Famine in East Africa

European Parliament resolution of 15 September 2011 on famine in East Africa

The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on the Horn of Africa,
– having regard to the statement of 24 August 2011 by High Representative Catherine Ashton on the EU response to famine in the Horn of Africa,
– having regard to the outcomes of the pledging conference of 25 August 2011 in Addis Ababa,
– having regard to the UN Millennium Development Goals,
– having regard to the UN Declaration on Human Rights,
– having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
– having regard to its resolution of 17 February 2011 on rising food prices,
– having regard to the report by Jack Lang, United Nations Secretary General Special Adviser on legal issues related to piracy off the coast of Somalia,
– having regard to the Roadmap for Ending the Transition in Somalia, adopted by the Somali Transitional Federal Government, the regional administrations of Puntland and Galmudug, and the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a movement on 6 September 2011,
– having regard to Rule 110(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas tens of thousands of people have died, 750,000 are imminently at risk of starvation and 13.3 million people across Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Eritrea and Djibouti are in urgent need of food aid in the worst famine in 60 years;

B. whereas in places, malnutrition rates are more than three times the emergency threshold and it has been predicted that the situation across the Horn will worsen before it improves, with the situation forecast to be at its most severe in October 2011 and no prospect of recovery before early 2012;

C. whereas famine in the region has been aggravated by factors including conflict, scarce resources, climate change, high population growth, a lack of infrastructure, distorted trade patterns and high commodity prices;

D. whereas Somalia has been the hardest hit, with more than half the population dependent on food aid, 1.4 million internally displaced persons and UNICEF reporting that 780,000 children are acutely malnourished in Southern Somalia;

1 Text adopted, P7_TA(2011)0071.
E. whereas the humanitarian situation in Somalia is worsened by the consequences of 20 years of conflict between warring factions in the area; whereas the militant group al-Shabab controls many areas where famine has been declared and has forced some Western aid agencies out of the area, severely hampering the aid effort;

F. whereas there is a clear-cut denial of access by the Government of Eritrea for food and other humanitarian support for its people;

G. whereas more than 860 000 refugees from Somalia have fled to neighbouring countries, in particular Kenya and Ethiopia, in search of security, food and water, and the refugee camp at Dadaab in Kenya is overwhelmed by more than 420 000 people;

H. whereas the refugee camp at Dadaab is currently the largest refugee camp in the world and whereas 440 000 people are living there, although it was designed to receive 90 000, and whereas the humanitarian situation in the camps is deteriorating day by day, with the emergence of epidemics of, for example, cholera and measles, and several cases of rape have been registered;

I. whereas 80% of the refugees are women and children, many of whom have experienced sexual violence and intimidation either en route to or in the refugee camps;

J. whereas a lack of law and order on shore has led to increased piracy in the Indian Ocean, severely disrupting supplies to and from the region, and the EU’s naval operation EUNAVFOR has only been able to deter and contain piracy rather than address the root causes;

K. whereas the EU has committed €158 million in humanitarian relief in 2011, in addition to €440 million from Member States and more than €680 million committed to the region in long-term aid in the areas of agriculture, rural development and food security until 2013;

L. whereas African Union (AU) leaders have pledged more than USD 350 million to the humanitarian operation;

M. whereas the rapid scaling-up of the emergency response is of the utmost importance to address the existing humanitarian needs and prevent further deterioration; whereas the total operational shortfall over the next six months for drought-related WFP operations covering Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia stands at USD 190 million;

N. whereas increased acquisition of land in the Horn of Africa (mainly by foreign investors) has made its precarious agricultural and food system even more vulnerable, failing to deliver the promised benefits of jobs, food and economic development;

O. whereas the impact of climate change has seriously affected crop yields in the region, which, coupled with the global economic downturn and rising food and fuel prices, has set back poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals;

P. whereas the World Bank's August 2011 Food Price Watch report states that high and volatile global food prices are putting the poorest people in the developing world at risk and are contributing to the emergency in the Horn of Africa;
Q. whereas the increased liquidity and accessibility of these hedge instruments is linked to the
high prices and the high volatility in the underlying spot markets, and whereas it is more
difficult for regulators to have a full picture of these markets because the vast majority of
these transactions are carried out over the counter;

1. Expresses its deepest sorrow at the loss of life and suffering in the region; calls for
increased mobilisation of EU aid to areas where the famine is most severe to provide food
aid, healthcare, clean water and sanitation supplies to the most vulnerable;

2. Calls on all authorities and factions in the region to allow humanitarian aid organisations to
have unhindered access to those in need and to protect the civilian population under all
circumstances, particularly women and children, in accordance with international
humanitarian and human rights law; calls for humanitarian corridors to be opened up in
order to take food and aid deeper into the affected regions;

3. Demands that all sides immediately end abuses against civilians, especially women and
children, hold those responsible to account and ensure access to aid and the free movement
of all people fleeing conflict and drought; strongly condemns the role of the Islamist
militant group al-Shabab in obstructing the efforts of aid agencies and the WFP to deliver
food aid; reminds all countries in the region of the need to assist and protect refugees under
international law;

