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**REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON THE HUMANITARIAN
SITUATION IN AFRICA**

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. This report is an update of the previous report presented to the 20th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It portrays a Continent that continues to grapple with serious problem of forced displacement mainly as a result of conflicts, natural and man-made disasters. It further presents information on the implementation of programmes and activities by the African Union Commission and the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa and its operational partners in search for durable solutions to the problems generated by forced displacement in Africa. In conclusion it presents challenges on how to tackle the problem of uprooted populations and the way forward.

2. The information contained in the report was mainly provided by some Member States and African Union partners.

II. SYNOPSIS OF CURRENT HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN AFRICA

3. Conflicts in some parts of Africa continue to produce mass displacements of people on the continent which have resulted in untold human suffering of innocent people, especially women and children and other vulnerable groups. Furthermore, perpetual floods, droughts, and to some extent famine in some Member States have further complicated the humanitarian displacements. This is evidenced in the Sahel Region where more than 16 million people are directly affected by an escalating food and nutrition crisis. The main focus in this report will therefore be on the Sahel Region countries which are mainly in West Africa but also extends to the North and Central Regions.

4. The complexities of these situations have contributed to an increase in the number of forced displacements. The number of refugees is estimated to be close to 3 million while the internally displaced persons are over 16 million according to humanitarian agencies. Even though there are still some disturbing humanitarian issues in some parts of the Continent, there is still hope that forced displacement population will decrease as Member States commit themselves to implement the Plan of Action on the Outcomes of the 2009 Kampala AU Special Summit of Heads of State and Government on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. This desire was further exemplified through the conclusions of the Regional Consultative meetings in the promotion of signature and ratification/accession to the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa.

5. Furthermore, efforts were made at the Commission and at various levels of stakeholders to deal with the fundamental challenges in promoting resilience within Member States affected by disasters by improving mitigation and preparedness for shocks and to integrate humanitarian and development actions to simultaneously

address chronic dimensions of such crises that came to the fore during the reporting period.

6. In the meantime, the Commission will continue to advocate for support from Member States in addressing the root causes and seeking durable solutions to the problem. Gratitude goes to countries of asylum that continue to receive and care for the thousands of forced displaced people on their soil.

III. ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

NORTHERN REGION

7. The humanitarian situation in the Northern Region of Africa has improved since the last reporting period. Thousands of Libyans who were in the region returned home while the internally displaced went back to their communities.

8. **Algeria** continues to host 165,000 Sahrawi refugees who have been living in Tindouf refugee camps for more than 35 years. In the meantime UNHCR resumed the family visits in the camps and in Western Sahara. The visits are part of a Confidence-Building Measures programme that was launched in 2004 between UNHCR and the governments of Morocco, Algeria, Mauritania and Polisario Front. Additionally, the country has received about 30,000 Malian refugees since January 2012, according to government source.

9. **Mauritania** is one of the countries in the Sahel region which is at the risk of food insecurity with about 700,000 being affected. Additionally by February 2012, the country was home to over 55,000 refugees from Mali according to the Government official who briefed the Consultative meeting in April 2012 in Tunis, Tunisia. Due to a steady flow of new arrivals, a refugee camp was opened in Mbera, about 50 kilometers from the border with Mali. Additionally they were other unregistered refugees who came to the country and went to stay either with relative or friends. The number of new arrivals increased from between 200 and 500 daily in March to 1,000 in April 2012.

10. Thousands of Libyans who were in **Tunisia** in 2011 returned home while other refugees mainly from Somalia and Eritrea were waiting for resettlement. Between January and February 2012, the country experienced cold weather, heavy rains and snow, which was reported to be the worst in 20 years. This caused Majerda River to overflow and resulted in flooding, thus isolating villages with roads cut off.

