

Brussels, 17 September 2009

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

Re: The Humanitarian situation in Somalia

During the tenure of the previous European Parliament, the conflict situation in Somalia has become of increased concern. Years of fighting between warlords and clan leaders, coupled with recurring droughts, have left the country and its population destitute. The situation has increased in complexity and tragedy since the December 2006 Western-backed invasion of Somalia by Ethiopia and its aftermath. The conflict in Somalia has left a total of more than 1.3 million people displaced. The severity of the fighting is such that over 250,000 people have been displaced from the capital since May 2009 alone. Close to half the population – 3.64 million people - require humanitarian assistance.

Somalia is one of the most difficult and dangerous operating environments for aid agencies in the world. The aid agencies who have managed to continue working in the country are faced with numerous challenges and their access to the millions of people in desperate need is extremely restricted. They are extremely concerned that their ability to operate and provide assistance will continue to diminish.

As a major donor, the EU (European Commission and the EU member states) has been playing an important role in the political, development and humanitarian affairs of Somalia and has offered substantial financial support to the different initiatives developed by the UN (such as the UNDP Rule of Law Program), and to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). In the past, MEPs have queried aspects of the EC's support to the security sector such as the training and payment of salaries to police officers who were alleged to be implicated in grave human rights abuses and support to the Transitional Federal Institutions which was provided in such a way that its use was not transparent.ⁱ

In addition, parliamentarians have voiced their concerns in relation to the humanitarian situation in the past few years and particularly in 2008.ⁱⁱ The increase of internally displaced people, living in squalid and cramped IDP camps, fully dependent on humanitarian aid which is slow and insufficient due to extreme insecurity, has made it even more important, that parliamentarians insist that humanitarian needs are taken into account at every level. Humanitarian aid workers need to have full access to all the regions in need of assistance, without their lives being threatened or their material impounded. As champions of the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles, I call on the EU to be seized of the importance of these principles, in particular Principle 4 – 'Respect and promote the implementation of international humanitarian law, refugee law and human rights'.

(<http://www.goodhumanitariandonorship.org/>)

I would therefore like to invite you to continue and step up the work of the previous legislature and monitor the work of the EU in relation to the crisis in Somalia. Only by regularly querying the EC and the Council, and pointing out the need to include civil society and listen to those most severely hit by the conflict, can there be any prospect for peace, security and stability in Somalia. Accountability mechanisms, both fiscal and human rights, for all planned support to

the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) must be improved and the government held accountable to fulfilling its responsibilities to the Somali people.

I urge you to address the following issues through your (written) questions and recommendations:

Accountability

1. The EP to ensure EC aid and financial support to the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Institutions is used in a manner that is transparent and held to account against international legal and fiscal standards;
2. The EC to continue to advocate for an independent, international Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights violations carried out by all parties;

Security sector support

3. The Council and EC must review carefully the effects of past security sector support by the international community and take measures to mitigate the negative effects of past support, before providing the TFG with any further support in the security sector;
4. The EU to ensure that any EU security sector support (including all training of military, police and/or other security workers, including on foreign soil; and payment of salaries) have mechanisms in place to ensure that it is not used in the commission of violations of international human rights and humanitarian laws as has been documented to be the case in the past. It must also not contribute to the proliferation of weapons in Somalia;
5. The EU to ensure that any EU security sector support will not result in harm to the Somali civilian population through fuelling conflict or human rights abuses and/or undermine humanitarian access.

Humanitarian

6. The EC to plan urgently how it will continue to contribute to the humanitarian needs of approximately half the population, both within Somalia and in refugee camps in Kenya, Ethiopia and Yemen.

Finally, a hearing by the European Parliament to address the above issues in the near future would be greatly welcomed.

A briefing paper giving an overview of the points discussed during the previous legislature is available on request.

Yours sincerely,



Mirjam van Reisen
Director

ⁱ Please see written questions by MEP Erik Meijer: parliamentary questions, 21 August 2008, "Misuse of EU funds by armed organisations in Somalia which are impossible to monitor, claims for more money for them and ways of putting a swift end to the situation"(E-4643/08)

ⁱⁱ Please see the following two EP resolutions: European Parliament resolution of 15 November 2007 on Somalia (P6_TA(2007)0544) and European Parliament resolution on the routine killing of civilians in Somalia (19 June 2008)