



121st ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION AND RELATED MEETINGS

Geneva, 19-21.10.2009

Assembly
Item 2

A/121/2-P.1
15 September 2009

CONSIDERATION OF POSSIBLE REQUESTS FOR THE INCLUSION OF AN EMERGENCY ITEM IN THE ASSEMBLY AGENDA

Request for the inclusion of an emergency item in the agenda of the 121st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union submitted by the delegation of Uganda, on behalf of the African Group

On 7 April 2009, the Secretary General received from the delegation of Uganda, on behalf of the African Group, a request for the inclusion in the agenda of the 121st Assembly of an emergency item entitled:

"Parliamentary cooperation with the United Nations to promote investment in research and scientific advancements to boost agricultural productivity and combat drought-induced famine, floods and other natural disasters".

Delegates to the 121st Assembly will find attached the text of the communication submitting the request (Annex I), as well as an explanatory memorandum (Annex II) and a draft resolution (Annex III) in support thereof.

The 121st Assembly will be required to take a decision on the request of the delegation of Uganda, on behalf of the African Group, on Monday, 19 October 2009.

Under the terms of Assembly Rule 11.1, any Member of the Union may request the inclusion of an emergency item in the Assembly agenda. Such a request must be accompanied by a brief explanatory memorandum and a draft resolution which clearly define the scope of the subject covered by the request. The Secretariat shall communicate the request and any such documents immediately to all Members.

Furthermore, Assembly Rule 11.2 stipulates that:

- (a) A request for the inclusion of an emergency item must relate to a major event of international concern on which it appears necessary for the IPU to express its opinion. Such a request must receive a two-thirds majority of the votes cast in order to be accepted;
- (b) The Assembly may place only one emergency item on its agenda. Should several requests obtain the requisite majority, the one having received the largest number of positive votes shall be accepted;
- (c) The authors of two or more requests for the inclusion of an emergency item may combine their proposals to present a joint one, provided that each of the original proposals relates to the same subject;
- (d) The subject of a proposal that has been withdrawn by its authors or rejected by the Assembly cannot be included in the draft resolution submitted on the emergency item, unless it is clearly referred to in the request and title of the subject adopted by the Assembly.

**COMMUNICATION ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY GENERAL
BY THE CLERK OF THE PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA**

Kampala, 7 April 2009

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

The Inter-Parliamentary Group of Uganda, on behalf of the African Group, would like to request the inclusion of the following emergency item in the agenda of the 121st IPU Assembly:

"Parliamentary cooperation with the United Nations to promote investment in research and scientific advancements to boost agricultural productivity and combat drought-induced famine, floods and other natural disasters".

Please find attached an explanatory memorandum along with a draft resolution on the proposed emergency item.

Yours sincerely,

For Clerk to Parliament

(signed)

Ignatius KASIRYE

**PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS
TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENTS
TO BOOST AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND COMBAT DROUGHT-INDUCED
FAMINE, FLOODS AND OTHER NATURAL DISASTERS**

*Explanatory memorandum submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Group of Uganda,
on behalf of the African Group*

Introduction

Perhaps more than ever before, the world is experiencing various natural and man-made disasters which have either directly or indirectly impacted on agricultural productivity and consequently on the macroeconomic status of countries, particularly those in the developing world.

In recent times, the frequency and magnitude of natural disasters in Africa cannot be over emphasized. They range from drought, hunger, famine and floods to locust invasions, among others. These have, in the long run, led to low agricultural productivity, starvation and even death in some cases. This paper gives a statistical analysis of agricultural productivity on the continent and how some of the natural disasters it has experienced have affected this sector.

1. Agricultural productivity

Agriculture - the major source of employment in most of sub-Saharan Africa - has over the years been declining due to natural climatic and other anthropogenic factors. This has had a severe impact on livelihoods of the people as well as on the socio-economic status of these countries.

Agricultural productivity in sub-Saharan Africa is lagging behind. Cereal yields in the region are less than a third of what they are in Asia, and half of what they are in Latin America. After being a net food exporter in the 1960s, Africa has become a net importer, and agricultural imports represent about 25 per cent of total imports. The share of gross export revenues needed to cover food imports has increased from 12 per cent to over 30 per cent in East Africa alone, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In terms of exports, agriculture has generally performed poorly: the relative share of African agricultural exports to world markets fell from 8 per cent in the period from 1971 to 1980 to 3.4 per cent in the period from 1991 to 2000. This decline is partly explained by rapid population growth, damaging farming practices, insufficient infrastructure investments and lack of coherent agricultural policies, all of which over the years have translated into declining yields and a decrease in per capita food production¹.

