

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs



# A Week in the Horn



## Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros holds discussions with Finland's Foreign Minister

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom held discussions with a high level delegation from Finland led by Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja and the Minister of International Development, Heidi Hautala, in his office this week. The delegation was in Somalia before coming to Addis Ababa and went on to South Sudan. Dr. Tedros welcomed the delegation, noting the growing interest of Finland in peace and security matters in the region as an important opportunity to help efforts to consolidate stability within the sub region which he described as “enjoying a relative peace and stability in its long history of war and conflict.”

Mr. Tuomioja expressed his appreciation of the improvements in the political and security situation in Somalia, noting that “there is a sense of optimism in the air”, thanking Ethiopia for its contribution in stabilizing the country. Dr. Tedros agreed that there was “now a window of opportunity for a positive change in Somalia” and stressed the importance of properly utilizing this opportunity to consolidate gains made so far. Ethiopia will continue supporting Somalia’s government to consolidate peace and stability, he said. Its commitment to Somalia’s peace was anchored in Ethiopia’s foreign policy which sees the peace and stability of the entire region as fundamental to development in Ethiopia. He said “we believe that we can only grow together and that can only happen when there is peace in our country and our neighbors” and reiterated that Ethiopia's commitment to Somalia’s peace emanates from its own commitment to peace.

On the current status of the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan Dr. Tedros highlighted the signing of the security arrangement matrix as a major breakthrough following the nearly three months delay in implementation of the Addis Ababa agreements of September last year. He explained to the Minister that Prime Minister Hailemariam's shuttle diplomacy had been instrumental in bringing the two sides back to the negotiating table and to the signing of the matrix. This, he said, had been particularly important as the signing of the matrix and restarting the oil flow are the keys to resolving the security issues and boosting the confidence of the two sides to encourage them to deal with such issues as the border, the dispute over the Mile 14 and the final status of Abyei. Dr. Tedros assured Finland's Foreign Minister that Ethiopia would continue to encourage the two sides to talk on all matters, and expressed high hopes that they would be able to settle all their differences. He said that although there had been some hiccups in the process the positive gains so far were remarkable. The two ministers agreed that the involvement of spoilers on each side were detrimental to the peace efforts. They said both countries should address this.

On Eritrea, Dr. Tedros briefed Mr. Tuomioja on the problems posed by the belligerent and inherently brutal regime in Asmara both to the people of Eritrea and to the region. He described the current situation of Eritrea as dismal when thousands of youngsters feel forced to cross heavily mined border areas to flee the country. He said the growing social and political discontent rendered the regime precarious and there were signs of cracks between the military and the civil administration. It was a troublesome situation for the region.



On IGAD, Dr. Tedros emphasized that Ethiopia will continue to play its part in its economic integration as this agreed well with its own policies. The aim was to realize economic integration as a short term goal and political integration in the long term. He explained Ethiopia's pivotal role in realizing the economic ties in the region pointing out it was working to connect the Horn through infrastructure, through road, railway and power transmission links. Establishing strong economic bonds within the sub-region is a major deterrent to violent conflict and instability.

The two sides exchanged views on ways to strengthen EU-AU relations, noting the importance of multilateralism to further strengthen relations between the two organizations. Dr. Tedros said Ethiopia, as current Chair of the African Union and IGAD, felt that resolving the crises in Mali, CAR, DRC, and Guinea Bissau must be high on the agenda.

The two sides also discussed human rights and democratization. Foreign Minister Tuomioja said Ethiopia's joining of the UN Human Rights Council was a welcome opportunity to strengthen its work in this area. Dr. Tedros agreed, noting that the recent finalization of the country's Human Rights Action Plan symbolized its commitment to human rights and democratization. He pointed out Ethiopia was committed to a broad based democratization process charted and owned by the people and Government of Ethiopia. It is "a function of multifaceted changes that includes a change in culture and operation of social and political institutions", adding that a robust democracy needed the participation of the grassroots, and this was thriving in Ethiopia.



