

A Week in the Horn 8th February 2013

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Ethiopia: Registration for April's Local Elections completed

The registration of voters for the local elections due in April throughout the country was completed last weekend with nearly thirty million voters registered. According to the National Electoral Board the exact number was 29,905,518, an impressive percentage of the estimate of eligible voters of 34.5 million. In addition to the Woreda (district) and Kebele elections, voting will also be taking place for the Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa City administrations. The voting day for the woreda, kebele and the city administrations will be 14th April. President Girma Woldegiorgis, in his opening speech to the joint session of the House of People's Representatives and the House of Federation on 8th October last year, underlined that "Political parties are expected to move our democracy another step forward by competing in the elections while respecting all constitutional regulations." A significant number of opposition parties have already expressed their interest in participating in the election; it is to be hoped all will do so and engage seriously in this crucial democratic process.

These local elections follow the successful completion of a fully democratic transition of power following the death of former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The late Prime Minister contributed a great deal to the prevailing peace, economic growth and democratic development of the last two decades, and these elections will continue the process. President Girma noted in his October speech to Parliament that the country would continue to demonstrate "impressive improvement and progress in the speeding up of democratization and social development" with the government taking various measures to ensure the rights of citizens, to strengthen democracy and to bring about good governance. He underlined the importance of the different parties freely participating in national and regional elections every five years and in the local elections as well. **The President noted that the government would, as usual, do all it could "to provide financial and media assistance to all the parties involved in the elections."**

The voters understand the importance of these elections to provide local government for the Woreda and Kebele administrations. Ethiopians exercised electoral democracy by determining

the composition of local governments through the ballot box for the first time ever in June 1992. This is a crucial component of the democratic developmental state. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia underlines that direct participation of the people is the manifestation of their sovereignty. The Constitution under Article 8 (3) states that "The sovereignty of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia shall be expressed through their representatives elected in accordance with this Constitution and through their direct, democratic participation." Article 38 (1) says that "Every Ethiopian national has the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly and through freely chosen representatives". In Article 50 (4), it lays down that "State Government shall be established at State and other administrative levels that they find necessary. Adequate power shall be granted to the lowest units of government to enable the People to participate directly in the administration of such units."

In line with these constitutional principles, Ethiopia conducted local elections in 1996 and 2001, a year after the first and second national and regional elections of 1995 and 2000. The local election of 2006, however, had to be postponed. Following the post-election violence after the 2005 national and regional election of 2005, the government felt obliged to address the problem through nation-wide public consultations on administrative problems and launched national consensus-building discussions. It felt obliged to enhance the administration's capacity to organize a free, fair and peaceful electoral process. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front voluntarily committed itself to a long and meticulous round of consultation with opposition parties to achieve agreement on the necessary improvements to the electoral processes and institutions of the democratic process, including changes to the election law and re-organization of the National Electoral Board.

In addition, the government also felt it necessary to restore confidence in the electoral process by re-affirming the rule of law. Those responsible for the violence were arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced by the courts. The trials affirmed the equality of all before the law and the necessity to abide by the law. Subsequently, the government accepted the petition for pardons of those convicted in accordance with the supremacy of the Constitution.

After this crucial ground-laying, the next local elections were held in 2008. These had two additional elements. One was the parallel election for the Addis Ababa City Administration, previously held along with the National and Regional elections. The reason for this was because the opposition parties, which won an overwhelming victory in the election for the Addis Ababa Council in 2005, had refused to take up their seats. They had tried to use this as a bargaining element in opposition demands for the formation of a coalition government at the Federal level where the EPRDF had equally clearly won. Following this refusal, the government had to appoint a caretaker administration. The first opportunity to provide for a new election came in 2008 and the city elected its Council members alongside the local Woreda and Kebele elections.

Another important change in 2008 was the increase in the numbers elected for the Woreda and Kebele administrations. The numbers of seats in each Kebele Council was increased to around 300. The councils meet at least quarterly to discuss the performance of the Kebele and Woreda administrations as well as other issues concerning their electors. These representatives are also organized into a number of standing and ad-hoc committees which follow various aspects of local administration on a regular basis. They also help to encourage and organize public participation and organization through networking activities in the Kebele and in traditional social organizations like 'edir' and 'equb'.

