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de las  
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Unidas  
para la  
Agricultura  
y la  
Alimentación

## TWENTY-FIFTH REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR AFRICA

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### GLOBAL AND REGIONAL EMERGENCY ISSUES

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Global and Regional Emergency Issues which are currently of particular concern to African countries relate to the following: (i) Avian influenza and other trans-boundary animal diseases; (ii) Desert locust; (iii) Floods and Drought; (iv) Civil Strife and related security problems; (v) HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases (Malaria, Tuberculosis; and (vi) Climate Change.

## **II. AVIAN INFLUENZA AND OTHER TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL DISEASES**

2. The current wave of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), a disease affecting primarily poultry and wild birds, commonly known as bird flu, was initially reported in East and South-east Asia in 2003/2004. The disease has since spread widely in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, parts of Western Europe, Middle East and reached Africa in February 2006. The unprecedented geographical spread of this zoonosis (human disease of animal origin) has been characterized by high mortality and morbidity in poultry, several other mammalian species and wild birds and caused some deaths in humans, including in Africa. The continuing spread of the disease, the socio-economic impacts and, in particular, the potential threat of human pandemic influenza are critical concerns that justify a global approach to its control, containment and elimination.

3. The status of Avian Influenza differs in various parts of the world and even within Africa. These differences are dynamic and influenced by a complex set of factors including virus ecology and disease control interventions. Due to the complexity of the epidemiology of the disease and the areas where it is still unknown, it is very difficult to predict what will be the future of the Avian Influenza epizootic. However, selected elements of the epidemiology of the disease are known such as the role of commercial trade of poultry and wild birds and, in particular, of the uncontrolled movements of birds between countries. The impact of wild birds transporting the virus over long distances has also been demonstrated; however, the role of wild birds as a long-term reservoir of the virus has not been established scientifically.

4. Globally, the HPAI situation has evolved rather favourably in the last two years compared to the beginning of the crisis in early 2004. Towards the end of 2004, when the disease was spreading from Asia towards Central Europe, African countries began preparing themselves for the unfortunate event that the disease would reach the continent.

5. On 6 February 2006, the first outbreak on the African continent of AI was confirmed in Kaduna State, northern Nigeria. Within three months, the disease had spread to seven African countries and to nine by June 2007 (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria and Togo). The Africa Region faced a peculiar and specific challenge because of the poor institutional capacity of most Veterinary Services to control HPAI. Most affected countries found it difficult to enforce control measures such as halting or controlling movements of birds. Fortunately, the virus seems to have a tendency of dying out when the poultry population is low and dispersed. Such observations should however be made with great caution as the disease may become endemic in some areas, without being detected by the generally weak surveillance systems. Therefore, the Africa region should be a priority for support in the fight against avian influenza.

6. Three noteworthy economic and social impacts of HPAI stand out:
  - market shocks;
  - livelihoods impacts of the disease and of the control processes applied to contain it; and
  - changes to the structure of poultry market chains; in some cases induced by heightened bio-security regulations and /or other related government policy.
7. The role of international organizations in the fight against HPAI has been exemplary. FAO and OIE started giving assistance in support of AI control from the beginning of the crisis. In January 2006, FAO launched three regional technical cooperation projects in Africa to support national emergency preparedness plans, in line with the FAO/OIE global strategy for the progressive control of HPAI. FAO reorganized its technical and operational capacity to better respond to animal disease emergencies by establishing a Crisis Management Centre (CMC) and the Emergency Centre for the Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), creating the position of Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) and making the TADs crisis eligible to support from the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA).
8. At the regional level, FAO and OIE established OIE-FAO Regional Animal Health Centres (RAHC) in collaboration with regional Organisations - Northern Africa (Tunis), Eastern Africa (Nairobi), Southern Africa (Gaborone), and Western Africa (Bamako) - to enhance disease management capabilities. FAO and OIE, in collaboration with WHO, as well as with other partners of the UN system (UNICEF, UNDP, OCHA, UNHCR, WFP) and regional and international organizations and donor agencies, have assisted countries in the development of their national plans through technical and operational support, capacity building and implementation of control and prevention programmes.
9. Although the AI situation appears to have improved since 2004, increased and continuous support is still needed. It is imperative that more effective surveillance, reporting and early response to outbreaks are established, based on strong Veterinary Services, private sector involvement and transparency of health information.
10. Since December 2006, there have been reports of a serious fish disease outbreak affecting several countries (Namibia, Botswana and Zambia) in the Chobe-Zambezi River. In June 2007, through the work of an Emergency Disease Investigation Task Force in Botswana, FAO confirmed, using internationally accepted diagnostic procedures, the presence of EUS (Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (EUS) caused by the fungus *Aphanomyces invadans*) in the Chobe-Zambezi river system. The Government of Botswana made an official notification to the World Animal Health Organization (or OIE, *Office international des epizooties*) of the presence of EUS in July 2007.
11. In October 2007, FAO approved an Emergency Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) Project for the seven countries bordering the Chobe-Zambezi river system (Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe). This TCP addresses part of the Task Force recommendations particularly the short-term actions carried out before the anticipated possible start of the next EUS outbreak season in