## Continuing violations of the UN arms embargo on Somalia and Eritrea

The UN Monitoring Group's latest report continues to suggest that arms shipments are still arriving in Somalia in violation of the UN arms embargo and that sales of charcoal have also continued and even expanded despite the ban on charcoal exports. Certainly, there appears to be a continuous flow of components of Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) into Somalia and subsequent transportation of these components on to other parts of East Africa. At the same time there is evidence of the appearance of a new weapons systems in the fighting in southern Somalia. These are 'homemade' surface-to-surface rockets, similar to those used by the insurgent forces in the conflict in Syria. It's not yet clear if these have been assembled abroad and then imported into Somalia or whether they have been put together inside Somalia. Either way, they appear to constitute an increase in the capacity of the extremist elements, and the latest report described it as a significant development.

Investigations continue into where these and other arms originate and the ways in which they arrive in Somalia. This means enquiries have to be made into countries of manufacture, identifying intermediary brokers and agents, and end-user-recipients for the arms and ammunition that have been captured and are now stored in AMISOM containers in Mogadishu. One recent incident included the arrival of a Greek shipping company vessel apparently carrying a military cargo which reportedly off-loaded a consignment of arms and ammunition at Las Qoray. At the moment neither the origin of the cargo nor its intended recipient are clear. Las Qoray is in Somaliland but it not under the control of the Somaliland government and possible recipients for these arms include Al-Shabaab allied groups in the nearby Galgala Mountains or elements of the Khatumo militia that have been fighting the Somaliland government, though most made peace last year. There were also two vessels intercepted by the Yemeni authorities which appeared to have been planning to violate the arms embargo. They were intercepted by Yemeni naval vessels and are currently detained in Yemeni ports.

The report says it appears the production and sale of charcoal around Kismayo has continued with minimal change since Al-Shabaab was driven out by Kenyan and Somali forces. Indeed, a new stockpile has been established in Kismayo, comparable in size to the original stockpile, and there has been no reduction in its size despite reports of continuous exports of charcoal in January and February. There has also been a noticeable increase in the number of trucks transporting charcoal from areas outside Kismayo relating to expansion of charcoal production. Some of this is coming from areas still controlled by Al-Shabaab such as Badade, south of Kismayo near the Kenyan border, where a forest is being leveled. Production is so large that up to 100 trucks a day have been bringing the charcoal into Kismayo. The report says that the Al-Shabaab tax, levied at their Buulo Xaaji checkpoint, is US\$250 for the smaller 5-ton trucks and \$US500 for the 12-ton trucks. It has also been claimed Al-Shabaab fighters have been using the trucks for transport to the environs of Kismayo. There are indications that charcoal is also being regularly exported from small ports like Buur Gaabo, Anole, Koday and Koyaama, south of Kismayo. Certainly there are charcoal stockpiles there.



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Some of these issues have been raised with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud who has made it clear he needs all available assistance from the international community to help prevent these activities. Both he and the UN agree that it is important to put an end to charcoal exports and indeed he has indicated it is a first priority. Any task force to deal with the situation will need both technical and political assistance to make progress. Any solution to the problem is also complicated by the current discussions ongoing on the future status of Jubaland. The President had earlier sent a fact-finding delegation to Kismayo but it had not been able to leave the airport because of the security situation at the time and had to return to Mogadishu without result. The intermediate administration of the city is under the Ras Kamboni militia with Kenyan forces of AMISOM also present.

The President has said he welcomed the partial lifting of the arms embargo as an important mechanism to help build up the strength of the Somali National Army. It would also prevent some arms companies were benefitting from the conflict in Somalia. He has responded to the concerns that officials, politicians or soldiers might be unable to resist requests for arms and ammunition, and that weapons might leak away in this way or even through direct sales, by saying he would institute strong and firm controls over all arms and ammunition. He has reiterated his firm intention to resolve any issues that might arise immediately.

AMISOM has, of course, been involved in helping to monitor the flow of arms and ammunition into Somalia, and now it is involved in discussions of the practicalities of the changes introduced by the recent decision of the UN Security Council (Resolution 2093 (2013)) to allow a partial lifting of the embargo. Further discussions will be held with UN officials. As operations by AMISOM, Somalia National Army and Ethiopian troops have continued to limit the freedom of Al-Shabaab activities, there have been indications that the organization plans to extend its activities outside Somalia. The Monitoring Group report notes that investigations are being carried out into Al-Shabaab's external funding networks, believed to include connections in Yemen. Other enquiries are being carried out into pirate leaders, negotiators, financiers and facilitators of Somali piracy even though its level has dropped sharply in recent months.

