



26 September 2013

IGAD Partner Forum Ministerial Meeting on the margins of the 68th UN General Assembly

I would like to call your attention to a point that is closely related to all those security issues that we are discussing here today: that is food security. Two years ago, famine was declared in Somalia. A tragic moment that shows the failures and the possibilities of cooperation.

Famine happened because the international community was slow to react to the multiple warnings that were made of a rapidly worsening situation.

A recent estimate points to over 250 thousand hunger-caused deaths in Somalia between October 2010 and April 2012.

But when we did react, we made the difference. In six months, famine ended.

Allow me to point out three key issues to avoid such a tragedy from happening again.

First, food security is an important foundation for peace, political stability and sustainable development. There is a vicious circle linking violence and hunger that is not restricted by national borders. In a globalized world, hunger is not a problem of one country. It's our problem, and a global problem. Today it is not possible for any country to achieve food security alone; food security is a global issue.

Second, the importance of partnerships. Working together, coordinating and complementing what we do, listening and responding to local needs, we achieve better results. That is why FAO has aligned its support to the Horn of Africa with IGAD, its member countries, and local development partners.

We worked together with the World Bank and African Development Bank to prepare resilience and sustainable programs worth over 300 million dollars.



And, FAO, WFP and UNICEF implemented together a joint resilience strategy in Somalia. This is innovative not only in partnership but as a paradigm shift from emergency response to resilience and longer term development. It includes as central elements cash-for-work programs and other stimulus to strengthen local production and local markets.

That brings me to my third point: we cannot just wait for an emergency to react. To achieve food security, we need to act before the crisis. We cannot prevent a drought from happening, but we can prevent it from becoming famine.

The food security situation in Somalia today is the best since 2011, thanks to above average rainfall, low food prices and the sustained efforts of the international community and their regional and local partners.

But nearly 900 thousand people remain food insecure in the country. It is up to us to step up our efforts and make famine a part of our past history and not our future in Somalia and in the whole Horn of Africa.

Count with FAO's continued commitment.

Thank you.