WESTERN REGION

11. During the period under review, there was deteriorating humanitarian situation and unfolding complex emergency in the Sahel Region. In February 2012 about 10 million people were affected but the number increased dramatically to over 16 million people in April 2012. This was mainly due to escalating food and nutrition crises as a result of the on-going drought, compounded by conflict in Mali, high food prices and general insecurity. Furthermore, the situation has been exacerbated from the loss of

remittances which were previously sent by thousands of migrant workers in Libya and Côte d'Ivoire.

12. At the time of reporting the situation was still fluid and the number of affected populations kept rising on a regular basis. The gravity of the situation in the most affected countries are: Burkina Faso with 1.7 million (10 per cent of the population), Chad 3.6 million (28 per cent of the population), Mali 3.5 million (23 per cent of the population), Mauritania 700,000 (22 per cent of the population), Niger 5.4 million (almost 35 per cent of the population), Senegal 739,000 (5.6 per cent of the population), the Gambia 713,500 (42 per cent of the population), Northern Nigeria and Northern Cameroon.

13. Some of these overburdened countries mainly Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger were also receiving thousands of refugees, on a regular basis, the majority of which were Malians who numbered over 160,000 in April 2012. They fled to drought-affected areas where food forecasts are among the worst in the host countries. Since some refugees were nomadic pastoralists, they brought with them their livestock, which needed food and water, thus sharing the meagre resources available with the refugees and increased the burden on the host communities.

14. **Burkina Faso** is one of the countries most affected in the Sahel region with the number close to 2 million. The problem has been compounded by the thousands of Malian arrivals where the Government continued to receive between 500 and 600 Malian refugees on a daily basis. By mid-April 2012, the number of Malian refugees was 46,354. The refugees arrived in the country where host communities have almost nothing especially in terms of food, thus putting pressure on very limited food, water and sanitation resources as well as on the other weak capacities of basic social services.

15. Since January 2012, **Mali** has been caught up in a serious security situation which started with the renewed activities of the *Mouvement national de Liberation de l'Azawad* (MNLA) which was formed in 2011 attacking towns in Northern part of the country and demanding autonomy for the tribe in the area of Azawad in the north. Various cities located at the border with Niger, Mauritania and Algeria were affected by the fighting as well. In March 2012 a coup d'état took place which further complicated the already volatile security situation.

16. As the political and security situations remained fluid, thousands of Malians sought refuge mainly in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger where they numbered almost 160,000 by April 2012. At the same time 270,000 people were internally displaced as a result of the conflict in the North of the country since January 2012. The problem is further complicated due to limited humanitarian access which prevents humanitarian agencies to gather information, assess the needs and thereafter respond to the situation. Allegations of human rights abuses have been made including rapes of women were also reported in the northern area. 3.5 million Malians are at the risk of facing severe food security and nutrition crisis and out of this number about 725,000 are in Northern Mali.

17. With regard to **Niger**, it is facing the problem of taking care of more than 5 million people suffering from food crisis and nutrition. The problem is unfortunately compounded by the arrivals of Malian refugees who were settling in the vulnerable areas. They are almost 30,000 refugees in the country and out of that number about 27,000 are from Mali. The Government is working closely with UNHCR to establish new refugee camps. Furthermore, the country is trying to cope with her thousands of nationals who came back from Libya in 2011.

CENTRAL REGION

18. The Central African region is trying to come to grips with its conflicts which have gone on for several years. This is in addition to the activities of Lord Resistance Army (LRA), a terrorist group which has contributed to the suffering of the population as thousands of people were still displaced in the region, especially in Central African Republic (CAR) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). However, due to efforts that are put in place and which are effective in dealing with LRA, hope is not lost. These initiatives include US deployment of small force to act as military advisors to military units of LRA-affected nations, appointment of AU Special Envoy on LRA as part of AU-led Regional Cooperation Initiative against LRA and the agreement in principle of cross-border collaboration which allows forces of four national governments (DRC, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Uganda) to cross national borders in pursuit of LRA.