In Eritrea, there have been a spate of recent claims that most of the Eritrean air force has been grounded for months due to a lack of maintenance and of spare parts, as these have been difficult to obtain due to the arms embargo. Certainly, it seems most of the planes have not moved for months, and there have also been shortages of fuel. Now there have been reports that one Eritrean fighter may have made a recent flight; and it appears an Italian helicopter may have been operating in Eritrea in 2010-2011, possibly as part of a larger degree of Italian military cooperation with Eritrea.

The UN Monitoring Group report makes it clear it is continuing to investigate other aspects of possible violations of the UN arms embargo on Somalia and Eritrea, including overcharging of diaspora taxes by Eritrea, enforced collection of diaspora taxes from Eritreans and other areas of potential military assistance given to Eritrea or to Somali extremist elements.



## The International Crisis Group asks: “Is change in the air in Eritrea?”

Since January when there was what the Eritrean government likes to call a “brief incident”, involving the seizure of the Ministry of Information by a hundred or so soldiers, there has been widespread diplomatic and media speculation that the highly secretive regime in Asmara might be losing its grip. The International Crisis Group has produced a report claiming that change is in the air in Eritrea despite the country’s highly authoritarian and controlled government, and calling on concerned Western powers, neighbours and others urgently to pay more attention to what it calls “a small, isolated country that has remained unnecessarily mobilized on a war footing for far too long.” It wants proactive measures to help avert internal chaos that might cause wider regional troubles.

The ICG report, “Eritrea: Scenarios for Future Transition”, published last week looks at the Eritrean regime’s vulnerabilities, maps out six possible forms an eventual transition might take and identifies the main risks and opportunities the country now faces. The report notes that the state lacks any institutional mechanisms for a peaceful transfer of power or even a clearly anointed successor to the ageing President Isaias, and that as a result “instability is to be expected, with the army the likely arbiter of who will rule next.” The opposition, mainly in the diaspora, is divided and largely out of touch with internal constituencies and with the tens of thousands of young people who have been fleeing the country in large numbers for years.

While ICG’s says exactly what is happening within the regime is unclear, it points out that Isaias is aging and his health is deteriorating rapidly, reportedly “not helped” by heavy drinking. It suggests his authority is declining at a slow but steady pace, and the chain of command he built around himself is weakening. It believes some officers who helped build and consolidate the repressive system are losing confidence in the president, and he in turn now appears to distrust almost everybody, abruptly turning against former comrades, removing them from power, “freezing” others or promoting rivals into overlapping positions of authority. In a brief history of the state since independence, the report considers how the Eritrean dream disintegrated and how Isaias established his position and perpetuated it, emphasizing how he wanted to be seen “as the only figure capable of holding Eritrea together”. The posters created for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the liberation in 2011 were a good example of this – showing Isaias in the image of Jesus Christ, the shepherd of the people, leading elders of both the lowlands and highlands.

It describes Isaias as “the nucleus of the Eritrean state, adding that entrenched personal rule raises serious concerns about what will happen to the country, and by extension the region, should he be deposed or incapacitated.” The report notes he has maintained control by keeping the country on a perpetual war footing with overwhelming militarisation of an already authoritarian regime, “supported by the disastrous rhetoric that all problems have a military solution,” and the enormous corruption created in the Eritrean Defence Forces; by nullifying institutions and personalising all branches of the state; continuously fomenting rivalry; stifling all dissent and criticism; and constructing a system of patronage reliant solely on him.



The ICG report provides details of what it calls the “President’s annus horribilis”, that is 2012, listing some of the events demonstrating growing discontent as well as deepening political and social divisions in Eritrea: Isaias’s disappearance from public view for several weeks in April when the rumours of his illness and death made the lack of a succession plan very evident; Ethiopian army incursions in March and May 2012 which demonstrated the disastrous state of the Eritrean army; defections of the presidential plane pilots (and plane), of Ali Abdu, the information minister (a close ally of the president), and of the national football team, as well as the “several thousand – predominantly young – Eritreans [who flee] every month, preferring the danger and uncertainty of refugee camps and illegal migration routes to the hopeless stasis at home.”

The ICG maps out six possible scenarios for a post-Isaias Eritrea and looks at the main risks and opportunities the country and the region would face. It suggests several possible options: a refashioned Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice that tried to maintain the status quo, or a PFDJ, without Isaias, looking for change including peace with Ethiopia; the collapse of the state leading to civil war; a power struggle with external intervention or mediation; or less likely a peaceful transition to multiparty democracy; and regime change with Ethiopian intervention – This last one is the most implausible as Ethiopia has consistently ruled out the possibility of any such intervention.

