only for punishing, no! We are saying it should be justice that must take into account the need for reconciliation and to ensure that both the guilty and the victims are able to walk closely together to wield and build one society. I agree with the author that we should promote a peaceful resolution of this conflict, but I also submit that it requires a carrot and stick. If Kony refuses, as has refused to talk, and continues to kill people, the world has no choice but to effectively respond.

Actually, the most effective way of protecting the civilian population is to deal with the root cause of the insecurity of the civilians. Therefore, while we are talking, looking for peace, if we think there is stubbornness and refusal, we should be prepared to invoke the stick.

Number two, we need to consolidate the peace in Northern Uganda, and indeed, I'm happy to say that at long last, Northern Uganda is now peaceful. We should implement the programs which are in place by government and by the international community, including signing of the final peace agreement, and the, Kony has been a very negative element, but believe it or not, even this negative element has got a silver lining. Kony's army now, the remnants of it, the majority are not Ugandans. The majority are people he has abducted in Sudan, in the Central African Republic, and in DRC/Congo, so this terrible failure has created the regional force.

I think the governments in the region may have to pick a lesson, though more positively, to have a proper regional approach to deal with this problem. The proposal of a new envoy from the UN, I do not subscribe to that. I do not subscribe to it because President Salva Kiir was an excellent envoy. He has the credibility, the authority, and the dedication to handle this matter. He personally went to the bush in DRC/Congo forests to meet Kony, even before he seriously went back on his job. He has done very good work in Madagascar and in other parts of Africa. I think Africa was lucky, and the region was lucky, and this particular problem was lucky to have President Salva agreeing to be the special envoy. His mandate, his job has not been terminated, no! What the Secretary General did, and we support him, was to say, since Kony has refused to talk, there is nobody to talk to, why should we maintain officers and offices, paying for this and that? Let us suspend this office. When Kony's ready to sign, then President Chissano will come and witness this function. Let us do everything possible as a way forward to continue looking for justice, but justice that will reinsure that it is also reconciliation. I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hoge: Thank you, Ambassador Rugunda. Thank you, in particular, for being so specific in your comments. Dr. Baldo, we'd like to hear from you now.

Suliman Baldo: Yes, and I would like to thank the IPI for inviting me to this event and to comment on the report. I would like to start from where both speakers have ended, that's to say, the way forward, and by focusing on the issue of justice, because the report presents the problem really as an either-or, that's to say, the issue of accountability as an obstacle for a peace agreement, and therefore any renewal or revival of the peace process would run into this difficulty and would have to come with an answer to it.

Strangely enough, the Juba process has addressed the issue of accountability as a major point in the negotiation, and compared to other peace agreements, the Juba agreement is very comprehensive and may be seen as exemplary, in fact, in laying out an approach to accountability and reconciliation precisely. It also highlights the significance for a variety of mechanisms to be implemented simultaneously for attaining both justice and accountability as complementary requirements, rather than an approach of either-or. Therefore, there is already a major achievement in the Juba agreement, and all that is needed is to build on that in any renewed dialogue and peaceful efforts and efforts to reach a negotiated settlement in the coming period.

The agreement or protocol on accountability and reconciliation is the driving force behind the government and international communities' current interest in the issue of transitional justice in Uganda. There are other transitional justice issues that pertain to root causes of the conflict, such as reparations, the reintegration of former soldiers of the LRA fighters that are found in the second protocol, the comprehensive solutions protocol, on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, and therefore, between these two protocols, you have a comprehensive set of mechanisms that, if taken together, they could significantly resolve the apparent tension between accountability and reconciliation. The agreement therefore makes a deliberate effort to balance these two essential notions, justice on the one hand and resolution of broken relationships on the other.