4. Calls for greater mobilisation of the international community, which should redouble its
efforts to tackle this emergency in order to meet the growing humanitarian needs and
prevent a further deterioration in the situation, and bearing in mind the inadequate financing
available;

5. Stresses the need to control aid by identifying reliable partners on the ground, including
well established aid agencies and local community leaders, and by means of better
coordination and better organisation of distribution, thus preventing any diversion and
pillaging of aid supplies;

6. Calls on the Commission to urgently improve the transition between EU humanitarian aid
and development aid, as the drought crisis in the Horn of Africa clearly shows that years of
emergency aid to drought-stricken areas have not been effectively followed up by long-term
development policies, particularly with regard to agriculture; calls on the Commission and
the EU Member States to support East African countries’ projects on prevention capacities
and famine and drought early warning systems;

7. Welcomes the African Union's commitments to the humanitarian operation, including the
AMISOM peacekeeping mission; regrets, however, that only 9 000 African Union
peacekeepers out of a promised total of 20 000 have been deployed in Somalia so far;

8. Underlines that a solution to the famine in the Horn of Africa, and Somalia in particular,
will only be possible if the underlying political, economic, environmental and security
problems are addressed by local actors and the international community alike; calls for an
EU strategy for the region which outlines political objectives and how individual
humanitarian, development, security and military measures correspond and interlink;

9. Calls on the HR/VP to critically assess the Djibouti Peace Process; stresses the need to
involve all people affected by the conflict in Somalia, including civil society and women’s
10. Welcomes the commitments of the EU and its Member States; recalls, however, that the UN emergency appeal is still USD 1 billion short of what is needed; urges the international community to honour its commitments, deliver food aid and improve health conditions on the ground;

11. Calls for a greater percentage of EU Official Development Aid (ODA) to be directed to agricultural production and assistance to pastoralists in developing countries to boost food security; in this context urges the international community to make long-term investments in agriculture as the main source of food and income in the region, and in the building of sustainable infrastructure, and to afford small farmers access to land, thereby bolstering the local market and providing acceptable everyday food for people in the Horn of Africa;

12. Calls for information about food reserves and stocks and about international price formation to be more transparent, of better quality and more up to date;

13. Demands that Member States ensure that financial institutions that engage in speculation on food and agricultural commodity markets cease abusive speculative activity which is responsible for high and volatile food prices and to put tackling poverty and human suffering in the Horn of Africa and across the developing world above profits and earnings from food price speculation;

14. Urges those institutions to take their corporate social responsibilities seriously and put in place internal rules to ensure that they limit their activities on food and agricultural commodity markets to serving real economy businesses with a need to hedge risk;

15. Calls on the G20 to step up action to agree global regulation to prevent abusive speculation and to coordinate the creation of preventive mechanisms against the excessive fluctuation of global food prices; stresses that the G20 must involve non-G20 countries to ensure global convergence;


17. Stresses that the European Securities and Markets Authority must have a key role in oversight of commodities markets; affirms that ESMA should exercise vigilance in its application of regulatory tools to prevent manipulation and abuses in food and agricultural commodities markets;

18. Calls on the Commission to update its land policy guidelines with regard to land grabbing, to ensure their alignment with the CFS-led Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests and to give greater importance to this through its development cooperation programmes, trade policies and involvement in multilateral financing institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF;

19. Asks the Commission and governments in the region to assess the current impact of farmland acquisition on rural poverty and famine-hit areas; asks the Commission to include the land grab issue in its policy dialogue with developing countries, to improve reporting on
and monitoring of large-scale land acquisitions and to support developing countries in decision-making on investments;

20. Calls for considerable efforts to better integrate climate change adaptation into EU development policies; calls on the EU to considerably increase such funding, ensuring that it is additional to ODA, to show bold leadership at the upcoming COP 17 with regard to better implementation of climate adaptation policies and to reinforce international governance of sustainable development policies;

21. Calls on the UN, the Commission and the HR/VP to take action with regard to the illegal dumping of toxic waste in Somali waters and put in place a policy to remedy the potential health risks to the population;

22. Expresses concern about recent reports of misuse of ODA to carry out political oppression in Ethiopia; calls on the EU and Member States to ensure that aid is used strictly for poverty alleviation, in an accountable and transparent manner, making full use of the human rights clauses of the Cotonou Agreement;

23. Calls on the Commission to better integrate pastoralists into EU development policy, as they ensure an important part of economic activity and protein production in the region; believes that an urgent dialogue with local authorities is needed in order to safeguard their lifestyle, recognising that their nomadic existence is well adapted to arid areas where conditions do not allow for settlers;

24. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the UN Security Council and Secretary-General, the African Union institutions, the Governments and Parliaments of the IGAD countries, the Pan African Parliament, the ACP-EU Parliamentary Assembly, the Presidency of the G20 and the governments of the EU Member States.