



Office of the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia

2.1 Million Somalis in Urgent Need of Assistance Following Worst Drought in Ten Years

Nairobi, 21 March – A revised Humanitarian Appeal for Somalia was launched today in Nairobi by the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mr Christian Balslev-Olesen, to seek additional funding to respond to the critical needs of 2.1 million people whose already chronically food insecure and dire humanitarian situation has been further aggravated by the worst drought in a decade.

The appeal for US\$ 326,718,040 addresses the urgent and critical humanitarian needs of the country's drought affected and vulnerable populations including 710,000 people in a state of Acute Food and Livelihood Crisis, 915,000 experiencing a Humanitarian Emergency¹ and up to 400,000 internally displaced people. Areas worst affected are Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba, and parts of Bay and Bakool.

Over the last fourteen years, protracted civil war and persistent fragmented conflicts have eroded Somali livelihoods. Infant, child and maternal mortality rates are amongst the highest in the world. Average life expectancy is 48 years. Somalia has one of the lowest primary school enrolment rates in the world. Displacement, prolonged drought, flooding and human rights abuses have torn the socio-economic fabric of society apart too, all contributing to the current grave humanitarian crises.

Climate predictions issued in March 2006 suggest a significant possibility of poor rains for the upcoming main (*Gu*) rain season lasting from mid April to June. In the event that this worse case scenario materializes, the number of vulnerable populations will increase to 2.2 million between July and December 2006. While seemingly not such a large increase, it does include a major shift in severity, with a nearly 40% increase in the number of people facing Humanitarian Emergency or Famine conditions.

The Acting Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mr. Christian Balslev-Olesen said 'this current drought is unprecedented in ten years and the impact it is having on food, water, health, education and livelihoods is alarming. With a rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation, the humanitarian community needs to scale up its current response exponentially. Nearly 2.1 million people are in urgent need of assistance, this is a race against the clock to stem the tide of human misery – and if the *Gu* rains fail – a tragedy will unfold. I appeal to all aid organisations, the government, local authorities and the donors to work together to alleviate the egregious effects of the drought in this country'.

The revised humanitarian appeal focuses on scaling up humanitarian activities in response to the drought conditions. This includes a need to increase food availability; increase access to water; maintain livelihood and productive assets; increase protection activities especially as a result of drought induced population movements; enhance health and nutrition activities, particularly to prevent the spread of a measles and contain the polio outbreak; as well as prevent more children from dropping out of school due to hunger and inability to pay school fees.

'While the operating environment for humanitarian organizations working in Somalia remains one of the most challenging in the world owing to difficulties accessing vulnerable populations, armed conflict and general insecurity, the humanitarian imperative is compelling and we have to find ways to overcome these challenges', said Mr. Balslev-Olesen. 'I urge the Transitional Federal Government to do everything possible to ensure access and security for the aid community'.

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¹ For details on phase classification:

http://www.fsauSomali.org/200511163834_explanation_of_fsau_food_security_phase_classification.php