

## RICH NATIONS URGED TO ACT AS CONTINENT FACES FOOD CRISIS

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Climate change is already affecting many parts of Africa and will get worse if the global community does not commit itself immediately to combat that change, a campaign group coalition said yesterday. A new report, *Africa - Up in Smoke 2*, which updates previous research carried out by Oxfam and the New Economics Foundation, comes as Sir Nicholas Stern publishes his Treasury-sponsored review urging radical change in the world's approach to carbon emissions.

The Oxfam/NEF report is also designed to warn of the specific threat to Africa ahead of next month's conference on climate change in Nairobi, Kenya. Temperatures in Africa have already risen by 0.5°C in comparison with 100 years ago, putting additional strain on water resources. According to the UK's Hadley Centre, temperature increases over many areas of Africa will be double the global average; drought patterns as a result will worsen catastrophically, says the report, which was compiled in conjunction with the Working Group on Climate Change and Development, a coalition of non-governmental organisations. It describes climate change as an "unprecedented threat to food security" and says what is needed is a "climate-proof" model of development as well as huge cuts in emissions. Africa's problem, though, is that it is the world's poorest continent, and lacks the resources to solve its problems by itself.

The coalition calls for rich countries to make good on their Kyoto promises and go beyond them. It also calls for an overhaul of humanitarian relief and development, for donors to fund urgent measures to help communities adapt to a new and more erratic climate and for donors and African governments to tackle poverty and invest in agricultural development. "Global warming is set to make many of the problems Africa deals with much, much worse," said Andrew Simms of NEF. "In the last year alone, 25 million people in sub-Saharan Africa have faced food crisis. Global warming means that many dry areas are going to get drier and wet areas are going to get wetter. They are going to be caught between the devil of drought and the deep blue sea of floods." Africa is the continent that is probably most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, and the one that faces the greatest challenges to adapt, according to the report.

For millions of people in the Horn of Africa and the eastern side of the continent, the success or failure of rains due over the next two months will be critical. Whether the rains fall will determine if 2007 offers the prospect of recovery from the serious drought of 2005-06 or be another year of struggle to survive.

But, the report says, whatever happens with these rains, Africa is undergoing big environmental changes. Although the climates of Africa have always been erratic, the latest scientific research, coupled with the direct experience of the agencies themselves, indicates new and dangerous extremes, continual warming and more unpredictable weather patterns.

The success or failure of one rainy season, or even several, cannot be attributed to global warming. But, says the report, Africa is steadily warming and the climate is changing.