Since most of the damage that has occurred, it happened at the community level, the mechanisms that are envisioned are those of the creation of a special chamber in the high court of Uganda as a formal justice approach, the incorporation of traditional justice mechanisms to address the need for social justice and reconciliation at the grassroots level, and there are, of course, provisions for also, a truth-seeking mechanism, which is not called a commission -- the word has a bad reputation in Uganda because two previous truth commissions failed to really address root causes of grievances of marginalized communities and regions in Uganda and to address the issue of mass violations of human rights that occurred during different phases of the history of the country, therefore there is a call for a truth forum, a truth mechanism, but basically, it is a truth-seeking commission. Balance between accountability and reconciliation may play out between different mechanisms that are provided for, and even within the same mechanisms, and therefore, there is an understanding in government of Uganda circles that the special chamber of the high court would then take care of a limited number of individuals responsible for the more serious violations of international law, and therefore the understanding that this would be the basis for a complementarity challenge for the issue of the ICC warrants that remain pending and that are the main reason cited by Kony not coming back and joining the peace process.

I believe that there is sufficient evidence and sufficient provisions here to look into what these mechanisms would be capable of delivering in terms of meeting the requirements of complementarity challenge, and therefore resolving the issue of accountability in a way that does not either dilute the need for accountability or put the peace process in jeopardy. Their answer, I would conclude by this, given the time and limitations that we have, the best expression of what needs to be done was precisely articulated by Vice President Riek Machar in a report to the Ugandan government. Dr. Riek has urged implementation of some of the agreements, and here I quote, "for confidence-building with the LRA to show that the agreements they negotiated are already being respected."

Two, the most benefited that would accrue to the conflict affected communities, particularly in terms of the solutions that are victim and community focused.

Three, the fact that commencing implementation will address underlying grievances that may have sparked, fueled, or resulted from the conflict, and four, this would answer skeptics and detractors of the peace process.

The mediator has also argued that the agreements in Juba are legally valid and not provisional instruments since they have been initiated and signed by the delegations, and the fact that Kony and the two other top commanders or President Museveni haven't signed on them shouldn't diminish their legal power.

Thus a question that is also of very legal and political complexity, and I would like to turn it over to Ambassador Rugunda to tell us, if this agreement is binding to the government of Uganda. What we know is that the government of Uganda went ahead and created a government team to start implementations of the protocols on justice and accountability and reconciliation, and there are subcommittees to look into each of the mechanisms.

What has been going on over the last few months are preparations in terms of legislative action which needs to be finalized and study tools by members of the justice and law sector, JLOS, in Uganda to learn from experiences and places such as Sierra Leone, where two dozen members of the LOS in Sierra Leone, to look into models of special courts and models of approaches to accountability in post-conflict situations, so they travel to Sierra Leone, to Bosnia, Herzegovina, and to the Hague to look at international court examples there, so a lot of implementation is underway.

I'm not saying this is going to be an easy ride. There are many issues, the approach of the government, for example, may be a bit bureaucratic and very formalistic and not sufficiently intrusive. We know that very, that civil society groups in Northern Uganda, for instance, local leaders, traditional, religious, elected leaders in northern Uganda were key stakeholders in the peace process in Juba, they have to remain engaged, and they have to be acknowledged as full stakeholders in the peace process. It wasn't only the LRA and the government, and in fact, the intervention of these other stakeholders was key to the success of the Juba process, so the issues are not final, and there is a lot to build on to carry this to the final moment of realization of peace, reconciliation in Uganda and in the region, and I'm going to stop here, for the other two to take place. Thanks.

Hoge: Thank you, Dr. Baldo. I'm eager to get to the room for questions, but you did say you would appreciate hearing Ambassador Rugunda respond to that one. If you could do it ever so quickly, then we can get to the floor.

Rugunda: Well, the government of Uganda fully accepts all the agreements as they were signed and has already embarked on implementation of all aspects of those agreements which are not dependent on LRA. For example, the question of disarmament doesn't arise because LRA hasn't come, so the government of Uganda accepts the agreements and is implementing them.

Hoge: I also want to give Ron Atkinson a chance to respond at the very end, but I'm particularly eager now, if any of you have questions, please raise your hands and wait for the microphone to arrive once I call on you. There, the gentleman in the back,, and please introduce yourself.

