



Opening Remarks

by

**H.E. Dr. Jean Ping,
Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

On the Occasion of the

**African Union Pledging Conference
on Drought and Famine for the Horn of Africa**

Your Excellency, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, Chairperson of the African Union

Your Excellency, Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of IGAD

Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government Present

Your Excellency, Jerry Rawlings, Former President of the Republic of Ghana and the High Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission

to Somalia

Your Excellency Dr. Rose Migiro, Deputy Migiro, Deputy Secretary General, Representative of the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon

Honorable Ministers

Excellencies, Ambassadors, Permanent Representatives and other Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Representatives of Member States

Distinguished Representatives of Regional Economic Communities

Distinguished Representatives of UN Agencies, Partner Institutions

Distinguished Representatives of the Private Sector

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed, an honour and pleasure for me, on behalf of the African Union Commission, to welcome so many African Union Heads of State and Government, and other prominent dignitaries representing their various Governments and institutions, who, despite the short notice and their heavy schedules, have gathered here today, so that we can together, consider how we could address the current huge humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa in general, and Somalia, in particular.

2. Allow me to pay special tribute to the Chairperson of our Union, H.E. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, for the sterling role he has played in the organization of the Pledging Conference. He did not hesitate to receive H.E. Jerry John Rawlings, High

Representative for Somalia on the issue. He also promoted the idea to dedicate August 15 to sensitizing all our Member States to the importance of the Pledging Conference and the need for Africans to show that they are their brothers' – and Sisters' – keepers, by participating massively in today's Conference and by making important contributions to this African initiative. I have informed the Chairperson of the Union that the events of that day under the theme "One Africa – One Voice Against Hunger", was a huge success here in Addis Ababa and I believe this has contributed to the massive attendance we are witnessing today.

3. I also would like to thank H.E. Ato Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of IGAD, for his contribution to the success of this Conference. As has always been the case, the Government of Ethiopia has made considerable and often unrecognized contributions, to the success of our Summits, this one included, held in Addis Ababa. We thank all IGAD Representatives here for the burden they have carried and for being part of this African event.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Barely two months ago, when our Continental Leaders met at an Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, one of the items on the agenda before the Executive Council was a report on the humanitarian situation in Africa, which focused, in part, on the forced displacement of people due mainly to natural and man-made disasters. Since that time, countries of the Horn of Africa, namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and especially Somalia, have been gripped with severe drought and famine, the worst in 60 years. The crisis has resulted in widespread loss of lives and wiped out livelihoods in affected areas. The situation in Somalia has been further compounded by conflict and insecurity, lack of access to affected areas, high food prices, human and livestock diseases. There are now over 400,000 displaced people in Mogadishu, the capital, with an average of 1000 more arriving there everyday. There is also continuous forced displacement of people from the country into Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Over 600,000 people have already found themselves in these countries.

5. It is recalled that in July 2011, the United Nations already declared a state of famine in Southern Somalia, mainly in the two regions of Lower Shabelle and Bakool. The country has the world's highest malnutrition rates exceeding 50%, especially among children. One in four children is acutely malnourished in the south of the country.

6. It is against this backdrop that our Member States agreed to hold this emergency Pledging Conference to save the lives of over 13 million brothers and sisters who have fallen victim of the drought and famine and are in dire need of urgent humanitarian assistance.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

7. The fact that the Conference is being attended by our highest authorities, the Heads of State and Government, leaders of our Private Sector on the Continent, Representatives of Governments and Regional Economic Communities, the United Nations System, Representatives of various Inter-Governmental Organizations from inside and outside of Africa, Civil Society Organisations, among others, demonstrates our collective commitment to our shared responsibility to our brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa and Somalia in particular.

8. Nevertheless, some critics have alleged that the African Union and its Member States have reacted too late and too little. However, allow me to show what Africa has done to assist the affected population in the Horn of Africa. First, I would like to remind us all that the Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya have opened their doors to Somali affected populations and have been receiving them in large numbers. This is not a small contribution on the part of these countries, particularly as they themselves have been affected by the drought. I particularly extend my gratitude to them for sharing the burden of their neighbors.

9. Secondly and ahead of today, many pledges have been made. These efforts were set in motion with the donation of a total of US\$ 500,000 from the AU Fund for forced displaced persons and the Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine in Africa.

10. Thirdly, various missions have been dispatched to some of the most affected countries, namely, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. This includes high-level delegations consisting of the African Union High Representative for Somalia, H.E. Jerry Rawlings, myself, the Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission and Chairpersons of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons and Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine in Africa. In this respect, I visited the Dolo-Ado refugee camp in South-Eastern Ethiopia on 14 August 2011 and Mogadishu on 20 August 2011. I was accompanied to the Dolo-Ado refugee camp by Ethiopian Government Officials, the Chair of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the Ambassadors of Canada and the US in their capacities as Chairperson and Member of the AU Partners Group, respectively. In these cases, we witnessed first-hand, the distressing sights of people in varying states of weakness and pain, deepened by mothers who had been forced to abandon their children on the way because they could not continue. We also witnessed the poor condition in which the new large numbers of Somali refugees, especially the children, arrive in the camps and the efforts being made by the Governments and the humanitarian organizations to cope with such situation. A large number of the children are malnourished and this will likely affect their brain growth in the future.