It’s difficult to disagree with most of the analysis, but some of its recommendations and suggestions fail to take account of the past attitudes and behaviour of the Eritrean leadership. To reduce the risk of instability the ICG suggests a broad coalition of international actors should take immediate and decisive efforts to promote dialogue to avoid internal power struggles and mediation for a peaceful transition. Rather optimistically, and contrary to most of its own analysis and comments, it suggests this could lead to the opening of political space and normalisation, both domestically and internationally. Similarly it suggests letting Eritrea rejoin IGAD or possibly moderating UN sanctions “to incentivise” some improvement in Eritrean behaviour. This takes no account of the way Eritrea has responded in the past and its failure to moderate his activities significantly. It has only ever moderated its behaviour when threatened by increased pressure. It has never responded to anything other than force, perhaps not surprisingly given its own essential aggressive militarisation. Isaias indeed has never responded to ‘kindness’, or moderation; there is no reason to think he might do so now.

The ICG is concerned that in the absence of a controlled transition in Eritrea, further instability is likely, “with profound consequences for the entire Horn of Africa.” It emphasizes that Ethiopia has just achieved a successful leadership transition, but elsewhere in the region, it notes an embattled ruling National Congress Party in Sudan; recent electoral unrest in Djibouti; worrying ethnic divisions in South Sudan; a new government still relying on foreign troops for survival in Somalia; and Yemen undergoing an unstable transition. Instability in Eritrea could well spread well beyond its borders, entangling not just the Horn of Africa, but even the Red Sea coasts. A regime that could provide future stability in Eritrea would be of benefit to the entire region. It would indeed be welcomed by all in IGAD.





## Ethiopian Ambassadors and Foreign Ministry officials meet in Addis Ababa...

Ethiopian Ambassadors working in all Ethiopian missions abroad and the Directors General from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs began a five-day meeting in Addis Ababa on April 1st. Chaired by the Minister, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, and the three State Ministers, the meeting provided for an exchange of views and for directions on implementation of the Ministry's core activities. In his opening remarks, Dr. Tedros noted it would emphasize the Ministry's performance in: building a strong diplomatic 'army'; providing effective business and economic diplomacy; mobilizing and protecting the rights of the Diaspora including illegal migration; and responding to religious extremism, the current situation in the IGAD region and Ethiopia's contributions as well as considering the effectiveness of the deployment of foreign service staff based abroad, program budgeting, workloads and related topics. The program will also include the inauguration of the "Meles Foundation" on Saturday (April 6th), visits to technological centers contributing to technology transfer including the Metal and Engineering Technology Corporation (METEC) and the Bishoftu Assembly plant, as well as a session with the Prime Minister.

Presenting the Ministry's assessment of its status in building a strong diplomatic 'army', the topic of discussion for the first day, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane, noted the involvement in Government's plans to make Ethiopia a middle income country by 2025. The Ministry's efforts to build support for development included preparation of materials, establishment of a board and mechanisms to meet regularly, build capacity and manage any bottlenecks related to the Foreign Service. Encouraging activities were being undertaken in coordination with Governmental and private stakeholders, domestic and foreign business people, the Ethiopian Diaspora, the diplomatic community in the country, professional associations, media institutions and nongovernmental partners, and the wider public as part of the process. The State Minister stressed the need for full commitment and uniform conceptual clarity to maximize capacity and broaden contributions as well as strengthen mechanisms for anti rent-seeking measures in the Ministry.

Dr. Tedros emphasized the need to further strengthen the positive aspects of implementation and the need to work continuously to improve the Ministry's overall capacity. He also emphasized the need for appropriate attitudes towards the Ministry's target of building a structure that could successfully discharge its share of responsibility in the country's journey to ensure economic prosperity and building a democratic system of governance.



