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**REPORT OF THE PRC SUB-COMMITTEE
ON SPECIAL EMERGENCY FUNDS FOR DROUGHT AND FAMINE**

**REPORT OF THE PRC SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE SPECIAL EMERGENCY
ASSISTANCE FUND FOR DROUGHT AND FAMINE IN AFRICA (SEAF)
FOR THE PERIOD FROM JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2020**

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1. The PRC Sub-Committee on the Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine Relief in Africa (SEAF) oversees all matters relating to the operation of the Fund of the same name. It is composed of 15 Member States and is currently chaired by the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic.

2. The Sub-Committee is tasked with initiating effective measures for the mobilisation of resources for the Fund, determine the Fund's operational policy including the selection of beneficiary countries, and decide on the amounts of grants or loans to allocate to countries affected by droughts, famine, and other calamities in support of national efforts aimed at mitigating the impact of drought and famine in Africa. The assistance from the Fund is intended to show solidarity with the affected countries and to invite the international community to provide the support required to avert human suffering and damages.

3. During the year 2020, the Sub-Committee met for the first time on 27 February 2020 to receive an update on the Fund and a preliminary briefing on the locust infestation in the Horn of Africa. The subsequent meeting of the Sub-Committee at the level of the Bureau was held on 7 May 2020 to consider its work-plan for the year. The Sub-Committee met again on 9 November 2020 to receive relevant briefings and adopt its work-plan.

4. This report summarizes the Sub-Committee's activities during the period January-December 2020. It further highlights some challenges and prospects for the effective operationalisation of the Fund.

2.0. ACTIVITIES

2.1. Response to the threat to food security and livelihoods caused by locust infestation in Africa.

5. Under the guidance provided by the Sub-Committee, the Commission in collaboration with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) briefed the Peace and Security Council (PSC) during its 917th meeting held on 9 April 2020 on the humanitarian situation in the countries affected by desert locust infestation in Africa. This meeting allowed the Peace and Security to encourage the Member States to enhance collaboration towards eradicating the desert locust infestation in the affected countries, to prevent a regional and possibly a continental plague that could harm agriculture, food, and economic security in Africa.

6. In the same vein, the Sub-Committee convened an open session held on 9 November 2020 that comprised two relevant briefings, including the briefing from the Desert Locust Control Organisation for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) on the locust infestation in Africa. The briefing made by Dr. Stephen from DLCO-EA underlined the fact that the Horn of Africa is the most affected region by the locust infestation in Africa. The locust infestation has been spreading rapidly across this region since December 2019. Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia remain the most heavily impacted, with bands of hoppers and swarms of adult locusts devouring vegetation in multiple areas.

7. Locust infestations have also intensified in Djibouti, Eritrea, and Sudan since March 2020 due to increased rainfall and the arrival of desert locust swarms from other affected countries. The scale of the infestation and the attendant impact is unprecedented in recent decades. It is reported to be the worst infestation in 70 years and the swarms are extremely large.

8. At the same occasion and for the same purpose, another briefing was made by Dr. David Phiri from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nation on the impact of COVID-19 on Food security in Africa. Dr. Phiri stated that Africa is not on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 1 (SDG 1) that calls for no poverty by 2030 and SDG 2 which aims to achieve zero hunger by 2030, and the AU Malabo Declaration on agriculture and food security in Africa. Statistics shows that more than 250 million people were food insecure in Africa in 2019 and 66 million of these people are facing acute food insecurity. The COVID-19 could increase undernourishment in Africa by up to 40 million people in 2020.

9. The possibility of responding to the threat in supporting the countries affected by the Locust infestation was discussed by members of the Sub-Committee at the meetings held on 27 February and 9 November 2020. Proposals have been made to support the affected countries and communities either with the SEAF Fund or with the Horn of Africa famine Relief Contribution fund. However, these proposals were not feasible due to lack of resources.

10. The Proposal of conducting a Sub-Committee solidarity mission to the affected countries in collaboration with the PRC Sub-Committee on Refugees, Returnees and IDPs could not be implemented in the course of the year 2020 due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the reallocation of the AU operational budget to the Africa-CDC to respond to the coronavirus outbreak in Africa.

2.2. Follow-up on the implementation of the Executive Council decision (Ex.CI / Dec. 968(xxxi) that calls for the organisation of a Donors'/pledging conference for the replenishment of the SEAF Fund.

11. The concern of the PRC Sub-Committee on SEAF regarding the replenishment of the SEAF Fund was reaffirmed throughout the year during various meetings. The replenishment of the Fund has become more urgent because of the increasingly complex situation of drought, famine and other calamities in Africa accelerated by COVID-19.