Wilbert Ibuge: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm Major Wilbert Ibuge from the permanent mission of Tanzania, and let me thank the panelists for their good presentations, and really, Dr. Atkinson for the research, Ambassador Rugunda for the very elaborative statements. I have a couple points that I think that might be of concern to me. One, Jan Egeland has also called the Northern Uganda conflict Africa's forgotten war, but

for someone who is coming from East Africa, I was a young academic in the early 2000s and became military officer who still interacted with Northern Uganda, was actually there last, two years ago, I really know, not just know, but have been through the actual situation of seeing what has happened over the more than 20 years, the impact on the population, what has happened over the past two years since I was here, and to be honest, the areas that the international community needs to come squeaky clean, if I might use the term, one thing with the forgotten war scenario, it's important to underline that the international community has seen the ravages of Kony and his group. Since 1986 and go on.

Those lips from women and young men that have been cut from their mouths, if you see them physically, not from the pictures, you would see what I mean when I say that it's important, not to look into going into the idea of having a new UN envoy begin a process that President Chissano did so well, but rather to find a mechanism whereby iterative justice can eventually be realized in Northern Uganda. Is it true? I have seen it physically, it is not from reports, that people have moved out of the IDP camps. The IDPs that were created to actually ensure the people's protection themselves, really, you have Ugandan army, the UPDF which was so overstretched itself, it had to ensure that people are brought into the camps, but if someone says that's a gross violation of human rights or something again, we need to look into that. So I thought I should react to that, but one last point, no, let me recap, let me recap what come up with regard to the allegations of gross violations of human rights, "Operation Lightning Thunder", with something, I'm also aware of, as a military man, as somebody who comes from the region, I'm aware of what also transpired.

True, there are varied accounts, but one account that must not go forgotten in my view, in my personal view, is that when we speak of foresight, we are more looking at the ideal, and it's really ideal, it's beautiful to look at. Hindsight always brings us back to reality to what really should have happened, but sometimes it did not. No, the LRA has committed atrocities. When we have, us, when we have soldiers on the ground commit again crimes at what times of what they should do in the opposite way when it comes to the protection of civilians. Yes, we got to hold them accountable, but we should not lose sight of what we are really fessing up to, what is the really the crux of the matter? No, the negotiations in Juba ended quite, in my view, really forcefully and conclusive enough. Kony debunked. To go after Kony, beg him, and to look at the people who have their lips cut on the ground, what we really should be getting into is. It's important for the people on the ground that they receive their justice. Thank you.

Hoge: Would either of you like to respond to that? We can go on. You'll have a chance later. I think we'll go on and get some more questions. Thank you very much for that comment. Haile Menkerios in the front row here.

Haile Menkerios: I guess it's not really a comment for me to make, but since the only way out was presented as continuing a peaceful solution, and that the UN should take over, and they will probably, in one way or another come to the department of which I'm a part, I want you to help me out here. If, the question is if it comes to the content of what was the crux of the complaint, of the grievance that Kony is supposed to have represented, then all that seems to have been agreed and signed and ended. Now what remained was actually, we say the signing, well not signing, but it was a question of, I am ready to sign, we'll come to sign if the issue of the ICC indictment over me could be lifted and I could be sure that whatever is against me could be handled in a – this is the final, we know this is his position.

Now how much leverage does the UN have? What is going to be the basis now of continuing a peaceful solution with Kony? What can we say? Given the ICC indictment is an ICC indictment, and we've seen how much of a problem it caused even with Bashir,

because this is an international legal instrument in which the UN does not have any leverage? Of course the only way it could be done, possibly, might be if the LRA or either the ICC says there is the will and the capacity inside Uganda to try the case, that's one issue, or the other is a security council saying, okay, we will suspend this in the interests of peace, which I cannot see happening, and therefore, what would be the leverage actually for the UN now?

As Ambassador Rugunda said, President Chissano has not packed and left. What he said was, well since what needs to be agreed has all been agreed, when you are ready to implement, it must be implemented. Well, the second is the fact that since the agreement has already been signed, and it is, actually the victims are the people of Northern Uganda, then to appeal for the government of Uganda to fully implement and not wait for Kony, who's way out now and is not in a position to make it difficult for the government to implement that agreement, in the interest of the people of Northern Uganda, who would, well, whatever carpet there might have been the support of Kony, we'll pull the carpet from under his feet, is to fully and vigorously implement the agreement in favor of the people of Northern Uganda, and this would definitely, at least, if not make him agree, at least isolate Kony more.