## ...discussions on the Ministry's business and economic diplomacy activities...

The second day of the meeting was devoted to the Ministry's business and economic diplomacy activities. State Minister Nega Tsegaye noted that business and economic diplomacy was the basis of the country's diplomatic practice. The establishment of the Ethiopian Business Consortium Forum following the implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan in 2011 had the aim of coordinating different Government stakeholders, managing any possible bottlenecks, and ensuring the widest possible benefits from the core aims. The Ministry itself had implemented Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), a Balanced Score Card (BSC) and other relevant management tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry's diplomatic engagement; ensure a speedy service provision and promotion of the country's business opportunities; and establish a system for speedy and effective information exchange between the Ministry, its missions abroad and other stakeholders; and set a regular planning for better performance. These measures had helped the country register continuous growth in trade revenues, in production of import substitutes, in FDI inflows and other related benefits. A regular monthly ministerial meeting chaired by the Prime Minister also helped to manage investors' concerns over various subjects, including the availability of foreign currency.

The State Minister said the GTP's ambitious targets necessitated an even more coordinated and aggressive approach up to 2015 and after. The Business Consortium Forum should be used more effectively to create more effective coordination among Government stakeholders. It was important to improve follow up and support mechanisms during pre- and post - investment phases and trade partnerships. The new Investment proclamation/2005 (EC) was giving the Investment Agency the basis to provide encouraging more investment, trade and tourism. This was being accompanied by broadening deployment of expertise in relevant Government institutions and strengthening coordination with regional bodies to address investment challenges.

Briefing the meeting, the State Minister for Industry underlined the need to use the Business Consortium Forum and the Export Committee exhaustively to provide the fullest possible benefits of Ethiopia's business and economic relations. He said his Ministry was ready to organize forums to involve all stakeholders to bring about more coordination of efforts. He stressed more organized establishment of Industrial Zones would help to address problems related to land allocation, infrastructure and follow-up and support.

The Head of the Ethiopian Investment Agency also provided details of the revised Investment Proclamation aiming to provide effective one-stop-shop service and simplified working procedures for investment. The Proclamation gives the Agency the responsibility of pre- and post- investment services including information delivery, trade registration and licensing, contractual agreements, trade and residence permits, duty free permits, and other elements. It identified additional areas for foreign investment, and allows for more incentives for investments outside of Addis Ababa. Mechanisms to address issues related to land, loans, foreign currency, infrastructure, electricity and other questions have been addressed following the enactment of the Proclamation. The Agency itself is currently undergoing extensive structural reform to provide for effective implementation of the priorities identified.



## ...and on enhancing Diaspora participation.

Discussions have also covered the themes of enhancing capacity and commitment to ensure the widest possible participation of the Ethiopian Diaspora in development and the protection of their rights. The provisions of the recently ratified Diaspora Policy and its effective implementation required proper information and effective and sustainable relationships with diaspora associations and their representatives. The discussion underlined the importance of identifying diaspora needs, to provide support and protection of their rights, the ability to address problems and provide people with quick and effective services at Ethiopian missions abroad as well as in Addis Ababa as well as ways to strengthen the effectiveness of the Diaspora Sub-Committee, established under the framework of the National Renaissance Council and chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister emphasized the need to involve the diaspora in technology transfer and technical assistance, assist promotion of business opportunities, incentives and guarantees and encourage the take up of diaspora bonds for investment projects; interest on diaspora bonds is to be paid every six months into diaspora foreign currency accounts. He stressed the need to encourage diaspora participation in development and the democratization process, and to acknowledge and reward their contributions.

Diaspora issues are one of the permanent agenda items discussed at the regular board meetings in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Minister stressed that a strong and sustainable relationship was the key to address Diaspora problems as well as enhancing their contributions to Ethiopia's development and democratization process. He said Heads of Missions abroad should prepare objective assessments on the situation of the diaspora and its respective needs in their countries and produce yearly plans together with representatives of Diaspora communities starting from the coming budget year 2013/2014. The meeting was briefed by relevant officials from the Commercial Bank and other institutions.

The Minister of Federal Affairs briefed the meeting on the issue of religious extremism and terrorism, and the politically motivated distortions and campaigns orchestrated by extremist elements. These included fabricated claims that the Government had “sponsored the import and expansion of an alien sect called Al Habash”, that it “interferes and controls the management of a Muslim community school”, that it prevented the recent election of the Majlis leaders of the Council of Islamic Affairs from being held in Mosques”, and that it ‘detains legitimate representatives of the Muslim Community’. All were untrue. The Minister underlined the need to explain to the diaspora and the international community the constitutional principle of secularism and the government's policies of non-interference in religious matters, and what it has done to ensure religious freedom and equality as well as the rule of law and order. Dr. Tedros also emphasized the importance of clarifying misunderstandings and, if necessary, facilitating visits so diaspora representatives and others could see things for themselves. The meeting also received a briefing on the new ministerial website and social media applications.