The much better organized and stronger EPRDF won an overwhelming victory in the local elections of 2008 on the back of policies that had produced the country's steadily improving economic growth over several years. By contrast, several of the opposition parties collapsed into internecine struggles for leadership after 2005. They also continued to display a very visible lack

of interest in local elections as indeed they had done since 1992. This indeed is one obvious reason for the lack of success of opposition parties in the more recent national and regional elections. Opposition parties consistently appear to neglect local elections, apparently considering they offer insufficient scope for the sort of changes in the democratic developmental nature of the state that they would prefer. Their leaders also largely seemed to prefer the national stage, and only very few were prepared to make the lengthy preparations to build up popular support at local level necessary to build up an effective democratic political organization and campaign regularly at the local level. Local elections, of course, are more about service delivery rather than abstract rhetoric matter and are elections in which any lack of vision, disinterest in local issues, gaps in programmes, breakdown of discipline or organizational capacity are ruthlessly revealed.

Today, neither the public, nor the government, has any interest in such short-sighted calculations. The government is very aware that it is time to consolidate the participatory character of local government and entrench the democratic elements of the developmental state. The people have already learnt local participation provides the means to achieve their gains from development and strengthen their say in the democratic process and the country's governance. It is expected that once again voters will turn out in record numbers to exercise their constitutional rights by electing their representatives for nearly a thousand Woredas and some 30,000 Kebele administrations and for the City Administrations of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The government is, as usual, committed to creating a favourable environment for a peaceful and successful election.

Somalia's President Visits Europe

The new government of Somalia has been making itself known to an international audience these last two weeks with the visits of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, to various countries including the US, Belgium and the UK. He is now in Cairo for the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference. It was during his visit to Washington, that the US government announced its recognition of the Somali government and this can be expected to contribute to Somalia's efforts to consolidate recent gains, to help it build the different institutions necessary for lasting peace and improve the provision of goods and services. The government also hopes this round of visits to the US and Europe will ensure Somalia's tangible support from the international community to support the assistance from AMISOM and IGAD member countries in terms of securing peace and security.

The President's visit to Europe commenced with a visit to Brussels as we noticed last week when he met the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, the EU's 27 foreign ministers, and the European Parliament's development and foreign affairs committees. In speaking to the European MPs, the President highlighted that the greatest hurdle to Somalia had been the absence of the establishment of a legitimate, functioning government and society. He noted that to address the outstanding problems the country faces, the Somali government was now concentrating on three main priorities to ensure stability: **security, judicial capacity, and the public financing of state institutions**. The President also met with European Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, the European Union President, Herman Van Rompuy, and the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz. President Mahamud told European officials that Somalia was on a "path to transforming and taking its rightful place in the community of nations". It needed to move from being a country "in relief" to one in recovery. Somalia could not do this alone and his Government needed the support of the whole international community. He said it needed an engagement that looked like the Marshall Plan, the US-funded plan to rebuild Europe after World War II.

President Mohamud then went on to the UK where he met and held discussions with Prime Minister, David Cameron, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, William Hague, and the UK Development Secretary, Ms. Justine Greening. Talks covered a range of issues including the current situation in Somalia and the planned conference on Somalia to be held in London in May. It will be co-hosted by the British Prime Minister and by President Mohamud. During the visit, the UK promised an additional £3 million in aid to Somalia. This is earmarked as support for Somalia's new government and federal parliament; and also for the provision of food for up to 60,000 malnourished children and mothers. This is in addition to the £63 million in aid that the UK has already pledged to Somalia. President Hassan also got an assurance of the UK's commitment to help the Somali people create a secure and stable country after two decades of conflict. The UK also announced the launching of a joint programme with Norway to host Somali parliamentarians to receive advice and training from parliamentary and constitutional experts. The programme will help young Somali graduates participate in internships at the new House of the People's Representatives. It is intended to give valuable experience and training to a new generation of public servants and so help to establish peace and democracy in Somalia.

There is general agreement that as the situation in Somalia improves, it is important to consolidate nascent government institutions in Mogadishu and elsewhere, making the government legitimate in the eyes of its citizens and the international community. The creation of a functioning state remains crucial. Despite the improvement of the security situation, serious challenges remain and much further work is needed to consolidate liberated areas, clearing out the remnants of Al-Shabaab and discouraging any recruitment by extremist groups. One solution is to create an acceptable environment for the people of Somalia, especially for the younger generations, providing access to schools and creating job opportunities. The international community's help in this regard is an absolute necessity and promised assistance from international financial institutions and from countries like the UK and Norway is a good start. It is, however, critical that all assistance is rendered in a coordinated manner among the different stakeholders and that it is also in line with the priorities of the Government of Somalia.