In addition, sub-Saharan Africa ranks the lowest in the world in terms of yield-enhancing practices and techniques. Yield-enhancing practices include mechanization, the use of agro-chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides), and increased use of irrigated land. The use of these practices and technologies is low in Africa even in comparison to other developing regions. This at least partly explains why crop yields in Africa in general are far below average yields in

¹ <http://www.ifad.org/newsletter/pf/11.htm>

other parts of the world. Irrigated land accounts for only 3.6 per cent of the total cropland on the continent compared with the world average of 18.4 per cent, while the use of fertilizers is minimal at 125gm/ha compared with the world average of 1,020gm/ha. In the case of mechanization, the continent has an average of only 13 tractors/100km² of arable land, compared with the world average of 200 tractors/100km².²

This becomes even more significant when considering the imperative for Africa to sharply and sustainably increase its agricultural productivity. No country in the world has managed to develop its economy and increase its people's living standards without first significantly increasing agricultural productivity. About 80 per cent of Africans depend on agriculture in one way or another for their livelihood. Yet Africa's yield per hectare for food crops is less than half the level in developing countries, less than 10 per cent of its arable land is irrigated, and fertilizer use remains scarce – only 8kg per hectare as compared to a global average of 100kg per hectare. Fertilizer use actually declined in half of all African countries in the 1990s.³

Climatic conditions have worsened the level of agricultural productivity in Africa. The 2006/2007 National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) Report states that poor climatic conditions reduce Uganda's agricultural sector performance, which constitutes up to about 40 per cent of GDP. This results in higher food prices, low domestic revenues and widening of the current account deficit due to lower export earnings.

Productivity of Uganda's grasslands and livestock is dependent on climate and will therefore be affected by climate variability and climate change. The major grassland areas are concentrated in the cattle corridor, with about 60 per cent of the cattle population in the country. The cattle corridor is an area of lower rainfall and has increasingly become prone to frequent droughts, leading to the depletion of both pasture and water resources.

Statistics indicate that Uganda's agricultural productivity is steadily reducing because of various factors such as high population growth (depleting land available for agriculture), soil erosion due to poor farming practices, droughts, floods and landslides as well as the low use of organic fertilizers.

With Uganda's two growing seasons a year, the depletion rates of crucial nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Moreover, agro-chemical input to overcome soil nutrient loss has polluted the land (NEMA, 2001 and Uganda State of the Environment Report 2000).

Elsewhere in Africa, about 80 per cent of the population in Chad depends on farming or herding or gathering forest products for a livelihood. Soil erosion and desertification are problems, and pest plagues are a continuous threat to harvests and livestock. Chad is one of the countries worst affected by desert locusts. Farmers lack access to agricultural services and to the know-how and technology they need to improve productivity. The lack of access to rural financial services prevents poor farmers from developing alternative income opportunities and improving productivity⁴.

2. Drought-induced famine

² Economic Report on Africa, 2009 Developing African Agriculture Through Regional Value Chains-
<http://www.uneca.org>

³ <http://www.newvision.co.ug/D/8/459/692293>

⁴ <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/guest/country/home/tags/Chad>

Most of the arid and semi-arid zones in Africa have consistently been experiencing famine due to prolonged droughts. These are areas that experience irregular and low amounts of rainfall per annum that cannot adequately sustain agriculture and more specifically crop cultivation.

In Uganda droughts are mainly experienced in the "cattle corridor" that stretches from the north-east, through the central parts and to the south-west of the country. This is an area of particularly dry lands that are either dominated by Savannah woodlands or grasslands such as Kotido, Moroto (Karamoja), and Katakwi in the north-east through Nakasongola and parts of Luwero in the central to Rakai, Mbarara and Ntungamo districts. The most common activity of the inhabitants of these areas is pastoral farming. However, they tend to overstock, hence the phenomenon of overgrazing. This practice, coupled with bush burning, has led to prolonged droughts in some of these areas, which has consequently resulted in famine.

