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**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

**Press release**

**AU PLEDGING CONFERENCE ON THE HORN OF AFRICA: MORE THAN US\$350 MILLION DOLLARS PLEDGED**

**Addis Ababa, 25 August 2011** –African Union (AU) leaders gathered at the first ever AU Pledging Conference and made pledges of more than US\$350 million dollars toward the relief effort assisting the millions of people in crisis due to the extreme drought and famine conditions in the Horn of Africa. Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Jean Ping, noted “this is no time for rhetoric but concrete action through the announcement of redeemable pledges that build concerted action by Africa against hunger on the continent.”

The funding needs to address the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa has been put at US\$2.48 billion of which \$1 billion has been committed so far. The Horn of Africa is experiencing the most severe drought of the past 60 years, affecting 12.5 million people, including hundreds of thousands in Somalia, parts of which have fallen into famine. The contributions will go far in bridging the more than US\$1 billion gap in funding. An additional \$28 million of ‘in kind’ donations, such as food, medicines, and other forms of assistance was also pledged.

Emphasizing the capacity that exists within the African continent, Mr Jerry Rawlings, Special Representative of the African Union for Somalia, said the pledging conference was a message to the world that “we are not incapable of supporting our own.” He added that beyond the immediate urgency, “we must ensure that we address the root causes and not simply throw money at it and wait for another emergency in a few years.” In this regard, he underscored the need to provide more resources to AMISOM to allow them to expand access and enhance security in Somalia.

Mrs. Asha Rose Migiro, UN Deputy Secretary-General, pledged the full support of the UN to support the African Union with this effort, noting that the United Nations system has mobilized all its resources to join forces in responding to this critical situation. “This conference sends a clear message to the world: the African Union remains fully engaged with this crisis, and is taking a leading role in all our efforts to save lives,” she stated.

Mr Meles Zenawi, as Prime Minister of Ethiopia, a country affected by the drought, and as Chairperson of IGAD, called upon the audience to look at the root causes of crisis, namely security and stability in order to create a conducive environment so as to avoid famine in the future. He also advised to scale up successful projects to adapt to climate change as the worst is yet to come.

Chairperson of African Union and President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, Mr Teodoro Obiang-Ngema Mbasogo said that Africa should not ignore the factors that hinder peace, security and stability in one of the member states of the Union such as Somalia. It is crucial that the AU adopts a mechanism able to tackle crisis without relying exclusively on the international community. He reiterated his concern before the remaining funding gap and also reiterated his call for more generosity towards the Horn of Africa.

The pledging remains open and the African Union called on the private sector join forces to help fill the funding gap. The international community was asked to renew commitments as well as to help support medium- and long-term strategies aimed at creating resilience that allows for food sustainability as well as mitigate against the negative impact of climate change in the Horn of Africa and other parts of the continent such as the Sahel which is perennially affected by drought.