On Tuesday [5th Feb], President Mohamud arrived in Cairo to take part in the Summit of the Organization of Islamic Conference. He is accompanied by a high-level delegation including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Fowzia Adan. It is the President's first visit to an Islamic summit, and Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi has called on Arab countries to contribute to the reconstruction of Somalia. Using his Twitter account, President Morsi said "with the end of the transitional period in Somalia and the election of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, we must support the efforts of reconstruction of this brotherly country." President Mohamud has met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to review their bilateral relations. President Ahmadinejad, who said Iran will support the process of progress in Somalia, noted that Somalia enjoys rich resources which should be used in order to make further development. President Mohamud is expected to hold a number of other bilateral meetings to request support for the new government in Somalia. He will also meet the Somali community in Cairo.

The United Arab Emirates' Foreign Trade Minister visits Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam held talks with the UAE's Minister of Foreign Trade Sheikha Libna Binti Khalid Al-Kassim at his office on Tuesday this week (5th February). During the discussions the Prime Minister expressed Ethiopia's commitment to providing full support to UAE investors in Ethiopia; Sheikha Libna Binti emphasized the UAE's interest in engaging in a variety of investments in Ethiopia including manufacturing, air transport and other areas.

The following day (6th February) the Prime Minister inaugurated the new plant for the UAE's pharmaceutical company, Julphar in the Gerji area of Addis Ababa. The inauguration ceremony

was also attended by UAE Foreign Trade Minister, Sheikha Libna Binti Khalid Al-Kassim, and Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom. The plant is co-owned by UAE's Julphar Pharmaceuticals and MedTech Ethiopia, an Ethiopian Company. The plant which cost 170 million birr, and will offer more than 500 jobs, expects to be selling its products to Ethiopian and exporting them to African markets within a short time. During the ceremony, Dr Tedros Adhanom was presented with an award by the Company for his efforts in assisting the company's establishment in Ethiopia.

Speaking about the contribution that the newly inaugurated plant might make, Prime Minister Hailemariam noted that the Growth and Transformation Plan clearly stated that the objectives of developing a pharmaceutical industry was to produce essential products to substitute for imported products and produce for export. "Ethiopia is an important market with a growing population that has tremendous need for easier access to quality medicine," he said. "The opening of this facility will enable us to be able to supply the local market and thereby help our objective of import substitution," he added.

The Prime Minister, who said "the facility we are inaugurating today will certainly go a long way in augmenting the overall expansion of investment in this country," also noted that it represented something the Government believed to be that kind of investment that others should emulate: "namely, a joint venture environment with local partners who are better used to the investment environment than newcomers usually are." He said it was his hope and expectation that Julphar would find in MedTech Ethiopia "a committed partner ready and able to go all the way in endeavours to achieve the highest ambitions."

The Prime Minister concluded by inviting investors from the UAE and the greater Middle East region to give serious thought to investing in Ethiopia more extensively and in more diverse areas. He said: "the potential for rewarding investment in Ethiopia is never in short supply and our investor-friendly environment is more than conducive to welcoming your investment," adding that the Government had put in place a number of incentive packages to attract Foreign Direct Investment in agricultural and manufacturing sectors. "You can rest assured that Ethiopia is as good an investment destination as you can possibly expect."

Confusing and contradictory: Eritrea's intervention at the AU

At the just ended 20th African Union Summit few things confused those present more than the intervention of Eritrea's Ambassador Girma Asmerom. It was a statement with manifest contradictions including his advice to the Somali government to be inclusive while making no effort to recognize it as a legitimate government. Ambassador Girma said "The Eritrean Government is strongly committed to Somalia's sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence; we expect all countries and organizations to show the same commitment." This 'commitment' has been most vividly demonstrated, of course, by Eritrea's continued support over several years for Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups. Equally nonsensical was his demand for the implementation of the Ethio-Eritrea Boundary Commission's Decision when the sole stumbling block to this remains the Eritrean regime's continued refusal to hold a dialogue on implementation of the Decisions, and Eritrea's continued activities intended to try to destabilize both Ethiopia and the region.