2007/2008. These include the following: (i) assist in training key staff from the seven participating countries on the basic diagnosis of EUS including field collection of fish samples for laboratory analysis and implementing a surveillance and monitoring programme for EUS; (ii) assist in raising awareness to enable better understanding of the disease through regional consultations and national level public awareness campaigns; (iii) assist in preparing extension and educational materials to support good health management practices at extension and farm/producer levels; and (iv) assist in developing a regional strategy and a regional proposal aimed at establishing a medium- to long-term biosecurity programme to include as a priority an emergency preparedness response to disease epizootics and an overall strengthening of human and institutional capacities for fish disease diagnosis, control and aquatic animal health management.

12. FAO continues to support the control of other major TADs in the Region, including Rift Valley Fever (RVF) which, in 2006, severely disrupted livestock trade in the Horn of Africa, and animal trypanosomiasis, in partnership with Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign/ African Union-Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (PATTEC/AU-IBAR) and the AfDB.

13. Regional and global level coordination should be encouraged among donors, regional and international agencies, to effectively address the transboundary nature of highly pathogenic infectious diseases.

14. FAO investment support included preparation of World Bank Avian Influenza and Human Pandemic Preparedness and Response Projects in several North African countries.

### **III. DESERT LOCUST**

15. Many recall the 2003-2005 Desert Locust emergency in Northwest Africa and the consequences it had on the livelihoods of the affected people, particularly in the Sahelian countries. Considerable assistance was provided to the affected countries by both traditional and non-traditional donors through bilateral means. In addition, more than US\$90 million were spent on food assistance, as well as for the rehabilitation of communities affected by the upsurge. The total cost of the campaign was estimated at about US\$400 million. As a result of the events, FAO, with assistance from the African Development Bank, the USA, France and the World Bank, succeeded in establishing the EMPRES Desert Locust programme in the Western Region in 2006 covering Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia with the objective of strengthening national preventive control capacities.

16. A major achievement of the EMPRES/WR programme in 2006-2007 was the establishment of autonomous national locust control units in Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. In addition, FAO, in collaboration with the World Bank, organized an international workshop in Saly, Senegal in February 2007, to discuss the necessary steps to integrate the use of biopesticides in the preventive Desert Locust control strategies. The overall Desert Locust situation in the Western Region remained calm, but efforts under the EMPRES/WR programme continue to closely monitor the developments.

17. In contrast to the Western Region, the countries of the Horn of Africa and the Near East received unusually heavy rainfall along the Red Sea coast and interior of Saudi

Arabia and Yemen in early 2007, providing highly favourable ecological conditions for Desert Locusts to breed. Consequently, simultaneous Desert Locust outbreaks occurred in Eritrea, northern Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen. As a result of the rapid response to the onset of a developing emergency and the support provided by the Government of Japan and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), national Locust Control Units supported by FAO contained the outbreaks.

18. New approaches have successfully been applied to respond as quickly as possible to Desert Locust threats. In close collaboration with WFP, 70 000L of chemical pesticides from reserves in Mauritania were airlifted in July and early September 2007 to replenish dangerously low pesticide reserves in Yemen. This operation also reduced the risk that pesticides left from the 2003-2005 locust campaign in Mauritania would soon become obsolete and pose a threat to the environment.

19. FAO investment support to emergency preparedness and rehabilitation during 2006-07 included assistance to the World Bank African Emergency Locust project in West Africa.

