



SPECIAL EDITION

Eritrea Hosted 66th Session of the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa



The 66th Regular Session of the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) was held in Asmara, Eritrea from 4th – 8th October, 2021. The regular session incorporated two meetings. The first was the executive committee meeting which was held from 4th - 6th October, and the second was the governing council of ministers meeting which was conducted from 7th - 8th October, 2021. All member countries: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti, Somalia and Uganda participated in both sessions.

According to DLCO-EA documents, the organization’s mission is to enhance food security in Eastern Africa region by conducting research, monitoring and forecasting, implementing control operations against mandated migratory pest occurrences mainly the Desert Locust, African

Armyworms, Quelea- quelea birds and Tsetse fly.

During the first session of the meeting, the Director of DLCO-EA, Dr. Stephen W. Njoka welcomed the Executive committee members and all invited guests to the 66th Regular Session of the organization which was held at Asmara Palace Hotel. He also thanked the Government of Eritrea for hosting the sessions.

Dr. Stephen briefed on the Migratory pests’ status, Research activities, Air unit matters, Administrative Issues and the Organization’s finances of the years 2020/2021. The Director urged member countries for the need to modernize the organization’s spray aircraft as a way of strengthening the DLCO-EA. Finally, he appreciated the member countries that paid their 2020/2021 contributions fully;

and those significantly reduced their arrears.

Mr. Heruy Asghedom, Director General of the Agricultural Extension Department at the Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Eritrea, on behalf of the host country, delivered a welcoming remark. Then, Mr. Heruy noted that the devastating Desert Locust outbreak that occurred in the region in 2020/2021 was extremely dangerous and costed the member countries a lot. He observed the need to review the prevention and control strategies of the DLCO-EA so as to better serve the member Countries.

He emphasized that the secret of Eritrea’s success is the preventive and ground control strategy; involvement of the government bodies at high-profile level, and also dedication of experts, members of the defense forces and the general



*Mr. Heruy Asghedom
Director General of the Agricultural
Extension Department*

public. Moreover, he mentioned the weekly regular meeting of the relevant MoA bodies chaired by H.E Arefaine Berhe, the Minister of Agriculture, as a vital regulatory and enforcement platform in the process of control operations.

Following Mr. Heruy's statement, a short video on Eritrea's Experiences in Desert Locust control was displayed.

The chairman of the executive committee Mr. Collin Marangu, Director of Plant Protection Services, Kenya's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives, State Department for Crops Development, welcomed all delegates and participants, and thanked Eritrea for hosting the meeting during this difficult time of the Covid-19 pandemic.



*Mr. Collin Marangu
Chairman of the executive committee*

The Chairman further noted that last year, the physical meeting could not be held due to the pandemic and consequently implementation of activities such as recruitment of staff (Director and Operation Coordinator) remained pending for two years.

According to his reports, there was a massive invasion of Desert Locust swarms in 2020/21 and stressed the DLCO-EA resources. Due to climatic change and cropping patterns, pests like *Quelea quelea* birds are also controlled throughout the year. This becomes a tall order for DLCO-EA to control such pests in member countries with only three spray Aircraft.

Agendas of the Meeting

Management staff presented matters arising from the previous meeting, which the Executive Committee was expected to consider. These included: the DLCO-EA Strategic Plan of July 2021 – 30th June, 2026, and ToRs for restructuring the DLCO-EA. Moreover, the Executive Committee noted the need for reinforcement of the new base in Somalia.

With regards to the proper use of pesticides, the delegates noted that it would benefit the region if these pesticides are shared with the front-line countries whenever there is an invasion of locusts and need of pesticides.

The Executive Committee also submitted to the Council to take NOTE and URGE member countries to settle their financial obligations to the organization.

During the meeting, the management presented the progress report for 2020/2021 and Programme of Work for 2021/2022.

Control Operations

During the reporting period, member countries treated the following estimated hectares of infestations: Eritrea (31,159), Somalia (317,273), South Sudan (500), Ethiopia (902,215), Sudan (187,586), Djibouti (10), Kenya (73,160), Uganda (5,640) and Tanzania (1,324).

Also, reports on the situations of *Quelea quelea*, African Armyworm, Tsetse fly and Fall army worm were presented. In addition, the Division of Operational Research was extensively discussed. In the future, the Division is expected to continue to research on alternative ways of controlling migratory pests in environmentally safe methods.

Furthermore, the management presented the status of the DLCO-EA Aircrafts, Aerial operations, training of engineers and pilots, proposed program of work and report.

Finally, the meeting concluded urging country members to fulfill their payments and with a brief presentation report as well as work plan from the Administration and Finance of DLCO-EA.

Meeting of Council of Ministers

The meeting of the council of Ministers was held from 7th to 8th of October 2021 at the same venue.