These efforts to destabilize, indeed, provide the most obvious contradiction to the almost desperate efforts to present Eritrea as a stable country with a genuine interest in the workings of the African Union and in the peace and stability of the region. The known facts about the belligerent actions of the regime are an open contradiction to the pretensions and diplomatic manoeuvrings of the ever busy diplomats of Eritrea. If there is anything that is consistent about Eritrea's foreign policy, it is its absurd attempt to project this young nation, which has

deliberately embroiled itself in conflicts with all its neighbours, as a victim of the international political order and of United States' and CIA manipulations.

This is, after all, a regime that has turned Eritrea into a pariah state where thousands are forced to languish in secret gulags and cross the borders in thousands, at the risk of their life in the face of a shoot to kill policy. Yet, it flaunts itself as the last bastion of independence in Africa, keeping at bay the "arm twisting of the west and its allies" not to mention misguided policy of "self-reliance" in this increasingly globalised world.

The current effort to present a false image of Eritrea is, of course, deliberately designed to try to attract sympathy from the international community in order to try and gain support for the lifting of the UN sanctions. Ambassador Girma's intervention exemplifies the mind-set of the regime in Asmara, reflecting the "siege mentality" of a government which consistently blames the CIA for everything. "To derail and frustrate, if possible also dilute the legally and conclusively resolved border issue and to prepare the ground for "crisis management," the U.S. Administration has resorted to futile efforts of bringing up unrelated issues to the matter." The diplomatic charade of presenting an Eritrea in peril is used to add to the regime's method of holding the genuine demands of the Eritrean people for justice, democracy and development hostage, by perpetuating a war psychology which can only be compared with Orwell's 1984, where the nation is kept in a state of eternal war in order to keep Big Brother in control.

The regime may have implemented a system of what one analyst called a near perfect control of all components of Eritrea's culture, media, education, judiciary, economy, foreign affairs and even religious organizations as well as the decimation of alternative poles of power, but the recent "small incident" of troops seizing the State Television station, and the demonstrations at Eritrean embassies across Europe and in the US clearly showed there are cracks in the government's self-righteous edifice.

In his intervention, Ambassador Girma went on to request that the AU urge Ethiopia "to withdraw from sovereign Eritrean territory including the town of Badme". In an attempt to evoke sympathy he tried to draw a parallel between what he called the "occupation of Eritrean territories" with "Israel's occupation of Palestine territories". Refusing to admit the fact that Ethiopia's repeated call for dialogue on the implementation of demarcation and normalization of relations have been repeatedly turned down by Asmara, he said he had been instructed by President Isaias to say that Eritrea would negotiate with Ethiopia in the afternoon if Ethiopia withdrew its troops in the morning. He underlined the unreality of this by immediately adding that "the problem has nothing to do with the issue of "political will" or "dialogue." Ethiopia has made it clear, time and again, that it has accepted the decision of the Boundary Commission on delimitation of the border, and it has repeatedly called for the two sides to discuss demarcation of the decision, a normal practice in territorial disputes. One recent example is the way Cameroon and Nigeria settled their dispute over Bakassi through dialogue on the decisions of the International Court of Justice on their border.

It is the Eritrean regime's unwillingness and its destabilizing activity through surrogates that have remained a hurdle to the settlement of the issue. Ambassador Girma's claim for the implementation of EEBC's decision flies firmly in the face of the overwhelming evidence of Eritrea's intransigence and belligerent behaviour. Eritrea's call for this is at best mere lip service to peace; at worst mere parody. It might be added in this context that the accusation that Ethiopia is occupying Eritrean territory is downright false.

Leaving aside Eritrea's crocodile tears for peace, these diplomatic manoeuvres are no more than a smoke screen. Eritrea's latest prevarication over dialogue can only be compared to a soap opera aimed at trying to persuade the UN Security Council to lift the sanctions imposed on Eritrea for its continued assistance to the al Qaeda-linked Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia. It has

repeatedly demonstrated that it has no interest in peace within the region. As Minister Dr Tedros noted Eritrea's aversion to peace with Ethiopia goes back to 1998 and the start of two years of war when Eritrea "invaded Ethiopia in May 1998, and this is the genesis of the crisis between the two," and as he noted the Eritrea Ethiopia Claims Commission confirmed that Eritrea was the aggressor in violation of Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter.

