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## **PRESS RELEASE**

***African Union deeply concerned by the drought situation in Somalia and the Horn of Africa and its humanitarian consequences***

***AMISOM IS PROVIDING SECURITY IN MOGADISHU TO FACILITATE DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ACCESS BY AIDWORKERS TO THE NEEDY POPULATION***

**Addis Ababa, 12 July 2011:** The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, reiterates AU's deep concern at the prevailing humanitarian situation in Somalia, caused notably by the current drought affecting the country and the Horn of Africa, in general, which is one of the worst in recent memory. Close to 3 million people, that is 1 in 3 Somalis, are in need of humanitarian assistance. This has led to major displacements into urban areas, in particular Mogadishu, as well as in neighbouring countries.

The Chairperson of the Commission notes with concern that the number of children suffering from malnutrition was estimated at about 600,000 in the first half of 2011, and is, unfortunately, expected to increase in the coming months.

Against this background, the Chairperson of the Commission strongly calls on all AU member states to contribute in whatever way they can to the alleviation of the suffering of the affected populations. He calls on African humanitarian NGOs to contribute to the ongoing efforts.

The Chairperson of the Commission appeals to AU partners and international humanitarian organizations to provide the much needed financial and logistical support for the relief efforts in Somalia. He stresses the responsibility and obligation of the international community to assist the Somali people, who, for the past two decades, have experienced untold suffering as a result of the conflict tearing their country apart and the resulting collapse of state institutions.

The Chairperson of the Commission expresses AU's profound appreciation to all United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations that are already providing, in very challenging security conditions, assistance to the affected populations in a number of areas, in particular food, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, shelter and non-food items, and health. He encourages them to persevere in their efforts and assures them of AU's continued support.

In this respect, the Chairperson of the Commission has directed the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to continue doing everything in its powers to provide security for humanitarian personnel in Mogadishu, in order to facilitate access to those in need of food and other relief items. AMISOM is already providing limited humanitarian assistance (medical care and water) to local communities in Mogadishu, as well as securing both the seaport and the airport, thus making possible the delivery of humanitarian relief.

The Chairperson of the Commission has requested the AU High Representative for Somalia, former President of Ghana Jerry John Rawlings, to pursue and intensify his efforts aimed at sensitizing African countries and mobilizing both financial and in-kind support. The High-Representative will shortly travel to Mogadishu to assess the situation on the ground and make further recommendations on the best way forward.

Today, the Commission and the AU Sub-Committee on Refugees and Displaced Persons meet to review the situation and identify additional steps in support of the relief efforts in Somalia, in particular, and the Horn of Africa, in general.

Over the past few days, the Chairperson of the Commission held consultations with a number of stakeholders on the humanitarian situation in Somalia and East Africa and how best to enhance the response of the international community. In this respect, he met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mr. Antonio Guterres, and Baroness Valerie Amos, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (OCHA), on 8 and 9 July 2011, respectively.

## Note to the Editors

**About the current situation:** According to humanitarian agencies, about 2.85 million Somalis, that is 1 in 3 Somalis, are in need of humanitarian assistance, as a result of the current drought affecting their country, one of the worst in recent memory, compounded by the conflict that Somalia has been experiencing for the past two decades and the resulting collapse of state structures, as well as by soaring global food prices. This figure represents a sharp increase compared to the 2.4 million people reported in January 2011. It is estimated that 554,000 children were suffering from malnutrition in the first half of 2011.

Due to this situation, thousands of Somalis are moving into major urban areas, in particular Mogadishu, as well as to neighbouring countries. According to the UNHCR, 5,200 people moved into Mogadishu in the month of June 2011. Between the end of June and early July, 4,800 Somalis were registered at the Dadaab refugee camps in eastern Kenya, while an average of 1,000 people were daily received at the Doolow Ado camp in Ethiopia. In the month of June alone, a total of 54,000 Somalis crossed into Ethiopia and Kenya, a three-fold increase compared to the month of May.

The drought is affecting a number of other countries in East Africa. The affected population increased from about 6.3 million in 2010 to more than 10 million in July 2011.

**AU's earlier statements on the situation:** Over the past few months, the AU has made numerous pronouncements drawing attention to the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia and appealing for increased assistance.

