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UNITED NATIONS OFFICE FOR THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

CROSS BORDER & REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

ERC's visit to CEA region

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) John Holmes visited Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Kenya during an eight-day regional mission. Mr. Holmes arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 26 November and travelled to Jijiga and Kebridehar in the Ogaden region where over 640,000 people require urgent humanitarian assistance.

The ERC held meetings with senior national government officials, including the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, the Chief of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), regional government officials, and heads of UN agencies.



John Holmes greets residents of Kenbridehar Ogaden
27 Nov'07. Photo:AP by Anita Powell

The talks focused on the humanitarian conditions in Ogaden, including ways of boosting relief in the area. He also held consultations with representatives of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to discuss current humanitarian concerns and how to improve the humanitarian situation in Ogaden.

Between 29 November and 1 December, the ERC visited Khartoum where he met with representatives of the Government, UN agencies, international and national non-governmental organizations and donors. He also visited both northern and southern Darfur where he met with people affected by the conflict and local government officials with whom he raised issues of access, safety of humanitarian workers and the need for safety to be assured before any IDP returns could be arranged.

On 2 December, John Holmes travelled to Somalia and visited some of the 70 settlements of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Afgooye to gain first hand information on the situation of IDPs and their challenges. There are currently about 230,000 IDPs dispersed along a 15-kilometre stretch of road between the capital

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Mogadishu and the town of Afgooye,. More than half have fled the ongoing and worsening violence in the capital over the past four weeks.

From Afgooye, Mr. Holmes travelled to Baidoa, the interim seat of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), to meet the newly appointed Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein. The two discussed the concerns of the international community in relation to the humanitarian situation in Somalia, and also the priority to be given to the protection of civilians, particularly in Mogadishu.

The ERC held a press conference in Nairobi, Kenya on 3 December on his way back to New York where on 6 December he is scheduled to brief the UN Security Council on the findings of his mission.

Updates on the UN/EU peace keeping mission for Chad and CAR

The UN/EU peacekeeping mission to Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) appears to be taking shape as the European Union prepares to dispatch 4,300 troops from 20 countries within the coming weeks.

The EU operation commander, General Patrick Nash, announced on 5 November that this force - which was approved by the Council of the European Union on 15 October - will be 4,300 troops strong. They will operate alongside 350 United Nations police and military personnel who will work to protect the fragile triangle between CAR, Chad and the Darfur region of Sudan.

The United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) was approved by the Security Council on 25 September (Resolution 1778). It provides a mandate for one year for "a maximum of 300 police and 50 military liaison officers and an appropriate number of civilian personnel" who will serve directly under the UN flag. Their task is largely to conduct training for local police forces and support the CAR and Chadian governments in dealing with this crisis.

At the same time, however, the UN authorized a much larger European Union peacekeeping force (known as EUFOR TCHAD/RCA) "to take all necessary measures, within its capabilities and its area of operation in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic" to protect civilians, facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid, and ensure the safety of UN personnel.

Although November 2007 had been proposed as the starting point for early troop deployments, the UN as

well as the EU have yet to announce an official list of contributors as well as the most senior management staff.

Flood response updates

Uganda:

The first phase of the humanitarian response to flood victims in northern, eastern and central Uganda, which prioritized the distribution of emergency relief supplies, was concluded in November.

The cluster leads agreed on a review of the response for the second phase and to ensure linkages with recovery, local capacity building and disaster risk reduction. The clusters are currently revising priorities according to the work undertaken so far and the prevailing situation.

The review is to be endorsed by the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC). As of 27 November, donors have committed US\$13.8 million of the \$41 million requested through the Uganda Floods Flash Appeal, which was originally launched on 21 September 2007.

Kenya:

Heavy rains in the Mt. Kenya region coupled with the release of excess water from the Kindaruma dam by the Kenya Electricity Generation Company (KenGen) caused floods along the Tana River. As of 30 November, close to 600 families were affected in Kibarani and Bura areas. In Hola, several hectares of farms are submerged in water.

