

**Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs,
Mark Lowcock, remarks at the High-Level Event on the New Way of Working**

Addis Ababa, 28 January 2018

As delivered

I think it is probably true for you, Achim, as it was for me, but when our bosses – the Secretary-General and Deputy Secretary-General – approached us to ask whether we would take on these jobs, one of the things they said is that they really want us to work together to improve the impact both of the humanitarian sector and of the development effort to get better results, faster results and faster progress, above all for the people whose lives we are trying to improve in all the countries where we work.

For me that was a very powerful reason why I was very keen to come and join the new leadership team in the UN. It is the case that sometimes as humanitarians we have to work separately – in a way which preserves principles and protects people and focuses on access, particularly in conflicts and hot wars and some of the really, really difficult environments we work in across the world. More often it is the case that our best strategy is to join up with those who are working on recovery and resilience and development.

There are very few humanitarian crises that I deal with that are solved by humanitarian interventions. Solutions require join-up, sometimes with the political colleagues, sometimes with the security colleagues, almost always with the development colleagues. The humanitarian system globally is a very effective system. We reach tens of millions of people every year and we unquestionably save millions of lives, and last year as the UN humanitarian system we raised 13 billion dollars for our response plans. We could generate much greater value for money and much greater results and solve problems faster in the cases where it is possible to join up better, working behind the leadership provided by Governments and with our development colleagues. And that, as somebody who has spent the last 35 years in an organization trying to do both humanitarian response and development join-up, is a powerful experience of learning that I bring into this role.

As in everything in our international fora, there is lots of, as Ahunna said, jargon and slogans in this space. I just want to talk about two specific examples – building on the rather fantastic video and what Ahunna and Achim have said that I have been struck by just in the last two days visiting Ethiopia – of things that can be done more widely on joining up the two systems better.

Firstly, as we have heard, Ahunna touched on it, we have the issue of the ongoing drought in in east and southern Ethiopia, especially in the Somali region, and I think we all need to hear a little alarm bell ringing about the danger of a fourth failed rainy season this spring. We need now to get together behind the leadership and within the framework provided by the Government to get ready to respond to the needs that will arise if, as the scientists tell us, those rains fail and the number of people in need of emergency life-saving assistance grows. The international community, I think,

will have to think through carefully over the next weeks and months on how we are going to act faster than we have done sometimes in the past, because fast response is cheaper and better than waiting until, as we know, the crisis crystallizes.

But we need to do it in a way that recognizes – and this is something that we have heard directly from the drought-affected people who we talked to in Gode in Somali region yesterday – that for at least some of those who have had traditional nomadic pastoralist life-styles, a different set of livelihoods will be desirable and necessary into the future. I must say I was extremely impressed by the presentation of the sort of work in progress, if I can put it like that, of the federal and regional governments' thinking on how to do this join-up in practice better into the future, and we were very privileged to have Ato Mitiku with us for the day yesterday. This concept that the Government is developing, a sort of three-pronged approach, giving life to the join-up between the humanitarian and the development in the case of, particularly the chronically drought-affected regions of this country, is a powerful organizing framework for it.

Firstly, the focus on prevention and mitigation, especially with better investment in water resources. It is not fantastic that every year in too many drought-affected places, not just here but elsewhere as well, we spend a lot of money, millions and millions of dollars, trucking around the place, as opposed to finding a way to invest in more sustainable water resource management. So that stronger focus on prevention and mitigation is a first element.

The second element is around resilience and response. There is an enormous opportunity to learn the lessons from one of the world's most famous and successful and earliest safety-net programs put in place in vulnerable countries, the Productive Safety Net Programme, which has been going on for ten years here now, and probably, as the Government has been explaining to us, will need some adjustment to be really effective in the chronically drought-affected places, including in this country. To do that alongside maybe a more risk-based and insurance-based and contingency financing-based, scalable up-and-down humanitarian emergency response where that is necessary. And that is something where there is a really important opportunity here for the humanitarian system to join up much better in a practical way with the development system, which has pioneered a lot of the safety net programmes.

And then there is the set of issues around rehabilitation and livelihood diversification and development, which is how you get into the longer-term solutions for communities whose maybe traditional livelihoods won't be viable for the numbers of people now in those areas, particularly as a result of climate change. So that is one first really powerful example of where I think there is a sort of opportunity to put into practice the concepts that we are talking about.

The second area relates to how the needs of internally displaced people are met. We know that very frequently when people are displaced by conflict, displacement lasts a long time. Ultimately, it often ends up with people being given the opportunity to start new livelihoods not where they came from but in places where they have gone to. But that typically takes far too long. Lots of us have worked for a long time on displacement arising from the conflict in Darfur, 13 or 14 years ago. In fact the UN every year since 2003 has run appeals, annual appeals to meet the humanitarian needs of those people. So for 13 years we have been trying to do that, but what in fact we have done is we have had a one-year response thirteen times instead of thinking through from the outset what a better longer term response would be.

Earlier today I had the opportunity to go and meet and talk to some of the, I think about a million people, who over the last 6-12 months have been displaced as a result of the conflict along the

Oromia-Somali region border and I was really struck talking to them and also the federal and national authorities who are putting in place what I think are more sustainable approaches, which will deal with this problem faster, but I was really struck listening to these people in this place who I met today that what they said was what they wanted was an opportunity to restart their lives, to re-integrate themselves closer to where they now are, so that they get a chance to re-establish their lives and the international community needs to get, I think, behind people who are expressing that need as how they want to move forward from the, in some cases, extreme trauma that they have gone through.

And I would like us in the United Nations on the humanitarian side to support those aspirations whenever we can, so today I am announcing that from the Central Emergency Response Fund [CERF], which is the fund that is my responsibility to manage to provide fast response to new or under-funded crises, we are going to allocate \$10 million to try to help the needs of those recently displaced people, both life-saving needs but also to contribute to lasting solutions.

One of the reasons why I am particularly pleased to be able to do that here in Ethiopia, as Achim said, is because there is a track-record here of the country working together with its international partners to develop new solutions to long-standing problems and I think if you are able to do that in the case of those recently displaced people, it would be good not just for them and for Ethiopia, but the lessons will be replicable across the wider world. And that is one of the things we have seen with your piloting of safety-nets – your piloting of safety-nets has been widely copied in other places. And I hoping if we can do something inspiring on looking after displaced people faster and better that too will be copied by others.

Thank you very much indeed.