20. The use of biopesticides in locust control has been widely accepted by governments such as in Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Sudan and Yemen, largely as a result of opposition from local communities against the use of chemical pesticides. The Region should draw valuable lessons from the demonstrations that were organized in Yemen to show bee keepers and local authorities the environmental advantages of selective biocontrol products.

21. FAO has joined the Borlaug Global Rust Initiative (BGRI) together with ICARDA, CIMMYT and Cornell University to support national programmes on cereal production and protection through monitoring and sharing information on the spread and development of cereal rust diseases starting with the Ug99 wheat stem rust. This strain of potentially devastating cereal disease has affected farmers in Kenya and Ethiopia, and threatens other wheat-growing areas in Africa. The BGRI supports surveillance, strategic control in the field, conventional and molecular breeding, selection and rapid seed multiplication. The surveillance work which has begun, building on the Desert Locust Information Service system, should be strengthened and expanded in all concerned areas.

#### **IV. FLOODS AND DROUGHT**

22. Weather related emergencies, especially floods and drought, continued to affect food security in many countries in the region in 2006-2007.

23. In Western and Central Africa, heavy rains and floods in 2007 caused considerable human casualties and damage to crops and livestock in several countries. An estimated 800 000 people were affected by floods in West Africa alone where the hardest hit countries included Ghana, Togo, Burkina Faso and Mali. Locally, serious food implications were noted in the severely affected countries, notably in Ghana where the reduced 2006 crop in the North had increased the rural population's vulnerability to production and price shocks.

24. The succession of drought-induced crop failures that affected parts of Mauritania in recent years has had severe negative impact on rural households' purchasing power, increasing their vulnerability to shocks.

25. Similarly, in Eastern Africa, notwithstanding the general improvements in overall food availability in 2007 following the severe flooding in the Horn of Africa which caused damage to crops, livestock and infrastructure in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia, millions of people continued to face serious food difficulties due to the effects of localized drought conditions coupled with ongoing or past conflicts. Of particular concern is the situation in Southern Somalia because of a well below average main crop season. Similarly in Eritrea, high food prices continue to affect large numbers of vulnerable people. In Ethiopia, according to a 2007 UN Interagency Mission, nearly 600 000 people in the Somali region were in need of emergency food aid in the last quarter of 2007. In Kenya, large numbers of people, particularly in pastoral areas, continued to receive food assistance due to slow recovery from previous drought and continued pastoral conflict and cattle raids. Floods in the Sudan and Uganda in mid 2007 caused damage to crops and property, and resulted in continued food assistance requirements. In Southern Africa, a combination of severe droughts, floods and/or economic constraints led to sharp reduction in the 2007 harvests of maize, the main staple crop, especially in Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Lesotho.

26. Overall, to face the immediate risk of food insecurity in various parts of the continent, emergency assistance (food, seeds, tools, etc.) to affected and vulnerable population groups should continue at national levels, with strong support from the international community. Assistance can be provided through direct distribution of aid to vulnerable populations, but also through market-based mechanisms like seed vouchers and fairs or input trade fairs. However, in drought or flood prone areas that face recurring difficulties, longer term solutions are encouraged based on a livelihoods approach that include irrigation, livestocking fishing and alternative income generation strategies. These approaches can be linked with initiatives suggested for adaptation to climate change (strengthening the resilience of crop systems, promoting appropriate varieties, seed production, etc.). FAO should continue to play an active role in emergencies in Africa, not only in the provision of seed and other inputs but also, to ensure a catalytic role among concerned agencies and governments.

## **V. CIVIL STRIFE AND RELATED SECURITY PROBLEMS**

27. Disasters such as civil strife and other armed conflicts continue to affect several parts of Africa as they disrupt productive activities, destroy infrastructure and livelihoods, seriously undermining food security and overall development efforts. In West Africa, although significant improvements in the security situation had been noted over the past few years in protracted conflicts areas (Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone), reports of military activities and kidnappings had raised concerns for access to food and nutritional issues for vulnerable population groups in these areas, especially during the lean season.

28. In Eastern Africa, on-going and past conflicts continue to cause food difficulties for large population groups in Somalia, especially in southern areas, as well as in the Somali region of Ethiopia. In the Darfur region of the Sudan, insecurity remains a major

factor inhibiting access to food and resulting in large population displacements. Other conflict affected areas include the Great Lakes Region, where renewed conflict in 2007 in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, are affecting a large number of people. Similarly, food insecurity continues to be a concern for a large part of the population in Central African Republic and Chad, as a result of disruptions in production and marketing activities caused by civil conflict. It is imperative that the AUC sub-regional initiatives and the international community to resolve these conflicts which tend to adversely affect development efforts in the affected areas, especially in relation to agriculture and food security.

