



Statement by Amb Emile Ognimba, Director for Political Affairs, on the Occasion to Commemorate International Humanitarian Day 19 August 2011

Honorable Minister

The Resident Humanitarian Coordinator

Distinguished Representatives of Development Partners and UN Agencies

Excellencies

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

As the world commemorates International Humanitarian Day, the African Union Commission salutes all those involved in humanitarian aid around the globe and in Africa, many of whom are working under extremely difficult conditions to help people in need.

As we commemorate this day, we are reminded that humanitarian access to people in need is increasingly facing new challenges. Millions of civilians in dire humanitarian situations are trapped behind battle lines or cannot be reached due to lack of capacity.

These developments are of great concern to the AU. The AU will continue to deploy its personnel to facilitate humanitarian aid and protection of civilians. Therefore as we commemorate this day, let us remember those who have fallen in line of duty.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

This year we are commemorating the international humanitarian day under the theme, **“people helping people”**. The commemoration comes when the continent is experiencing unprecedented humanitarian crisis in recent history. New patterns and forms of forced displacement and population movements have emerged.

As I speak the humanitarian situation of millions people in northern Africa, Eastern and the Horn remains complex. The effects of climate change are growing not only in intensity but frequency and are affecting millions, as evidenced by the current crises in the Horn of Africa. The effects of these situations on the continent as a whole can not easily be paced.

The AU calls for renewed efforts to strengthen continental mechanisms for rapid and effective humanitarian response and respect for humanitarian law and principles.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

We commemorate this day with dire humanitarian situation in East Africa and the Horn. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the governments in the region for prompt action and also for taking measures to ensure unimpeded access. I also wish to express profound gratitude to all UN Agencies, Donors and all humanitarian actors who have contributed towards the situation in the Horn in one way or another.



The challenges and needs of this complex emergency as stated by the Humanitarian Coordinator remain enormous. A huge funding gap still remains to be filled.

The AU in support of these efforts has decided to organize a donor conference for Drought Situation in the Horn, on 25 August 2011, at the AU Commission, to bolster efforts to raise more resources and to create awareness amongst its Member States and the wider international community towards alleviating the dire plight of the affected populations in the region.

I wish to seize this occasion to invite you all in contributing generously as an expression of solidarity with affected populations and Member States. Details of the Conference can be obtained on the AU web-site at africa-union.org.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me stress that the situation in the Horn of Africa calls for long-term solutions to avoid future occurrence. Similar situations could emerge elsewhere, given the growing impact of climate change. The efforts in the present emergency should culminate in future examination of comprehensive strategies that will address the issue of drought and famine in the Horn and else where on the continent in a more sustainable way. The AU would welcome proposals on how we can engage in no distant future, in developing such long-term solutions.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

In concluding, let me once again reiterate AU's resolve to provide leadership in addressing humanitarian crises and challenges of forced displacement on the continent. In the coming months, the AU will prioritise the development of tools and strengthening of mechanisms for rapid and timely humanitarian response, development of strategies to address root causes and strengthening durable solutions.

I wish take this opportunity to invite the UN System, development partners and all humanitarians in developing these priorities.

I thank you.

Addis Ababa