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Agenda item 5. Desert Locust outlook until spring 2020

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Overview and background

The current Desert Locust situation is extremely serious in the Central and Eastern regions and will probably continue during the spring.

Western Region. The situation is expected to remain calm in the Region until at least next summer. Small-scale breeding is likely to occur in a few places in Mauritania and northwest Africa.

Central Region. Summer-bred swarms may arrive in Oman from the Indo-Pakistan area during December. In the Horn of Africa, swarms are likely to spread within Ethiopia and Somalia and invade Djibouti and perhaps southern Somalia and Kenya during December. A tropical cyclone in December is expected to bring heavy rains to the Horn of Africa that will further exacerbate the situation. This will be followed by another generation of breeding in eastern Ethiopia (Ogaden) and in northern Somalia, causing locust numbers to increase further with the formation of additional hopper bands and swarms. If breeding continues during the spring, this would cause a substantial and dramatic increase in hopper bands and swarms. Along both sides of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, one generation of winter breeding will occur in southeast Egypt and Sudan while two generations are expected in Eritrea, Yemen, northwest Somalia and perhaps Saudi Arabia between now and March. Consequently, locust numbers could increase substantially, giving rise to hopper bands and swarms until about March. Thereafter, migration to spring breeding areas in the interior of Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Somalia will occur as vegetation dries out in winter breeding areas along the coast. The scale of this migration depends on rainfall and breeding during the winter and the effectiveness of survey and control operations.

Eastern Region. A significant migration of summer-bred swarms is expected to occur during December from the Indo-Pakistan border to the spring breeding areas in southwest Pakistan and southeast Iran. This will cause the situation to calm down along both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border by the end of the year. Swarms that appear in the spring breeding areas are likely to disperse upon arrival, but some groups and swarms are expected to move further west along the southern coast of Iran to areas of recent heavy rains in the southwest province of Bushehr. Although low temperatures will slow down adult maturation, some adults could lay eggs in areas of recent rains; otherwise, most of the egg-laying will occur once temperatures warm up in about February, allowing for at least one generation of breeding during the spring, depending on rainfall.

Points for discussion and decisions

- What immediate actions should be taken by countries and FAO to address the current situation in the next 4–8 weeks
- What advanced preparations should be made to address expected locust developments during spring 2020