

**December 10/2003**

**Excellencies,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

First of all, on behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome you to this gathering once again, during which humanitarian needs in the country are officially announced. As you all know, this is an annual forum where we exchange information and views on existing or possible threats of disasters in the country and the measures which need to be taken to avert human suffering.

At the outset, I would also like to thank you for your extremely generous contributions that enabled us to achieve the successes we enjoyed together during this receding year.

**Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As you all know, 2003 has seen a trying year in terms of the magnitude of the emergency situation we have faced due to mainly the recurrence of drought as well as the structural food shortages. As a result, 13.2 million people, which is about 21 % of the population of the country, were forced to require 1.8 million tons of food and USD 81 million worth of non-food emergency assistance. In the face of this humanitarian crisis, fortunately, there have been concerted efforts and generous donor and public responses.

Your support and concerns made the emergency operation in 2003 a success. We have saved the lives of millions. The Government, donors, the UN system, NGOs and the general public have stood together to face the challenge, and we believe that we have made a difference to the daily lives of the victims of drought and food shortages.

Alongside the successes, however, there have been setbacks. In some parts, particularly in eastern and western Hararghe of Oromiya and SNNPR, the situation of children required special attention. The grim situation of the drought ultimately necessitated the opening of therapeutic feeding centers in some "hotspots ". These and supplementary feeding efforts have enabled us save many lives of severely malnourished children, and sustain lactating and pregnant mothers.

During the year, the donor community contributed about 1.7 million MT of cereals, pulses, oil and blended food, which is about 94% of the requirement. Although reliable information as that of food could not be compiled, it is understood that donor contribution for non-food needs in general was also significant.

Ethiopians both in the country and in the diaspora have also made significant contributions, which were very important when valued in terms of filling gaps, and also in meeting their obligations as citizens.

On the food side, favorable donor responses allowed us to increase the food ration rate from the reduced level of 12.5 kg at the beginning of the year to the standard 15 kg/person/month as of July. Likewise, health and nutrition and water and sanitation needs in many areas were satisfactorily addressed.

Effective coordination was also possible because of the all rounded concern and actions of all partners.

The visits of high level international delegations and renowned personalities to the affected areas have helped them to physically witness the magnitude of the problem \_which I believe, many of you were involved in the arrangements\_, and this has given an enormous impetus to our collective humanitarian efforts to attract attention and mobilize more resources.

Thanks to this collective and unprecedented humanitarian gesture, we have been able to more effectively address the food, health and nutrition and water and sanitation needs of the year.

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

According to the joint assessment conducted recently, the performance of the 2003 Meher\_the main rainy season\_was satisfactory in most parts of the country. This pre-harvest assessment has indicated an improved food production in the crop growing areas resulting in a significant reduction in the number of needy population in many of the affected areas. In spite of this, however, the situation in many areas has not been as favorable, as many croppers in low lying areas have for various reasons failed to produce enough. Failure of the October/ November short rains in the pastoral areas of Somali Region, Borena and Bale of Oromiya and South Omo of SNNPR is a cause for serious concern. Already, there are reports of shortage of water and pasture, which are critical components of food security in the pastoral areas. If confirmed during our forthcoming assessment, this will be a serious threat to the livelihood of the people. The details of these are given in the Early Warning report just issued.

As the result of the combined effects of the above factors, the number of needy population in the country in 2004 is estimated to be 7.2 million, that is about 10.5.% of the total population, requiring 946,690 MT of food. Considering 122,780 MT to be carried over from 2003 resources, the net requirement for food amounts to 841,910 MT.

Estimate of beneficiaries and the food need includes both chronic and transitory food insecure categories. The former is estimated at 5 million and the latter at 2.2 million. Whether chronic or transitory the fact, however, remains that these are beneficiaries who can't feed themselves. Your usual generous support, therefore, is needed to effectively address the food needs of both categories of beneficiary.

In addition, emergency related non-food interventions in 2004 in health and nutrition, water and sanitation, agriculture, HIV/AIDS, education and capacity building is estimated to cost USD 85,064,743. Lessons learnt so far testify that unless non-food interventions are given equal importance with that of food, a crisis would not be averted even with substantial food aid.

Though the main rains in 2003 have brought about better prospect for 2004, in areas where the October rains were late or failed all together, and where previously below normal rain fall was recorded during the last two to six years, there is still great concern with respect to water and sanitation. And the task of averting the potential crisis in this area requires support estimated to cost about USD 24,830,081.

In a related endeavor, in the area of health and nutrition, USD 17,930,339 is needed for effective response to the needy. HIV/AIDS will be another serious emergency health concern during 2004 as the infection is rapidly extending to rural areas. Needless to say, it is essential to fight the disease both in prevention through awareness creation and caring for the affected.

Hence, the multi-sectoral non-food assistance request we have submitted deserves your attention and support.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,**

Having noted with a very brief reflection on the food and non-food assistance requirements for 2004, I would now like to take up a few more minutes of your time to highlight on the current initiative of identifying chronic and transitory problems separately in the search of lasting solutions to the problem of food insecurity.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to be faced by the humanitarian community in 2004 will be to link the humanitarian effort into the ongoing work of the New Coalition for Food Security. Initiatives under the Coalition to improve availability and access to food, to promote preventative and curative health services and to provide safety nets for about 5 million persons, will begin implementation in 2004. It is within this context that this Appeal is launched.

The government is committed to address predictable and unpredictable needs separately, and measures will be taken in 2004 to put mechanisms in place. The predictable needs will ultimately be addressed through a separately designed safety net program.

Under the new direction, the annual resource mobilization practice related to predictable caseload, shall be transformed into a multi-year intervention, and managed through a different channel.

This is a paradigm shift. And it is a reflection of the political will and determination on the part of the Government both at the federal and regional levels as well as that of its partners to effectively address the problem.

This new approach, no doubt, will take some time, and it is for this reason that we have included both predictable and unpredictable needs in our appeal this year, but I can assure you that the alternative mechanism will be in place very soon.

In order to allow appropriate safety net instruments to be in place, 2004 is planned to be transition period. While this appeal should be viewed as transitional, the challenge, however, remains to be to meet uninterrupted humanitarian needs, which are real, whether predictable or not.

**Dear Partners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Before concluding, I would like to stress once again that addressing the humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable population remains to be a serious challenge to all of us. As in 2003, during which we have jointly averted a major disaster and saved the lives of millions, we strongly believe that the challenge ahead of us would also be met with the same spirit of concern and unity of purpose. Thus, with your usual generous and prompt response, we are very much optimistic that we will do the same in 2004.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who took part in the assessment of needs, and in compiling and editing of the main Appeal and Food Supply Prospect documents which have been presented to us today.

**Thank you very much!!**