

A Week in the Horn

1st June 2012

- **The Istanbul II Conference on Somalia....**
- **....and AMISOM advances on the ground**
- **May 28: the launch of the Ethiopian Renaissance**
- **Symposium on religious tolerance**
- **The First Global African Diaspora Summit**

News and Views (page 10):

- **Sudan and South Sudan continue talking**
- **Uganda's President visits Eritrea**
- **International Peacekeepers Day**
- **Deputy Premier Hailemariam calls on scholars to participate in development**
- **South Sudan detains suspects in Gambella Regional State killings**
- **Below average rain in Somalia, but famine unlikely**

The Istanbul II Conference on Somalia....

The two-day Istanbul Conference on Somalia, "Preparing for Somalia's Future: Goals for 2015", opened on Thursday [31st May]. The meeting is bringing together a number of heads of state, prime ministers and ministers from 54 countries as well as donors and international and Somali stakeholders, representatives of the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the AU, civil society groups and the private sector. Among those attending have been UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon, the UK Secretary of State William Hague, and US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Johnnie Carson. The Ethiopian delegation is led by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. Those attending from Somalia include President Sheikh Sharif, Prime Minister Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, several ministers and representatives of the TFG, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, Somali business leaders, private sector and civil society, women's and youth groups, the Diaspora and traditional elders. The administrations of Puntland and Galmudug, however, pulled out earlier in the week claiming that the conference was "not a Somali-owned process," that the purpose and agenda of the conference were "ambiguous" and that it was intended to look for an unacceptable fresh start to the peace process. Somaliland announced on Sunday that it would be attending the meeting.

Participants are discussing Somalia's recovery and development as well as ways to support its political transition. The first day of the conference concentrated on ways to rebuild the country, focusing on such issues as reconstruction, energy and water; day two focused on political issues, in particular preparing for the end of the mandate of Somalia's transitional government in August. One of the key items on the agenda was the creation of an international fund to pay for the long term training and arming of Somali security forces. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that international

forces cannot solve Somalia's problems in the long term and that the fragile country needs to develop its own security apparatus and strong security institutions. He said the international community must help Somalia build its own security apparatus, establish the rule of law and shed a culture of impunity. Somalia's President Sheikh Sharif emphasized that his country does not have a national army and its security forces need military training.

Addressing the opening session Somalia's Prime Minister, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, said "Somalia is more than hungry faces in the news, pirates or extremists. It's a diverse, rich land with an historical pedigree. I can foresee a day when Somalia has an active, vibrant economy buoyed by modern infrastructure and by highways". The Prime Minister said his government was now making real progress over agreement on the size of the future parliament and in guaranteeing women's representation. He expected the Istanbul meeting to expedite the process. He said Somalia needed help from the international community but he emphasized that "Somalia's future is in the hands of Somalis". He noted that an international trust fund was needed for long-term development. Prime Minister Abdiweli said the conference would be successful if the international community adopted a common position on the future of Somalia, and he called on it to mobilize resources to stabilize his country or risk a reversal of the recent gains made against Al-Shabaab.

The Ethiopian delegation is reflecting the position of IGAD that first, and foremost, there must be no delay and obstruction to end the transition; secondly no new elements should be produced that fall outside the scope of existing agreements and mechanisms and that risk side-tracking the peace process; and thirdly, at this critical juncture, there is a need to leave post-August processes to the Somalis themselves. Ethiopia will call for the international community to support a strict implementation of the roadmap, in accordance with the Addis Ababa agreement, and to provide in a timely manner for the comprehensive support Somalis need to turn around the future of the country.

Turkish Deputy Prime Minister, Bekir Bozdog, said Somalia was making significant political gains and had begun to create an opportunity for genuine peace and security after a long period of instability and conflict. Earlier, Turkey's Foreign Minister had emphasized that resolving the conflict situation in Somalia was one of Turkey's highest foreign policy priorities. It saw Somalia as neither an area of interest nor as a risk nor as a security threat, but as a place where the "conscience of humanity was being tested." Turkey, he said, was contributing to a stable economic and political environment in Somalia. Turkish officials had made several visits to Somalia; Turkish airlines have regular flights to Mogadishu from Istanbul; and the country has provided US\$365 million in aid over the past year.