In his report to the 273<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), held on 21 April 2011, the Chairperson of the Commission expressed concern about the significant reduction in overall funding levels for Somalia for the last two years - between 2008 and 2010, there have been a decline of new funding of US\$ 178 million, approximately 41%. He noted that, out of the 529 million dollars humanitarian appeal made for this year, only a quarter had been secured at that time. He strongly appealed to all AU Member States in a position to do so and to all other members of the international community to urgently provide the support required to assist the Somali people in their difficult moment.

In the press statement concluding its deliberations, the PSC noted with concern the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia resulting from continued fighting and denial of access by Al Shabaab elements for the humanitarian agencies to the affected populations, as well as from the current drought situation. Against this background, the PSC expressed concern at the significant reduction in the overall funding levels for Somalia in the past two years, and appealed to the international community as a whole to provide the required humanitarian support to alleviate the suffering and hardship endured by the Somali population. The PSC also called for the implementation of quick impact projects wherever possible, including areas under the control of the TFG in Mogadishu, to mitigate the suffering of the people.

On its part, the AU Panel of the Wise, at its 10<sup>th</sup> meeting held in Addis Ababa, on 12 May 2011, expressed deep concern at the prevailing humanitarian situation in Somalia. The Panel recalled that, at its meeting on Somalia, held in Nairobi, in November 2008, it stressed that there was no country in the world where the principle of the responsibility to protect was more relevant than in Somalia. It noted with deep regret that, three years later, the plight of the Somali people remains at best marginal in the preoccupations of the international community, as demonstrated by the continued inadequate funding of humanitarian needs in Somalia.

In a press statement issued on 17 May 2011, the Chairperson of the Commission reiterated his concern at the prevailing humanitarian situation in Somalia, noting that 2.4 million Somalis, almost a third of the country's population, were living in dire conditions, as a result of the ongoing conflict and violence, compounded by the drought affecting Somalia. He appealed to the international community to urgently provide the support required to assist the Somali people in this particularly difficult moment, while expressing AU's profound appreciation to all the humanitarian agencies and organizations providing assistance to the Somali people, in a very challenging security situation.

In his opening statement at the 17<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the AU, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 30 June to 1 July 2011, the Chairperson of the Commission expressed once again concern at the drought situation in Somalia and the resulting humanitarian consequences.

**AMISOM efforts on the ground:** In order to facilitate relief efforts in Mogadishu, the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which, together with the Somali security forces, controls about 70% of Mogadishu representing about 80% of the city's total population, is providing security to humanitarian personnel to facilitate access to those in need of food and other forms of assistance. It should be noted that, in addition to its primary mandate to protect the Somali institutions, AMISOM is currently providing free medical care to about 12,000 people per month at two AMISOM hospitals in Mogadishu and roughly 60,000 liters of safe drinking water per day to Somalis living near AMISOM camps. AMISOM is also in the process of implementing quick impact projects to mitigate the suffering of the Somali people during the crisis. In addition, AMISOM is securing both the seaport and the airport in Mogadishu, thus making the delivery of the much needed humanitarian assistance possible.

**AU-IBAR efforts on the ground:** Furthermore, the AU, through the Nairobi-based Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR), is carrying out a number of activities in Somalia to help mitigate the drought and food crisis. Livestock is the mainstay of the Somali economy and the basis for the livelihoods of the largely pastoral and agro-pastoral population of Somalia.

These activities include the Livestock Emergency Interventions to Mitigate the Food Crisis in Somalia (LEISOM) project. Under this project, IBAR is carrying out vaccination and treatment of small ruminants in order to enhance their health status, as well as the rehabilitation of livestock trade infrastructure. In so doing, the Project boosts trade in livestock, thus contributing to increased incomes and reduction of hunger.

AU-IBAR is also implementing the Somalia Livestock Certification Project (SOLICEP). Within this framework, AU-IBAR is working towards the adoption of an animal health certification model that promotes the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) Sanitary and Phyto-sanitary Standards (SPS) for livestock, the improvement of the access by the Somali stakeholders to international livestock markets, and the enhancement of linkages between relevant Somali institutions and international livestock trading partners.

In addition, AU-IBAR has supported the Somali authorities through recently completed projects in the following areas: implementation of a series of activities that led to the final eradication of rinderpest from Somalia (through the Somali Ecosystem Rinderpest Eradication Coordination Unit – SERECU II Project) and the enhancement of the capacity of the Somali authorities to control animal diseases through the provision of training, laboratory facilities and vehicles (within the framework of the Support Programme to Integrated National Action Plans – SPINAP Project).