11. These visits graphically portrayed the magnitude of the crisis and brought to mind what needed to be done urgently to address it. In Somalia itself and in the drought stricken areas of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti, the picture is dire and thousands of victims need help. Moreover, cross border migrations in the affected region create competition for scarce resources, which could erupt into resource-based conflicts between the refugees and the host communities. They also brought to the fore the funding requirements needed to respond to the crisis, currently estimated at US\$2.48 billion, and raised great concern about the fact that out of that amount, only US\$1.03 billion or 42 % had been secured as at the end of July 2011.

12. This is to emphasize that the African Union has not been silent and certainly has not felt unconcerned about the plight of the brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa. How can Africans feel unconcerned with the graphic picture I have given above and which they have also witnessed? This is why the African Union decided to

organize this Pledging Conference and we thank the rest of the world for joining us here today.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. Some of our partners have also made some valid observations. One of this is that many of ~~them~~ our partners have contributed substantially and on their own, considerable resources to deal with the emergency and were not really counting on making new pledges, here. I had occasions to discuss this with some of our partners and I have thanked them immensely for what they have done already. Nevertheless, I have also emphasized that this is the first African effort, on such a large scale to raise funds and materials for such an emergency. We therefore appeal that our partners will also support us directly here inspite of the enormous resources they have already deployed.

14. A second observation is that the African Union does not have the capacity to utilize the funds or distribute the resources to the affected population. We recognize this and that is why, for this first time, we are going to work with all existing Agencies, particularly the UN System such as OCHA, WFP, UNDP, UNICEF and even NGOs that have expertise and channels for distributing food and other materials.

15. Some of you have also raised the issue of accountability and transparency. To respond to those anxieties, and as a mark of the positive values the African Union has been preaching in the last few years, we have put in place a management structure that involves our partners, and other contributors. More detail is available in our documentation but I want to assure that your funds, and your contributions will not go to waste.

16. I should emphasize that it is because of these concerns that we are working with our partners in the UN System. Baroness Valery Amos, Head of OCHA, has visited us in Addis Ababa and her representatives in Addis Ababa have been working closely with us in the international steering committee that organized this Conference. They will also all remain with us after the Conference.

17. One other major reason we have organized this Conference is to emphasize the fact that several international humanitarian agencies and AU partners have difficulties in gaining access in order to provide humanitarian relief to the populations most affected by the drought and famine and to provide safety for the humanitarian aid workers. AU's presence in Somalia through AMISOM has helped, but the latter is not able to provide humanitarian corridors for safe access to needy populations and delivery of emergency goods and services throughout Somalia. I sincerely wish to thank Uganda and Burundi whose troops constitute AMISOM for the role their troops are playing in Somalia. I wish to use this opportunity therefore, to appeal to all concerned to allow aid to reach those who need it, irrespective of where the population may be or who is controlling the area. I believe the time has also come for the UN to supplement our efforts by deploying troops in Somalia.

18. I suggest also that we should engage non-state actors operating in the South-central Somalia within the context of the need to establish a Civil-Military Coordinating Mechanism that will address the use of military assets and personnel to maintain and expand the humanitarian space.

19. Another important reason for this Conference is the need to emphasize that the humanitarian crisis that we are experiencing today in the Horn of Africa makes it imperative for us to pay greater attention in the future to finding medium and long term solutions in the area of humanitarian issues not only in the Horn of Africa but on the Continent as a whole. All of us are aware that there are also circles of drought, coupled with famine, in other parts of the Continent. The Sahel Region is a classical example and our plans for the future must take this on board.

20. It is also critical to develop strategies to ensure that the humanitarian efforts, supported by the African Union's mobilized resources, are linked to medium and longer term solutions that protect productive assets and build resilience among communities in drought-prone areas by expanding the scope for recovery and rehabilitation, while at the same time addressing the African Union capacity to mitigate and manage disaster risks by drawing on relevant continental frameworks and commitments, especially the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and on existing Clusters and Sub-Clusters. I also strongly

believe that the time has come for the African Union to address the issue of alternative sources of funding so as to make the Union more self-reliant in resolving crisis affecting the Continent. We have produced a preliminary paper on the longer term strategy but this is only the very first thought which needs to be further developed.

21. Let me conclude by expressing the sincere appreciation of the African Union Commission to all our partners who have collaborated with us in organizing this Conference. The United Nations System has worked closely with us and the UN Secretary General, H.E. Ban Ki Moon, had wanted to be here personally but for his prior engagement. This is why we have with us our sister, the Deputy Secretary General, Her Excellency Dr. Rose Migiro. Please convey our appreciation to the Secretary General, and your colleagues. We are re-assured that with your support, we will succeed.

22. I should like to use this occasion to thank my brothers and Colleagues, Dr. Abdoulie Janneh of ECA and Dr. Donald Kaberuka of the AfDB, who has had to break his vacation to come here and has announced, and may announce another substantial contribution. Many African diplomats outside Africa have also joined the Commission in sensitizing their host countries to the Pledging Conference and urging them to be here. I like in particular to thank the African Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo who took the lead on this.

23. Finally, Excellencies, while welcoming you all once again to this Pledging Conference, I should like us to remain cognizant of the reason for our gathering, which is to raise the much needed resources for the humanitarian crisis on our hands in the Horn of Africa and Somalia in particular. This is no time for rhetorics but concrete action through the pronouncement of redeemable pledges that build concerted action by Africa against hunger on the Continent.

24. Thank you all for your contributions and your presence. I know that the people of the Horn of Africa and especially the people of Somali, greatly appreciate your gesture. I wish you safe return as you return to your various abodes.