Equally contradictory is President Isaias' recent letter to the UN Secretary General calling for an independent investigation of human trafficking of Eritreans. He described this as something that has been going from 'bad to worse' and claims the country, in collaboration with the world body, will do everything it can to "stem and eliminate the perpetrators who commit such a hideous crime against its citizens." He therefore asks the UN to launch "an independent and transparent investigation of this abominable affair so as to bring to justice the culpable parties."

President Isaias claims that for ten years or so, Eritrea has been the target of malicious and concerted practices of human trafficking, adding, bizarrely, that this "despicable ploy was unleashed in tandem with the decision to block the implementation of the "final and binding" arbitration decision of the border dispute, and is part and parcel of the war declared against the country." In this letter he does not accuse anybody in particular only saying that "the architects of this scourge have further resorted to various schemes, under suitable labels to conceal and disguise the crime as well as their real identity." Elsewhere, however, he has claimed this is all the responsibility of the US government and especially the CIA.

Nowhere does he make any reference to the policies which lead thousands of desperate youngsters to try to flee across the border to avoid perpetual conscription or others to escape the continued militarisation of Eritrean society and an increasingly desperate economic situation. Unsurprisingly, he makes no mention of those whom Eritrean human rights organizations have named as responsible and accused in detail of involvement in this practice. According to the testimony of refugees who have survived the ordeal, one central element in the chain of those involved in the human trafficking of refugees out of Eritrea and into Europe and the Middle East, involves senior officers of the Eritrean army, whose commander-in-chief is President Isaias. Perhaps, it would be appropriate to start any investigation into human trafficking nearer to home.

DFID attacked for effective aid to Ethiopia

Last week in the London Review of Books, Ben Rawlence asked "where does DFID's money go?" In what is rather an unpleasant little piece he does appear to welcome the rise in DFID's budget and the fact that the place of foreign aid in British politics appears assured, but he precedes this with the statement that "there has been a raft of scandals involving overpaid consultants, private equity firms and a lack of transparency at DFID last year". He then asks where the money should go and rapidly dismisses most possible recipients. West African countries – too small; India, Nigeria and Kenya – too rich; Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique – small populations and seriously corrupt; the DRC - on turmoil; and Rwanda – aid suspended.

As for Ethiopia as a possible recipient, much to Rawlence's horror when the UK Government recently reviewed its aid spending, Ethiopia came out top of the possibilities. Indeed, spending on Ethiopia will rise from £240 million in 2010-11 to £390 million in 2014-15. Rawlence identifies the attraction of Ethiopia as twofold. It is the second most populous state in Sub-Saharan Africa and has, he says, 'the largest market' of poor inhabitants. He even admits, reluctantly, that the government appears to get things done and "has made progress towards some of the UN's Millennium Development Goals". Actually it has made serious progress in all the MGDs and is likely to be one of only two or three countries to achieve all of them by 2015. Indeed, it appears to be a very positive success story.

But for Mr. Rawlence the increase in aid suggests Ethiopia has become oversubscribed. He claims after the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front won the 'controversial' 2005 elections, the donors became worried about "dictatorial tendencies" so they created a 'Democratic Institutions Programme' to support the office of the ombudsman, a human rights commission and national elections board. It might be noted that all of these had been created earlier by this 'dictatorial regime' as he calls it. In 2010, very much the largest party and with several years of substantial economic growth (10% plus), the EPRDF on the basis of exception economic development over several years and faced by a divided and fractured opposition whom many electors blamed for not taking up their parliamentary and Addis Ababa Council seats in 2005, won another multi-party election.

Mr. Rawlence wasn't pleased. The election merely provided another example of authoritarian rule. Indeed, Human Rights Watch wrote a report alleging that government services, funded by DFID through the donor funded Protecting Basic Services programme, were being used as weapons to starve, intimidate or reward people into supporting the ruling party. Mr. Rawlence adds: "full disclosure: I wrote it".

Full disclosure is hardly the right phrase. The evidence in the 'report' did not produce reliable evidence of any systematic misuse of aid as he claimed. The report was strongly criticized by DFID, donors, embassies and NGOs working in the regions to which the claims refer. Nobody was prepared to back up the claims in the report. The report itself, typically, provided no details sufficient for the government or anyone else to investigate any specific allegations on the ground. As usual, the report and the claims it made were expected to be taken on trust. Given how often a situation seems to occur where all other bodies dispute the claims made, it has to be said this is becoming difficult.