With the international troops going, recruited as they go, it makes it more complicated. It is a threat that is not a direct threat actually to Uganda, it is there, it is not physically there, and therefore, the implementation should fully go ahead while a search on how to get all these countries together and come with a proposal, a way of how we could continue, I understand purely military alone hasn't worked at least. Either it hasn't been serious, or it is not the only way that should be pursued. But an easy solution is not very easy, and therefore, if you have any opinions as to how the UN might continue to engage for a peaceful solution, I would like to hear that.

Hoge: Panelists, I'm going to ask you to hold those thoughts and get a couple more questions, because we're running out of time. Peter Gastrow in the left hand corner, and then that woman who's had her hand up for quite a while there, and that will be the end.

Peter Gastrow: Thank you very much. My name is Peter Gastrow from the IPI. Question to both Dr. Atkinson and Ambassador Rugunda: as you were giving us your presentation, Dr. Atkinson, I thought of Angola and Dr. Jonas Savimbi and UNITA. Very different circumstances, clearly, but UN involvement, military solution's not the option, that was all part of the rhetoric as well, and at the end, surprising to everyone, the death of one person hasn't solved all the problems, but there was a new era. I'm not suggesting that is the answer to your problem there, I'm not familiar enough with it, but my question is, in your assessment, if Kony was to be killed, either through an attack or through some other way, what would the political response be in northern Uganda? Has he got sufficient support, sympathy for that to be a problem around which people might mobilize? Or will there be a sigh of relief, even in Northern Uganda, if that was to happen? I just don't know the area well enough to make an assessment. Thank you.

Hoge: I'm anxious to hear the answer, but we have one last question, and then we'll take all those questions in one final thrust.

Kirsten Hagon: Hi, I'm Kirsten Hagon from Oxfam International, and we have programs in Uganda, Sudan, and in DRC, so I work with communities that are affected by the LRA, and I have two questions for the speakers. The first one, Dr. Atkinson, you talked about protection of civilians, and in your paper, you mention the need for the peacekeeping missions to be doing more when it comes to the protection of civilians. So in the meantime, while whichever future avenues are pursued, be they military or

negotiations, do you have any particular recommendations on how to do to a better job of protecting civilians in the meantime, whether that be by peacekeeping missions, by governments, or by whom? The second question that I had which is also very short was, in your work, whether you did any consulting with communities, and I noticed that you mentioned in your paper about some senior members of the Acholi community in Uganda, but I'm wondering if you also talked to some of the other tribes, people from the other areas, the Langi, the Madi, the Teso, because I would imagine they might have some slightly different views, and I'd be interested to hear how their views on the different options might be. Thank you.

Hoge: Excellent. I think we'll go in reverse order here. Dr. Baldo, if you have any thoughts on those comments, and then Ambassador Rugunda, and then finally, we'll end with Ron Atkinson.

Baldo: In response to Haile's question, very pertinent one, I think the real action moving forward is the government of Uganda taking all the steps that are needed to address the structural inequities, the protracted marginalization of northern Uganda throughout the history of the country, and therefore addressing the root causes of the conflict. The elimination of Kony tomorrow wouldn't end the resentments and the grievances of the population in Northern Uganda. It would only just be another event for the population there, and therefore, implementation of the agreement in its full extent with regard to addressing the root causes of the conflict is key, and that is where the international community could make a difference by putting pressure and encouraging the government of Uganda through incentives, but also to constantly remind us that they really have a national responsibility as the government of the land to address injustice in and within their own borders, and without that, there will be no end to conflict or to grievances in Uganda or anywhere else.

Rugunda: The intention of the government has been within Kony's variable, within him being available would be useful to Uganda and to the international community to even see how somebody with such rudimentary education and contacts has been able to sustain a rebellion for so long. Second point, were the population involved, the population have been extensively involved in the negotiations, in the consultations, and actually during the talks, the government delegation and the Lord's Resistance Army delegation was able, the whole country, and the final peace agreement and their agreements enjoy support of the different parts and the peoples of Uganda. One of the instruments we agreed on to use for justice is mato put. Mato put, the traditional system of justice and reconciliation, and we believe that it would be adequate for many of the people who would be, who were involved in the Lord's Resistance Army and the crimes. The ICC, we left it, the court we put in place in Uganda would be for the few who have committed very grave crimes, so the protection of the population, we believe that the surest way to protect them is to remove the cause of insecurity.

