

**EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR'S
KEY MESSAGES ON HORN OF AFRICA
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I. Key Messages

1. The UN has declared a state of famine in the southern Bakool and Lower Shabelle regions of southern Somalia. The famine conditions were caused by a combination of severe drought, crop failure, rising food prices and conflict affecting already vulnerable communities. I am extremely concerned that if humanitarian agencies cannot intervene now, famine conditions will spread to the whole of southern Somalia within two months. Across the country, nearly half the Somali population – 3.7 million people – is in crisis. According to recent assessments, based on well-established international criteria, malnutrition rates are above 50 per cent in some districts. Tens of thousands of people have already died due to malnutrition in recent months. Parts of neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti are also suffering severe food insecurity, and altogether some 11.6 million people need life-saving help throughout the Horn of Africa. These numbers will increase over the coming months.
2. The scale and severity of the crisis in Somalia makes this the most serious food security emergency in the world today. We are responding in transit areas near the borders and in the Mogadishu area, where the majority of IDPs have moved in search of help. We have moved quickly to assist people inside Somalia where we can reach them, bringing in critical medical, water and nutrition supplies by road and air, but there are large areas in southern Somalia we cannot access directly at the moment. The deteriorating conditions in Lower Shabelle, Middle and Lower Juba, Bay, Bakool, Benadir, Gedo and Hiraa are particularly worrying.
3. We stand ready to scale up assistance in southern Somalia if we are guaranteed security and non-interference. In order to provide life-saving help to people, we need to be able to reach them freely, in all areas, and without delay. We need to be able to bring in critical supplies and services as quickly and directly as possible, through all available channels and routes. Our only interest in Somalia at this moment is to save lives. We welcomed the previous statement from Al Shabaab welcoming humanitarian agencies to resume operations in areas under their control and we reiterate the need to increase assistance to people in acute distress, wherever they are.
4. Assisting people displaced by the drought is an especially high priority. Thousands of people continue to arrive every day in camps across the Ethiopian and Kenyan borders. We welcome the steps taken by the Governments of those countries to provide additional sites for refugees,

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The mission of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to mobilize and coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors.

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but we need to work closely with the authorities and other partners to quickly register people and reduce delays in helping them when they arrive. We need to increase shelter, water and sanitation services, and reduce the pressure on host communities who are also severely affected by the drought.

5. Donors have committed more than US\$1 billion to help us respond to these huge and critical needs, outlined in a number of Appeals and other funding documents. I have also allocated US\$51.3 million from the CERF to provide urgent life-saving help for people in parts of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. However, we still need almost US\$ 1 billion to enable us to intervene and scale up now if we are to save lives and prevent the situation from deteriorating in other areas of the Horn of Africa.
6. In addition to the planning, appeals for funding and pre-positioning of supplies carried out since last year, the humanitarian community has stepped up efforts to urgently meet people's needs in all the affected areas. UNICEF has sent nearly 900 MT of therapeutic and supplementary feeding supplies to help around 38,500 malnourished children in southern Somalia. WFP is feeding 1.5 million people in Somalia and is working to reach a further 2.2 million in areas of the south that have been inaccessible. UNHCR is distributing aid packages to some 189,000 people in southern Somalia, and is working with the authorities and other partners to register Somali refugees in Kenya and Ethiopia, and urgently improve shelter, water and other aid services for them. As we trying to obtain safe access to people in conflict areas, we are also exploring all available ways of reaching people and bringing them critical aid as fast as possible.