The Kenya Red Cross responded with non-food relief supplies (tarpaulins, mosquito nets, kitchen sets, blankets) and high energy biscuits. In Budalangi (Western Kenya), the waters that had flooded several villages after the Nzoia River broke its dykes have now receded and most people have returned to their villages save for some 200 people still camped Mukobhola and Lugari areas.

Eritrea-Ethiopia border

Tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia were heightened in recent weeks as the deadline to physically demarcate the 1,000-km (620-mile) border drew closer.

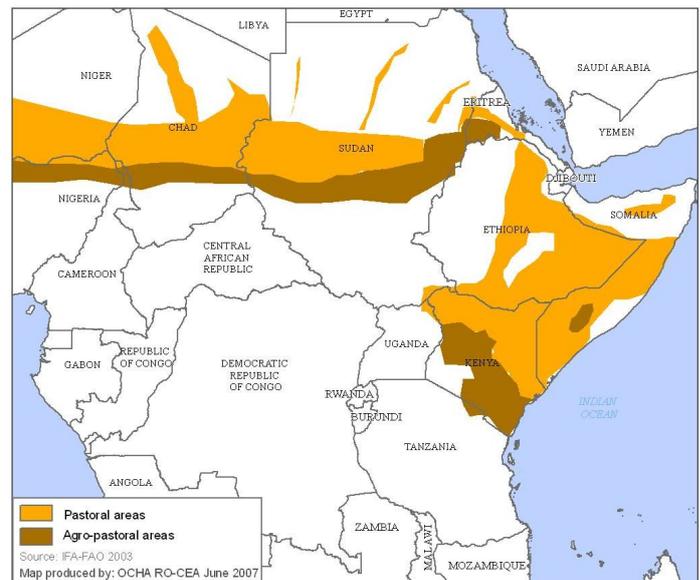
The Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC), whose mandate expired on 27th November, had issued a warning to the parties a year ago, indicating that if the two failed to take necessary action to implement the Delimitation Decision of 13 April 2002, the Commission would, at the expiry of its mandate, determine the boundary as delineated by the boundary points listed in its 2002 Decision.

The Boundary Commission is, yet to issue an official statement on the current status of either its mandate or the border impasse. The international community has continued to appeal to the two parties to exercise restraint.

FOCUS

Towards a Policy Framework for Strengthening Pastoralists' resistance to Conflict and Drought in the Horn

Severe droughts in the Horn of Africa have in recent years been responsible for aggravated conflict and struggle over scarce resources amongst pastoralist communities in the region. The Horn of Africa is home to the largest group of pastoralists in the world. Since pastoral communities are especially vulnerable to slight changes in climatic conditions, a delay in the onset of the rainy season has an immediate and direct negative impact on pastoral livelihood and food security.



Contrary to prior beliefs, recent research by organizations like the International Institute for Environment and Development is proving that pastoralism is a rational economic activity able to enhance Africa's food security if supported by appropriate government initiatives. The challenge for pastoral livelihoods in the Horn of Africa is that mainstream policy planners have often failed to recognize the pastoral enterprise as a rational pursuit resulting in an absence of pro-pastoral policies. This has increased the vulnerability of pastoralists to drought which, in turn, has fuelled conflicts amongst pastoralists over scarce resources.

Current trends have seen increased momentum from pastoralists asking for regional policy initiatives that recognize pastoralists' access to resources across national borders. They are arguing that a continent-wide policy framework that is formulated in partnership with pastoral communities will support sustainable pastoral livelihoods. Building sustainable livelihoods amongst pastoral communities in time will reduce the vulnerability to drought and inter-clan conflict over scarce resources.

In one of such events, over 250 pastoralists from Ethiopia and Kenya gathered in Nyangatom Woreda zone South of the River Omo in Ethiopia to find solutions for

ending inter-clan conflict which many argued was an impediment to building sustainable pastoral livelihoods. The 8–12 November event was also attended by representatives of Government, UN, NGOs, donor organisations and the media.

