

**Transcript: Press Statement on Somalia by Ms. Valerie Amos  
Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief  
Coordinator  
New York, 17 February 2011**

I wanted to brief you having just returned from my first visit to Kenya and Somalia in my role as Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Somalia has been in a state of crisis for 20 years. It hosts one of the largest populations of displaced people in the world. And it is again teetering on the brink of a much larger disaster due to the threat of a country-wide drought. Because of La Niña, rains have failed, which has caused a severe water crisis in most of the country, and crop failures have occurred in south and central crop-producing regions.

Malnutrition rates have increased in the last six months in southern Somalia and 2.4 million people – 32 per cent of the population – remain in crisis. A significant number of people already in a crisis situation are also in drought-affected regions, which are controlled by armed opposition groups. We are concerned that internal displacement and conflict over resources may increase quickly.

There are significant urban population movements from Hiraan and Middle Shabelle regions to Kenya, due to the deteriorating living conditions and their inability to make a living. Families are said to be selling their assets, including their houses and land, to get by and to facilitate their movement to the refugee camps in Kenya.

I traveled to Puntland on 2 February to look at the relief operation on the ground and to assess the challenges faced by the humanitarian community in providing aid to people in need. Speaking to people at a camp in Galkacyo, it was clear they were all anxious to find work, to build homes, and to educate their children. I cannot stress enough the importance in Somalia of finding a political solution. Only that will enable the people of Somalia to live in peace and dignity.

In Kenya, I looked into preparedness for climate change and environmental related emergencies, the situation of the internally displaced from the post electoral violence in 2008 – they still number 30,000 people – and the situation of refugees who have fled the crisis in Somalia. The refugee influx to Kenya continues to rise. There are currently 430,871 refugees in Kenya, the majority in Dadaab's over-crowded camps. Increased assistance for the growing number of refugees is needed, as is aid for communities hosting refugees. Kenya needs to find durable solutions to the internal displacement problem caused by the post-electoral violence in 2008, and it needs to ensure that all those internally displaced are resettled before next year's electoral season.

Just as in Somalia, the current drought is affecting food security in northern and eastern parts of Kenya. Drought has been the most constant driver of humanitarian needs in the country. We will continue to work with the government to strengthen its preparedness and to enhance resilience to shocks.

It's important to remember what is happening in this part of the world. Behind every statistic, there is a human face, and we must continue to do everything we can to give support to the most vulnerable people in both countries.