Soroti, the district in which Katine sub-county is located, is one of 17 regions in the north and east of Uganda that the government has defined as experiencing famine. While Katine has not reached this level, food shortages and rising prices indicate a potential crisis. In the north and east of Uganda at least 35 people are reported to have recently died of starvation.⁵

Droughts have affected millions in a vast area stretching across Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Chad, and into Burkina Faso and Mali, and tens of thousands of nomadic herders have had to give up their animals. Many people, in Kenya and elsewhere, cannot understand the scale and speed of what is happening. The East African country is on the equator, and has always experienced severe droughts and scorching temperatures. Nearly 80 per cent of the land is officially classified as arid, and people have adapted over centuries to living with little water.⁶

The scenario is replicated in other parts of the continent that are experiencing severe drought and famine, with millions of people in dire need of food.

The poor growth in June 2009 is the result of a weak rainy season. Seasonal rains, which usually come between March and June, were insubstantial in 2009, resulting in drought. The drought caused food and water shortages in Kenya. The country declared a state of emergency when approximately 10 million people, a third of the country's population, needed food aid, reported Reuters. The poor rains also led to water and power shortages as reservoirs dried up. According to local news, cities throughout Kenya rationed water when municipal supplies fell short. The Kenya Electricity Generating Company closed the Masinga hydroelectric dam after water levels in the reservoir fell so low that they could not sustain power generation, reported BBC News on 1 July 2009.

A drought-induced famine also affected most of the southern African countries, including Angola, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe in 2002 after a period of failed or insufficient rains.

In the seven most severely affected countries of southern Africa, nearly 16 million people are in urgent need of food aid with drought being the most immediate cause. Earlier hopes that sufficient rain would fall in time for the 2002-2003 planting season, after poor harvests in early 2002, have now been dashed. Serious famine conditions have also developed in the Horn of

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/katine/2009/jul/21/food-crisis>

⁶ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/sep/03/climate-change-kenya-10-10>

Africa, principally in Ethiopia and Eritrea, just two years after the end of a devastating war between the two countries. The United Nations, the Ethiopian Government, relief agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), after assessing the full impact of Ethiopia's inadequate and erratic rainfall, estimate that some 11.3 million people required more than 1.4 million tonnes of food aid through mid-2003, with another 3 million in need of close monitoring (out of a total population of 67 million). A joint UN-Ethiopian appeal, issued on 7 December, warned that the crisis could reach the magnitude of Ethiopia's 1984-1985 famine, which claimed around 1 million lives.

A subsequent Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) assessment noted that conditions may actually be worse than in Ethiopia's last major famine. Between 3 million and 5 million poor rural Ethiopians are unable to feed themselves, even in good years. Many others have very low household grain stocks, following previous poor harvests. As a result, many more people now need food aid than in 1984-1985, when 8 million required relief. As elsewhere in Africa, notes the FEWS report, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS is increasing destitution, lowering labour productivity and eroding traditional coping mechanisms.⁷

3. Severe weather patterns and floods

Severe weather patterns and floods have become so common on the African continent that it has led to the loss of life and property and the destruction of farmlands and transport infrastructure, among others.

Flooded rivers in Central Uganda cut off access to some northern and eastern sections of the country in mid-September 2007, reported the Monitor, a Kampala news service, on 18 September. Like many other countries in western, central, and eastern Africa, Uganda faced severe flooding as a result of unusually heavy rains from July through September. By 18 September, the floods had killed at least 10 people and affected about 300,000 people in Uganda, said the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Uganda was just one of the many African countries that were flooded in September 2007. As many as 17 countries and more than a million people were affected by flooding across Africa, reported BBC News on 17 September.⁸

The floods that hit the eastern part of Uganda in 2008 have had an adverse impact on agricultural productivity in the area. Farmlands were destroyed and animals were killed. As a result, the region has been hit by famine, with many people starving to death in mid-2009.

After abnormally heavy El Niño rains (1997/98) the level of Lake Kyoga rose and dislodged the papyrus bed, floating suds and water hyacinth mats. The weeds accumulated into the outlet of Lake Kyoga and effectively blocked it. This impacted negatively on the lake shore wetlands and the breeding grounds for fish shrunk. The floods displaced populations, destroyed infrastructure, caused diseases and some deaths, and paralyzed the socioeconomic activities of the region. In Nakasongola district, El Niño had additional effects. For example, the people displaced by the floods lost about 13 per cent of their annual revenue (Nakasongola District state of the environment report (DSOER), 2004), three roads were destroyed, 1,390 houses were destroyed, 300 hectares of crops and 7000 hectares of farmlands were flooded and destroyed and 5,493 people were displaced. (NEMA, 2006/07)

