

Press release: Priti Patel: UK efforts save more lives in Somalia and Ethiopia

International Development Secretary Priti Patel today called for a new concerted global push to prevent millions of people losing their lives across East Africa to the threat of starvation and disease.

As the first Cabinet Minister to visit Africa since the General Election, Ms Patel saw how UK leadership has saved the lives of many facing the risk of extreme hunger.

But she warned that the crisis had reached a critical point and that a loss of momentum in the international response could rapidly reverse the progress made, cost lives and further destabilise the already fragile region.

She made clear that the UK will continue to set the pace. The quick response from the UK earlier this year to the growing food crisis in East Africa – including pledging £110 million for Somalia, £11.5 million for Ethiopia and matching £10 million of public donations to the Disasters Emergency Committee's (DEC) appeal – led the international response. This support has been integral to preventing starvation in Somalia and Ethiopia, but the risk is far from over.

In Somalia – a country plagued by civil war and terrorism where millions have fled their homes – our support is not only helping people survive, it will help give them a choice about their lives and their futures, so they aren't forced to turn to extremism or make the dangerous journey to Europe. This in turn means a safer UK.

The Ethiopian Government showed strong leadership in the 2016 drought and put forward more than US\$700 million to meet the needs of their own people. We are working with the Government to ensure they respond effectively this year, to prioritise, plan effectively and step up their own finance for the response.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

Global Britain is leading the way in providing a lifeline for millions of people in Somalia and Ethiopia who are at risk of starving to death as extreme hunger stalks East Africa.

I've seen UK aid in action, doing what it does best – saving and changing lives. This is also helping to stabilise the world's most fragile countries and giving vulnerable people a chance to build lives closer to home and therefore increasing the UK's security.

The UK stepped up early with support and lobbied others to do more

which has prevented the spread of famine. We are showing our continued leadership with more food, more water and more medicine for those at imminent risk of dying from drought and conflict.

The world must follow our lead and act now to put an end to humanitarian crises that threaten our global stability and help accelerate progress on peace, security and prosperity – which is firmly in everyone’s interest.

Ms Patel has also pressed international partners – including the World Bank – to disburse funding more quickly. The Bank has since pledged \$1.8 billion to respond to the crises, including \$50 million to Somalia and \$100 million to Ethiopia to help people in drought affected areas access food assistance, water and health services.

The world has faced an unprecedented number of humanitarian crises in 2017, including a famine in parts of South Sudan, the first declared globally since 2011.

Severe drought conditions, cholera and measles outbreaks, losses of livestock and increasing numbers of people fleeing their homes have put people in Somalia and neighbouring Ethiopia back on the brink of starvation, threatening millions of lives.

Half the population of Somalia have no reliable access to food and are facing the possibility of a third famine in 25 years.

The UK continues to work with the Governments of Somalia and Ethiopia, and partners such as UNICEF, World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organisation, and NGOs to ensure aid reaches those most in need.

While in the country, Ms Patel saw crates of UK aid ready to be loaded onto aircraft at Mogadishu airport, to reach people across the country. Following the London Somalia Conference earlier this year, Ms Patel reaffirmed the need for the international community to continue to support Somalia, not just through emergency aid but also by strengthening security to keep Somalia on course for increased peace, stability and prosperity.

For Ethiopia this is the second severe drought in two years. As the second largest refugee hosting country in Africa, Ethiopia’s resources are being stretched to the limit with 880,000 refugees who have fled war and violence in neighbouring countries. The UK is working with its international partners to improve the infrastructure, local services and job opportunities in Ethiopia to help the country cope with the increase in refugees and prevent onward migration.

As part of her visit, the Secretary of State announced a £90 million package of urgently needed support which will help more than 2 million more people in desperate need of clean water, food, and basic medical supplies in Somalia and Ethiopia. This includes £60 million in new funding for Somalia, and a £30 million allocation for Ethiopia.

Priti Patel visited a food distribution centre in Ethiopia to see first-hand how UK aid is supporting people at risk of hunger and to meet the UK aid workers on the front line. She also visited a health centre, one of many UK aid is supporting across Ethiopia, to see how malnourished children are receiving life-saving support, including an innovative peanut paste which gives them vital nutrients.

Notes to Editors

1. Before February, there had been only one certified famine globally since 2000. Parts of South Sudan are now in famine and in 2017 there is a credible risk of another three famines: in Somalia, Yemen and North East Nigeria, with Ethiopia and Kenya also suffering from severe drought. More than 20 million men, women and children face the very real risk of dying from starvation in the next six months because of relentless war and drought.
2. In Ethiopia, 7.8 million men, women and children are at risk of going hungry, while in Somalia over 6 million do not have reliable access to food.
3. The UK has now pledged £321.5 million in response to the humanitarian crises in East Africa this year.
4. More information about previous announcements of UK support for East Africa can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-outlines-new-humanitarian-support-and-urges-international-community-to-save-lives-before-its-too-late> and here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-scales-up-humanitarian-relief-efforts-in-somalia> and here:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/priti-patel-will-double-public-donations-to-the-disasters-emergency-committee-east-africa-crisis-appeal-this-weekend>
5. £60 million pledged for Somalia is new money – not previously allocated to our Somalia budget – for the rest of 2017.
6. £30 million pledged for Ethiopia is an allocation of money from our Ethiopia budget for the rest of the financial year of 2017/18.
7. £60 million of UK aid will provide:
 - 350,000 people with emergency food
 - Access to clean water and sanitation to over 1 million people
 - Shelter for 100,000 people
 - Vaccinations for 2 million livestock
 - And protection for 20,000 vulnerable women at risk from violence and trafficking.
1. The number of people in need of food in Ethiopia has risen sharply. £30 million of UK aid provide:
 - Emergency food support for 1.5 million people
 - Life-saving nutritional support to more than 154,000 starving children and pregnant and breastfeeding women
 - Safe drinking water for 100,000 people
 - Livestock support for 500,000 people.

- 10 mobile protection teams to provide child protection, support victims of sexual violence and help internally displaced people and their host communities

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