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Secretary-General of the United Nations
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CC: Martin Griffiths, United Nations Under-Secretary-General
for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

James Swan, Special Representative of the UN
Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia

Adam Abdelmoula, Deputy Special Representative
of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG), Resident
and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia

6th April 2022

Your Excellency,

RE: Urgent action needed to avert a possible famine in Somalia in 2022

We, the Country Directors of national and international humanitarian agencies working in Somalia, are writing to express our deepest concern at the possibility of famine in Somalia in 2022. The humanitarian situation is deteriorating rapidly, with about 4.5 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance due to the worsening drought conditions. Moreover, weather experts forecast unprecedented fourth consecutive below-average rains during the long rainy season of April to June across most of the country.¹

More than 1.4 million children, nearly half of the country's under-five population, are likely to suffer from acute malnutrition with 329,500 of them likely to be severely malnourished.² According to UNICEF, for, "a severely acutely malnourished child, or severely wasted child, the risk of them dying from diseases such as measles or diarrhea is 11 times higher than for a well-nourished child."³

The number of people displaced internally by drought since the start of 2021 has increased to more than 670,000, including 425,000 this year, many arriving in urban areas, congesting already overpopulated IDP camps.⁴ There are already an estimated 2.9 million IDPs in Somalia and total drought displacement may reach 1.4 million by mid-2022 if no emergency aid is delivered.⁵

What we are now seeing is impending famine similar to that which occurred in 2010/2011 in which more than a quarter of a million people died - including 133,000 children under the age of five.⁶ Although some donors have committed to fund Somalia's Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) which seeks US\$1.5 billion, not even 4% of funding required to meet Somalia's humanitarian needs have been

¹ <https://fews.net/east-africa/somalia/key-message-update/january-2022>

² <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/urgent-support-needed-14-million-children-likely-suffer-acute-malnutrition-somalia>

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/15/un-hunger-crisis-threatens-half-of-somalias-young-children>

⁴ <https://unhcr.github.io/dataviz-somalia-prmn/index.html#reason=&month=&need=&preigion=&pdistrictmap=&cregion=&cdistrictmap=&year=2022>

⁵ <https://www.iom.int/news/intensifying-drought-threatens-displace-over-1-million-people-somalia>

⁶ <https://www.fao.org/somalia/news/detail-events/en/c/247642/>

allocated.⁷ Like the novel coronavirus, which had impacted many of Somali households, the Ukraine crisis has driven inflation and rising costs in Somalia, particularly for food and energy, at a time when families are already incredibly desperate.

With limited resources, we are doing our best to meet the needs of those affected, including through emergency water trucking, food security activities, and treatment of acute and severe malnutrition.

However, the international community has not yet grasped the urgency of the situation, which is deteriorating fast. We are concerned that Somalia's possible famine is not high enough on the list of international disaster responses with focus now on the Ukrainian crisis. We request you to urge donors and the Member States to commit additional resources to enable immediate scale-up of humanitarian response in Somalia to avert a possible famine and save lives.

The current drought is a regional crisis and has affected countries in the Horn of Africa, but the Somali people are facing the brunt of it, with increasing numbers crossing to neighboring countries. We request you to urge regional authorities to facilitate an adequate response to the Somalis, most of them women and children, crossing the borders to seek assistance.

We also request you to urge all stakeholders including the Somali Federal Government, Federal States and armed groups to allow access and speedy facilitation of delivery of the emergency humanitarian aid to the affected, and where possible, we also request you to urge talking to the other side (Al-Shabab) for humanitarian access.

We would be grateful if you could use any opportunity to:

- Noting your recent message, continue to and expand highlighting the seriousness of the food security and displacement crisis and request a coherent international response.
- Ensure that adequate funding is available to respond to the needs, and encourage a Somalia-focused donor pledging conference, as done in 2017
- Encourage donors and UN agencies, funds, and programmes to consider flexibility/repurposing of existing in-country resources towards drought response, and release development funding to support resilience-building efforts
- Request that all national and local authorities allow humanitarian agencies full, secure and continuous access to those in need of assistance.
- Request that regional states allow free movement across their borders for those fleeing the drought in Somalia.
- Call for strengthening protection of civilians, especially women and girls and persons with disabilities, by systematically monitoring and addressing abuses, exploitation, violence and holding perpetrators accountable.

We are running out of time. It is time to keep the promise of 'never again' that was made during the 2017 drought when the immediate action of the humanitarian community led to lives being saved. The window to avert a famine is closing fast. If we don't want to see history repeating itself, we cannot delay action any longer.

⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-fund-allocates-us25-million-early-response-drought>

Notes to the Editor: The Somali NGO Consortium is a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working together to improve international aid coordination and raise the presence and profile of NGO representation within the aid coordination structure for Somalia/Somaliland.