19. The population of **Central African Republic** continued to suffer from the LRA attacks despite the country's initiatives to deal with LRA. As a means of survival, LRA targets food and clothes as well as kidnapping people for use as porters. Approximately 60,000 people were living in main towns of affected region. In March 2012, the country was also home to 5,361 refugees from DRC.

20. **Chad** is considered to be the most affected in the Sahel Region in terms of food security and nutrition. Harvest deficit, for example, was reported to be 50 per cent and food prices were higher by 50 to 60 per cent. This indeed weighed heavily on long term development. The country is host to refugees from Sudan, 274,640 and 67, 863 from CAR while about 125, 000 are IDPs and 83,244 migrants came back from Libya.

21. The humanitarian crisis in the **Democratic Republic of Congo** remains one of the world's most complex and protracted emergencies. The country continued to experience insecurity, diseases, natural disasters, and inaccessibility of roads. Additionally the country suffers from LRA atrocities, which has contributed greatly to displacement. Out of more than 2 million people who are still internally displaced, LRA is responsible for almost 400,000 people. More disturbing is the renewed offensive to apprehend a former rebel and renegade General which is now cause for fresh displacements of persons in Eastern part of the country.

22. In the **Republic of Congo**, the Government authorities reported that they were 126,000 refugees from DRC and out of that number 6,000 have been in the country for a long time. Rwandese refugees were 8,000 and 813 Angolan refugees. The asylum

seekers were 5,893. At the same time the country was affected by natural disasters and man-made disasters which displaced over 15,000 people.

EASTERN REGION

23. The Eastern Region was trying to come to terms with the 2011 drought and famine which was also coupled with conflict in Somalia and as a result affected over 16 million. As a follow up to the situation, the Commission in cooperation with its partners met several times to review the progress made after the Pledging Conference in August 2011 in Addis Ababa. However, there is still a great need to build resilience in order to avoid a repeat of last years' catastrophe.

24. Sudan and South Sudan are embroiled in fighting in the areas of Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile and this has produced thousands of refugees and IDPs in the region. In March 2012, the governments of the two countries came up with a framework agreement on the status of their nationals which will help greatly in the regularization of nationality status. In the meantime, the Leaders of the region are struggling to create peace and stability throughout the region mainly through the good offices of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

25. During the reporting period, **Comoros** was also greatly affected by disasters. The Government informed the Commission that Since 20 April 2012, the islands of the country were hit by torrential rains which caused heavy floods as well as landslides and rockslides. The authorities gave the figure of almost 46,139 people affected mainly on Anjouan, Grande Comoros and Moheli. However the number went up to 57,232 in early May 2012 according to humanitarian agencies as follows: 25, 000 on Anjouan; 17,232 on Grande Comoros and 15,000 on Moheli. Almost 14,000 of that number became internally displaced and were living with relatives or community members. Water supply, electricity and telecommunication services were cut off while market businesses were greatly affected. The villages became inaccessible due to the cut off of roads and other communication infrastructure.

26. Due to the fighting in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, nearly 6,000 new arrivals of refugees fled to **Ethiopia** in March 2012, thus bringing the total number of refugees in the country to 309,395. The majority are Somalis with the population of 192,833 followed by Eritreans, 57,809 and Sudanese 55,014. Different nationalities account for 3,739. The refugees reside in 16 camps of which some of them are new and two transit centres.

27. In the last reporting, **Kenya** was stretched to the maximum with the problem of forced displacement as it was one of the countries in the Horn of Africa that was affected by drought. The number had gone down but long lasting solution to the problem needs vigilance in order to implement CAADP framework. Furthermore, the country is still home to over 400,000 refugees, the majority whom are Somalis.