Mr. Rawlence's only response to the criticisms is typical. He says DFID failed to investigate and claimed the problem didn't exist. Actually DFID did investigate, so did the UK embassy, so did other independent bodies. Nobody else could find the evidence for the claims – and that might be why they said there was no problem. Equally though, nobody denied, given the number of recipients, several million, that some individual cases of interference are likely to have occurred.

Mr. Rawlence goes on to refer to what he calls the "most audacious authoritarian move yet, the collectivization of 1.5 million people in model villages the better to provide them with the basic services PBS pays for." The use of the word 'collectivization' is presumably deliberate and intended to give a false and misleading impression. Mr. Rawlence knows very well that the policy of villagization bears no relationship to 'collectivization'. He claims, quoting a case in a UK court brought by one refugee in Kenya, there have been forced relocations, beatings, hunger and insecurity.

This time, Mr. Rawlence acknowledges that DFID has investigated the allegations though he dismisses these as unacceptable calling their investigation "a few staff twice to conduct brief surveys of the villagization programme". **In fact there have been two substantial surveys by donors, in February 2011 and again in June to August last year, as well as other checks on the progress of what has been identified by almost all those involved as a voluntary process.**

In June last year, for example, DFID, USAID, the UN and Irish Aid, carried out a substantial investigation into the villagization process in Gambella Regional State where the project is expected to involve up to 45,000 households. As of mid-2012, some 30,000 households had moved and the report concluded that the first year's operation seemed to have over-achieved targets, though the second year had under-achieved.

The mission's report noted clear improvements in conditions in the new villages since a previous visit in February 2011, water pumps had been installed and were working, homes had been

made safe from flooding, schools provided and road access improved, though it also felt more could still be done over health facilities at the new sites. The mission found no concern over food supplies, significantly perhaps some people continued to cultivate their original land and moved back and forth between new and old sites. The mission's report specifically noted, as did the February 2011 mission, that it found no evidence of forced relocation or systematic human rights abuses. Certainly, a number of people interviewed said they didn't want to move and there were some claims of unmet promises, but the mission found that communities that objected to moving had stayed.

It might also be added that both in February 2011 and in June 2012, the missions concluded that there was no indication of any previously settled land being used for commercial farming. All villages, with one exception, reported having continued access to their original land none of which had been affected. The June 2012 mission also found greatly increased knowledge of the mechanism for appeals and investigation of grievances, and that the communities visited had no problems raising issues of concern with officials.

In sum, the June 2012 mission, like that a year earlier, found nothing to substantiate those wilder flights of fancy of Mr. Rawlence which are based on claims by **Gambella political figures now in exile or members and supporters of Eritrean-based Ethiopian opposition groups**. Both missions certainly found that not everything worked as smoothly as it should, and there had been some hiccups. This is not surprising in a villagization programme involving the voluntary resettlement of 45,000 households over a three-year period and aiming to provide cost-effective service delivery to previously scattered populations, protection of vulnerable communities from natural disasters and cross-border attacks, the development of agriculture and the social transformation of previously marginalized communities. It is hardly surprising in light of the numbers involved that there have been some questions over details of the scale, speed and implementation capacity. But this is all a far cry from the sort of allegations peddled by Mr. Rawlence.

DFID doesn't need us to defend itself against these sorts of allegations, of course, but it is worth noting that DFID, which in Ethiopia works to meet the needs of the very poorest, and operates proven results-driven programmes that will bring healthcare, education and water to millions, has always made great efforts to prevent misuse of aid. It recently detailed its Anti-Corruption Strategy for Ethiopia which noted that the Independent Commission on Aid Impact which reviewed DFID's approach to tackling corruption, found it had a good awareness of the risks. The World Bank's report 'Diagnosing Corruption in Ethiopia' (2012) said there was low official tolerance for corruption and minimal policy level corruption. It also found petty corruption around service delivery to be less of an issue than in many other countries. In fact, fighting corruption in the public sector was one of the major themes of the last Congress of the EPRDF and it is a major element in the Growth and Transformation Plan.

