

Somalia: Threat of famine persists

Mogadishu, 31 August 2017 — The Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, today expressed concern about the continued threat of famine in Somalia, whilst praising the collective efforts that have so far prevented famine from being declared. He urged the international community to stay the course and sustain famine prevention efforts. At the launch of the latest food security and nutrition assessment results issued by the FAO-managed Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) in Mogadishu, he called on aid agencies to keep up the good work and maintain current efforts to avert a deterioration of the humanitarian situation.

Somalia is experiencing an intense drought, induced by consecutive seasons of poor rainfall and is one of four countries faced by the threat of famine in 2017, including Nigeria, South Sudan and Yemen.

While the latest FAO-managed FSNAU assessments show a decrease of the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance from 6.7 million to 6.2 million people, the threat of localized famine countered by scaled-up humanitarian response is as relevant today as it was in the first months of this crisis. The *Gu* harvest will provide temporary relief for some communities in terms of food availability, but the harvest is reduced due to poor rains and access to food remains constrained and prices will remain elevated through at least early 2018.

“Through robust humanitarian assistance and the modest benefits from the underperforming *Gu* rains, the situation has stabilized but remains of serious concern at emergency levels,” said Peter de Clercq. “Whereas there is a modest decline in the number of people in need, we have seen an increase in the number of persons in the emergency-phase (IPC 4) compared to the previous assessment. When we announced the threat of famine in February, the number of people in need stood at 6.2 million and therefore Somalia is unfortunately not yet out of the woods,” he added.

Malnutrition, one of the leading indicators of the crisis, has reached emergency levels in a number of locations in southern and central Somalia, primarily, though not exclusively among displaced populations. Overall, some 388,000 acutely malnourished children are in need of critical nutrition support, including life-saving treatment for more than 87,000 severely malnourished children. Nearly 895,000 internally displaced people due to drought and conflict, on top of the 1.1 million protracted IDPs that predated this crisis, rely exclusively on assistance for basic services and life support. Major AWD/Cholera and measles outbreaks are also of continued concern.

“Unlike the 2011 famine, this year, drought related displacement occurred mostly in localized areas. We must seize the opportunity to support the voluntary return of IDPs, while at the same time preventing new displacements by providing integrated support in rural areas,” said Daniele Donati, the FAO Representative in Somalia. “We proved that together we can stave off famine with sustained humanitarian assistance. In the long term, livelihoods must be restored in order to make lasting improvements to food security - these efforts cannot diminish – neither in speed nor scale.”

More than \$900 million provided by donors in 2017, the robust humanitarian assistance by partners, government authorities, the private sector and diaspora have prevented the situation from declining into famine. Operational agencies are reaching over 3 million people per month with life-saving assistance and livelihood support, the majority in the form of cash and vouchers. Systems established at the start of the crisis, including cash transfers for up to three million people, rapid deployment mechanisms such as the Drought Operations Coordination Centers in Mogadishu, Baidoa and Garowe and enhanced

coordination with authorities, are in place and can sustain lives given sufficient resources. Livelihood support, including vaccination of 20 million animals benefited 3 million people. With assistance, IDPs who live in locations less than 50 km from their agricultural livelihood zones could return home to exploit the predicted average to slightly below average Deyr rains. Long-term plans to increase resilience, support early recovery efforts, and promote increased investment in the productive sectors and urban infrastructure will be necessary to prevent future droughts from developing into similar situation as the one we are seeing today.

Somalia experienced the worst famine of the twenty-first century in 2011, affecting an estimated four million people, three-quarters of a million of whom faced famine conditions. The famine resulted in the loss of more than a quarter million lives.

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For further information, please contact:

Tapiwa Gomo, Head of Communication, gomo@un.org, Tel. +252 616 548 007
Chi Lael, Communications Officer, FAO Somalia, Chi.Lael@fao.org, Tel: +252619567836 or +254 715 894 825