

Excellency IGAD Executive Secretary, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu,
Excellences, Representatives from IGAD Member States,
Representatives from Development agencies and partners,
Representatives from United Nations Agencies, NGOs, Red Cross and Red crescent Societies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Between 2010 and 2012, a severe drought affected the entire East African region, said to be "the worst in 60 years".

The drought caused a severe food crisis across Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya that threatened the livelihood of 9.5 million people.

Many refugees from southern Somalia fled to neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia.

Nearly 260,000 people died in Somalia from 2010 to 2012. Half of them were children under the age of five.

10 and ½ years ago, the endorsement of the IGAD Regional Platform for Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability by the IGAD Summit of Heads of State and Government of 25 November 2011 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was signifying the beginning of IDDRSI.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations was immediately responding to the endorsement of the IDDRSI Platform through a partnership with IGAD and support to IGAD Member States that never stopped since then.

The current drought is worse than in 2011 in terms of number of consecutive failed seasons. It is the worst one in 4 decades.

Thanks to resilience building over time, spearheaded by IDDRSI, and thanks to recent humanitarian efforts, the drought did not cost the life of people in the range it did in Somalia in 2010-12.

Nonetheless, over 20 million people are severely food insecure (IPC 3+), as a direct result of the drought. Malnutrition rates for children under 5 years old exceed 30% in parts of the region

(above one of the 3 thresholds for famine declaration). Already 7 million livestock died in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

This means that around 250 million litres of milk is going missing this year.

This means that over 3 million kids will not get a cup of milk a day this year.

While addressing the humanitarian needs triggered by climate extremes, we must collectively address root causes of regional vulnerabilities, through resilience building and climate adaptive programmes.

On 12 August 2021, The IGAD post-harvest loss management strategy was endorsed at a virtual ministerial meeting organized by IGAD with the technical support of FAO.

The strategy must be implemented as soon as possible.

The region is losing over 4 million metric tons of cereal every year due to poor storage, while importing 10 million metric tons a year from other parts of the world including for food assistance.

Right now, the international community is looking at financial means in order to increase crop production and productivity in the region in response to the global food and energy crisis. We may risk to invest in inputs, including fertilisers that cost 30 to 50% more than 2 years ago, and still lose 30% of the production after harvest.

In 2019, IGAD and FAO launched The Animal Feed Action Plan as a means to collectively address some of the constraints in accessing and using animal feed, and provides a guided approach to pave the way for the sustainable production of quality livestock and products, while improving competitiveness and profitability and ensuring appropriate feed resource management across East Africa.

To date, only priority area 1 - Establish and strengthen animal feed data, information, reporting and communication systems is being implemented by FAO and IGAD, thanks to the generous contribution from the Government of Sweden.

Other priority areas have not been implemented at the required scale, in order to be transformative. This is particularly true for priority area 2 on the Development of sustainable animal feed supply chains.

We are not short of strategies and policies in the subregion. We are short of resources and somehow coordinated and complementary efforts to implement them.

FAO subregional office for eastern Africa launched recently its Resilience programme of work 2022-2026.

The programme is focusing on 3 interlocked pillars.

The first pillar looks at data for early warning, food security analysis and resilience measurement, building on existing FAO and partners' efforts, including through IFRAH.

The second pillar looks at preparedness for and response to crises. The Desert Locust Response in 2020 and 2021 and now the drought response plan are examples of FAO activities in the subregion.

The third pillar is focusing on transformative programmes at-scale through 5 regional causes. Post-harvest losses management and feed systems are 2 of these five causes.

Other causes focus on:

1. Durable solutions for displaced populations, returnees and host communities
2. Resilient value chains
3. One health

Finally, I would like to mention that FAO is going to focus even more than before on youth. A lack of employment opportunities is a central cause of poverty and migration among rural young people in eastern Africa. Despite relatively high economic growth in the subregion, youth

unemployment remains a great concern, with disproportionately large number of young women and men exposed to long-term unemployment, or short-term work in informal sector. Agriculture has extremely valuable untapped potential to address the challenge of youth unemployment. This potential was evident at a regional conference in Kigali, Rwanda, organized by FAO, the African Union Commission and the Government of Rwanda, in 2019, entitled “Youth Employment in Agriculture as a Solid Solution to Ending Hunger and Poverty in Africa”. The conference emphasized enhancing platforms and mechanisms for youth engagement on policies and employment opportunities but, most importantly, on promoting investment in well-targeted value chains with high potential for creating youth jobs.

Our programme of work 2022-2026 is FAO’s commitment to support IGAD and IGAD Member States to implement existing regional strategies while looking at additional transformative priorities and capacity building requirements.

On June 16, 1941 **Winston Churchill** used the phrase, "United we stand. Divided we fall".

We are at war against climate change. A war that we must win together.

Thank you