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**Statement
delivered by**

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at the
Meeting on Emergency in the horn of Africa: Follow-up and Response
Actions
organized by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
(FAO)

18 August 2011
Rome, Italy

- **Your Excellency Prof. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)**
- **Honorable Ministers Present**
- **Representatives of Development Partners**
- **Distinguished Participants**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**
- **All Protocols observed**

Let me first of all thank the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for organizing this meeting and for inviting the African Union to participate in this important forum that aims to reflect upon practical measures that need to be urgently taken to address the grim reality that has visited upon millions of our people in the Horn of Africa Region, in what is being described as the worst food crisis of the 21st century.

Under the circumstances, I firmly believe that it is right and fitting to deliberate on the set of emergency response actions that must be taken to address the dire situation facing the affected people and countries in the region of the Horn of Africa. The scope and impact of the humanitarian crisis calls for a commensurate, coordinated, and harmonized emergency response.

But I also believe that our response should go beyond emergency relief. Without underrating the impact of the protracted conflict, I would like to say that drought is clearly one of the immediate causes of the current crisis in the Horn of Africa Region. However, there are other regions in Africa where water stress is more severe and drought is more frequent than in the Horn of Africa, yet those areas do not often face the kind of food crises that we are witnessing in this particular region.

In my opinion what the Horn of Africa region is enduring today is a true manifestation of the extent to which livelihoods in Africa are extremely vulnerable to shocks such as natural disasters – hence the need to address such extreme vulnerability of livelihoods and of the economies of communities and nations. In some ways, what we see in the Horn of Africa today may also be taken as a manifestation of the failures of previous actions in terms of making a real commitment to transform our agricultural and rural sector.

Therefore, while reflecting on emergency response measures to be taken, the situation should also lend itself to seriously evaluating the adequacy and appropriateness of the medium and long term responses to address structural issues of agriculture and food security. In particular, our evaluation should be informed by the extent to which the response measures address both challenges of vulnerability and low productivity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is true that the majority of Africans whose livelihoods are vulnerable to seasonal shocks and consequently suffer from food shortages are actually food producers, including pastoralists. Effective response measures should, therefore, be about enhancing the capacity of producers and the institutions that provide support along the food system for them to be resilient and sustainable.

The African Union has been seized with the matter in terms of complementing the global efforts of other partners to contribute towards an effective emergency response in the Horn of Africa region. The AU's efforts are mainly directed at banking on regional and international solidarity and harmonizing regional efforts for a sustained and meaningful emergency response.

I would like to seize this opportunity to call upon all partners to rally and harmonise their actions behind this African effort for an impact that we can all be proud of in the future.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The efforts of the African Union are not confined to emergency response measures alone, but are also geared towards addressing the root structural causes of the problem in the region – that is, promoting and sustaining peace and security, enhancing capacities to address the problem of high vulnerability to natural disasters, and boosting the level of agricultural productivity and trade.

I am sure you already know the AU's remarkable efforts towards establishing and sustaining peace in Somalia, where the current food crises is further compounded by a complete lack of enabling conditions, including war and insecurity in the country. Hence, I won't dwell much on that due to time.

The African Union Commission has also been working with strategic partners such as the WFP, UNISDR, the World Bank and others, to enhance Africa's capacity to make important transition from managing crises towards managing risk, in particular on management of drought risk through pooling resources and efforts. We are exploring ways and means towards enhancing AU Member States capacities to mitigate exposure to disaster risk through a Pan African disaster risk pooling facility. We believe that through such collective and responsible actions, Africa's capacity to mitigate the impact of disaster will be significantly enhanced.

The African Risk Capacity could be complemented through a strategic medium term intervention through establishing/strengthening regional grain reserves to be progressively stocked with food products in Africa,

and to have food aid supplies to be sourced as rapidly as possible by home-grown rather than charitable international supplies.

We are also convinced that by implementing the AU-NEPAD Agricultural Climate Change Adaptation-Mitigation Framework we shall be addressing the bedrock of the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

I wish to also mention the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) which provides the framework for addressing the issues of sustainable land and water management, food/nutrition security, market access and boosting agricultural productivity. I must state that to-date 28 AU Member States have signed their CAADP Compacts; and many of them have prepared their investment plans. Countries have developed national and regional frameworks that are based on sound analytical work through the CAADP Roundtable process. All CAADP country investment plans have in them areas to support the long-term perspectives and supply capacities. All governments are taking leadership and national budget processes and we welcome and encourage our development partners to build on this momentum to support national implementation capacities. If these had been supported the situation we are in would not have prevailed.

Some of the countries in the Horn of Africa region have developed and are operationalising robust and promising programmes within their respective investment plans that address both challenges of productivity and vulnerability. To mention just few:

- Ethiopia's Policy Investment Framework includes promising interventions on sustainable land and water management, on household asset building, on productive safety net, etc. There is empirical evidence corroborating the observation that in

areas where such programmes have been effectively implemented, vulnerability of livelihoods to natural shocks have been reduced with noticeable resilience built, and significant productivity gained.

- Kenya's Medium Term Investment Plan, which includes among other things, the "Lamu Northern Kenya - South-Sudan - Southern Ethiopia - Growth Corridor" has an enormous potential to boost production and intraregional trade.
- The AUC is working closely with the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to elaborate their food and investment strategy and coordinate regional investments that Kenya, Ethiopia, Southern Sudan and Uganda will be running but requiring regional concerted actions.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:

These are the kinds of response measures that have far reaching impacts and wider and bigger dividends reducing and, even in the longer term, rendering emergency responses unnecessary. We must, therefore, rally our support behind such investment plans and interventions that are aimed at addressing the structural problems. We must be steadfast in supporting the operationalisation of those investment plans that are owned and driven by the countries themselves.

As I conclude, I would like to invite you all to the AU Pleding Conference due on 25 August 2011 in Addis Ababa. Let me once again thank FAO for giving the African Union this opportunity and also Your Excellencies for your attention.

I thank you.