⁷ <http://www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec/vol16no4/164food1.htm>

⁸ <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=19110>

Sandwiched between the vast Sahara Desert of northern Africa and the equatorial forest of central Africa is the semi-arid, but fertile Sahel grassland. One of Africa's most significant crop areas, the Sahel, swings between frequent drought and frequent floods. In September 2007, floods dominated. Unusually heavy and persistent rains pounded much of the Sahel, swelling rivers from Senegal on the Atlantic coast to Kenya on the Indian Ocean coast. As many as 17 countries across the Sahel were flooded, affecting more than a million people, reported BBC News on 17 September.⁹

The 2007 rainy season brought what the Sudanese Government called the worst floods in living memory to Sudan. From the start of the rains in early July to 4 September, 122 people died and at least 200,000 were made homeless in floods throughout the country.¹⁰

Conclusion

If it does not improve, the current trend of agricultural productivity in Africa will push more people into hunger and starvation because of little or no food. This is exacerbated by high population growth, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Coupled with this is the occurrence of natural disasters such as floods and drought, which have rendered futile peoples' efforts aimed at ensuring food security. This situation, therefore, calls for concerted efforts from all stakeholders to ensure that farmers are helped to adapt to these disasters and climate change in general.

⁹ <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=19084&oldid=14532>

¹⁰ <http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/view.php?id=18106&oldid=14499>

**PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED NATIONS
TO PROMOTE INVESTMENT IN RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENTS
TO BOOST AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND COMBAT DROUGHT-INDUCED
FAMINE, FLOODS AND NATURAL DISASTERS**

***Draft resolution submitted by the Inter-Parliamentary Group of UGANDA,
on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP***

The 121st Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,

- (1) *Recalling* United Nations General Assembly Resolution 63/24 of 22 January 2009 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
- (2) *Taking into consideration* the cooperation agreement of 24 July 1996 (A/51/402) between the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union that laid the foundation for cooperation between the two Organizations,
- (3) *Welcoming* the contribution of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to shaping the agenda and work of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF), recently established by the United Nations Economic and Social Council,
- (4) *Reaffirming* that eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, particularly for developing countries,
- (5) *Noting* that the world is experiencing various natural and man-made disasters, which have either directly or indirectly impacted on agricultural productivity and consequently on the macroeconomic status of countries, particularly those in the developing world; these disasters range from drought, famine and floods to locust invasions, among others and have in the long run led to low agricultural productivity, starvation and even death in some cases,
- (6) *Noting* that agriculture - the principal source of employment in most of sub-Saharan Africa - has over the years been declining due to the natural climatic and other anthropogenic factors; this has had a severe impact on livelihoods of the people as well as on the socioeconomic status of these countries,
- (7) *Recognizing* that for Africa to sustainably increase its agricultural productivity it needs to develop its economy and enhance its people's living standards,
- (8) *Aware* that about 80 per cent of Africans depend on agriculture in one way or another for their livelihood, yet Africa's yield per hectare for food crops is less than half the level in developing countries, less than 10 per cent of its arable land is irrigated, and fertilizers remain scarce, with fertilizer use actually declining in half of all African countries in the 1990s,

(9) *Also aware* that most of the arid and semi-arid zones in Africa have consistently been experiencing famine due to prolonged droughts; these are areas that experience irregular and low amounts of rainfall per annum and that cannot adequately sustain agriculture and more particularly crop cultivation,

(10) *Aware* that droughts have affected millions in a vast area stretching across Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Chad, and into Burkina Faso and Mali, and that tens of thousands of nomadic herders have had to give up their animals; the scenario is replicated in the other parts of the continent that are experiencing severe droughts and famine, putting millions of people in dire need of food,

(11) *Realizing* that severe weather patterns and floods have become so common on the African continent that it has led to the loss of life and property and the destruction of farmlands and transport infrastructure, among others,

(12) *Recalling* the commitment made by parliamentarians under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to establish under the auspices of the IPU a Parliamentary Network on the UNCCD, a network of information, interaction and influence aimed at increasing parliamentary involvement and efficiency in the fields of combating desertification, soil erosion and land degradation,

(13) *Reaffirming* that although each country has the primary responsibility for its own sustainable development and poverty eradication, concerted and concrete measures are required at all levels to enable developing countries to achieve their sustainable development goals as related to the internationally agreed poverty-related targets and goals, including those that arise out of the relevant United Nations conferences and the United Nations Millennium Declaration,