Dr. Tedros on his part concluded the session underlining the importance of clarifying any possible misunderstandings in these areas for the Diaspora constituencies and for the international community. Visits could be facilitated for Diaspora representatives and others to see the situation for themselves.



Thursday's discussions covered issues related to a the Program Budgeting scheme recently introduced and implemented by the Government in order to create effective and transparent annual budgets based on properly planned activities and tasks. Friday's discussion concentrated on the current situation in the sub-region including Ethiopian-Eritrean relations, with briefings from the General Director of the Sana'a Forum, General Mesfin Amare, and the Deputy Head of the National Intelligence and Security Services, Ato Esayas Woldegiorgis, as well as issues related to immigration and on the plans to improve service provision in the area. The meeting ends today (April 5th), though participants would also be attending a session on Program Budgeting on Monday (April 8th).



## Ethiopia Ambassadors, Ministry officials visit the Renaissance Dam

It has been two years now since the foundation stone of the of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) was laid by the late Prime Minister Meles, and the second anniversary of the launch has been commemorated in colorful celebrations both at the project site and in Addis Ababa. As part of the celebrations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a field visit for the country's Ambassadors and other officials of the Ministry on Saturday (April 30th) to the construction site in Guba woreda of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State. The visit was intended to keep ministry officials abreast with the latest details of the project's progress and give them the opportunity to witness the round-the-clock activity of the more than 4000 employees employed at the site despite the challenges of arid climate in the area.

On arrival the ministry officials were received by Engineer Simegnaw Bekele, the project manager who briefed the visitors on the general overview of the project and the work so far accomplished, noting that 18% of the project has been completed and the work is progressing in accordance with the schedule. GERD, he said, is being built in two mountainous valleys and will have a width of "1780 meters and 145 meter height". The excavation work for the right side of the dam is complete and the concrete filling of the floor of the Dam had started. Engineer Simegnaw said "the dam will be filled with 10.5 million cubic meters of roller compacted concrete. The project has its own plant to produce this material.

Responding to questions about the proximity of the dam to the Sudanese border, Engineer Simegnaw explained the reasons for the current site. The site was selected for three reasons. The two reasons related to the firm rocky foundation of the area which will be impermeable and allow a major cache of water to be held by the dam. Thirdly, as a height difference is necessary for the generation of power, the geography of the site made it the best option for hydropower.

The other major construction going at the site is the saddle dam. This is being constructed at the back of the mountain behind the main dam, and together with the main dam will contain a total of 74 million cubic meters of water. According to Engineer Simegnaw, when the dam is filled it will cover 274 square kilometers, and have immense potential as a tourist site and for fisheries.

Explaining the facilities installed at the site Engineer Simegnaw said the crusher factory has a capacity of producing 2000 tonnes of different sized gravel per day. Different conveyor belts have been set up. There is also the factory that produces the roller compacted concrete. The dam when complete will have 10 power generation units on the right side and 6 on the left bank of the wall. Concrete filling works have started and the water will be temporarily diverted so as to be able to work on the water course pipes. Engineer Simegnaw stressed however that there would be no reduction of water to downstream countries during the construction of the dam.

Another dimension to the project is that it will for the first time allow the country to have a 500kilo voltage level, making it competitive with developed countries.



The work is being undertaken jointly by the French company METEC and the Italian company, Salini. Engineer Simegnew said his staff and local companies were gaining a lot in terms of technology transfer.

The ambassadors and officials were visibly impressed by the project and the progress it had made. As a flagship project for the country's renaissance and development it was a symbol of the country's multifaceted struggle in the battle against poverty. They were excited by the performance of the project and by the morale of the workers. It was, they agreed, indeed a grand project and had a positive impact in narrowing differences and building a national consensus for development and progress.



