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## Goal 17

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The Kenyan women share stories on how the drought has changed their lives and how they are coping. Photo: OCHA/ Basma Ourfali

## Humanitarian Aid to Africa Falls Far Short of Target

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By Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS, 25 May 2023 (IDN) — At a UN sponsored high-level meeting, donors collectively pledged about \$2.4 billion in “life-saving and life-sustaining assistance” to nearly 32 million people across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia plagued by five consecutive poor rainy seasons.

But the pledges—from 28 donors out of the 193 UN member states—fell far short of the \$7.0 billion needed to rescue the countries devastated mostly by droughts.

Speaking at the event, Secretary-General António Guterres said the crisis is threatening the lives and livelihoods of millions across the region.

“We must act now to prevent crisis from turning into catastrophe—and called on donors and the international community to urgently fund the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plans for the region”

To date, he regretted, they are just close to 20 per cent funded, and “that is not acceptable”, and warned that, “without an immediate and major injection of funding, emergency operations will grind to a halt, and people will die.”

“The people in the Horn of Africa are paying an unconscionable price for a climate crisis they did nothing to cause, and we owe them solidarity, assistance and a measure of hope for the future,” Guterres said.

Meanwhile, the [UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs \(OCHA\)](#) said famine has been averted, “thanks in part to the tremendous efforts of local communities, humanitarian organizations and authorities, as well as the support of donors.”

The emergency is far from over, OCHA warned, and additional resources are urgently required to prevent a return to the worst-case scenario.

The pledges were made at a high-level event held in New York May 24, and co-hosted by the United Nations, Italy, Qatar, the United Kingdom and the United States, in collaboration with the Governments of Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

<https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/2023%20Horn%20of%20Africa%20HLE%20May%202023%20Announcements%20Resu>

The humanitarian community, OCHA said, requires \$7 billion to protect and assist drought- and conflict-affected people in the region in 2023. The funds announced at the pledging meeting will allow humanitarian agencies to sustain aid pipelines of food, water, health care, nutrition and protection services.

“We welcome the announcements of support for the people of the Horn of Africa, who need our sustained commitment to recover from a crisis of catastrophic proportions,” said Joyce Msuya, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

“We must persist in pushing for stepped-up investments, especially to bolster the resilience of people already bearing the brunt of climate change.”

Fati N’Zi Hassane, Africa Director at Oxfam International, expressed “deep disappointment” at the “donors’ dismally inadequate pledges to East Africa’s crisis; a protracted crisis which continues to be woefully underfunded”.

She said donors pledged just a fraction of the total needed \$7 billion—“and most of those pledges (\$ 2.4 billion) announced today were hardly new.”

“This was a vital moment for rich donors to step up and show their commitment to saving lives. They have failed millions of people caught up in this vicious spiral of hunger, displacement, and insecurity,” said Hassane.

“One person is likely to die of hunger every 28 seconds between now and July across Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and South Sudan alone the highest on record. To wait for a fully declared famine before donors act decisively is both complicit and immoral,” she pointed out.

“The needed funds are a lifeline for millions of people struggling with hunger, skyrocketing inflation and poverty. But insufficient funding means impossible choices will have to be made that will leave out millions in urgent need”.

“We cannot continue drip-feeding aid to keep the worst of the crisis at bay while each day millions are being pushed further to starvation. The failure to act decisively now is perpetuating a deadly cycle of hunger and destitution,” declared Hassane.

“What East Africa urgently needs is a drastic global collective effort not only to save lives now but to scale up programs that help people become more resilient to shocks like climate change and food price inflation.”

Meanwhile, OCHA said the Horn of Africa is the epicentre of one of the world’s worst climate emergencies. An estimated 43,000 people died in 2022 in Somalia, most likely due to the drought, half of whom may have been children under age 5. Millions remain displaced because of drought as well as conflict.

“Today’s event was held as improved rains are starting to ease the impacts of the drought, but they also bring new risks and challenges. Floods have already caused widespread damage and affected at least 900,000 people. More flooding is expected later this year, partly due to the forecasted El Niño phenomenon, potentially leading to further displacement, death and disease”.

Despite the relief brought by the rains, it will take years to recover from the historic drought, OCHA said.

Antonio Tajani, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy, said “Now more than ever, as global humanitarian needs soar, our action cannot be merely limited to meeting the most immediate needs but should also be tailored to finding solutions and prevent a further deterioration.”

“The international community must invest further in the link between humanitarian and development action as a way to ensure that interventions on the ground have both immediate effects as well as durable benefits.”

The UK Minister for Development and Africa, Andrew Mitchell, said, “A unified international effort helped to narrowly avert famine in 2022, but we can be anything but complacent. The clear and present threat remains, and we must act now to prevent further suffering.

“Funding pledged today will help millions, but we must work together to break the cycle of crisis afflicting so many States. Without effective governance there can be no truly sustainable development,” he noted.

US Ambassador to the UN, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said, “Today’s pledge brings the total US humanitarian assistance for the response to the region to more than \$1.4 billion in FY 2023 and is anchored in the most essential of American values—that we have a responsibility to help others in need when we are able.”

Qatar’s Ambassador to the UN, Sheikha Alya bint Ahmed Al Thani, said, “The magnitude of the humanitarian crisis resulting from the drought in the three countries of the Horn of Africa requires our urgent attention and our moral and humanitarian responsibility to alleviate the suffering of the people in the region.

“The State of Qatar remains firmly committed to standing in strong solidarity through its consistent humanitarian support. We urge all Member States to fulfil their moral obligation by contributing to the realization of food security in the region and globally.” [IDN-InDepthNews]

Photo: The Kenyan women share stories on how the drought has changed their lives and how they are coping.

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