

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Statement on Nigeria and Ethiopia
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I have just returned from Nigeria and Ethiopia and I will brief on that visit.

I'll start with Nigeria and go on to Ethiopia.

Nigeria is playing an increasingly important role in world affairs, not only through its participation in UN peacekeeping operations, to which it is the fourth largest contributor of military personnel and police, but also in the humanitarian sphere. Nigeria made a contribution of \$100,000 to the Central Emergency Response Fund, and also made a generous contribution to Haiti after the earthquake last year. The donation to the CERF is important, as it made Nigeria both a donor to and a recipient of CERF—they received money first in combating a meningitis outbreak in 2009, and then for responding to an outbreak of lead poisoning in 2010.

My visit was an opportunity to discuss with the Government of Nigeria and also with ECOWAS ways of strengthening our partnership, especially in relation to disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures.

Nigeria also recently hosted the ECOWAS Ministerial Conference on Humanitarian Assistance and Internal Displacement in West Africa. I would like to stress my support for the Kampala Convention, the first legally binding regional instrument in the world to impose obligations on states to prevent internal displacement and assist those displaced. I hope that all African States will ratify the convention quickly in order to ensure it can be promptly implemented.

The Convention is significant in many respects, but I would especially like to recognize its focus on addressing the root causes of internal displacement. Where we are unable to prevent conflict and violence, we must stop accepting internal displacement as its inevitable consequence. More can and must be done to prevent displacement and avert the cycle of despair, deprivation, and destitution that almost inevitably ensues.

If parties to conflict take steps to spare civilians from the effects of hostilities and comply with the principles of distinction and proportionality, as required by international humanitarian law,

we would see fewer civilians fleeing their homes in search of relative and sometimes illusory safety.

Turning now to Ethiopia, which is, along with several other countries in east Africa, experiencing a devastating drought.

As of June, an estimated 3.2 million people were receiving food assistance throughout Ethiopia, an increase of 400,000 from February to April 2011. Today, the government announced new figures of 4.56 million people requiring food and other assistance. Of these, more than 2 million people are located in *La Niña*-induced drought-affected areas of the southern and southeastern lowlands of the country.

I traveled to the Somali Region, where 1.3 million people (and in my discussions with regional authorities, they thought that number would go up to 2 million) – nearly one-third of the region's population – require food and non-food assistance due to the drought.

I met the regional president, and visited an affected community in Bisle *kebele*. I spoke to women who had walked for five hours with their children to get help – food assistance and health care. More and more children are malnourished. People have lost their livestock and now have no means of economic support. Everyone I met spoke of the lack of water and the impact it is having on their day to day lives.

It is also important to acknowledge that though millions of Ethiopians are suffering from drought, the country is also hosting increasing numbers of refugees fleeing Somalia. A new refugee camp at Kobe, which was opened just weeks ago, is already nearing its full capacity of 20,000-people. Some 54,000 have arrived so far this year, and in the last few weeks, an average of nearly 1,700 have been arriving every day.

It is clear that the effects of this drought are going to last for at least the rest of this year and the situation in drought affected areas is expected to worsen.

The need to do more now is urgent. But in addition, we also need to plan for the longer term – to help people rebuild their lives when the situation improves. Access to water and sustainable ways of harvesting rainwater in particular need to be developed in drought-prone areas to reduce reliance on water trucking, which is expensive and unsustainable.

Communities need better access to basic health services to stop preventable diseases from taking a higher toll on an already weakened population.

We are asking our donors to do more for the Horn of Africa—and they are coming forward. They have been generous and I hope that that generosity will continue and increase. We urgently need a united approach to the relief effort so that we can avoid a descent into the famine-like conditions last seen in the 1980s.

Ethiopia is a vast country. Overall, the country is on the fast track for development, and I welcome the emphasis put by the Government on longer-term development and the need to build the overall resilience of the people.

However, a sizeable proportion of the population remains vulnerable to natural hazards such as drought and requires assistance in the face of crises such as we see unfolding this year across the Horn.

The Secretary General has called an interagency meeting, to be held tomorrow, to review the UN's response and to identify what more needs to be done so that we can adequately address the crisis in the horn of Africa.

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