



EDITORIAL

“One Africa One Voice Against Hunger”

Once again a desperate humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa has caught the attention of the world at large.

Vast swaths of the region, and in particular, Somalia, have been in the grip of a severe drought for many months leading to acute food shortage. In two regions of Somalia, the dreaded killer word, “famine”, has now been officially declared.

A staggering estimated number of over 12.5 million people (with 3.3 million affected in Somalia alone) are now in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. This grim situation is likely to worsen by the fact that the negative impact of the drought will continue to increase in the days and months ahead.

Regional authorities in several countries have been working hard in partnership with international NGOs and UN agencies to tackle the situation for some time. However, despite these commendable efforts, the adverse impact of climate change across the region, as well as continuing conflicts, in some areas, have caused a further deterioration in the humanitarian situation.

The African Union has been at the forefront of activities to tackle the crisis, in collaboration with international organisations and bilateral partners. However, we are the first to acknowledge that our efforts, to date, while notable, have not been enough. It is thus critical now to upscale our own regional resources in this battle to save the lives and livelihoods of millions of our fellow African brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa.

In that context, the AU is organising a Pledging Conference on the Horn of Africa in Addis Ababa on 25 August, to raise resources and awareness amongst AU Member States and the wider international community towards alleviating the plight of the affected populations in the region.

There is an urgent need to fill a funding gap of (about 1,4 billion USD) that currently exists in the resource requirement needed to address the dire humanitarian situation resulting from this extreme and persistent drought situation in the Horn.

On-going fund raising efforts at the international level are focussed on filling the funding gap mainly from the contributions of traditional sources of funding.

While the support of these partners is needed and commendable, it is also imperative that we, Africans, be seen to contribute what we can, from our own financial resources to tackle the humanitarian, food and nutritional crises, occasioned by the drought situation in the Horn of Africa.

The proverb says: ***“United we are Rock, Divided we are Sand”***.

Therefore African countries, collectively, through our continental body, the African Union, must now be more proactive in addressing the drought situation in our affected states.

It is against this backdrop that the Pledging Conference on the Horn of Africa crisis is being convened to garner contributions from the AU’s Member States, the Regional Institutions and also the private sector.

The key aim of the high level meeting is to bring the drought situation in the Horn of Africa to the consciousness of African leaders and the International Community at large by calling on them to make direct financial or in-kind support to the region in general, and to Somalia, in particular.

Vocal and concrete support of this nature by African leaders within a summit type forum will be an important and viable expression of solidarity with the plight of the affected populations.

Other core partners of Africa such as the League of Arab States, Organization of Islamic conference, Brazil, Russia, India, China, the United States and the EU will also be invited to make pledges.

Finally, the conference will seek to impress on African leaders and the international community at large, the necessity of focusing on the conceptualisation of a viable medium-to-long term AU crisis-mitigation strategy, which will strengthen the coping mechanisms at the national level, as well as increase the effectiveness of our new regional African Risk capacity and disaster reduction mechanisms.

The funds to be raised by the African Union will be used to fill emergency funding gap through operational partners such as UNHCR and WFP, while the longer term mitigation programme at the regional level will be carried out through FAO and WFP.

Time is of the essence. Lives are at stake. We therefore sincerely hope that our esteemed fellow leaders in government and the private sector will answer the AU’s call to demonstrate concrete support to Somalia and other affected countries in the region, by making whatever contributions they can to help fill the Horn of Africa crisis funding gap.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jean Ping', is written over a horizontal line that extends across the page.

Dr Jean Ping
Chairperson of the African Union Commission