

China donates rice to Karamoja

MOROTO

By Olandason Wanyama

The Chinese government has donated rice worth sh18b to Karamoja to alleviate the effects of drought that hit the region last year.

The disclosure was made by the Chinese ambassador to Uganda, Zheng Zhu Qiang, on Friday during the conclusion of his three-day visit to Karamoja.

He was on a tour of World Food Programme stores, located in Moroto town.

Zheng said the \$5m donation would arrive soon in Karamoja to be distributed to the worst hit households.

On his maiden trip and the first Chinese ambassador to travel to Karamoja, Zheng said he had made a lot of discoveries in the region.

"I have learnt a lot on the performance of United Nations interventions in the region," he said. He added that China would do the same.

Zheng said he plans to contact his home office over the issues of poverty alleviation saying even in China people live below the poverty line, but it is worse in Karamoja.

"We need to go deeper into the affairs of poverty, see how we can help people in the region," he said.

The ambassador further said he hopes his country will work with World Food Programme on issues of humanitarian aid to ensure households get out of the recent drought effects.

Zheng said: "Karamoja is a beautiful region with good scenery. It is a wonderful place with potential in terms of investment, agriculture and infrastructural development."

He encouraged the elite class in the region to think of investing back home, saying none will develop Karamoja for them.

"This is how China developed. We decided to invest in our villages, towns and the entire country," Zheng observed.

He also said China spends 10% of their time on policy making and the other 90% on implementation of development programmes.

The Minister for Karamoja Affairs, John Byabagambi, was grateful to China for the continued support to Uganda.

"We have been going bilateral, but now it is a tripartite arrangement," he said.

Byabagambi said the Government will continue providing food to the people of Karamoja until such a time when food security will improve.

"That is why the Chinese intervention is timely," he added.