The United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN Political Office for Somalia, Ambassador Mahiga, noted that regional bodies such as the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development had remained actively and constructively engaged in Somalia. He also welcomed the fact that key U.N. member states were deeply involved in promoting development, recovery and institution-building in Somalia. These included the United Kingdom which had convened the London Conference on Somalia in February and now Turkey with this "Istanbul II" Conference. Ambassador Mahiga said the Somali people

need sustained long-term investments "in both productive and service sectors" to support Somalia's recovery, development and the on-going political transition. The right investment could deliver employment, enable equitable development and bolster much needed capacity in resilience. A paradigm shift in international assistance would allow the partners of Somalia to build the resilience of Somali households, communities and local institutions against crises in the medium and long-term, but this needs "real partnerships, strategic vision and integrated multi-sectoral approaches and reliable multi-year funding." He spoke of the need to expand access to cheaper and sustainable energy and of efficient use of water resources. Transparency and accountability would help build confidence. Underlining the point, a World Bank report this week suggested that the Somali government has not accounted for most of the revenues and donations it received in 2009 and 2010, and that the TFG had received far more money than it had reported.

...and AMISOM advances on the ground

AMISOM and Somali National Forces have continued to make military advances over the last couple of weeks. At the beginning of this week a joint operation out of Mogadishu finally secured the critical 'Afgoye corridor' linking the capital Mogadishu and Afgoye, 30km north-west of Mogadishu. Afgoye was a major stronghold of Al-Shabaab and the road from Afgoye to Mogadishu, the Afgoye corridor, gave its fighters easy access to the capital. The corridor has been home to 400,000 displaced people who fled there from different areas of fighting in Somalia. Government troops, supported by AMISOM's Burundian contingent, took the market town of Elasha Biyaha, the last remaining stronghold of Al-Shabaab in the Afgoye corridor at the beginning of the week. TFG soldiers also captured the town of Sabbiyo, nine kilometres north of Afgoye. The week-long Operation Free Shabelle will allow a renewed flow of civilian traffic between Afgoye and Mogadishu, and provide the opportunity for humanitarian agencies to access the area. Ambassador Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, noted that the troops had gone out of their way to avoid causing harm to civilians and called the operation "a testament to the African Union's commitment to support the peace process and improve the lives of the people of Somalia." Brigadier-General Audace Nduwumunsi, Deputy AMISOM Force Commander, said AMISOM troops had demonstrated a high degree of professionalism and restraint and there had been minimal displacement of people.

President Sheikh Sharif paid a visit to Afgoye on Monday [28th May] but on his way back his convoy was attacked by Al-Shabaab fighters on the outskirts of Elasha midway along the road. The President, and the other TFG officials, ministers, MPs and military officials who were accompanying the President all escaped unharmed and returned safely to the capital. One Somali government soldier was said to have been killed and four others wounded. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for this attempt to kill the President. An AMISOM spokesman, Lt-Colonel Paddy Ankunda, said TFG and AMISOM forces had disrupted and repulsed the attack as soon as the attackers had opened fire.

Elsewhere, Kenyan and TFG forces and allied militia have finally taken control of the town of Afmadow, one of the towns they have been targeting as a prelude to moving on Kismayo, the main Al-Shabaab centre in southern Somalia. A Kenyan military spokesman, Major Emmanuel Chirchir, said on Thursday [31st May] that Kenyan and

TFG allied militia forces had now captured Afmadow. On Wednesday [30th], Al-Shabaab had admitted that their positions in Afmadow had been attacked for the second day running but claimed that its forces had repulsed a Kenyan attack and that they still controlled the town. Then on Thursday they admitted they had abandoned the town despite having spent several months claiming to have built up its defences. The capture of Afmadow is a crucial step in the Kenyan drive towards the southern port city of Kismayo, 120 km to the south. Kenya's General Julius Karangi said yesterday that the Kenyan forces, now being re-hatted as AMISOM troops, will seize Kismayo within three months and before the mandate of the Transitional Federal Government ends on 20th August. The TFG and AMISOM have also asked Ethiopia to assist Kenya and the TFG in the capture of Kismayo. A statement by an Ethiopian spokesman this week said that Ethiopia has not yet taken a decision on whether to assist in operations against Kismayo.