Director of DLCO-EA Dr. Stephen W. Njoka welcomed the participating Ministers and other stakeholders. He, then, delivered brief remarks on the situation of Migratory pests in the region, Research activities, Air Unit matters, Administrative Issues and the Organization's Finances during the 2020/2021 period.



*H.E Arefaine Berhe
Minister of Agriculture of the State of Eritrea*

Minister of Agriculture of the State of Eritrea, H.E Arefaine Berhe, in his official opening speech, acknowledged participation of all relevant ministers from member states.

H.E Arefaine Berhe noted that this year's meeting is conducted in the aftermath of a terrible locust upsurge that has caused huge damage on crops and rangelands in the region; and the COVID-19 situation that still prevails. Therefore, this experience and those before dictate all member countries to put their best practices together in order to effectively win the battle against DLCO's mandated pests in general, and desert locust in particular.

Furthermore, he briefly shared Eritrea's modest experience regarding control of desert locust, a strategy which is ground control. He underscored that Eritrea carried out extensive control operations against the locally bred as well as the invading ones.

He, then, stressed the effective and regular flow of information

from the scouts at the front line to the Head Quarters, and vice versa. Besides, he mentioned the collaborative efforts of experts, the local population and members of the defense forces.

Moreover, the Minister informed the council that Eritrea is now introducing the use of metarhizium (green muscle) and hopper sucker not only to control locusts but to eventually use them as animal feed source, and why

not, as human food as well. Using pesticides is harmful to human safety and the environment.

Finally, H.E Arefaine Berhe underlined the importance of research and said, "if we put our resources together, strengthen the capabilities of the front-line countries and if we forge stronger cooperation with our regional and global partners with similar mandates, the challenge is not beyond our means."

Following, H.E Fred Bwino Kyakulaga (MP) State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda; and Chairman of DLCO-EA Governing Council of Ministers delivered a speech.

He welcomed all participants to the historical and beautiful city of Asmara for the 66th Regular Session of the DLCO-EA Governing Council of Ministers and acknowledged the warm welcome accorded to all the delegates by Eritrea in general and by H. E Arefaine Berhe in particular.

He then, commended the Executive Committee and the



H.E Fred Bwino Kyakulaga (MP) State Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries of Uganda



DLCO-EA Management for successfully holding three virtual sessions. During these sessions, many issues were resolved, which allowed the Organization to continue implementing its mandate in the Region including controlling the worst Desert Locusts outbreak in 70 years. He also expressed his condolence and sympathy for the aircraft accident which led to the death of a long serving pilot and hospitalization of two surviving members.

Moreover, he welcomed Somalia, as it will mark its full reintegration into the Organization after an absence of close to 30 years.

He noted that DLCO-EA continued to promote food security in the Region through its noble mandate of combating the major migratory pests. Thanks to its efforts in monitoring, forecasting and controlling of the major migratory pests, the organization has saved the member countries millions of dollars by protecting their crops.

Finally, he appreciated the continued and renewed collaboration of development partners; mainly the FAO and USAID for which their combined support has increased the capacity of DLCO-EA Research and Operations.

Dr. Mamoon Alalawi, Executive Secretary of FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) also addressed the 66th Regular Session of the DLCO-EA Council of Ministers representing his organization.

He outlined the seriousness of the Desert Locust upsurge which happened during 2019-2021 and exposed 23 countries to widespread severe infestations and dense desert locust swarms, where more than 5.3 million hectares were controlled in the region.

He noted that the locust upsurge of 2019-2021 affected around 20.2 million people with the threat of acute food insecurity due to the severe damage that threatened crops, grain stocks and natural pastures.

He further expressed that relevant governmental, non-governmental and international institutions, partners and organizations have contributed to preventing and mitigating the locust upsurge's potential damage and opposing effects.

He said, "Among these efforts were the appeals made by the FAO which mobilized USD 243

million to respond to the locust upsurge. This support was able to save around 5 million tons worth of grain production, keeping about 2.3 million rural families out of poverty and safeguarding nearly \$1.7 billion in domestic income for affected countries"

Furthermore, he underlined that it is essential to ensure the preparedness against any potential future upsurge of the Desert Locust similar to that of 2019-2021.

Finally, he urged to strengthen the collaboration between CRC and DLCO-EA in preventive Desert Locust management.

The council of the ministers then went on to discuss the DLCO-EA work plan and other issues raised by the executive committee; and at the end came up with important decisions and deliberations.

It is to be recalled that the Ministry of Agriculture arranged a tour for the delegates to Asmara city and a coffee ceremony along with brief cultural shows in its Horse Breeding Center located in Villagio, Asmara.

The Public Relations Division of the Ministry of Agriculture conducted short interviews with Dr. Mamoon Alalawi, Executive Secretary of FAO-CRC, and Dr. Stephen W. Njoka, Director of DLCO-EA.

• **Can you introduce us with yourself, please.**

- My Name is Mamoon Alalawi. I am the Executive Secretary of FAO-CRC of the desert locust commission based in Egypt.

