Meeting on Emergency in the Horn of Africa: Follow-up and Response Action; 
FAO, Rom 18. 8. 2011
Statement by Hans-Jörg Lehmann, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to FAO, IFAD and WFP

Madame Chair, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues

We thank FAO for organizing this very relevant follow up meeting today.

Switzerland is profoundly concerned about the famine in Somalia. Its potential to spread to other regions is deeply alarming and the whole Horn of Africa may be further destabilized.

At this juncture, Switzerland would like to pay tribute to the Governments of Ethiopia, Kenya and others for providing protection and assistance to very large populations, in spite of their own difficulties. Likewise, we would like to address a word of great appreciation to the host communities, local authorities and other affected populations for their expression of solidarity vis-à-vis those suffering.

Switzerland also commends the efforts taken by all United Nations Agencies concerned, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, as well as the NGO’s, to prevent further deaths and additional suffering.

The Swiss Minister for External Affairs, Mrs Calmy-Rey, paid a working visit to the region very recently, both to advocate in favor of the victims and to analyse what can be done to restore livelihoods and build up the resilience of populations vulnerable to the effects of changing weather patterns and other events. In particular, we deem important to support pastoralists and marginalized populations in adapting to these harsher climatic conditions. For this purpose, mid- and long term interventions are needed. In order to prevent future crises, political stability as well as a continuous and sustainable commitment in the field of resilience building is needed. In that spirit, efforts by all relevant - national and international - actors to provide safe and unhindered humanitarian access must also be intensified and enlarged. Likewise, for coordination and collaboration among all actors the necessary respect of international humanitarian law is needed.

Switzerland has been active in the Horn of Africa since the 1990ies with a very large number of short term bilateral and multilateral humanitarian activities, as well as long term development plans. In 2011 so far, Switzerland has spent SFR 18.5 millions in the region, in particular in Somalia, in Ethiopia, in the Kenia, in Erythrea and in Djibouti, - via support to ICRC, HCR, WFP, OCHA, UNICEF, FAO/TCEO, NGOs, - and by providing experts to our partners. I would also like to add that regarding cooperation between SDC and FAO/TCEO, it is our intention to work much more narrowly in the future. The activities of FAO, - now and in the coming few months, - both on rehabilitation of agriculture and livestock domains, is of utmost importance, to prevent future crisis and to stabilize livelihoods in the region, including in Southern Somalia.

Due to the acuteness and severity of the current crisis, Switzerland has yesterday decided to increase its funding to humanitarian and development agencies active in the Horn of Africa region by an additional SFR 20 million. Likewise, Switzerland’s civil society fundraising mechanism (“Swiss Solidarity Chain”) has started advocacy throughout Switzerland for the Horn of Africa and more than SFR 20 million have been collected so far for the region.

Thank you for your attention.

Rome, 18.08.2011