On Tuesday [29th May], Kenyan ships patrolling along the coast off Kismayo fired at Al-Shabaab positions after they had been fired upon. This was the first time Kenyan warships have responded to shelling from Al-Shabaab. There was another exchange of fire the following day. Kenyan troops have been advancing along the coast towards Kismayo as well as moving from the border towards Afmadow. There has been no indication of whether Kenya plans any naval attack on the port in support of attacks on the ground.

May 28: the launch of the Ethiopian Renaissance

Twenty one years ago, EPRDF forces entered Addis Ababa, finally bringing to a victorious end sixteen years of civil war. It was a momentous day for the peoples of Ethiopia who had suffered for so long at the hands of a ruthless dictator and whose lives had been shattered by the misguided Marxist policies of the military regime. Ethiopia is a country in which more than eighty ethnic groups exist and twice as many dialects are spoken. The 'National Question' was among the first issues to be formulated by radical university students in their demands for socio-political change in Ethiopia. Growing civil unrest and a unified force of Ethiopian peoples, led by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) against the dictatorial communist regime finally led to its demise in 1991. The victory of the Ethiopian people over the Derg was not just a mere change of government; it was a victory which opened the way to democracy and good governance.

The struggles of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia for equality and justice; for respect for their human and political rights; and for good governance, development, peace and security finally bore fruit. To launch the final goal of the struggle and assure the country's renaissance, a coalition of 27 political and liberation organizations under a transitional government embarked on the path of transforming Ethiopia from a centralized, military-controlled, Marxist dictatorship into a free and democratic federation between 1991 and 1995. In 1994 a new constitution was drafted, setting up a bicameral legislature and an independent judicial system and guaranteeing equal rights and freedom of expression to all Ethiopian citizens. The New Ethiopia was constituted on the basis of equality, mutual respect, common aims and interests of all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia as well as of all religions and faiths in

the country: unity in diversity. This is the reason why we celebrate the Anniversary of May 28, the National Day of Ethiopia.

The building of the institutions of democracy, of good governance and of the rule of law is, of course, a work in progress. It continually deepens and expands, gaining strength year by year. The Constitution provides for a regional system of government comprising nine autonomous states, and each region also has its own Constitution, valid for that region alone. As the Federal Government, so the regional/state governments have executive, legislative, and judicial powers within their own regions.

The victory of May 28, and the subsequent activities at both federal and regional level, to move the country out of backwardness and conflict and into peace and stability have led the country down the path of democracy and development. The war being waged against poverty is yielding substantial results. For the first time in its history, Ethiopia is in a dynamic process of vigorous transformation. It is one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world. Its GDP has been growing at an average rate of more than 11 per cent for the last eight years. The success of its development is demonstrated by its capacity to bring about rapid and continuous development which has benefited people at all levels. By sustaining this growth rate, Ethiopia's Gross National Income is expected to double over the next four years. **Ethiopia is one of the few countries expecting to achieve all the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.** The strategy of building a democratic system has played a significant role with good governance based on transparency, accountability, public participation, and the supremacy of the law, being the main reason for the country's quantum leap in development.

The democratic constitution is the foundation for all the policies and strategies. Foreign Direct Investment, technology transfer, technical assistance and foreign trade have all shown significant increases. Image building activities have become productive. Ethiopia represents Africa in negotiating in international meetings on global climate change. The right direction of the country arising from the change of direction on May 28 has benefited Ethiopia's development. It has also provided support for peace and security in the Horn of Africa with Ethiopia as a vanguard in combating terrorism and global threats. Its Growth and Transformation Plan is designed to keep the country moving up the development ladder and by focusing on mutual benefit, doing this together with others in the region.

