

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO AFRICAN UNION PLEDGING
CONFERENCE**

Addis Ababa, 25 August 2011

Excellencies,

It is a great privilege to be here in Addis Ababa for this important pledging conference.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, has asked me to personally convey not only his best wishes – but his commitment to working with all of you to help end the suffering in the Horn of Africa.

Secretary-General Ban has mobilized the United Nations system to join forces in responding to this critical situation, and I am here on his behalf to pledge our continued full support.

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.

The gravity of the situation demands our utmost commitment.

In Somalia, famine has spread throughout the south, including Mogadishu, and could advance further over the next four to six weeks. Tens of thousands of people have died. 3.2 million Somalis are on the brink of starvation – including 2.8 million people in the south. Many are in areas where we, the United Nations and partners, have not been allowed to work.

Communities have been shattered. Mothers and fathers are grieving for their sons and daughters. A generation of orphans is looking for answers - without the guidance of their families - and they will bear the scars of hunger for the rest of their lives.

Millions of people are also struggling to survive in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti, after the worst drought in decades.

While the situation outside Somalia is not expected to reach famine proportions, the suffering is real and widespread – and we cannot afford to lose the momentum for action.

And even as Kenyans and Ethiopians confront their own difficulties, they are hosting hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees, who have fled conflict and famine, and who now live in vast camps.

We thank Kenya and Ethiopia for their generosity, including the decision to open more camps to deal with the inflow.

Excellencies,

We must also remember that this is not just a hunger crisis.

It is also a public health crisis – with a genuine threat of disease, including cholera and measles, spreading throughout Mogadishu and beyond. We must do everything to ensure that affected communities have enough clean water, medicine and hygiene supplies to stop it spreading further.

This is also a protection crisis. Where women face the threat of rape in overcrowded camps. Where orphaned children are lost and scared, with no sense of future. Where refugees are being preyed upon by armed gangs and bandits during their long walk to safety.

And, this is a livelihood crisis: thousands of households have sold their assets to keep themselves alive. Pastoralists have lost their livestock: they will only be able to survive future environmental or economic shocks if they can rebuild their resilience.

The Transitional Federal Government must take up these challenges to assist and deliver food relief and basic services to Somalia in the areas that it controls.

People elsewhere in Somalia will be watching what happens in Mogadishu. The crisis thus marks an opportunity for the Government to make a difference.

It is crucial that the international community is fully committed and supports the TFG so that it can exercise its responsibilities to protect civilians and play a coordinating role in delivering aid.

Short-term relief must be linked to building long-term sustainability and resilience. It is never too early to begin to think how shortages can be averted and to encourage appropriate agricultural intervention which is sensitive to climate and market fluctuations, so as to end the cycle of recurring crises. The TFG also needs to step up its own outreach and reconciliation efforts to build sustainable peace in Somalia.

In this regard, the constitution-making process is critical. It must be broadly consultative and inclusive.

Excellencies,

Dear Friends,

We in the United Nations are doing all we can to address these many challenges. We sounded the alarm last year, and we are conducting a worldwide campaign to draw attention to the crisis.

Later this morning, you will hear more about what humanitarian agencies are doing on the ground to save lives.

In general, we can say that the international response is accelerating.

Aid agencies are arriving in greater numbers and delivering increasing supplies in Mogadishu. Despite restrictions and security concerns, they are expanding operations in the rest of Somalia.

In areas where western and UN agencies have not been able to gain access, many Islamic organizations have arrived and are responding to needs.

In Kenya and Ethiopia, humanitarian organizations are also providing assistance to millions of people, including hundreds of thousands of refugees.

But we are still not reaching all the people who need help, and the crisis has still not peaked. The cost in human suffering will rise even higher. We must do all we can to stop the acceleration.

Sometimes the numbers can be difficult to comprehend. But when we say that mortality rates in young children have reached 13 per 10,000 per day in some areas, that means that by the time we go to sleep tonight, 13 children will have died in a community of 10,000 people.

And 13 more will die tomorrow. And another 13 the day after that.

Excellencies,

The future of an entire generation hangs in the balance.

In this battle, the UN and its partners are only part of a much broader picture.

Above all, this crisis is being tackled by local people and institutions – including the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies - who are working hard to save lives.

Regional organizations, including the African Union, are playing an essential role in offering the know-how and support.

That is why it is so important that the African Union takes its rightful place at the forefront of the response to this crisis.

First, we would ask you to give, however you can.

Many governments here have already made generous pledges. We ask others to do the same, and where possible, we ask those who have already given to give more.

But it is also essential that private companies, and individuals, play their part. I look forward to hearing clear commitments from the private sector.

As you give, we would ask you to make your donations to multilateral efforts - pooled international funds - so that we can jointly identify where the needs are greatest, and how that money should be best spent.

Some elements of this crisis have been well funded. Others less so. No-one must be forgotten.

We also ask you to help us get the access we need to save lives. To use your influence, wherever it may lie, so we can reach everyone who needs help, no matter where they are.

Dear friends,

I assure all parties: the United Nations' humanitarian agencies and partners are here for one reason and one reason only: to save lives.

It will not be easy. This emergency will be long and complex. It is likely to last at least until the end of the year and beyond.

But we cannot fail. We must end this crisis, and we must stop it spreading further.

If we do not respond, the consequences will reverberate for years.

We will be asked how we stood by and watched a generation die, how we allowed a crisis to become a catastrophe, when we could have stopped it.

By holding this meeting, the countries of the African Union have taken an essential step. You have shown that you are ready and willing to come together during a moment of profound challenge, and to raise the resources needed to end suffering.

The seriousness of the situation demands no less.

Thank you.

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