

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. RES. 239

Supporting ongoing efforts by the United States Government, in concert with the United Nations and the donor community, to respond to drought and food insecurity in the Horn of Africa.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 3, 2017

Mr. ENGEL (for himself, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Ms. BASS, and Mr. ELLISON) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

RESOLUTION

Supporting ongoing efforts by the United States Government, in concert with the United Nations and the donor community, to respond to drought and food insecurity in the Horn of Africa.

Whereas the worst famine in 20 years occurred in Somalia between October 2010 and April 2012, caused by severe drought, failed harvests, a spike in food prices, and pervasive insecurity, which impeded the delivery of food aid;

Whereas the famine resulted in the deaths of at least 260,000 Somalis and Somali refugees in Southern Ethiopia and Northern Kenya, including at least 133,000 children under the age of five;

Whereas early warning of drought and famine conditions was accurate and timely across the region, but funding for the humanitarian response came too late to mitigate the worst effects of the drought, including mass displacement into neighboring countries, starvation, and death;

Whereas in 2011 alone, the threat of starvation contributed to the influx of over 110,000 Somali refugees into Ethiopia, 100,000 Somali refugees into Kenya, and thousands more into Djibouti;

Whereas a shortage of rainfall over the course of the past two years has again exacerbated drought conditions, significantly increasing vulnerability and food insecurity across the Horn of Africa region, leaving more than 14,000,000 people facing severe food insecurity and in need of humanitarian assistance as of early 2017;

Whereas in February 2017, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit for Somalia (FSNAU) warned of a significant deterioration in food security and an increased risk of famine in the Horn of Africa in the coming months if the April–June rains are as poor as expected;

Whereas the effects of drought place the heaviest burden on women and girls, whose coping strategies put them at increased risk of violence and cause them to forego educational opportunities;

Whereas in Ethiopia, drought conditions have developed in recent months in at least 15 zones of Oromia, Somali, and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples regions, and 5,600,000 people are projected to require humanitarian assistance in the coming months;

Whereas Kenya has experienced two consecutive seasons of poor rains, causing 12 counties to experience drought conditions and contributing to acute food insecurity for 2,600,000 people;

Whereas in Somalia, nearly 6,200,000 people are currently in need of humanitarian assistance, and more than 2,900,000 people are facing crisis or emergency levels of acute food insecurity, including nearly a million children under the age of five;

Whereas according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Somalia is the fourth largest source of refugees in the world, after Afghanistan, Syria, and South Sudan;

Whereas more than 1,000,000 people are already internally displaced within Somalia, many living in dire and unsafe informal displacement camps where they face a range of serious risks, including sexual violence and violent forced evictions;

Whereas the anticipated scale of population displacement from Somalia due to pervasive conflict and the threat of starvation will increase refugee flows throughout the region and into Europe;

Whereas in 2016, the Government of Kenya revoked prima facie refugee status for Somalis and disbanded the Department of Refugee Affairs, leaving thousands of newly arrived Somalis unregistered and without assistance;

Whereas the Government of Kenya has announced plans to repatriate 261,000 Somali refugees to areas of Somalia affected by drought and famine conditions, as well as the persistent threat of violence from Al-Shabaab; and

Whereas if timely, sufficient funding for a robust humanitarian response is not received by the end of April 2017, the humanitarian consequences of this drought, including the loss of life and reverberating effects in the region, will exceed those of the 2011 famine: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the House of Representatives—

2 (1) commends the timely response of the De-
3 partment of State and the United States Agency for
4 International Development (USAID) to early warn-
5 ing signals of drought in the Horn of Africa, and for
6 providing substantial assistance for the humani-
7 tarian response in fiscal year 2016 and to date in
8 fiscal year 2017;

9 (2) commends USAID’s quick deployment of a
10 Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) be-
11 tween March and November 2016, in response to the
12 previous drought in northeastern and central Ethi-
13 opia, which, by working with international partners,
14 resulted in the number of people requiring humani-
15 tarian assistance declining from approximately
16 10,200,000 in late 2015 to a projected 5,600,000 by
17 the end of 2017;

18 (3) commends the Somali diaspora in the Horn
19 of Africa, the United States, Canada, Australia, and
20 Europe, for spearheading the response to humani-
21 tarian needs in Somalia, and encourages financial

1 institutions to explore means to facilitate the flow of
2 charitable donations and remittances to populations
3 in need;

4 (4) commends the work of United Nations
5 agencies and international, national, and local non-
6 governmental organizations (NGOs) in providing
7 sustained life-saving assistance to vulnerable popu-
8 lations across the Horn of Africa, leading to im-
9 provements in malnutrition rates since 2011;

10 (5) commends USAID for its work to date to
11 mitigate the impact of environmental shocks to pas-
12 toralist communities across the Horn of Africa, and
13 calls on the Department of State and USAID to
14 continue providing robust, long-term development
15 supporting programs that build resilience, protect
16 livelihoods, and strengthen global food security
17 through programs such as USAID's Office of Food
18 for Peace and Bureau for Food Security, as well as
19 programs to provide drought relief and emergency
20 food assistance implemented by the World Food Pro-
21 gram (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization of
22 the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Inter-
23 national Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF),
24 and nongovernmental organizations, including faith-
25 based and non-faith-based organizations;

1 (6) calls on the President to appoint high-level
2 officials able to engage the international community
3 in joining the United States to respond to this crisis,
4 including an Administrator for USAID, a Director
5 for the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, an As-
6 sistant USAID Administrator for Africa, and an As-
7 sistant Secretary of State for African Affairs;

8 (7) urges the Government of Kenya to publicly
9 declare that the Dadaab refugee complex will remain
10 open, respect prima facie status for new arrivals
11 from Somalia, and work with the Office of the
12 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in
13 Kenya to restart the registration of refugees, includ-
14 ing from Somalia, at their points of entry, re-estab-
15 lish fair, transparent, and effective asylum proce-
16 dures across the country, and put in place robust
17 border protection monitoring to track humanitarian
18 indicators inside Somalia and assess the needs of
19 new arrivals; and

20 (8) calls on the United States Government and
21 the international community, including international,
22 national, and local NGOs, to continue life-saving as-
23 sistance and development activities in order to allevi-
24 ate drought and food insecurity in the region to

- 1 avert the catastrophic consequences of drought in
- 2 the Horn of Africa.

