

Dear attendees at today's first Pre-Conference

On behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, I have the pleasure of inviting you to a series of Pre-Conferences. We organize these Pre-Conferences to strengthen the coordination, cooperation and capacitation for pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in the lowlands of Ethiopia.

Last year the Ministry of Agriculture with support of the Regional Governments of Afar and Somali Region and the GiZ-Strengthening Drought Resilience Programme organized the DREAM-1 Conference – attended by 250 persons and concluding with a Joint Declaration. The Joint Declaration mentioned among other the intention to communicate, network and bring on-board all stakeholders acting in the lowlands.

This year in particular has underlined the need to strengthen resilience in the arid lowlands. On top of the long term challenges, the present situation has been extraordinary critical with floods, locust infestation and Covid-19 pandemic. This has all affected the lowland communities severely. We may address this with immediate relief but we also need to contribute to long-lasting prosperous and shock-resistant pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in our dry lowland areas.

In this we need to put the ideas and priorities of the lowland communities central with their engagement and their unique culture and strengths. We need to come to joint direction that looks at the longer term prospect in the lowlands and take into account the climate change, the invasive species and the access to resources.

We should avoid that with the best intentions we undertake program that are silo-ed and that we miss the opportunities to learn from each other and create the critical mass for positive change that comes with coordination and cooperation. In this first Pre-Conference today we want to learn from the on-the-grounds program of regional governments and from civil society. We also want to discuss how we can built links and bridges for coordination. The next two Pre-Conferences, respectively on 12 November and 26 November will discuss co-operation and capacitation.

On behalf of the Ministry I want to thank you for your participation in these Pre-Conferences and we look forward for the contribution that it will bring to the well-being of the communities in the lowlands.