The success story does not end there. It is also well reflected in foreign relations. Ethiopia enjoys good relations with almost all its neighbours as well as with the international community at large. It has expanded its bilateral, regional and international relations, and takes a prominent role in international peace-keeping operations. The guiding principles of its foreign policy are focused on the principles of mutual respect and benefit, good neighbourliness, mutual growth and international peace and stability. These are winning the cooperation and support of its development partners. The current foreign policy strategy gives priority to tackling the challenges of underdevelopment and its ills. This is a fundamental departure from previous regimes and it has demonstrated its importance for the survival and transformation of the country. The principles of Economic Diplomacy that Ethiopia now pursues complement the national endeavours to lift the country out of poverty and contribute to the strengthening of its democratic institutions.

As State Minister Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos told members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 28 offered “a new chapter [in which] Ethiopians are beginning to make the Ethiopian Renaissance a reality by demolishing the ignorance and poverty that resulted from a history of suppression and civil war.” Ethiopia can now be described as one of the fastest growing economies in the world as a result of the policies and strategies launched since then; and the double digit growth of the last eight years was a vivid illustration of this. Similarly, the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy has helped Ethiopia play a major role in bringing peace and security to the Horn of Africa.

May 28 in fact has been a turning point for democracy and development in Ethiopia. The victory brought about a fundamental transformation in the political economy of the country. It has created a situation in which the private entrepreneur can become the motor of development by creating an exceptional and conducive environment and drying up various forms of rent-seeking. **It allows the government to selectively and effectively interfere when market gaps occur and lets it play a leadership role in coordination and improving the capacity of development forces.** Democracy and development require a democratic constitution. May 28 laid the foundations for democracy, peace and good governance and has allowed Ethiopians to hold their heads high and once again take pride in their identities.

Symposium on religious tolerance

A day-long symposium dedicated to discussion of contemporary challenges to religious tolerance was held here on Monday [28th May] at the newly inaugurated Africa Union Conference Hall. The symposium was organized by the joint effort of the Ministry of Federal Affairs, the African Union, the Council of Ethiopian Religious Institutions, Nejashi Ethio-Turkish International School and Turkish Airlines. Dr Shiferaw Teklemariam, Minister of Federal Affairs and Professor Andreas Eshete, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister as well as academics, representatives of religious institutions and other stakeholders attended.

Four academic papers were presented followed by a panel discussion on various issues raised by the research papers. Reflecting the Turkish initiative for the symposium, a main focus of the papers and the discussions was on sharing the Turkish experiences in nurturing religious tolerance in a pluralistic society. Dr Abdullah Antepelli, Professor of Islamic Studies at Duke University in America, in a paper entitled “Co-existence and Harmony in a pluralistic World: the Gulen Movement as a world model”, discussed the activities and achievements of the Gulen Movement in Turkey and around the globe. The Gulen Movement, named after Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish scholar acclaimed for his new approach to the role of education, science, economics, and social justice in fostering religious tolerance, is actively engaged in encouraging dialogue on cross-cutting issues of religious tolerance among the various denominations attending Turkish International Schools. Taking its cue from his philosophy that puts poverty, ignorance and lack of unity as the three major foes of religious tolerance, the Gulen movement strives to encourage unity through dialogue and discussion.

Professor Thomas Mikel of Georgetown University, in his paper, also discussed the practical achievements of Turkish International Schools in teaching Gulen's philosophy. Teaching and encouraging practices of respect, rapprochement and dialogue with peers of other religious denominations, Turkish schools around the world have achieved commendable results as can be seen in their increasing appeal in various countries including Ethiopia. As a panacea to challenges of extremism in Ethiopia, Professor Thomas recommended Gulen's philosophy. Ignorance in particular he noted as one of the factors that endanger tolerance.

Dr Shiferaw Teklemariam, Minister of Federal Affairs, was also one of the panellists who presented a paper: "New Religious Chapter in Ethiopia: The New FDRE constitution and practice". This discussed the history of religious tolerance in Ethiopia and emerging challenges to its age-old tradition of toleration. Dr Shiferaw discussed religious tolerance among Ethiopian Christian and Muslim communities and explained in detail the unique tradition of building churches and mosques in unison, and in close proximity with the harmonious interaction of followers of both religions in local social institutions providing symbolic practices from which the world could learn a lot. He underlined the point: "No world history can beat the long co-existence and mutual understanding of Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia. At a simplified level, I can say Muslims and Christians coexisted and mutually understood each other". He did however note that this tradition which had lasted for over 1,400 years was now facing challenges from the advance of extremist teachings.

