

**United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief
Coordinator, Valerie Amos:
Statement to Press on Visit to Somalia and Kenya**

Noon briefing, New York, 17 August 2011

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Thank you very much. If I may I will make a brief statement on my recent visit to Somalia and Kenya and then of course open up for questions.

In Mogadishu, I was struck by the destruction in the city caused by years of war, but also by how people are nonetheless out in the streets and getting on with their lives. Our aid effort is doing a tremendous amount to help in Mogadishu. Hot meals are being given every day to almost 100,000 people. Half a million people are getting clean water, which is crucial as we seek to prevent the spread of cholera and other diseases. An emergency measles vaccination campaign to reach 88,000 children – 80 per cent of the under 15 population in the city and 46,000 women is already happening.

Nonetheless it was clear that even in Mogadishu the famine has already claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people, and it will kill many more if we do not further scale up our efforts. I visited Banadir Hospital where children with the worst levels of malnutrition are given life-saving treatment. It was heartbreaking to see children so weak they couldn't lift their heads, their mothers in despair. Many children don't survive as they get there too late and their situation is too desperate. The medical staff are exhausted, working around the clock, and doing everything they can but they do not have enough medicines and supplies, even though they are getting support – for example, from UNICEF. We need to get more food and nutritional supplies, water, sanitation and hygiene equipment and medical care to those who are in desperate need.

Aid operations are reaching new areas of Somalia all the time. We have been able to provide safe drinking water to 50 per cent of the people in the Afgooye corridor, which hosts thousands of IDPs who have fled the ongoing violence in Mogadishu. Throughout the south of Somalia, in Al-Shabaab controlled areas, more than 500 nutrition centres are operating. These are major accomplishments, and I am optimistic that the work being done on the ground to improve access will continue to shrink the areas of the country that are still off-limits.

We have to remember that the needs are not limited to Somalia. Millions of people are also struggling in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. And even as Kenyans and Ethiopians confront the impact of the drought on their own communities, they are hosting hundreds of thousands of Somali refugees, who have fled conflict and famine, and now live in vast, overcrowded camps.

I am grateful to the donors who have provided more than \$1.3 billion to make our work possible.

While the situation in these countries has not reached famine proportions, and is not expected to, in part because of longer-term planning which has taken place, for example, safety net programmes, and the national and international aid efforts which are underway, I am very mindful of the need to keep the momentum going. In Ethiopia we have provided food aid to some 3.5 million Ethiopians, and 226,000 refugees. In Djibouti, we have assisted almost all the food affected people; and in Kenya, 1.3 million drought affected people have received food aid, out of the 2.7 million who have been targeted.

I visited Dadaab camp in Kenya which as you all know is the largest refugee camp in the world. It is really more a city than a camp. New arrivals from Somalia are still being registered every day. And despite a fall in the numbers of daily arrivals, the number of children with severe acute malnutrition has risen, and many lose their lives *en route*. I met one woman who had lost all four of her children on the journey from Somalia to Kenya. There's a tremendous amount of work going on in Dadaab to keep the camp and refugees in supplies. In the weeks ahead we also need to step up our efforts to ensure the host communities in areas accepting refugees are being helped as well.

We have demonstrated, I think, how much can be accomplished when aid agencies are given the resources they need and can get to where they need to. But we're faced with a still-spreading famine in Somalia, and with such scale of suffering, every effort needs to be expanded and sustained in the months ahead. That is why we are still appealing for another just under \$1.2 billion. There are still many lives that need to be saved in the Horn of Africa.

Thank you.

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