

**STATEMENT BY ERC VALERIE AMOS AT THE WORKSHOP ON  
INFORMATION SHARING FOR BETTER HUMANITARIAN ACTION  
KUWAIT CITY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2011**

H.E. Mr. Khaled Suliman Al Jarallah, Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs  
H.E. Dr. Abdulah al-Matooq, Chairman of IICO and Humanitarian Advisor of HH the Emir of Kuwait  
H.E. Dr. Abdul Latif al Zayyani, Secretary General of the GCC  
H.E. Dr. Saleh Al Mehailan, Deputy Chairman of Direct Aid

Excellencies,

Can I begin by thanking the Government of Kuwait and IICO for hosting this meeting. It is a great pleasure to be here in Kuwait, at a moment of great importance for the humanitarian system.

2011 has been an extraordinary year, presenting aid workers around the world with unprecedented challenges; many of them in the Islamic world.

We have seen profound changes taking place in North Africa and the Middle East, where we are striving to help people overcome the impact of conflict and social unrest.

And we see the crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories continue, underlining the need to find a just long-term solution.

Today we are focusing on the Horn of Africa, particularly on the terrible famine in Somalia, which demands our most urgent attention.

As never before, the work of humanitarian organisations is being placed under strain, as we struggle to find the resources and political will to save lives and restore dignity.

So I am extremely grateful to be here amongst such esteemed company.

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The Gulf Countries are leading an important new phase in the development of our humanitarian system. In the UN, we are increasingly joining hands with organisations like Direct Aid, the International Islamic Charitable Organization and other important NGOs present here today.

And I would like to say a little bit more on this in a moment.

First, however, let me say something about my role.

In addition to being the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, I am also the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

These are more than different words for the same position. It means I have a role which is much broader than my role in the UN.

During big emergencies, hundreds of organisations rush in to help.

The outcome, if not properly organised, can be disjointed and confused. And that confusion costs lives.

So twenty years ago, UN Member States passed a General Assembly resolution to bring order to the humanitarian system.

As Emergency Relief Coordinator, my job is to represent and seek to co-ordinate all humanitarian groups on the international stage; not just those within the UN.

To speak for them in meetings with the UN Secretary-General. With the Security Council. With governments, private corporations, and militaries.

My position involves a lot of advocacy, speaking on behalf of those affected by crises. I also raise funds to enable aid agencies to get the money they need.

It is a job with a lot of responsibility - participation for the humanitarian organisations in the global system is voluntary. We have to show that it brings benefit and adds value.

It is about ensuring that during a crisis, we work together to achieve common goals.

Let me give an example.

Somalia is currently the biggest humanitarian emergency in the world with famine having been declared in seven regions.

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Last year, before it made the headlines, we sounded the alarm, and appealed for hundreds of millions of dollars to tackle the impending crisis.

Today, we are coordinating dozens of UN agencies and implementing partners, identifying where the needs are and who is the best placed to meet them.

It is a huge challenge, and we still have a lot to do. We must work together more effectively to end this crisis.

Excellencies,

People especially in the Gulf countries have been extremely generous in their assistance to Somalia.

The royal families of the region have led the way with their contributions, and the businesses and people of the Gulf have followed; raising impressive amounts in telethons and other public appeals.

Regional organisations, the GCC, the League of Arab States, and the OIC have drawn attention to the crisis, convening meetings, raising funds, and offering solutions.

And on the ground, the Red Crescent societies, and many NGOs from the Gulf region are doing extraordinary work.

Many Arab and Muslim charities have been at work in Somalia for years. Long before the latest crisis was declared, they were saving lives and providing hope.

And they stayed, even when other agencies had to leave. Today, some UN agencies and some of our partners are working to gain additional access to areas controlled by Al-Shabaab, NGOs from this region are hard at work, reaching people in need.

Thank you. Arab and Muslim organizations are invaluable players in the humanitarian field.

Excellencies,

To capitalise on our networks, contacts and access we need to work even more effectively together. It will make the humanitarian system stronger.

The UN already works with a large number of Muslim and Arab organizations and the governments of the region are doing their part.

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The UAE recently created an Office for the Coordination of Foreign Aid, which is sharing information and helping us to understand the bigger picture.

Kuwait has undertaken to provide 10 per cent of all its aid through multilateral channels, and gave a record \$675,000 this year to the UN's Central Emergency Response Fund; which ensures money reaches aid agencies in the crucial early days of a crisis, as well as funding crises which we have forgotten about.

Qatar, which has appointed a state minister for international cooperation, also announced a \$4 million contribution to the CERF this year. Experts from both Kuwait and Qatar form part of the CERF Advisory Group, providing essential strategic guidance to its work.

And Saudi Arabia over the past two years has given very generous and timely contributions to the UN system: more than \$100m in 2010, including \$50m to the CERF, and almost \$70m this year, to the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and UNICEF.

With these national and regional developments I hope that we can strengthen our partnerships and do even more to make the global humanitarian system even more effective.

The famine in Somalia, for example, is most certainly a food crisis. But it is also a health crisis. People need shelter. They need their livelihoods to be restored and they need to be protected from harassment and abuse and violence. We need to deal with all these issues.

Effective partnership means using common funds to meet all the requirements of the emergency, through consolidated appeals.

We must ensure, for example, that where we fund food supplies, we also fund medicines and other essential life-saving interventions.

Effective partnership means working together in international fora and with our bilateral partners, to ensure the root causes of the crisis are addressed.

In Somalia we must jointly argue for unhindered access to people in need, even in areas under Al-Shabaab control. To stress that humanitarian agencies have no political agenda, and are there for one purpose only; to save lives.

And, as this meeting highlights, effective partnership means sharing information; so we can build an accurate picture of what everyone is doing, and where.

Kuwait has provided excellent leadership and built on the outstanding start made by Oman which hosted the first meeting that established the Regional Humanitarian Information Network.

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Together we can build an even stronger partnership: one that will last for years to come.

In today's complex environment, no one agency, no one government and no one organisation can deal with humanitarian issues alone.

We must work together.

I thank you for your ongoing commitment and support.

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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.

**Celebrating 20 years of coordinated humanitarian action**