Dr Shiferaw said he largely concurred with Gulen's philosophy. Ignorance, poverty and the absence of unity were factors that bred extremism in Ethiopia as elsewhere in other parts of the world. In addition to these factors, the Ethiopian experience has shown that agents bent on disrupting this tradition for political ends are by far the most important element in causing harm. In Ethiopia, in the past 21 years and following the enactment of the constitution, freedom of religion is provided with a constitutional guarantee. Since then, citizens are free to follow, practice and proselytize the religion of their choice. In fact, with the rich culture of tolerance and constitutionally protected freedom of religion, there was no situation on the ground that called for dissent and extremism was virtually non-existent. In other words, the rise of extremism in Ethiopia cannot be linked to any restrictions on religious freedom. However, some have made religion a cloak for unconstitutional political ends. These groups "mislead followers by non-stop fabrications without any respect to other religious institutions, they use material rewards and use all forms of intimidation including social pressure" to erode the traditions of religious tolerance, cemented as they have been by a history of friendly social and religious interaction between traditional Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia for over a thousand years.

Pastor Degu Zerihun of the Council of Ethiopian Religious Institutions also presented a paper on the ethos of religious tolerance in Ethiopia, citing anecdotes from the rich history of Muslims and Christians in Ethiopia. Professor Andreas Eshete read a message to participants from Prime Minister Meles who thanked the Government of Turkey for its activities in the area of religious tolerance.

The First Global African Diaspora Summit

The first Global African Diaspora Summit was held in Johannesburg last week on 25th May under the theme “Africa and her Diaspora: A Shared Past, Present and Future”. The Summit was attended by the King of Swaziland, the President of Benin and Current Chairperson of the African Union, the Presidents of Equatorial Guinea, South Africa, South Sudan, Somalia, Sao Tome and Principe, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic and Zimbabwe, the Vice-Presidents of Cuba and Nigeria, the Prime Minister of Guyana and the former Presidents of South Africa, Nigeria, Namibia and Suriname as well as prominent Diaspora personalities. Other countries were represented at Ministerial and Ambassadorial levels, and the Ethiopian delegation was led by Ambassador Kongit Sinegiorgis, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the African Union and UNECA. The Summit was preceded by a preparatory Ministerial Meeting, which deliberated on a draft outcome document for the Summit to include a Summit Declaration, and a Programme of Action and Implementation Strategy.

The Declaration recalled "the Protocol on Amendments to the Constitutive Act of the African Union adopted by the 1st extraordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2003, and in particular Article 3 (q) which invites the African Diaspora to participate as an important component in the building of the African Union". In this regard, the Declaration recognized "the need to build sustainable partnerships between the African continent and the African Diaspora through sustainable dialogue and effective collaboration with governments and peoples of different regions of the world in which the Diaspora population is located". The Declaration therefore commended "the efforts undertaken thus far to support Africa and the African Diaspora process including organizational efforts, measures and strategies pursued by the African Union". It also underscored "the need to build on the efforts and outcomes" of the series of meetings which has taken place in relation to the African Diaspora "as the basis for establishing a solid foundation for the rejuvenation of the global African family as an instrument of wider renaissance".

The Programme of Action outlines the various areas of cooperation identified in political, economic and social fields to strengthen the links between Africa and its Diaspora. Among other things, it calls for the establishment of an African Diaspora Investment Fund to address development challenges confronting Africans in the continent and the Diaspora, and for a Diaspora Advisory Board in order to utilize African and Diaspora expertise on economic development issues as well as a comprehensive and all-inclusive database that will match the expertise of African professionals in Africa and its Diaspora to Africa's development needs. The programme of action also encourages and supports the development of an African Union Diaspora Volunteer Programme as a framework for associating the Diaspora directly with the development of the continent.

The Implementation Strategy envisages the establishment of an AU-Diaspora Foundation Trust to support the AU-Diaspora initiative. A number of other multi-stakeholder working groups will be established to follow-up the implementation of the Programme of Action. The Diaspora Advisory Board is expected to address overarching issues of concern to Africa and its Diaspora. After deliberating on the outcome document and making the necessary amendments, Ministers recommended it to the

Summit for adoption. After receiving the recommendations, the Summit adopted the revised version of the Declaration, the Programme of Action and the Implementation Strategy. Implementation of the outcome document will certainly go a long way to strengthen relations between Africa and its Diaspora.

