

Press Release: For Immediate Use

Thursday 7th July 2011

Somali community come together discuss response to East Africa drought

The Muslim Charities Forum chaired a meeting yesterday between the Somali Diaspora community and UK Muslim aid agencies to discuss a swift response to the ongoing drought in Eastern Africa.

The drought condition, which is considered to be the worst in the region for 60 years, has left around 9 million people in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, with 2 million of them being children under the age of five.

Funding shortfalls are hampering the humanitarian response with UN agencies and their partners requesting over \$500 million for both Somalia and Kenya. In both cases only half of what was requested has been received.

Chairman of the MCF, Dr. Hany El-Banna believes that working with the Diaspora communities can provide a valuable resource to all aid agencies working in the area.

“The Somali Diaspora community in the UK have a unique insight into the region and their knowledge and contacts are important to gain access to the different affected areas in the East Africa region.”

A team has been set up from the Somali NGOs to coordinate the response from within their community, assist in information sharing and create a forum for Somali NGOs in the UK to address this crisis and future emergencies. They have been tasked with creating a matrix for the affected areas in the entire region to help aid agencies coordinate their resources on the ground.

Highlighting the seriousness of the situation, MCF Trustee and Director of Islamic Relief UK Jehangir Malik commented, “Islamic Relief hasn’t used the words starvation and famine in any of their appeal over the past decade. What is happening in East Africa now due to the drought is unprecedented and is leaving millions hungry. We must act now.”

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Notes for Editors

This meeting was convened at the request of Somali NGOs in the UK to discuss possible humanitarian responses and setting-up a Somali Forum.

Organisations that attended the event include Islamic Relief, Muslim Hands, Islamic Help, Human Appeal International, African Relief Fund, African Development Trust, Women of the Horn Association UK Somali Students, MUFED, Gargar Foundation and Jigjiga Rehabilitation and Resettlement Organisation.

The Muslim Charities Forum is an umbrella organisation of Muslim-led NGOs in the UK providing advocacy and support.

For more information about the MCF please visit www.muslimcharitiesforum.org.uk.