28. During the period under review, the conflict in **Somalia** continues to be a major challenge as it remains volatile despite some positive developments within Transitional

Federal Government (TFG) and AU Mission in Somali (AMISOM) including the return of several humanitarian agencies even though accessibility is still a problem, especially in the regions of Lower Juba, Southern and Central Somalia. The fighting between TFG/AMISOM forces and Al Shabaab on one hand and tension between Al Shabaab and TFG/Kenyan forces on the other hand resulted in further displacements where some IDPs are living in unsuitable locations and unable to access the basic services. For example, the attack on the National Theatre in Mogadishu and an explosion at the vegetable market place in Baidoa in April 2012 caused serious injuries and death. Displacement is affecting the agriculture productions, which is critical to the livelihoods of the population considering the fact that they were going through a difficult period of combating drought and famine of last year which affected over 4 million people. Low attendance in school was also a major problem. Over one million people are still internally displaced and 200,000 are in Mogadishu.

29. With regard to **Sudan** the Government informed the Commission that the total refugee population in the country stands at 142,624 who come mainly from the neighbouring countries namely; DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda, Chad and Central African Republic.

30. At the time of reporting, humanitarian agencies reported the continued mass movements of people in Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile due to fighting especially in March 2012. Since June 2011, an estimated number of more than 300,000 were either internally displaced or affected in South Kordofan and an additional 50,000 in Blue Nile while Abyei area has over 100,000 IDPs and the returnees from South Sudan account for 5,000 people. The problem in Abyei is made worse by the presence of landmines and unexploded ordinance which also hampers the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

31. On the other hand, over 140,000 IDPs in the Darfur region returned to their villages while 34,000 refugees returned home from Chad. For the first time since the conflict started in the Darfur region in 2003, it was reported that the number of returnees was more than the number of new displacements. However, the IDP population in the camps is still estimated to be around 1.9 million. There is concern for the welfare of close to 500,000 former IDPs from South Sudan who are still in Sudan and have not had the possibility of establishing their nationality, thus highlighting the importance of implementing the framework agreement on the status of nationals from both Sudan and South Sudan.

32. Following **South Sudan independence** in July 2011 clashes broke out between the governments of Sudan and South Sudan in the unsettled areas of Abyei, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. Since then thousands of people have fled to Ethiopia and others went to the country's Unity and Upper Nile States where UNHCR established four settlements. In February 2012 it was reported that Upper Nile State both in Doro and Jamam camps reached full capacity with over 30,000 refugees each and new settlements were urgently needed to accommodate the ever increasing number of new arrivals. The refugee population from South Kordofan and Blue Nile is about 150,000 and more than 100,000 were from Abyei. While dealing with the large numbers of

refugees, the country was also receiving returnees from neighbouring countries in particular Sudan. 372,000 people returned from Sudan since October 2010.

33. Due to the mass information campaigns against LRA since 2006, the return of IDPs to their communities in the North of **Uganda** produced positive results. The initiatives taking place to deal with LRA has also helped the reduction of its activities. In January 2012, UNHCR announced the end of its assistance to the remaining IDPs as majority of them returned to their villages. In the meantime, the country continued to host over 100,000 refugees from DRC, Rwanda and Sudan.

SOUTHERN REGION

34. Even though the Southern region hosts refugees mainly from DRC, Rwanda, Burundi and Somalia, its major challenge is mixed migratory movements from other African countries and also within the region itself and, in particular to South Africa. At the same time, natural and man-made disasters have also been affecting the region for some years.

35. In **Madagascar** almost 170,000 people were affected by tropical cyclone Giovanna in the eastern regions with large scale flooding in the south- eastern regions while 9,600 people were displaced by Irina. Approximately 135,000 people were considered food insecure due to floods and cyclones which also affected the rice fields and other crops.

36. With regard to **Malawi**, close to 100,000 were affected by storms and floods to which the Government responded immediately in order to avoid further calamities. Several thousands of people have returned home except for the 4,328 who are housed in shelters.