## Ethiopia and Netherlands sign an MOU on formalizing dialogue

Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Bob Hiensch, Ambassador-at-Large for the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on Thursday (April 4th) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on formalizing the existing tradition of dialogue between the two countries, and aimed at strengthening relations on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues. In their discussions, Ambassador Berhane underlined the long-standing and excellent relations existing between the two countries and expressed Ethiopia's desire to transform the relationship into a strategic partnership. Ethiopia is, he said, transforming itself in all aspects. He appreciated the encouraging FDI inflows from investors from the Netherlands in the brewery, flower and other sectors. He said the Government would also like to see more investment in priority areas including agro-industrial sectors.

The State Minister said he greatly appreciated the long-standing tradition of dialogue between the two countries and expressed his belief that the signed agreement would help transform and broaden overall relations to a higher level. Ethiopia wanted to see a more understanding and constructive engagement, as detailed in the MOU, including dialogue on issues of revisiting cooperation in line with the EU Platform. He welcomed the meaningful development support that the Netherlands government and people had provided in food security, reproductive health and institution building, and expressed his belief that there was scope to scale up the breadth and effectiveness of development cooperation. He appreciated the Netherlands encouragement of the private sector in Ethiopia; this of course is one of the Government's priorities. The State Minister also noted the shared vision and cooperation between the two countries on regional issues of common interest, not least in ensuring regional peace, stability and security, bilaterally and through the AU, and in international affairs.

The Ambassador-at-Large also stressed the excellent relations that exist between the two countries and expressed his government's readiness to promote and expand investment relations. Ambassador Hiensch explained his Government's new thinking about development cooperation and expressed readiness to continue to support the strengthening and expansion of public-private partnerships in Ethiopia. He also expressed his Government's readiness to continue supporting Ethiopia's effort to improve food security, reproductive health, education and building institutional capacity, adding that it was also ready to see ways to expand the scope of development cooperation. Mr. Hiensch also welcomed Ethiopia's positive role and leadership in ensuring regional peace and stability, adding that the signed memorandum would pave the way for stronger cooperation in all areas.

The four person Netherlands delegation also held detailed consultations with the Director General of the European Affairs Directorate General, Ambassador Grum Abay, on bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest. Ambassador Hiensch extended an invitation for Ambassador Berhane and Ambassador Grum to visit the Netherlands; both expressed readiness to consider the invitation. Last month the Netherlands Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation, Mrs. Liliane Ploumen, paid an official visit to Ethiopia during which she had talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam and Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros.



# News in Brief

## Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry disassociated itself from criticism of the Renaissance Dam

Saudi Arabia's Foreign Ministry Undersecretary for Bilateral Affairs, Ambassador Dr. Khalid bin Ibrahim Al Jandan has dismissed statements made criticizing the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). In a discussion with Ethiopian diplomats in Riyadh, Dr. Khalid said statements made against the GERD were not the policy of his government. Citing the historic relations of the two countries, going back to the First Hegira when Ethiopia gave refuge to the family of the Prophet and his followers, Dr. Khalid denied recent media reports suggesting statements made against Ethiopia and the GERD might affect relations between the two countries. The Saudi Arabian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on April 1st issued a statement on its website which strongly affirmed Saudi Arabia's close relationship with Ethiopia, emphasizing relations with Ethiopia were based on mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs and work to promote common interests in the service of both governments and their peoples. The Ministry said any statements suggesting the contrary did not reflect the official stance of the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Dr. Khalid also emphasized that the ministerial statement reflected the high regard Saudi Arabia gave to bilateral relations with Ethiopia which were, he noted, based on the principles of mutual cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. It might be recalled that Saudi Arabia's Deputy Defense Minister, Prince Bin Khalid, made a comment at a Water Ministers' summit in Cairo earlier this year that GERD might be detrimental to downstream countries, and suggesting Ethiopia's legitimate development efforts were political machinations intended to harm Sudan and Egypt. The Ethiopian government strongly rejected the comment and asked for an official explanation from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

## President Al-Bashir orders release of all political prisoners

On Monday (April 1st), President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir of Sudan ordered the release of all political prisoners. The President told the Sudanese Parliament: "I announce today my decision to release all political prisoners," adding, "I also renew a commitment to create a climate to hold a national dialogue with the other political forces." In a speech at the opening of parliament, President Al-Bashir said the government was committed to a "national dialogue" with all groups, adding that Sudan had now "guaranteed the atmosphere for freedoms and the safeguarding of the freedom of expression of individuals and groups". He said the government would continue to communicate with "all political and social powers without excluding anyone, including those who are armed, for a national dialogue which will bring a solution to all the issues." The President's comments came after Vice-President Ali Osman Taha last week invited opposition and rebel groups to help prepare a new constitution for the country. Last month, President Al-Bashir, who came to power in 1989, said he would step down at the next election in 2015, because Sudan needed "fresh blood".





