



STATEMENT BY H.E.M. ERASTUS MWENCHA, DEPUTY  
CHAIRPERSON, AU COMMISSION  
ON THE OCCASION OF:

**HAND OVER CEREMONY OF HUMANITARIAN AID FROM  
THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF EQUATORIAL GUINEA  
TO PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DROUGHT IN SOMALIA  
Mombasa, 25 June 2012**

**Excellencies;**

**Members of the Delegation of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea;**

**Members of the Delegation of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia;**

**Representative of the Government of the Republic of Kenya;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

On behalf of the Commission of the African Union, I wish to recall the Pledging Conference by the African Union (AU) for countries of Horn of Africa affected by drought and famine which was convened on 25 August 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The conference was impelled by the need to respond to the dire humanitarian situation, severe food crisis and famine experienced in the Horn of Africa. Over 12 million people were severely affected in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia which was the epicenter of the crisis. The most affected segment of the population were children facing acute malnutrition, pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, conflict-affected and displaced households, women and children. The humanitarian crisis was driven by a combination of severe drought, crop failure, rising food prices and the persistent conflict in areas such as Somalia. This has led to massive displacement particularly in Somalia where thousands have been displaced internally and many thousands more have been forced to flee across the border. On the whole, total numbers of refugees in the region has risen to over 900,000 Somali refugees, of which more than 520,000 are in Kenya, 195,000 in Ethiopia, 16, 000 in Djibouti 210,000 in Yemen and more than 36,000 in other countries. In the meantime, there are 1.36 million internally displaced persons in Somalia mainly in South Central regions.

Humanitarian agencies have reported an improvement in the malnutrition rate since the beginning of 2012, however, a lot more remain to be done.

In response to the humanitarian situation in the region, Member States have showed their solidarity and confirmed their commitment with donors to address the problem by pledging a total of US\$ 351.7 million in cash while US\$ 28.8 million was pledged in-kind during the Conference.

To date the sum of US\$ 8.7 million Dollars has been redeemed from Member States and other groups, while over 70 % of the 300 million pledged by the African Development Bank is being disbursed through IGAD and regional projects aiming at building communities livelihood and resilience.

I wish to seize this opportunity to sincerely thank the People and Government of Equatorial Guinea for honoring its pledge. First, by redeeming the sum of US\$ 2,000,000, and secondly, by providing today's in-kind donation to Somalis' affected populations.

It is worth recalling here the personal commitment of H.E. Teodoro Nguema Mbasogo, then Chairperson of the African Union when he called for the gesture of solidarity from all member states to providing African solution to African problems.

Concerning the current status of the funds so far redeemed, the Technical Advisory Committee comprising the partners and the African Union Commission met several times and discussed the needs as well as funding modalities in the four affected countries namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya.

Consequently, the African Union Commission has allocated the sum of US\$ 8.7 million Dollars through the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator and/ or Resident Coordinator of the four affected countries in order to fund projects through a prioritization mechanism at the country level.

With regard to in-kind donation, AU partners including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have been facilitating the distribution of such donations to the affected populations in refugees camps and Internally Displacement persons' settlements.

## **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

While we appreciate the donation of the People and Government of Equatorial Guinea to Somalia today, we should not forget that the drought and famine situation is becoming more complex in the humanitarian work.

A new but increasingly significant phenomenon in forced displacement is the incidence of climate change. In a comprehensive 2009 report<sup>1</sup> by a consortium of institutions concerned with this issue, it was noted that the impacts of climate change are already causing migration and displacement including in Africa. One of the sub-regions of the continent that was made a case study was the Sahel (including West Africa) where it was noted that climatic changes had led to land degradation, desertification and deforestation; and migration had become one of the coping mechanisms.

The report notes that “A significant proportion of environmental migrants are displaced due to land degradation and draught in the Sahel, though drought-induced migration is often only temporary. Generally, there is a large migration movement to the coastal and urban agglomerations, and to the coastal States.”<sup>2</sup>

The growing phenomenon of climate-induced displacement raises a number of policy and legal issues: The first is what measures are needed to protect the dignity and basic rights of persons displaced by climate change and to increase the people’s resilience to the impacts of climate change so that fewer people are forced to change? Second, how to close the gap in protection by integrating climate change into existing international and national frameworks for dealing with displacement and migration, and strengthen the capacity of national and international institutions to protect the rights of persons displaced by climate change.<sup>3</sup> These issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

It is in the same manner that the Sahel is experiencing acute food crises since 2005 and 2010. In 2012, several countries in the sub region are again at high risk. Agricultural production was sharply reduced due to late and irregular rains, and prolonged dry spells in 2011.

---

<sup>1</sup> Warner, K. et al, In Search of Shelter: Mapping the Effects of Climate Change on Human Migration and Displacement (2009)

<sup>2</sup>Id. p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Id. p. v.

This unfavorable situation, with sharp spikes in fuel prices and greater insecurity –and conflict- in the region, precipitated in the new emergency that we are facing in the Sahel region. The most seriously affected countries include Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Senegal and The Gambia, with some countries (Chad and Mauritania) experiencing a decrease in cereal production up to 50 percent as compared to the previous agricultural year, and other countries suffering serious localized cereal deficits.

For the households living in affected areas, the lean season began in February, earlier than usual. A severe food shortage in localized areas, particularly in Chad, Mauritania and Niger, led to early transhumance and changing transhumance corridors, thus also exacerbating tensions between communities at border areas and within the countries.

This situation, compounded by sustained high food prices of imported and locally produced products, has placed millions at risk of food insecurity. More than 16 million people are now food insecure. This includes 5.4 million people in Niger (almost 35 percent of the population), 3.5 million people in Mali (23 percent of the population), around 1.7 million people in Burkina Faso (10 percent of the population), 3.6 million in Chad (28 percent of the population), 713 500 in the Gambia (42 percent of the population), 700 000 people in Mauritania (22 percent of the population) and 739 000 in Senegal (5.6 percent of the population).

A decrease in remittances, due to the global economic crisis and the return of migrants from Libya, has worsened the situation.

The return of migrants and displacement of populations in Mali has also increased pressure on communities' scarce resources and caused tension over access to public services, such as health and education.

The current political instability in Bamako and the insecurity in northern Mali continue to trigger influxes of refugees into Burkina Faso, Niger and Mauritania. Close to 20,000 Malian refugees have arrived in neighboring countries since mid-May. Altogether, the crisis has now displaced close to 320,000 people. As of June 4, 170,553 Malians have found refuge in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger. Additionally, 148,467 men, women and children are displaced inside Mali.

The AU Commission and the ECOWAS Commission are working together in defining ways and means to also assist the affected populations in the Sahel region.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The dire humanitarian situation described above could discourage many, but we have hope in the positive efforts and contributions from our member states that together, these challenges could be turned into opportunities. That's why I would like once again to assure the People and the Government of Equatorial Guinea that their generous donations will go a long way in alleviating the suffering of millions of our brothers, sisters and children affected by the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Somalia and other countries in the region.

I thank you