37. **Mozambique** experienced flooding, which affected close to 108,048 people. An estimated 428,000 homes and thousands of school classrooms as well as some health units were destroyed including about 140,538 hectares of crops that were affected. The Government was struggling to implement recovery activities. Additionally, the country is home to almost 7,000 refugees in Maratane refugee camp in Nampula area who had been in the country since 2011.

38. In the case of **Namibia**, the northern part of the country was affected by floods which persisted during the reporting period and this affected the population where some people became internally displaced. Concerning the refugees, the Government reported that at the end of 2011, they were 7098 refugees and 694 asylum seekers who originate mainly from DRC, Angola, Burundi and Somalia. In the same year, 28 refugees came back home from Botswana and are being assisted to re-integrate in their communities.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION

39. In line with various Recommendations, Resolutions and Decisions, especially the last Executive Council Decision, EX/CL/Dec. 686(XX), and in accordance with Work

Plans, the Commission together with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees took concrete steps with its partners to carry out some programmes and activities.

Visits to Member States and Meetings of the Sub-Committee on Refugees

40. Between February and March 2012, the Bureau of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons met twice and considered the Programme of Work of the Sub-Committee as well as the dire humanitarian situation in the Sahel Region and how best to respond to it. Additionally, the meeting of the whole took place in June 2012.

41. Field assessment missions were planned with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees and in consultation with Member States concerned as well as in close collaboration with AU partners. The visit to South Sudan was undertaken and arrangements are underway for visits to Mauritania and Niger.. Details of the missions will be reflected in the report of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees which will be considered as well.

Responses to disasters

42. As a follow up to the pledges made during the Pledging Conference on Drought and Famine in the Horn of Africa in August 2011 in Addis Ababa, the Commission together with the partners through the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) met several times and agreed on how to distribute the sum of US\$ 8,584.80 million redeemed from Member States and various Groups as at May 2012. This excludes the pledge of ADB of US\$ 300,000.00 million.

43. The African Union held preparatory meetings between February and June 2012 on the humanitarian emergency situation in the Sahel Region which needed concrete action. The preparatory meetings led to the convening of high level meetings. As a way of showing solidarity to the countries of the Sahel Region most affected by the situation, the AU responded by contributing the sum of US\$450,000.00 towards the crisis. Furthermore, the African Union extended US\$50,000.00 to the victims of ammunition explosion disaster in the Republic of Congo.

Cooperation with Partners

44. Within the framework of technical and financial cooperation in humanitarian assistance, partners contributed towards some of the Commission's activities and training. The programmes and activities include several consultations and Meetings which were held in February 2012 and considered the joint AU/Partners Work Plan for 2012 meetings of the Working Group of the Coordinating Committee on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (CCAR) met on a regular basis to implement its activities for 2012.

45. The UNECA in collaboration with the Commission organized a training Workshop for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on post conflict situations in Africa in April 2012 in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. The objective of the Workshop was to equip CSOs with a basic

understanding of conflict and the capacity to identify, analyse, define and discuss conflict at the different levels by using the toolkit developed by ECA. The kit would also guide CSOs to work with Community Based Organizations in post-conflict initiatives, particularly through community-driven development and reconstruction programmes which include gender perspective, social differences and diversity.

46. Training workshop was organized in Mombasa, Kenya in April 2012 by International Federation of the Red Crescent (IFRC) and UNOCHA on International Disaster Response Laws (IDRL) in the Horn of Africa. It was attended by all the countries of the Horn of Africa including Burundi, Tanzania, IGAD and the African Union. The workshop reviewed national policies with the aim of harmonizing them to enable the facilitation of humanitarian assistance in drought and other natural disasters in the region. The meeting also examined the legal and structural frameworks and considered how they facilitated or hindered humanitarian response in the affected countries. The meeting concluded that as part of its preparation, countries needed to put in place clear legislative guidelines.

