

NEWS: ACP-EU Assembly to vote on a resolution on Somali food crisis

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Lome, Togo, 22 November 2011/ European Parliament : Members of the European Parliament and their counterparts from African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries are “acutely concerned at the unprecedented and still deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa and regard the famine death toll in as unacceptable”. The EU-ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly (JPA) is set to adopt a resolution on the food and security situation in the Horn of Africa, especially in Somalia on Wednesday at its meeting in Lomé, Togo.

What is happening in the Horn of Africa is a “humanitarian disaster of enormous magnitude” said Catherine Bearder (ALDE, UK) in a debate Tuesday afternoon, adding that the situation of a large number of women and children was extremely dangerous.

Bobbo Hamatoukour (Cameroun) underlined that the international community should help Somalis to rebuild their state. It must be ensured that drought does not inevitably mean famine in the future, said Michèle Striffler (EPP, FR). Michèle Rivasi (Greens, FR) also underlined the need for supporting agriculture and rural development in the region.

Norbert Neuser (S&D, DE) stressed that those responsible for crimes against the people of Somalia should be brought to the International Criminal Court. Musikar Kombo of Kenya said his country had no intention to stay in Somalia any longer than it was necessary. His Ethiopian counterpart Teshome Toga voiced support for the Kenyan intervention.

Humanitarian support from the EU and the African Union

According to the draft resolution to be voted on Wednesday, JPA members welcome that the European Commission's total contribution to the drought-relief effort will amount to €158 million this year, and main African Union member states undertook to release almost \$350 million for the countries affected by the drought.

Nevertheless, the Assembly urges the international community to redouble its efforts to cope with the emergency situation so as to meet the growing humanitarian needs and prevent any further worsening of the situation.

Members condemn the role of the Islamist militant group al-Shabab in obstructing aid agencies and the World Food Programme in delivering food assistance to the population.

The draft resolution calls on the African governments to meet their commitment to allocate at least 10% of their national budgets to agriculture, with the aim of achieving a 6% annual growth rate in the agricultural sector. The JPA also welcomes that the European Commission has committed more than €680 million to the region by 2013 in the form of long-term aid for agriculture, rural development and food security.

13.3 million people affected

Drought, armed conflicts, high food prices and increasingly limited resources have resulted in the world's biggest humanitarian and food crisis in the Horn of Africa. The crisis is currently affecting 13.3 million people, of whom 840 000 are refugees, with tens of thousands of people, more than half of them children, already dead. Almost 80% of refugees are women and children with many experiencing sexual violence and intimidation en route to refugee camps.

A quarter of the Somali population of 7.5 million has been displaced either internally or as refugees in neighbouring countries. Dabaab, in Kenya, is currently the world's largest refugee camp, with almost half a million refugees living on a site designed for 90 000. At the same time, Somalia still remains one of the most dangerous countries for humanitarian aid workers.

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