DFID Ethiopia manages one of the largest of DFID's aid programmes, and over 80% of DFID Ethiopia's budget is focused on Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets in Health, Education, Poverty and Vulnerability. Progress towards these is largely delivered through support to **proven, nationwide government-led programmes**, maximized through efforts to strengthen service delivery and accountability at local government level. DFID notes that there is "strong evidence" that this is the most effective way of delivering results in Ethiopia and obtaining value for money. DFID stresses it has a range of controls and measures to ensure positive results, including rigorous risk assessments and monitoring requirements for all projects and programmes as well as regular internal and external audits to ensure money is spent on the purposes for which it is intended. Recent additional measures include more detailed fraud and corruption risk assessments, enhanced pre-funding 'due diligence' checks, and specialized training for staff. DFID provides independent audits to cover procurement, field level supervision and verification.

All this surely ought to satisfy Mr. Rawlence, but regrettably he is only likely to dismiss it all airily on the usual basis that it simply 'doesn't agree' with the 'evidence' he and Human Rights Watch produce.

News and Views:

Ethiopia averaged 10% per cent growth over the last two years

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has announced that Ethiopia's economic growth performance during the past two years of the Growth and Transformation Plan averaged 10%. The State Minister, Dr. Abraham Tekeste, in an interview on state television, added that growth in the remaining three years of the Plan will also attain double figures with numerous additional activities being implemented from now until the end of the Plan in 2015. According to Dr. Abraham, in the last financial year 2011/12 (2004 E.C) Ethiopia's economy showed 8.5% growth, with the agriculture sector seeing 4.9 % growth and the industry and service sectors registering 13.6% and 11.1% growth respectively. During the year, the country registered a national savings rate of 16%, surpassing the 15% target set by the Plan. Investment rose by 6.7% per cent from 27.9% to 34.6%. Dr. Abraham said that the year's economic performance indicated that Ethiopia was continuing with the rapid economic development it has seen over the past decade, registering an average growth of 11% for nine consecutive years, since 1996 E.C. It is continuing to produce a growth rate far better than the Sub-Saharan average of 5% to 6%. Ethiopian gross domestic product is now estimated to have reached 737 billion birr, and the per capita income grew from US\$387 dollars in 2003 E.C to US\$513 dollars in 2004 E.C.

The Foreign Minister meets a German Parliamentary Delegation

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, on Tuesday (5th February), held discussions with a parliamentary delegation from the Federal Republic of Germany. The delegation, comprising members of the Parliamentary Budget Committee, met the Minister following visits to a number of German-funded technical and developmental projects in the country. The delegation, which offered its condolences on the death of the late Prime Minister, also congratulated Dr. Tedros on his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs. The talks covered Ethiopia's growing economy, peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the burgeoning relations between Ethiopia and Germany. The delegation expressed its hope that the smooth relations between the two countries would continue to go from strength to strength in the future. The Minister also expressed his hopes that Germany would continue to support the continental efforts to promote peace and security, notably in the Sahel. The delegation took the opportunity to announce that the German Federal President, Joachim Gauck, would be making a visit to Ethiopia in March.

Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister in Washington

This week, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Demeke Mekonnen, expressed his thanks to Mr. Makhtar Diop, Vice President of the World Bank, for the timely and apt recognition of Ethiopia's success in the implementation of General Education Quality Improvement Phase One, which winds up in July. The Deputy Prime Minister, on a visit to Washington, underlined his appreciation of the support provided by a multi-lateral donor group of the World Bank, the United Kingdom, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands which has agreed a financial grant amounting to US\$432 million allotted under the Fast Track Initiative for Phase Two of the Programme which will follow after July. He assured the consortium, which he praised for their continued assistance, that Ethiopia was poised to continue with the next stage of the programme. The Deputy Prime Minister also held discussions with the Universities of Connecticut and

Maryland on enhancing and sustaining a dynamic and mutually beneficial partnership between Ethiopian universities and their counterparts in the US and on ways US universities could assist in Ethiopia's wider development strategy. He briefed members of the academic community from both campuses on the enormous strides made in the expansion of educational out-reach, on the General Education Quality Improvement Programme, the ever-increasing number of students, on centres of education and on the impressive results being achieved in the education sector. The Deputy Prime Minister also briefed several hundred members of the diaspora on the progress being made in development, noting that the Growth and Transformation Plan was making promising progress in bringing about structural transformation and addressing the fundamental challenges of development. He urged the diaspora community to sharpen their commitment to the Grand Renaissance Dam. The Deputy Prime Minister also detailed the commitment of the Ethiopian people, the government and all contesting parties to making the upcoming April 2013 local elections, fair, free, democratic, peaceful and credible.