(14) *Recognizing* that the achievement of many of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), is currently off track in many countries, and *emphasizing* that vigorous implementations of all development commitments will be needed without delay if the goals are to be achieved,

(15) *Also considering* that no country in the world has managed to develop its economy and enhance its people's living standards without significantly increasing agricultural productivity,

(16) *Recognizing* that countries do not have the capacity or are not yet ready to deal with such severe natural disasters, a situation likely to worsen as storms and droughts become more pervasive,

(17) *Aware* that African leaders are committed to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the principles and goals set out in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP),

(18) *Considering* the increasing need to innovate in agriculture and food production to adapt, inter alia, to climate change, urbanization and globalization,

(19) *Cognizant* of the fact that technological methods to advance these goals should be sustainable, accessible and of benefit to poor people, taking into account relevant international instruments and the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs,

(20) *Recognizing* that appropriate, affordable and sustainable investment in research and scientific advancements to boost agricultural productivity and combat drought-induced famine, severe weather patterns and floods can play an important role in helping States alleviate poverty and eradicate hunger,

1. *Calls upon* parliaments make laws that promote investment in research and scientific advancements on issues such as tree planting, wetland conservation, afforestation and deforestation that will reverse the effects of climate change, which in turn effects other interventions in this area;
2. *Urges* States, parliaments and relevant UN agencies to make greater efforts to promote the investment in research and scientific advancements to boost agricultural productivity and combat drought-induced famine, severe weather patterns and floods in developing countries under fair, transparent and mutually agreed terms;
3. *Calls for* support for national efforts to foster the effective utilization of local know-how and technology and promote agricultural research and technologies to enable poor rural men and women to increase agricultural productivity and enhanced food security;
4. *Encourages* States to make knowledge and know-how in the field of agricultural technology and agricultural innovation systems more accessible, in particular to the poor, subject to appropriate arrangements;
5. *Reiterates* that the eradication of poverty, hunger and malnutrition, in particular as they affect children, is crucial for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and that rural and agricultural development should be an integral part of national and international development policies; *calls for* increased productive investment in rural and agricultural development to achieve food security and for enhanced support for agricultural development and trade capacity-building in the agricultural sector in developing countries;
6. *Urges* the relevant bodies of the United Nation system to support the efforts of States, in particular developing countries, to take full advantage of new knowledge in agricultural technology, innovation, research and development to achieve relevant MDGs, specifically the eradication of poverty and hunger;
7. *Calls upon* public and private institutions to further develop improved varieties of crops that are suitable to various regions, especially those challenged by environmental factors, including climate change, and to develop and manage these crops in a sustainable manner; and *calls for* further efforts by all stakeholders to ensure that improved crop varieties are made available and affordable to small farmers in a manner consistent with national regulations and the relevant international agreements;

8. *Urges* all parliaments to underscore the importance of support for agricultural research, and *calls for* continued support for international agricultural research systems, including the international agricultural research centres of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, as well as other relevant international organizations;
9. *Encourages* States to recognize the importance of relevant institutions providing effective mechanisms for public-private agricultural advisory services, as well financial and market services to farmers, in particular small farmers, so that the benefits of new knowledge, agricultural innovation systems and improved technology can reach and be used by them;
10. *Also encourages* parliaments to exchange information on technological development and international cooperation in the area of agricultural productivity;
11. *Calls upon* developed countries and other regional and international organizations to allocate financial and technical resources to support the development of efficient, productive and environmentally sound technologies for sustainable agriculture in developing countries;
12. *Urges* parliaments to support fully the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the principles and goals set out in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP);
13. *Recalls* the commitment made to the Africa Union (AU) Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa, in which African leaders pledged to allocate at least 10 per cent of national budgetary resources to agriculture and rural development;
14. *Calls on* governments to work with the AU, NEPAD, regional financial institutions, business groups and relevant international organizations to review and improve the investment climate in Africa and promote private sector links and development;
15. *Encourages* parliaments to support national efforts to improve data collection and monitoring systems and enhance capacity to respond to emergency food crises in line with the NEPAD initiative on stimulating an agriculture renaissance in support of food security in Africa presented at the April 2004 meeting of the Africa Partnership Forum in Maputo, Mozambique;
16. *Urges* States to sponsor, in cooperation with the AU, NEPAD, and other relevant organizations, a public-private forum aimed at proposing concrete solutions to the challenges of raising agricultural productivity, especially for the rural poor.