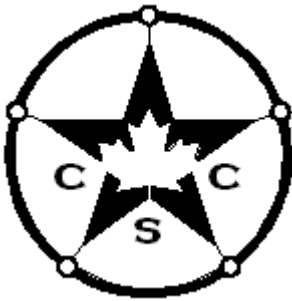




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CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL PEACE PROJECT AND CANADIAN SOMALI CONGRESS ISSUE STATEMENT ON SEVERE DROUGHT IN EAST AFRICA

National Coalition of Organizations Call on the Canadian Government to Respond to the Plight of Millions Facing Severe Drought in East Africa

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

-PRESS RELEASE-

For Immediate Release

(Ottawa 2/27/06) – Six prominent national Canadian organizations have signed a joint statement calling on the Canadian government to respond in an urgent manner to the plight of millions of people facing severe drought conditions in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti. “We call on the Canadian government to exercise leadership in addressing this humanitarian situation and we hope that Canada’s response to this severe drought will again confirm this country’s established reputation as a leader in agricultural production, in nutrition programs and in adapting technologies to address food-security issues,” said Mohamed Kassim, President of the Canadian Somali Congress. “We are here today to highlight the severity of this drought which according to the UN World Food Program (WFP) is impacting 3.5 million people in Kenya, 1.7 million in Somalia, 1.5 million in Ethiopia and 60,000 in Djibouti.”

“The people and government of Canada have in the past played a leadership role in the international community in addressing the Ethiopian famine crisis. We are hoping that the current government will assume similar leadership. I remind all that the Somali community in Canada is the largest African Diaspora community and many African-Canadian citizens are personally affected by this crisis,” said Mark Persaud, Chair of the Canadian International Peace Project.

“In recent weeks, I flew over parched regions of Kenya and Ethiopia and drove through similarly-affected parts of Tanzania and Kenya. Residents said there has been no rain for months and months. Our group saw cattle that looked like skeletons. There are now an estimated 11 million people in parts of Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia, who are only weeks away from famine,” said former parliamentarian, David Kilgour.

The statement, signed by the six national Canadian organizations reads:

“Representatives from six national Canadian organizations have joined together in an unprecedented manner to express their concern at the dire humanitarian situation facing millions of people in East Africa as a result of the ongoing severe drought in the region.

“For the poorest people living in the poorest countries, hunger is the greatest development challenge. As such, improving food security is one of the goals articulated by the government of Canada in its Foreign Policy Statement.

“We hope that the Canadian government will respond in a positive and timely manner to the \$18.5-million emergency appeal made by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

“Canadians have demonstrated that they will not turn a blind eye to the poorest and most destitute of the world. The tremendous response to the Indian Ocean tsunami, the recent earthquake in Pakistan and Canada's enthusiastic contribution to facilitating the democratic transformation in Ukraine reflect our growing sense of global solidarity and awareness of shared vulnerability.”

The signatories to the statement include:

Canadian Somali Congress
Canadian International Peace Project
Canadian Jewish Congress
Canadian Arab Federation
Assembly of First Nations
Islamic Council of Imams - Canada

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The Canadian International Peace Project (CIPP) is a novel and unique non-partisan organisation that has brought together diverse groups and individuals to work on issues and projects relating to local, national and international peace, security and development . Through partnership on events and projects, the CIPP fosters mutual respect and sustainable relationships among diverse groups including those in conflict with each other.