Ethiopia's representative on the AU Advisory Board on Corruption

The Ethiopian Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission has formally announced that its Commissioner, Ali Suleiman, has been elected a member of the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption. According to the Commission's statement, Commissioner Ali was elected at the 20th regular meeting of the Assembly of the African Union held on 28th January. Commissioner Ali will serve as a member of the Advisory Board on Corruption for two years. The Commission statement said the election of the commissioner was an acknowledgment of Ethiopia's commitment to the fight against corruption. Headquartered in Dar es Selaam, Tanzania, the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption provides support to the efforts of AU member countries for tackling corruption. Ten other members of the Board were elected from Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo, Burundi, Libya, Mali, Benin, Tanzania, Congo and Nigeria.

Somalia setting up an Independent Task Force on Human Rights

Somali's Prime Minister, Abdi Farah Shiridon, has said his government will shortly set up an Independent Task Force on Human Rights to investigate human rights violations, abuses against women and violence against journalists. In a statement, released on Sunday (3rd February), the Prime Minister said the government was committed to upholding human rights and freedom of expression. He specifically referred to reform of the judiciary which he described as "under-resourced and lacking the needed capacity to meet today's challenges", noting that this was one of the government's six leading priorities. The Prime Minister underlined that the crime of rape was completely intolerable in Somalia culture and stressed the importance of encouraging "any victim of sexual violence, to come forward and report such attacks, which must then be investigated and prosecuted". He said the government was encouraged by a sharp drop in incidents since it made its involvement clear. The Prime Minister also emphasized the government's support for press freedom and freedom of expression. He said journalists perform a critical role and the government wanted them to be able to work without fear or favour. They should be protected. He said a free press was at the heart of every democracy and was guaranteed under Somalia's new constitution. The Government, he said, was working hard to uphold the rule of law, and it had come a long way in a very short time. He pointed to the success in improving the security situation and stamping out illegal activities in Mogadishu. It had removed more than sixty illegal checkpoints that had been extorting more than US\$1 million a month from people. The Prime Minister said Somalia had "an independent judiciary" and "it is for the court - not the government- to establish the rights and wrongs of any case brought by police." He noted that the new Independent Task Force on Human Rights would be formed from diverse backgrounds, including people drawn from human rights associations, the media, the police and other sectors of society.

President Silanyo of Somaliland invited to London

President Ahmed Mahmud Silanyo is on his way to the UK this week after receiving an official invitation for talks in London from William Hague, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. He is leading a delegation which includes First Lady Amina Weris and Foreign Minister, Dr. Mohamed A Omar and other officials. No agenda has been made public but Somaliland sources expect the talks with William Hague to cover the modalities for a resumed dialogue between Somaliland and Somalia, as well as Somaliland's participation in the May conference on Somalia in London, to be co-hosted by Prime Minister David Cameron and Somalia's President Mohamud. The Somaliland President is also likely to raise his concern over the UK's issue of a security alert on Somaliland recently. On Nairobi, on Thursday [7th], President Silanyo met with the American Ambassador to Kenya, Robert Codec, the Deputy Special Representative of the US for Somalia Mr. Brian Philips and USAID Deputy Director, Ms. Hodan Hassan. Discussions covered a variety of topics including security, commerce, politics, development, the enhancement of democracy in the horn of Africa and ways to strengthened existing diplomatic ties.

Egypt's Ambassador to Rwanda calls for co-operation over the Nile

The Egyptian Ambassador to Rwanda, Ambassador Khaled Abdel Rahman, has said the Nile Basin countries should consider using the river's water as a source of cooperation and not of contention regardless of any differences in ideology. Speaking to Rwanda's *New Times* newspaper, the Ambassador said the Egyptian government was interested in building a foundation for peace in the region through proper communication on sharing the Nile's water. He added that "for us we look forward to reach a united basin based on the win-win principal and to materialize the interests of all Nile Basin countries with no exception." Sudan and Egypt have yet to sign the 2010 Cooperative Framework Agreement on the River Nile, signed by Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda and South Sudan. Egypt's Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Dr. Mohamed Baha'a El-Din, said last month that Egypt was still undecided about the treaty and would not be signing it any time soon, due to certain contested clauses. In a visit to Kampala, he said: "What we need to focus on here are the bilateral relations between our countries (Uganda and Egypt) not the Nile-sharing treaty."