

[UN approves \\$22 million loan to boost agricultural work to prevent famine in Somalia](#)

21 March 2017 – The United Nations agricultural agency will be further scaling up its activities in drought-hit regions of Somalia thanks to a \$22 million loan approved this week by the UN emergency response fund.

“More than 2.9 million people are at risk of famine and many will predictably die from hunger if we do not act now,” said the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O’Brien, in a news release.

As under-secretary-general, Mr. O’Brien heads the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which manages the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

“CERF is one of the fastest ways to enable urgent response to people most in need,” he said, explaining that the loan will bridge a crucial gap and allow FAO to immediately save lives and livelihoods of farmers and herders until additional funds from donors are received.

This effort is part of the international response to prevent another famine in Somalia five years after the previous one devastated the country.

Across Somalia, 6.2 million people will face acute food insecurity through June 2017. Of these, nearly three million people are in Phases 3 (crisis) and 4 (emergency) of the five-phase International Phase Classification for Food Security (IPC), representing more than a two-fold increase from six months ago. Phase 5 is famine.

“Livelihoods are people’s best defence against famine and this \$22 million loan is critical to FAO’s famine prevention and drought response in Somalia,” said FAO Deputy Director-General for Programmes, Daniel Gustafson.

[Deteriorating security situation in DR Congo ‘a source of major concern,’ warns UN envoy](#)

21 March 2017 – The United Nations envoy for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) today stressed the need for both the Government and the

opposition groups there to show the same level of commitment and compromise which led to the signing on 31 December of an agreement on the electoral process, while also citing the UN peacekeeping mission's readiness to adapt to the deteriorating security situation.

The primary responsibility for the implementation of the Agreement rests with its signatories, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for DRC, Maman Sidikou, told the Security Council in a briefing.

Under the agreement, President Joseph Kabila would stay in office until elections are held by the end of 2017. During this period, a 'National Council for Overseeing the Electoral Agreement and Process (CNSAP)' would be set up, and a new prime minister named from opposition ranks.

However, some discord has delayed the implementation of the agreement, and the death of opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi, who was to head the CNSAP, had had a significant impact on the political process.

Mr. Sidikou said that the situation seems to have evolved in the right direction over the last few days, with negotiations on the "Special Arrangement" resuming, and the Presidents of the two Houses of Parliament called for an irreversible and credible electoral process and expressed their support.

Significant progress has been made in updating the electoral roll. To date, more than 19 million voters have been enrolled and the enrollment process is about to begin in the two remaining enrollment areas, said Mr. Sidikou, who is also the head of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO).

MONUSCO's logistical and technical support for the enrollment process will be completed by the end of this month, and if authorized by the Security Council, MONUSCO is prepared to provide technical and logistical support for the electoral process, which would go beyond updating the electoral roll.

VIDEO: Concerns over deteriorating security in the DRC in briefing to the Security Council

On the security front, Mr. Sidikou said that violence and threats to civilians are no longer concentrated in the eastern DRC, noting that community-based violence and inter-ethnic clashes have spread from areas already affected by armed conflict, such as the Kivus, to Tanganyika, the three Kasai provinces, Lomami and Kongo Central.

The Secretary-General has set out a package of measures aimed at enhancing the ability of the MONUSCO Force to support the achievement of the Mission's strategic objectives in the current challenging security context through the adoption of a more mobile, flexible and agile posture. He has recommended the deployment of two additional formed police units (FPUs) to help the Congolese authorities address the potential threat of electoral and politically

motivated violence in key urban centers where there is no FPU presence.

Mr. Sidikou said that MONUSCO has already undertaken adjustments to its posture and operations, and that the Mission will continue to make such adjustments as may be required in the months ahead.

MONUSCO will continue to provide support for the implementation of the Agreement, while supporting efforts to address the mounting threats faced by the civilian population during the transition period, he concluded.

[Press release: New chair appointed to The Pensions Advisory Service](#)

The appointment was made without holding a competition and has been made in agreement with the [Commissioner for Public Appointments](#) who was content given the fact that a new body is to be created that will replace The Pensions Advisory Service (TPAS).

Ann will oversee the continued delivery of free, professional and impartial guidance on pensions and support for people if they have a problem or complaint about their workplace or private pension.

The Pensions Advisory Service delivers its information and guidance service through a variety of channels including telephone, web chat, written and online enquiries, outreach events and on its website. It is also responsible for delivering Pension Wise's telephone services.

Minister of State for Pensions, Richard Harrington said:

Ann Harris brings a wealth of experience and skills to The Pensions Advisory Service which does excellent work in helping the public with pension inquiries.

With more than 178,000 customers, and more than 2.7 million visits to its website in the past year, TPAS' services are very much in demand so it's vital it attracts a senior leader of such high calibre.

Ann Harris OBE said:

I am delighted with my new appointment as TPAS Chair.

This is an exciting time for TPAS, as it prepares for the proposed transition to a new single finance guidance body.

I am determined that it continues to deliver its core business of giving people professional, independent and impartial help with their private pensions.

About The Pensions Advisory Service

The TPAS service is free to the public. It is delivered by in-house pension specialists and a nationwide network of volunteer advisers who have typically worked in the pensions industry in roles that have required a high level of technical knowledge.

Single finance guidance body

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and HM Treasury have recently [consulted on a single guidance body](#) bringing together:

The consultation sets out a proposal to create a single body providing debt advice, money guidance and pensions information and guidance. The body would complement financial guidance provided by the third sector and industry, provide more targeted support for consumers and generate efficiencies.

This new body will make it easier for consumers to get the guidance they need.

Ann Harris OBE – Biography

Ann previously worked for 40 years as a civil servant, latterly holding senior Civil Service roles in finance and programme management. She was awarded an OBE in 2009, for her services to DWP.

Ann's roles outside DWP include acting in a trustee role for the Civil Service Pension programme, management board and operations committee. Ann is also an audit committee member for the Gambling Commission and volunteers regularly for her local Citizens Advice Bureau, where she is a volunteer trustee. She previously served with TPAS as a non-executive director for 18 months prior to becoming chairperson.

Media enquiries for this press release – 0203 267 5122

Follow DWP on:

Double horticulture award win

The Oatridge Campus of SRUC has been honoured with two awards from the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

Policy paper: River Thames Scheme: Berkshire and Surrey discussion group workshops (December 2016)

Updated: Summary reports added,

Discussions from the River Thames Scheme resident groups.