# News in Brief

## A new Prime Minister appointed in Djibouti

Abdoulkader Kamil Mohamed was appointed as Prime Minister of Djibouti by President Ismail Omar Guelleh on Sunday (March 31st) and took office on Monday (April 1st). The sixty two year old had previously served as head of a state-owned water agency and as Minister of Agriculture, Pastoralism and Water Resources from 2005, before being appointed Minister of Defence in 2011. He replaces Dileita Mohamed Dileita who had served as Prime Minister since 2001. The appointment is part of a cabinet reshuffle following the February elections in which President Guelleh's Union for Presidential Majority (UPM) took a majority in the National Assembly. Of the 21 ministers in the previous cabinet a majority were reappointed, with only five not getting back into office.

## Somali Prime Minister Shirdon on a series of official visits around the region

Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon left Mogadishu on Wednesday (April 3rd) at the start of a series of official visits in the region. He is visiting Djibouti, Ethiopia, Uganda, Burundi and possibly Kenya at the head of a delegation which includes Defense Minister, Abdihakim Haji Mohamud Fiqi, and Internal Security Minister, Abdikarim Hussein Guled. The Prime Minister said that the new Somalia highly regarded the strong and healthy relationship it has had with its neighbours and the time had come to "thank and congratulate AMISOM and IGAD member states for their efforts to stabilize the county." It was because of their efforts that Somalia was back on track and is ready to play an important role in regional development. The Prime Minister said he wanted to discuss issues including regional security, trade, improving human rights, greater partnership and development. The Somali delegation was welcomed at Djibouti by Djibouti Prime Minister, Abdoulkader Kamil Mohamed. After meeting with President Ismail Omar Guelleh and holding talks with government officials, the delegation is expected to travel to Ethiopia on Friday.

## Turkey offers to host renewed Somalia and Somaliland talks

The Somaliland government has accepted an invitation from the Government of Turkey to host resumed talks between Somalia and Somaliland. The talks are now expected to resume in mid-April. Somaliland's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohamed Abdilahi Omar, announced this at a press conference on Monday (April 1st). He said "Both sides of Somaliland and Somalia have received the invitation and we confirm that we have officially approved" adding that "the two presidents will sit together and will discuss various issues concerning Somalia and Somaliland." Somalia's federal government has not yet confirmed its response to the initiative. The talks began in June last year but were then halted following the change in administration in Mogadishu and to allow the new leadership to settle in. The framework for the talks was originally agreed at a UK-hosted meeting in London in February last year and ratified at a meeting of the two Presidents in Dubai in June.



# News in Brief

## UK plans trade and investment meeting on Somalia

The United Kingdom's Minister for Africa Mark Simmonds, has announced plans for a trade and investment conference for Somalia during the security meeting which is to be held in London in May. Mr. Simmonds told a meeting of Somalis on Thursday that many diaspora organizations were already going back to invest in Somalia and the UK wanted to encourage that, and also "to demonstrate to non-Somali UK businesses the opportunities that exist across South Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland." Mr. Simmonds said he was inspired by the dedication, commitment and passion he saw among the Somali diaspora which had "a vital role to play in the reconstruction of Somalia as it begins to emerge from 20 years of conflict." Meanwhile, President Ahmed Mohamed Silanyo of Somaliland has reiterated that Somaliland will not attend the May 7th London conference. He was speaking to the annual meeting of his ruling party, Kulmiye in Hargeisa. The Somaliland authorities have reportedly objected to their proposed status at the conference which will be co-chaired by UK Prime Minister David Cameron and Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. Referring to talks with Somalia, President Silanyo said this was an ongoing process and his government was willing to sit face-to-face with the new Somalia leaders, adding that "with the presence of the international community, we would like to sit with Somalia government and talk about our intention to be two separate states."



# About

# Credits

*A Week in the Horn*, established in 2007, is a weekly online publication dedicated to regional developments in the Horn of Africa. Its aim is to promote good will and brotherly relations between states in the region by highlighting events and publicizing news stories. It features detailed commentary, analysis as well as intelligent discussion of weekly developments throughout the region.

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