The gathering, which was organized by the Pastoralists Communications Initiative of the United Nations' Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA – PCI), was the third of a series of Pastoralists gatherings organized by OCHA-PCI since 2006. The next event is planned for November 29 – 3 December at Hudet Somali Regional National State Ethiopia.

A prior gathering of pastoralists from twelve African countries that took place in Isiolo Kenya in July 2007 specifically called on the African Union (AU) to begin formulating a continent-wide policy framework that will, amongst others, work with pastoralist in designing policies towards a long term reduction of pastoral livelihood vulnerability to drought and conflict.

Some of the critical policy issues that have emerged from pastoralists gathering since 2006 include:

- equitable access to land, water, capital, technology and resources,
- equitable access to services, especially education, human and animal health, communications and finance,
- increasing the value of livestock and preserving pastoral ecosystems, market access for pastoral products,
- greater participation of pastoral people in decision-making

In response, the AU has committed to designing a continent-wide policy initiative for approval by the AU Heads of State summit in 2008. The policy framework is a step towards securing and protecting the lives, livelihoods and rights of pastoralist peoples across the continent. Such a policy framework stands the chance of forming the basis for continental commitment to the political, social, and economic development of pastoral communities.

One of the strategies the AU is adopting to ensure a transparent and inclusive process is to establish a Specialist Task Force of twelve individuals, comprising technical experts and no less than five pastoralist representatives.

The Specialist Task Force will serve as the quality assurance mechanism that will provide periodic guidance, transparency and accountability to all parties for the duration of the pastoral framework elaboration process. In addition, the Task Force will develop terms of reference to guide the regional assessments and consultative processes.

The principles of fair representation will be reflected in the composition of the Task Force, with members chosen from each of the regional economic communities – SADC, COMESA, ECCAS, ECOWAS and UMA – to achieve equitable representation.

COUNTRY UPDATES

Sudan

In late October, Rift Valley Fever (RVF) broke out in Sudan's White Nile, Sinnar, Gezira and Khartoum states. According to a statement by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on 23 November, quoting World Health Organisation (WHO) sources, more than 160 people had died of the disease.

The vast majority of human infections result from direct or indirect contact with the body fluids or organs of infected animals. FAO expressed fears that the disease could escalate in the coming weeks as millions of animals are moved around the country and the region for the Eid Al Idha Muslim holiday, to be celebrated around 20 December. FAO sent a team of animal health experts to Sudan for in-depth field investigations. In response to the outbreak, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have banned livestock imports from Sudan.

In Darfur, the humanitarian community and affected populations still await the deployment of the hybrid AU-UN force for Darfur (UNAMID). The deployment has faced serious delays partly because Sudan has not agreed to the presence of non-African personnel and has not yet given the UN the land it needs to operate, nor given authorisation for night flights.

Addressing the UN General Assembly on 27 November, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guéhenno said that unless the problems are resolved, the international community may soon face a hard choice. Mr. Guehenno questioned "Do we move ahead with the deployment of a force that will not make a difference, that will not have the capability to defend itself, and that carries the risk of humiliation of the Security Council and the United Nations, and tragic failure for the people of Darfur?" Among other demands, Sudan has requested advance notice of troop movements and to be able to shut down communications.

Cameroon

According to UNHCR-Cameroon, the number of refugees from Central African Republic in Cameroon has increased tremendously in recent months. UNHCR recorded around 19,000 new refugees between August and October bringing the current total to 45,192 as of end of November. It is however not clear if they fled violence which has affected the west of Ouham- Pendé during the last few months, or if they were already present in Cameroon for a longer period.

Chad

After one month of relative calm in eastern Chad that followed a peace deal signed in Libya on 25th October, fresh fighting between the Chadian army and one of the rebel movements, the Union of Forces for Development and Democracy (UFDD) broke out in the last week of November. The worst clashes occurred around Abou Goulem, about 90 km east of Abeche around Hadjer-Marfaïne which lies between the towns of Adre and Bi-

rak close to the Sudan border.