Hoge: Ron Atkinson, you have the last word.

Atkinson: Okay. There are many questions on the floor here. I'm not sure how many I will be able to get to or even remember to try and get to, but a couple of general points, and I'll try and touch on most of the questions as I remember them. I really agree with both Dr. Baldo and your comment that implementing the final peace agreement is a really crucial element for building sustainable peace in northern Uganda. It's really essential. And Ambassador Rugunda, I haven't been in Uganda for several months now, so I may be missing what's going on, but when I was there, I was there all of last year until the middle of May, I didn't see, and the people that I talked with in northern Uganda didn't see much evidence of implementation of any of the agreements of the final peace agreement. I think it's a quite remarkable peace agreement that you helped negotiate. If it could be implemented, it would make a tremendous difference for the

people of northern Uganda and for long-term peace in Uganda. I think, I absolutely agree, it's really crucial, as all of you have suggested, but I don't know that we've seen much indication of what that can mean. Also, Ambassador Rugunda, your final point about mato put, that is being utilized in Acholi now, there are similar approaches being utilized among other groups. I think it can help and will matter.

With respect to your general question about discussions with other senior leaders from other areas of Acholi, one of the best statements that I've seen or research on that that I've seen, the UN office for the high commissioner for human rights did a really, really superb report using focus groups all across northern Uganda, looking at issues of accountability and responsibility for what happened, and it's a really superb report, and that does bring into the mix, not just Acholi, but the other groups affected by the war, and as always, there's no agreement on the best way forward. People have different ideas, people have experienced this differently, but this is a really comprehensive look, the most comprehensive I've seen anywhere, so I would recommend that.

In terms of the role for the UN, for me, it isn't the UN necessarily in particular, and I'm afraid that while special envoy Chissano's role was an incredibly positive one, for his future ability to play a role, his support of "Operation: Lightning Thunder", even the measured support that he gave, makes it difficult for me to see him being an effective, playing that role effectively in the future with the LRA. I think it's going to be really hard for, despite the trust that I understand built up with President Chissano, I can't see that being renewed, given his support for Operation: Lightning Thunder. That's why I'm suggesting it should be someone else. It could be Obasanjo, who has some general responsibility for peace in the area, but the main reason that I'm arguing for someone like this is no one's talking to the LRA, to the LRA leadership. Now they're making that very impossible, they're making it impossible in part just because of sheer security considerations, personal security considerations, but someone, someone needs to figure out a way, it seems to me, to talk with someone that has the LRA trust to actually begin to see if there's ways to open lines of communication. I think someone in the UN could play that role. I don't know that, but I wish someone would really try, because right now, there's no communication, and until there is, it's been a year since "Operation: Lightning Thunder", one week shy of a year.

I don't see that anything has gotten better as a result of that operation, and that operation really did put paid, for now, to any kind of continuing discussion under the status quo. Something has to change, and that was one of my ideas for something that might change if someone in the UN could begin really exploring who would the LRA leadership be willing to talk to, who could get to them, who could talk with them, and I don't know who that is, but I wish someone would really try and explore to find out, and in terms of protecting civilians, all of the armies in the region need, or could play a much stronger and more effective role. In Northeastern Congo, the FARDC, as Philip Alston's report suggests are being seen more as an obstacle than a help, in parts of Western Equatorial and Western Bar el Ghazal, from what I've been hearing, the local communities there find the SPLA either not interested or not willing to really provide protection, and so no one's doing it, and MONUC doesn't have enough people or any other international group to do it, so international support could maybe put pressure on these governments and their armies to do a better job, because right now, it seems to me, they're not.

Hoge:

Ron, thank you. I apologize for going a little bit over, but I found the comments so interesting, I couldn't cut anybody off. Thank you very much for coming, panelists, thank you very much for being such a wonderful panel.