## **VI. HIV/AIDS AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES (MALARIA, TUBERCULOSIS)**

29. In Africa, the agricultural sector is highly vulnerable to the impact of human diseases, essentially due to its dependence on human labour. The link between the human disease burden and food insecurity is bi-directional, with human diseases exacerbating food insecurity and food insecurity creating greater vulnerability to infections and diseases. The last four decades have been marked by the emergence and re-emergence of human diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS with its disastrous impacts in terms of losses of human lives, Malaria and Tuberculosis. These diseases, highly prevalent in developing countries of Africa and Asia, are disproportionately affecting the poor and the women in particular.

30. In addition, these diseases have a devastating impact on sustainable development, and in particular agriculture and rural development, irreversibly depleting rural households' productive resources and negatively affecting indigenous knowledge about agro-biodiversity as well as agricultural skills adapted to local agro-ecological circumstances.

31. According to the latest estimates by UNAIDS, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS stands today at 39.5 million, of whom 4.3 million acquired the HIV virus in 2006. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to bear the brunt of the global epidemic, as 63 % of all adults and children affected with HIV/AIDS live on this continent. Moreover, the number of adults and children that became infected with HIV in 2006 in this sub-region alone exceeded the total number of infected persons in all other regions of the world. Similarly, sub-Saharan Africa is most severely affected by Malaria both in terms of reported cases and deaths. Approximately 90% of the one million deaths per year resulting from malaria infection occur in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly affecting children and pregnant women. Tuberculosis (TB) is ranked second to HIV/AIDS as a leading cause of adult mortality worldwide. It is estimated that over 2 billion people are carrying the TB causing bacterium, although the global burden of new TB cases per year is around 8 million per year. Women are particularly affected, resulting in more fatal cases than all other maternal mortality causes combined.

32. FAO has a unique role in the prevention and mitigation of the impacts of HIV/AIDS and other diseases on rural societies in order to fulfil its mandate and meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other international commitments. In the framework of global efforts to mitigate the impact of the HIV/AIDS, FAO's initiatives include the following actions:



- **At global and regional level** - FAO continues to play a key role in international advocacy, raising public awareness and drawing attention to the specific inter-linkages between HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and food security, nutrition and sustainable agricultural development. Recent efforts by the Organization include the development of joint programmes and events with UNAIDS, WFP, IFAD, GTZ, OXFAM, as well as the production of a manual on nutritional care for people living with HIV/AIDS, together with WHO.
- **At national policy and project levels** - FAO encourages and supports governments to review and re-orientate key policies to ensure their relevance and appropriateness for HIV prevention/AIDS mitigation, as conventional agricultural and food security strategies, especially those that are labour-intensive and market-oriented, are no longer appropriate. Agricultural policies that help reduce migration, for example, will contribute to a slower spread of the epidemic.
- **At institutional level** – FAO supports Ministries of Agriculture to adapt their agricultural service-delivery to meet the changing requirements of communities affected by the HIV/AIDS crisis.
- **At household and community levels** – FAO’s programmes provide vital entry-points to addressing HIV/AIDS at the field level. Efforts focus on strengthening local responses and building the resilience of agricultural and rural livelihood systems, among others, through: community based systems to record and share local knowledge; vocational and life skills for orphans and vulnerable children through Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools ensuring a better quality of life, while boosting their agricultural skills and income; promotion of land tenure reform, securing women and orphans’ land rights; and nutrition advice as maintaining a good nutritional status may be the only means for poor infected rural people to delay the onset of AIDS and antiretroviral therapy can only be provided to people with an adequate nutritional status. Besides, FAO’s Emergency Programme and Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS)/National Programme for Food Security (NPFS), provide unique options for supporting vulnerable households with access to farm inputs, thereby securing their agricultural livelihoods and increasing their food production, generating income, improving nutrition and the overall living conditions of the target populations.

