



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear Presidents,

The European Commission would like to thank the Vlaams Parlement, acting as a component of the Belgian national parliamentary system pursuant to Declaration no. 51 annexed to the Treaties, for its Opinion on actions to combat the famine and humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa.

The overall humanitarian situation in the Horn of Africa has seriously deteriorated in the course of 2022. Conflict remains one of the main drivers of humanitarian needs across the region, triggering internal displacement and cross-border flows. At the same time, the Horn of Africa is facing the worst historical drought in at least the last forty years because of climate change, leaving people in some areas facing famine-like conditions. The war in Ukraine is also exacerbating food insecurity in the region, as food and fuel prices have skyrocketed.

The EU has been continuously engaged in the crisis in the Horn of Africa, both in terms of advocacy and in providing humanitarian funding. The EU has drawn attention to this situation to spur the international community into action, such as in April 2022 when Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič, together with the United Nation's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths, co-hosted a flagship event on the hunger crisis in the Horn of Africa. Pledges of nearly €1.3 billion were made to combat the drought in the Horn, out of which €633 million were pledged by the EU in a 'Team Europe' approach. Additionally, Commissioner Lenarčič visited northern Ethiopia and the drought-affected Somali Regional State in June 2022 to stand in solidarity with the affected communities and to denounce the severe humanitarian situation they are facing.

Furthermore, the EU is engaging at the highest political level to address the crisis and its root causes in a structural manner, through its support to the Horn of Africa Initiative (HoAI). This Initiative brings together countries of the region to address shared challenges along four pillars - infrastructure, trade, resilience – including food security – and human development. The EU provides a contribution of €430 million to the HoAI, including

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programmes to support sustainable food production, as well as the building of infrastructure to allow food and other essential goods to reach most vulnerable populations. The 14th Ministerial Meeting of the HoAI, which took place in Washington on 13th October 2022, focused on the ongoing drought and food security. The EU Commissioner for International Partnerships Jutta Urpilainen joined the discussion, where she reiterated her commitment to support the region and highlighted the importance of working towards sustainable solutions to address the drought and other impacts of climate change. The EU, through its Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, is engaging with other international partners to promote the HoAI.

The EU's humanitarian strategy in the Horn of Africa is based on addressing the most urgent and acute needs through the provision of life-saving emergency assistance to the most vulnerable on a needs-based approach, and on ensuring the protection of people in the most affected areas by conflicts, violence, and natural shocks. In 2022, the EU has so far allocated a total of €173 million (€76.5 million – Ethiopia, €17 million – Kenya, €79.5 million – Somalia) in humanitarian assistance to the Horn of Africa.

Given the scale of the crisis in Somalia and the humanitarian access challenges faced there, the EU has operated nearly 70 Humanitarian Air Bridge flights to deliver urgent medical and nutrition supplies to secondary humanitarian hubs in the country, thus directly supporting humanitarian organisations' drought and famine response.

Advocacy for respect of International Humanitarian Law, enhanced humanitarian access and humanitarian principles across the region are priorities for the Commission. The Commission does so via coordinated actions with like-minded donors and by mainstreaming these principles in all EU - funded projects.

In the face of the severe impact of the Horn of Africa drought on the population and the ever-increasing scale of needs, compounded by the limited availability of resources, it is essential that the whole international community takes action.

The Commission looks forward to continuing the political dialogue with the Vlaams Parlement in the future.

Yours faithfully,

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High Representative/Vice-President*

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