47. The Commission participated in the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Training (UNDACT) between April and May 2012. The training focused on preparedness and coordination of assistance in cases of disasters. It was noted that Africa is one of the Continents hit with most disasters but with the least level of preparedness hence the need to work with the Regional Economic Communities to ensure that a team is trained and ready for deployment at all times. Additionally, given the large number of assistance offered by the International community in case of a disaster, it was noted that the African Union would play an important role on assisting the affected countries to coordinate such assistance.

48. The Commission participated in the Regional Protection Meeting for the Horn of Africa held in May 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya under the umbrella of the UNHCR. The objectives of the meeting were aimed at improving coordination among UNHCR country offices, enhancing understanding of protection issues of regional dimension and recommend approaches for solutions. The AU and ECA participants emphasized the necessity to tackle the problem of forced displacement through existing legal instruments.

Commemoration of Africa/World Refugee Day: 20 June

49. As is customary, the Commission planned various activities with PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, AU partners and other relevant agencies in Commemoration of Africa/World Day which falls on 20 June every year. The activities were carried out according to this year's theme. They included visits to return and settlement areas in South Sudan and a token donation of US\$ 20,000, roundtable, refugee exhibition as well as statements of the Chairperson of the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, the Commission, UNHCR and other partners.

Implementation of the Plan of Action of the Kampala 2009 AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa

50. The following meetings were held with Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Partners, Civil Society and the Diaspora as well as other relevant organizations:

51. The Consultative Meeting between the AU and RECs was held in Yaoundé, Cameroon in February 2012. The meeting reviewed and harmonized inputs from various RECs with the aim of creating a convergence in Disaster Management Policy in accordance with international standards. The meeting therefore came out with a common Disaster Management Policy to form part of the AU Humanitarian Policy Framework.

52. The Northern Regional Consultative Meeting took place in Tunis, Tunisia in April 2012. The meeting underscored the importance of the Recommendations the Declaration and the IDP Convention that emanated from the AU Special Summit in Kampala. It was noted however that emphasis was more on the Convention because unlike the other two documents, it required a long process of signature and ratification before coming into force and domestication for its implementation. The meeting therefore agreed that every effort should be made in particular with the national legislative processes through the Parliaments to ensure a speedy signature and ratification/accession to the AU IDP Convention. It was stated that possibly the region would make the Convention enter into force in 2012.

53. The Commission in collaboration with UNHCR and the World Bank organised the AU Legal Experts Meeting on the Draft Model Law in Mombasa, Kenya in June 2012. The Meeting discussed and reviewed the document on the Domestication and Implementation of the IDP Convention and which further raised awareness among Member States on the status of the IDPs in the Continent and on the provisions and implications of the Convention, the Kampala Declaration and Recommendations.

V. CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

54. While there are pointers to some developments, there are still many challenges and difficulties to overcome in the area of forced displacement. Africa's millions of refugees, returnees and IDPs including victims of disasters are often left at the mercy of the international community for their survival. Unfortunately, since early 1990's, donor fatigue continues to affect humanitarian programmes and activities coupled with recent global financial crises.

55. Furthermore, while in many cases the international community is focusing on refugees, the question of IDPs is a thorny issue and that is the reason for Member States to sign and ratify the IDP Convention so that it comes into force by 2012. The pre-occupation of enhancing States' capacities to elevate the suffering of the IDPs on the Continent and protect them will then start in earnest while on the other hand the international community would continue to support Member States with the provision of the much needed assistance in this area. It should be noted that as of April 2012,

countries that signed the Convention were 35 while 11 ratified and deposited the instruments with the Commission. The Commission will continue to promote the Convention so that it comes into force in 2012.

56. In the meantime, all stakeholders are urged to implement the Plan of Action that emanated from the Outcomes of the Kampala 2009 AU Special Summit on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa. It should be noted that the Plan of Action is not an end in itself but rather a beginning of a long-term strategy to address the phenomenon of forced displacement in Africa in a more sustained way which is a commitment to action.

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