The renewed violence comes ahead of a planned EU mission for Chad and Central African Republic. The EU force is widely seen by rebels as strengthening President Deby's regime. It is believed that with the planned deployment of the EU mission and the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), the rebel group's recent attack may have been an attempt to occupy some territory which could be used to negotiate for political gain. Although it was not possible to conduct assessments in the area due to the security situation, there were no reports of any humanitarian consequences for civilian population as a result of renewed fighting partly because the area is largely uninhabited.

Somalia

Confrontations between the Ethiopian supported Transitional Federal Government (TFG) forces and Muslim insurgents intensified in November, with more attacks and displacements being reported in Mogadishu and its environs. According to UNHCR, an estimated 223,000 people were displaced by fighting in Mogadishu between 27 October and the end of November 2007.

The unconfirmed planning figure for the total number of displaced people in Somalia is nearly 1,000,000. This figure is comprised from the estimated 400,000 protracted IDPs who were displaced prior to the beginning of 2007 and an additional approximately 600,000 who remain displaced because of conflict, insecurity, and violence in Mogadishu since February 2007.

Protection concerns, including house searches, arbitrary arrests, carjacking, landmines, sporadic shelling in residential areas, and roadside bombs - including against humanitarian agency convoys, - continued to be experienced in November.

On-going restrictions on press freedom saw the closure of three radio stations by authorities in mid-November. Media groups and journalists operating in Somalia were on 14 November ordered to register with authorities within 30 days or be

barred from operating.

On 22 November, President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed nominated Nur Hassan Hussein, as the new Prime Minister for Somalia, following the resignation of Ali Mohamed Gedi on 29 October. Hussein, who was approved by the parliament in Baidoa, was sworn in on 24 November 2007.

During a subsequent interview on one of Kenya's Television networks, Nur Hassan said that he was ready for dialogue with Islamist-led opponents in an effort to reconcile the nation as it struggles to contain the insurgency.

DRC

The number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Kivus continues to increase as a result of continued conflict between the *Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo* (FARDC) and Laurent Nkunda's *Congres National pour la Defense du Peuple* (CNDP).

According to assessments by several UN agencies and non-governmental organizations, as of the 14 November 2007, the verified number of displaced had, according to OCHA DRC, reached 405,345 spread around Goma, Masisi, Rutshuru, Lubero and Kalehe (border of South and North Kivu). OCHA has also reported a recent increase in humanitarian actors in the region and improvement in the coordination of response activities.

Meanwhile, food insecurity in the Kivus has emerged as another issue of concern in addition to high levels sexual violence and widespread displacement. Humanitarian workers have indicated that both the FARDC and Laurent

Nkunda's forces are responsible for food shortages that could affect three million people across north Kivu province.

According to OCHA in Goma, both groups have blocked commercial trucks from delivering soap, oil and manufactured goods to Masisi, the agricultural capital of north Kivu, while also turning back Goma-bound trucks laden with bananas and potatoes.

In addition, 150,000 displaced persons in the forest of Mwenga and Shabunda in south Kivu are expected to face serious food shortages by January 2008 after their crops were destroyed by heavy rains in the region. According to WFP, food assistance will continue to be required during the first quarter of 2008.

Uganda

On 30 November, the Director of Health Services in Uganda announced an outbreak of Ebola hemorrhagic fever that hit the western Ugandan district of Bundibugyo.

By the end of November, 16 people out of a total of 51 people infected had died over a period of three weeks and the disease was spreading to more people including medical personnel.

The first case was reported on 10 November in Bundibugyo district that borders DRC. Health experts are on the ground and are deploying more people to respond to the situation. On 19 November, health officials in DRC announced the end of an Ebola outbreak that killed 6 out of 17 infected persons.



Civilians fleeing fighting in Kivu.
13 Sep 2007 ©Reuters

Disclaimer: The information in this document is consolidated from reports and field information from a variety of sources including OCHA field staff, United Nations agencies, humanitarian partners, NGOs, news agencies, and others. The articles provided are subject to availability of data and do not claim to be either exhaustive or fully verified.

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