The First Global African Diaspora Summit coincided with the celebration of Africa Day, marking the 49th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of African Unity. The Summit paid special tribute to the generation of pan-African leaders and founding fathers of the OAU for their vision to unite Africa and enable it to take its rightful place in global affairs.

Ethiopia, of course, has a sizeable Diaspora population residing in North America, in Europe and in the Middle East. The Ethiopian government clearly recognizes the potential role of the Ethiopia Diaspora in its efforts to ensure peace, development, democracy and good governance in the country. It has therefore been undertaking a series of measures to create a conducive environment for them to actively participate in the development of their country. Indeed, the government's draft Diaspora policy is designed to encourage Ethiopians and foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin living abroad to establish strong linkages with their country and become part and parcel of Ethiopia's development efforts. The policy seeks to ensure the rights and privileges of the Ethiopian Diaspora as well as harness the knowledge, experience, skills and financial resources of its members to spur economic growth. In particular, the government is trying to mobilize the Diaspora in implementation of the country's Growth and Transformation Plan which, among other aims, is attempting to double Ethiopia's gross domestic product within five years.

News and Views

Sudan and South Sudan continue talking

Sudan and South Sudan have continued their resumed negotiations on post-secession issues under the mediation of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) this week. The talks restarted on Tuesday [29th May] in Addis Ababa. The main objective of the meeting is to implement the AU's Peace and Security Council Roadmap and the UN Security Council Resolution 2046. The two parties have been given a three-month deadline by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union to conclude negotiations over citizenship, oil exports, demarcation of borders and the status of the Abyei region. The negotiators have now shared views on what they expect from each other in order to settle security and border issues and have presented various proposals on cessation of support to rebels, disputed regions and cross-border hostilities. They have also agreed to form a mini-committee comprising three representatives from each side as well as two representatives from the African Union High Level Implementation Panel, the facilitator of the talks. This is expected to pave the way to holding a meeting of the Joint Political-Security Committee headed by the Ministers of Defence and Chiefs of Security from both sides. At the moment it appears that the two sides are competing to demonstrate their commitment to the AU roadmap and the UN Security Council Resolution.

Uganda's President visits Eritrea

President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda arrived in Asmara for a three-day official visit on Tuesday this week [29th May], following an invitation from President Isaias. His visit follows the surprise visit of President Isaias to Kampala last year. The two Presidents have exchanged views on the possibility of enhancing bilateral relations, on issues of regional peace, security and integration in East Africa, and on international issues of mutual interest to both countries. On Somalia, Eritrea's Minister of Information, Ali Abdu, said the two leaders had agreed to work together to bring about peace and security, development, liberty and unity. They also made clear their support for Somalia's sovereignty. Five months ago, of course, the United Nations Security Council imposed further sanctions on Eritrea following Eritrea's persistent support of Al-Shabaab, the Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group which has been destabilizing Somalia and trying to overthrow the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. The two presidents also expressed their concern over the situation in South Sudan and Sudan, calling on South Sudan and Sudan leaders to resolve their differences peacefully and by themselves. On the continental level, they agreed to play a major role "to liberate and rescue" the African Union and regional organizations including IGAD from chaos, to encourage sustainable development and prosperity to flourish in the region and on the continent. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Ali Abdu and Uganda's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Musam Kiyingi, to boost ties and cooperation on food, trade, peace and security, civil aviation, communications, education and health and in socio-economic areas. They also agreed to establish a Joint Ministerial Commission to implement and evaluate their agreements and the relationship of Eritrea and Uganda.

