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## **Humanitarian Crisis Meeting to raise awareness on the food crisis in the Horn of Africa 5 April 2017 in Brussels**

### **Position of Switzerland**

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Switzerland's response to the call for action of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres regarding the food crisis was swift. On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017 it released an additional 15 million Swiss Francs to support to people threatened by famine in South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria and Yemen.

Further, in early April 2017, Switzerland released another 32.5 million Swiss Francs to the World Food Programme, out of which almost 10 million are dedicated to food assistance in the four countries affected by the food crisis. The total amount invested in 2017 in the four affected countries adds up to 63 million Swiss Francs (including measures of development cooperation).

The risk of a famine has been known before. Switzerland therefore regularly stepped up its activities in the region over the past years. It launched a new humanitarian programme in Lake Chad in 2015 and in 2013 made the Horn of Africa a new priority region of humanitarian aid and development cooperation.

#### What more can be done to increase public awareness and funding to the humanitarian effort in responding to the crisis?

Pledging conferences are a visible platform to raise public awareness and increase the funding base for a specific humanitarian crisis. On request of the UN Secretary-General, Switzerland and Sweden, jointly with the UN, will co-host the Yemen pledging conference in Geneva on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017.

The Yemen conference is one of four pledging conferences between February and May 2017 on the crises in Nigeria and the Lake Chad region, Syria, Yemen and Somalia. The international community needs to make sure that these pledging conferences translate into real funding. Switzerland considers reliability key in any humanitarian action. It thus calls upon all member states to effectively release the financial support announced in the pledging conferences.

Private donations are an important source of funding for international development cooperation and humanitarian aid. The Swiss Solidarity (*Chaîne de Bonheur*) is a humanitarian foundation of the Swiss radio and television network that raises private funds for relief projects. In the event of major disasters, the foundation appeals on a specific day for donations via national television and radio stations as well as the private media. On 11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 Swiss Solidarity will call for its national fundraising day for the people affected by the food crisis in Africa. Switzerland encourages all member states to support initiatives that aim at increasing private donations for humanitarian crises. It also sees an opportunity for the UN to consider calling for a global fundraising day to combat the food crisis.

#### What more can be done to increase access of humanitarian partners on the ground to reach people in need?

It is important to stress that the main responsibility for failing to reach people in need stays with those parties to the conflict directly or indirectly obstructing or hampering access, and not with the humanitarian community. All UN member states must push the parties on the ground to respect international humanitarian law and not to impede humanitarian access. Bureaucratic hurdles that render the working environment of humanitarian actors difficult must be lightened or lifted. In this context, the international community also has to make sure that international measures and counterterrorism laws must not inhibit the work of humanitarian actors or limit their access.

In the Horn of Africa specifically, Switzerland considers it key to strengthen partners with access into hard to reach areas within and beyond the UN system. In certain contexts local partners might be the best option, such as the local Red Cross and Red Crescent society or local non-governmental organizations. Switzerland supports the Somalia NGO Consortium which supports local NGOs that present in areas where international actors do not have access. We enable them to strengthen their dialogue with the government and regional authorities. This ultimately leads to improved access and to the reduction of administrative hurdles in delivering assistance (localizing aid).

OCHA's role in coordinating humanitarian aid and in negotiating access is key and should be further strengthened. In Somalia the establishment of a *Drought Operations Center* in Mogadishu, which is also supported by Switzerland, is an important step into this direction. Its tasks are to provide updates on the crisis, coordinate between UN agencies, the Somali government and NGOs and to consult them in their activities.

Beside this immediate action, how to negotiate access must become a more central skill for all field staff and organizations. Switzerland, together with OCHA and the ICRC, supported the development and continues to support the dissemination of an Access Negotiation Manual's now used in most of the contexts hit by the food crisis. Switzerland also supports the Centre of Competence on Humanitarian Negotiations in Geneva. The Centre has been created to facilitate the sharing of negotiation practices among professionals in the field, and the development of practical tools to assist them in the elaboration of robust strategies. It is a joint undertaking of the ICRC, WFP, UNHCR, MSF and the HD Centre.

How can the international community support the immediate humanitarian life-saving response while at the same time supporting development initiatives to reduce future vulnerabilities and risks (humanitarian-development nexus)?

The fight against the food crisis needs to be a joint effort of humanitarian aid and development cooperation in order to prevent future crises. Switzerland welcomes the integrated approach taken by the UNSG, which associates also the World Bank.

Switzerland has long followed a combined humanitarian-development approach. Programmes on the ground combine humanitarian and development components in order to react with more flexibility to the needs in such fragile contexts. In the Horn of Africa, Swiss development cooperation focuses, among others, on improved management of natural resources as well as resilience of population affected by drought. The development cooperation is complemented by humanitarian actions.

Switzerland is further active in donor coordination. As an active member and as current co-chair of the donor coordination groups in Somalia and Ethiopia, Switzerland advocates for linking humanitarian and development action and for more effective coordination during crisis. The peace nexus must not be forgotten neither. Considering that the main reasons of the current food crisis are ongoing armed conflicts, a political solution is urgently needed with adequate engagement of the international community.

In South Sudan, Switzerland is not only providing humanitarian aid, but is also working to promote dialogue on national and local level. In the past, Switzerland also offered its good offices to the Yemen Talks to find a political solution to the conflict. In this regard, the Yemen pledging conference on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017 in Geneva will offer an opportunity to confirm the importance of finding a political solution.