• **What is the mission of FAO-CRC?**

-FAO-CRC is a commission that consists of 16 countries; namely: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Sudan; and all



*Dr. Mamoon Alalawi
Executive Secretary of FAO-CRC*

Arab countries: Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Iraq and also Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. The main mission of the commission is to harmonize activities among the 16 members of the commission.

Also, to support them in terms of technical or improved technical capacity and financially during outbreaks and invasions.

Generally, we are a commission looking for all member states to be in a better position in case there is outbreak of locust inside or outside of the commission.

• What is the relationship between the FAO-CRC and DLCO-EA?

- The commission is based on trust fund. Since all members of DLCO-EA are members of FAO-CRC, we target the most important agricultural pest that is the Desert locust. So, we have an understanding to help each other and also benefit from each other. For this reason, I am here today to participate in the DLCO-EA 66th Ministerial meeting. Actually, in the past we had many activities that were conducted with good cooperation between us. We continuously planned to harmonize our activities. For instance, CRC has recently prepared drones for survey and monitoring desert locust in the breeding area.

• How would you rate the achievements of the meeting?

- From my point of view, the meeting went very well with the commitment of all member countries to support and strengthen the DLCO-EA. From the work plan that was approved by the ministers, I believe we have room to improve in all aspects of technical activities to support member countries for better preparedness to any infestation in the future. For CRC, we have agreed to strengthen our cooperation in terms of new technologies and probably in the near future, the DLCO-EA will benefit from the drone that is already in operation in CRC member countries like the Sudan and Saudi Arabia. And, we will invite them to be part of this program in the future for the benefit of the member countries especially for the front-line countries that face Desert locust on a regular basis such as Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia.

• What can you say about the experience of Eritrea in controlling the desert locust?

- Eritrea is one of the best countries that are dealing with the Desert locusts. Despite of shortages of facilities, I commend the desert locust control teams. I remember spending one night with them in the breeding area. They were doing well with limited resources even better than some countries having everything. From our side, as a commission, we have a master plan for desert locust control on the field, and the priority is for the countries which are working effectively on the ground like Eritrea.

• Any final words you would like to say?

This is not my first time in Eritrea.

I was here six times. I always enjoy to be here. I really appreciate the dedication of the MoA-Migratory Control staff in general and H.E Minister of Agriculture and the Director General of Agricultural Extension Department in particular. I wish a brilliant future for this country. As well, I hope I will be part of the team which is supposed to introduce new technologies to the MoA, desert locust control unit.

• Please tell us your full name and country of origin?

My name is Dr. Stephen W. Njoka. I am a Kenyan; and Director of the Desert Locust Control Organization for East Africa (DLCO-EA).



*Dr. Stephen W. Njoka
Director, (DLCO-EA)*

• What does DLCO-EA do?

- DLCO-EA is an organization of member countries of the East Africa that include Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, South Sudan, Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. Our mission is to control the migratory pests, particularly the Desert locust, Quelea-quelea, Armyworms, and Tsetse fly; and we have been dealing with them over the past 60 years. Subsequently, we believe we are contributing in food security. DLCO-EA is the oldest inter-regional organization in the region and we get support mostly from the member countries, and the rest from development partners.

• **What was the meeting about?**

- The meeting is a regular meeting conducted every year to present our work plan and budget and then to approve them before we go for implementation. The meeting was conducted for five days. The first three days were executives meeting; and the last two days were dedicated for the ministers' meeting.

This meeting went very well, many cases and issues were discussed, and our work plan and budget for the next financial year were presented. After discussions in the ministerial meeting, DLCO-EA work plan and budget were also approved.

Somalia is one of the founding members of this organization. Due to its internal issues, it has been out of the place since 1991. This was also part of the considerations in the meeting.

• **What are the major achievements of the organization?**

- DLCO-EA made a difference on the lives of many people of the member states in terms of controlling pests. More importantly, the organization enables us to interact with our technical partners within and outside the DLCO-EA. It creates a building bridge; and works together with CRC-FAO and other partners to overcome outbreaks and infestations.

Last year, for instance, the infestations of locust were very huge; and affected us all. The upsurge affected countries like Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania which didn't see such a serious outbreak for the past 70 years. Even though it caused some harm, thanks to the strong dedication of the member states and support of development partners, we finally managed to control the upsurge.

• **If you have final words to say?**

- I would like to thank the Government of the State of Eritrea for its hospitality. The tour was wonderful and the coffee was great, we enjoyed it very much.



Coffee ceremony with at the Horse Breeding Center of the Ministry of Agriculture, Eritrea.

Editor-In-Chief

Ermias Solomon, Director of Public Relations Division

Email:- ersohab@gmail.com, Tel: 182225/ 07143877/ 07182662, Asmara, Eritrea

Editorial Board

Filmawit Measho, Hara Weldetsae, Shushan Okbay

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