International Peacekeepers Day

The African Union and the United Nations jointly marked International Peacekeepers Day, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa this week. The ceremony, under the theme: “Peacekeeping as a Global Partnership”, was attended by members of UN agencies and International Organizations, the Regional Economic Communities and International NGOs. A message from UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon emphasized how grateful the UN was for contributions of troops and police, as well as for the financial and material resources that make peacekeeping possible. The Secretary-General honoured the memory of over 2,900 peacekeepers that have fallen in the line of duty, and thanked all the countries that provide political support and leadership to peacekeeping activities. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission Dr Jean Ping also paid tribute to the women and men who have displayed courage and commitment to ensure that peace prevails. Earlier, this week on 29th May in New York, the UN commemorated the 112 peacekeepers, including military, police and civilians who lost their lives last year while serving with the United Nations. All posthumously received the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal at a ceremony at the UN Headquarters. Among those honoured were eight from Ethiopia: Lance Corporal Abraham Bushira Asele, Private Lechisa Bedada Desalasa, Sergeant Biniam Haile Kassa, Private Abebe Wendmu Kebena and Corporal Tesfaye Belata Negasa, who lost their lives while serving with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei; and Lieutenant Gabremeskel Asmelash Brhana, Captain Hagos Misgina Gebray and Corporal Gedi Abdu Mehamed, who were killed serving with the United Nations - African Union Mission in Darfur. The International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers was established by the General Assembly in 2002 to pay tribute to all men and women serving in United Nations peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage, and to honour the memory of those who have lost their lives in the cause of peace.

Deputy Premier Hailemariam calls on scholars to participate in development

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam, speaking at the launch of the **Centre for Developmental Studies** this week, said the Centre could play a key role in mobilizing and exploiting the potential of the country’s intellectual elites. The Centre for Developmental Studies is a think-tank dedicated to improving overall aspects of the country’s development. The Deputy Prime Minister noted that the government offered all necessary support to such initiatives, adding that the participation of intellectuals to help alleviate the country’s socio-economic problems and backwardness was important and necessary. The chairperson of the new Centre, former vice-president of Addis Ababa University, Mohammad Habib, underlined the need to exploit and utilize the potential of Ethiopian intellectuals for the country’s transformation and bring them into a system for the betterment of the country. The Centre will work in nine thematic areas: federalism and democracy, development and justice, the rule of law and justice system, the media and press, education and training, financial markets, resource development, the contribution of the private sector and building up the country’s national image and its pride.

South Sudan detains suspects in Gambella Regional State killings

The Gambella Regional State authorities have announced that fifteen people have been detained in Jonglei Region of South Sudan on suspicion of involvement in violent attacks in Gambella region earlier this year. One attack was on a bus en route to Gambella Technical College in March when 20 students lost their lives. The other was an attack on the Saudi Star farm in April when four Ethiopians and a Pakistani investor were killed. The attacks, according to the region's Vice-President, Gat Luwak were committed by members of a group calling itself the "Gambella Nilotic Union". According to Vice-President Luwak, the arrests came after a coordinated manhunt by federal and regional security forces, and South Sudan's security forces played a major role in the hunt for the suspects. He noted that this was possible because of the agreement between the Gambella Regional State and South Sudan to cooperate on control of cross-border criminal activity.

Below average rain in Somalia, but famine unlikely

The UN's Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit (FSNAU) in Somalia has said that Somalia's most recent main rainy season is going to be below average. The FSNAU said Somalia wasn't likely to have a "very great, promising harvest in the coming season because of rainfall performance". The long rains, which began in April, started a couple of weeks late in some parts of the country and rainfall distribution has been erratic, hampering crop growth. Equally, there has been no total failure as occurred last year, so FSNAU does not believe the country will slip back into famine. The previous season's harvest in January was good and food stocks were still available. Cereal prices are between 40 and 70 per cent lower nationwide than at the time of the peak of the famine last year. In the south, hardest hit last year, prices have fallen by 200 per cent. Livestock were healthy and fetching good prices. At the same time more humanitarian organizations are now able to access larger parts of the country as Al-Shabaab is being forced out of various areas. The famine in 2011 followed several consecutive rain failures, widespread conflict and Al-Shabaab's bans on the activities of international agencies. With a good harvest and increased humanitarian assistance the number of Somalis in urgent need of aid has fallen from four million to 2.5 million today, and the numbers of children under five suffering 'severe acute malnutrition', who need therapeutic feeding, have halved but still number 98,000. FSNAU warns, however, that these improvements could easily be reversed if drought conditions return or if conflict worsens.