33. Overall, FAO’s view is that, addressing infectious diseases successfully requires a holistic, systems-based approach to plant, animal and human health protection, and can only be achieved through collaborative, multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary partnerships. Efforts to reduce poverty, malnutrition and food insecurity cannot succeed if deliberate efforts are not made to address the complex linkages between agriculture and health as a biosecurity issue, which requires a strategic collaboration between the two sectors in research, policy making and programme implementation. The HIV/AIDS control efforts offer tremendous opportunities for synergy between health and agriculture that should not be missed.

34. Areas of collaborative efforts include: (i) information sharing on knowledge, attitudes, practices and beliefs; (ii) mainstreaming HIV/AIDS concerns in agriculture and food security; (iii) strengthening local responses and enhancing resilience of agriculture

and rural livelihood systems; and (iv) reinforcing research and development links between agriculture, nutrition and health in the areas of food production (cycles), storage and processing and quality labour (requirements and calendar), women's empowerment and income diversification (livestock and fisheries).

## VII. CLIMATE CHANGE

35. Climate change increasingly presents another significant challenge to be faced by the international community. Croplands, pastures and forests that occupy 60 percent of the Earth's surface are progressively being exposed to threats from increased climatic variability and, in the longer run, to climate change. As climatic patterns change, so also do the spatial distribution of agro-ecological zones, habitats, distribution patterns of plant diseases and pests, fish populations and ocean circulation patterns, which can have significant impacts on agriculture and food production.

36. In developing countries, an estimated 11 percent of arable land could be adversely affected by climate change, along with a reduction of cereal production in up to 65 countries, about 16 percent of agricultural GDP. Climate change can affect food security in a number of ways – impacting on production, access to food and distribution. It could also exacerbate conflicts and migration as people compete for land and food resources. The potential impacts on rain fed agriculture *vis-à-vis* irrigated systems also need to be better understood. In summary, climate change impacts can be roughly divided into two groups:

- i) biophysical impacts (such as physiological effects on crops, pasture, forests and livestock; changes in land, soil and water resources; increased weed and pest challenges; sea level rise and sea temperature rise); and
- ii) socio-economic impacts (decline in yields and production; fluctuations in world market prices; increased number of people at risk of hunger and food insecurity).

37. According to the April 2007 report from Working Group II of the IPCC, sub-Saharan Africa will be one of the areas of the world most affected by various phenomena related to climate change. With an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and hurricanes, and increased sea levels, it is estimated that between 25 and 42 percent of the African habitats to which plant and animal species are specifically adapted could be lost, affecting both food crops and non-food crops. Climate change is emerging as one of the leading threats to global food security on the continent, alongside wars and civil strife, HIV/AIDS and malaria. Climate change will therefore make it more difficult for Africa to reduce the number of poor and hungry people and thereby meet the WFS target and MDGs.

38. To address the challenges of climate change and degradation of ecosystems, current work by FAO, and other development partners, stresses the need for considerable efforts in two directions: 1) mitigation of, and adaptation to climate-related impacts and 2) integrated approach of climate change mitigation and adaptation for sustainable agriculture, forestry and fishery production systems.

- a) **Mitigation of, and adaptation to climate related impacts**

39. Agriculture and deforestation contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, helping to introduce improved livestock management and crops practices, and encouraging the adaptive management of forests, grasslands and cropping systems can contribute significantly in mitigating the impact of climate change.

40. Furthermore, in view of the importance of greenhouse gas emissions in rice production, improving rice production systems could also make a positive contribution.

**b) Integrated approach of climate change mitigation and adaptation**

41. Broadly speaking, agricultural adaptation to climate change involves strengthening the resilience of production systems. Most African governments have subscribed to the Hyogo Framework of Action for disaster reduction, which, among other things, requires that disaster reduction, preparedness and mitigation be streamlined into development policies. African countries, with support from FAO and other development partners should strengthen initiatives to adapt their agricultural systems to changed conditions and to specific stresses such as droughts, floods or storms, especially through improved management practices and the promotion of crops and varieties adapted to climate-induced stresses. This also includes enhancing soil fertility and water management practices that promote sustainable agricultural production; agro-meteorological data and tools for assessing the impact of extreme weather and for guiding adaptation; vulnerability assessment tools; land cover mapping; global assessment of crop and forest resources, the development of tools and strategies to manage the exposure to risk of extreme weather events and other disasters, and guidance on rural livelihood development related to cropping decisions by farmers.

42. Support is also required to research and development of drought or flood resistant seed varieties, as well as environment friendly technologies, which are at the heart of sustainable development response to climate change.