12. Plans were made to organise this important continental conference in Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) in November 2020 in collaboration with the Government of Equatorial Guinea and under the patronage of His Excellency Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of Equatorial Guinea and Champion of the year 2019, which was the year of Refugees, Returnees and IDPs. But this conference could not be convened due COVID-19. The Sub-Committee will continue to follow-up on the implementation of the Executive Council decision on the replenishment of the SEAF in 2021.

3.0. FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE FUND

13. The resources of the SEAF come primarily from voluntary contributions of Member States of the African Union.

14. Unfortunately, the Fund has not received any substantial contributions during the period under consideration, despite the dire humanitarian crises that have affected the continent in 2020 compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and in spite of the general appeal the Sub-Committee launched in this regard. Consequently, as of 30 September 2020, the net operating balance of the Fund (excluding the strategic reserve of US \$ 3 million) is about US \$ 2 million.

4.0. CHALLENGES

15. SEAF is a tool for African solidarity and mutual support. Over the last thirty years, it has supported over 80 projects in 34 countries, making a total outlay of over US \$ 36 million. However, the Fund's existence is now threatened by the continued depletion of its financial resources. It is, therefore, important that measures are taken to replenish the Fund. This has become urgent as due to the coronavirus pandemic. Because of COVID-19, hundreds of thousands of people would likely die, and millions more experience hunger without concerted efforts to address issues of food security.

16. Apart from the depletion of the Fund, the advent of the coronavirus pandemic in early 2020 has impacted the normal functioning of the PRC Sub-Committee on SEAF. The border closures that followed the spread of the pandemic at a global level and particularly in Africa, the lack of air flights, and particularly the economic consequences of the pandemic have prevented the organization of the pledging conference as planned.

17. Also, the activity relating to the alignment of the working documents of the Sub-Committee to the Executive Decision that expended the SEAF Fund was also impacted. A retreat of the Sub-Committee was planned for this purpose, but the current pandemic and reallocation of the AU operational budget to the Africa-CDC to respond to the coronavirus outbreak on the continent prevented the execution of this activity.

5.0. CONCLUSION

18. The activities of the PRC Subcommittee on SEAF have been revitalized in the course of the year 2020 with the convening of numerous meetings both at the bureau and plenary levels despite the difficult context characterised by the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. However, the depletion of the Fund remains a great concern for the proper functioning of the Sub-Committee and on its ability to redress adverse effects of drought, famine and food insecurity compounded by COVID-19.

6.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

19. Mindful of the need to enhance the level of human security on the continent and in consideration of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic which seems poised to continue in 2021, the Sub-Committee should consider carefully its activities during 2021. To this end, the Sub-Committee:

- a. Requests the Commission to expedite the organization of a donor's/pleading conference aimed at replenishing the fund for its sustainability, which should also consider the impact of COVID-19 on food security in Africa.
- b. Requests the Commission to take into account the working method introduced by the AU to counter the spread of COVID-19 as well as to save cost as directed by the Executive Council EXCL/DEC/1097(XXXVII) and make use of virtual platforms to conduct the activities of the PRC Sub-Committee on SEAF.

DRAFT
DECISION ON THE SPECIAL EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
FUND FOR DROUGHT AND FAMINE IN AFRICA

The Executive Council,

1. **TAKES NOTE** of the Report of the Sub-Committee on Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine in Africa;
2. **RECALLS** its previous decision EX.CL/Dec.968 (xxxi) that requests the Commission in collaboration with the PRC and its Sub-Committee on SEAF, to convene a Pledging Conference to raise resources to replenish the Fund;
3. **NOTES** the depletion of the fund and its adverse effect on the Sub-Committee's ability to fully execute its mandate;
4. **NOTE WITH CONCERN** the dire humanitarian crises that have affected the continent in 2020 compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic and **CALLS ON** Member States to urgently provide financial support for sustaining the Fund to enable the relief, through the Fund, of African populations facing drought, undernourishment, famine and the threat caused by COVID-19 pandemic on food security in Africa,
5. **REQUESTS** the Sub-Committee, in collaboration with the Commission, to:
 - a) Sensitize the Member States on the statute of the Fund and the need to replenish it without delay in order to respond to the dire threat caused by the coronavirus pandemic on food security and Africa and to other calamities such as the Locust infestation.
 - b) Continue to raise awareness in 2021 on the effects of locust infestation in Africa, particularly its humanitarian impact in East Africa and other regions of the continent.
 - c) Requests the Commission to expedite the organization of a donor's/pledging conference aimed at replenishing the fund for its sustainability, which should also consider the impact of COVID-19 on food security in Africa.
 - d) Coordinate the AU humanitarian action against drought and famine in close collaboration with the Africa Risk Capacity (ARC).
 - e) Take into account the working method introduced by the AU to counter the spread of COVID-19 as well as to save cost as directed by the Executive Council EXCL/DEC/1097(XXXVII), the Committee needs to make use of virtual platforms to conduct the planned retreat, solidarity mission and other activities as necessary.

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