

## **A Week in the Horn 13<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

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## **The UN Security Council reiterates full support to AMISOM**

On Wednesday this week [11<sup>th</sup> Jan], the UN Security Council met to consider the situation in Somalia. The meeting was briefed by Lynn Pascoe, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, and Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, as well as by Kenya's Foreign Minister, Moses Wetang'ula, the Chair of the AU Peace and Security Council. The UN Under-Secretary-General said the Government's efforts at building a consensus for reconciliation were slowly gaining ground, and all elements of a political, security and development strategy were in place. The focus now was on ensuring completion of the final draft of the constitution in the coming months, followed by the selection of a new parliament. This required a "full buy-in and determination" by the Somalis and the international community.

Ambassador Lamamra told the Security Council that "We cannot hide from the fact that, so far, the international community has yet to fully assume its responsibility in Somalia." The international community had failed to seize opportunities to further peace and reconciliation in Somalia, or provide support truly commensurate with the challenges. It was against that background that the African Union and IGAD looked to enhance the capacity of AMISOM and Government forces. A Strategic Concept for the Mission's future operations had been endorsed by the African Union Peace and Security Council. As we noted last week, this called for increasing the level of AMISOM to 17,731, including 5,700 from a Djibouti contingent and re-hatted Kenyan troops and the deployment of additional troops from Burundi and Uganda to reach the current UN authorised strength of 12,000 with the understanding that the utilization of these additional troops will be based on the needs of the main liberated areas; and the insertion of AMISOM troops in areas liberated with the support of Ethiopia, in view of the urgency of the stated intent of Ethiopia to withdraw from those areas.

Kenya's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Moses Wetang'ula, chair of the AU Peace and Security Council, said efforts of its AU member states had been "supported immensely" by the Security Council decisions to support AMISOM and the training of the Somali security forces. He underlined the need to raise authorized troop levels to more than 17,000 and the imperative to provide force enablers, multipliers and logistical support. He also hoped the Council would support the AU request to provide the capabilities to cut Al-Shabaab supply lines, renewing the request for international assistance in monitoring and inspection of all vessels entering and leaving Kismayo. He thanked the

Council for reinforcing sanctions on Eritrea, and hoped they would be fully enforced.

Uganda's Minister of Defence, Chrispus Kiyonga, said the challenges of cohesion in the TFG, the insufficiency of AMISOM forces and the initial lack of enthusiasm in the international community had prevented greater progress. He commended Kenya for its pursuit of Al-Shabaab terrorists into Somalia, and its decision to be part and parcel of AMISOM; and Ethiopia for its support to TFG allied forces. He said the required logistics for Uganda to deploy the final 1,700 troops for AMISOM were being finalized by the United States and he expected those troops to be in place by March. He also noted that since Kenyan forces entered Somalia and Ethiopia had renewed support to TFG allied forces intensive consultations had been taking place at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels to ensure clarity over the command and control structures of the proposed expanded AMISOM forces.

The Council President for January, South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, speaking in her national capacity, said there was now a good possibility, with international support, for Somalia to move towards peace and stability. She called on all Somali stakeholders to exercise sufficient political will to meet agreed deadlines.

There was broad agreement around the Council table that it was a time of "real opportunity" for Somalis, with the representative of the United Kingdom saying it was time for Somalia to move out of the transition towards a genuinely legitimate and representative government structure based on a constitutional process. The necessity to end the transition in August was underlined. Note was taken of security progress, with Al-Shabaab having been driven back on a number of fronts, and Council members urged adequate, timely and predictable funding for AMISOM. The US representative said he had listened carefully to the calls to increase AMISOM's strength and it awaited cost analysis to which it would give thorough and prompt consideration.

All members of the Security Council spoke in the subsequent discussions reiterating their full support to AMISOM and expressing continued appreciation for the commitment of troops by the troop contributing countries. The Council members stressed the importance of predictable, reliable and timely resources to AMISOM and called on the international community to provide un-caveated support to AMISOM in order for it to

strengthen its capability and to better fulfil its mandate. Members noted the recommendations of the African Union Peace and Security Council of 5<sup>th</sup> January and the intention of the Secretary-General to submit a report. They stressed the importance of international assistance to develop the Somali security forces. They underlined their intention to keep the situation under review.

The Security Council reaffirmed its full support for the Djibouti Agreement as the basis for the resolution of the conflict in Somalia, the Kampala Accord and the road map to end the transition in Somalia by August 2012. It commended the unity of purpose demonstrated at the recent Garowe Constitutional Conference and encouraged inclusive and representative dialogue with the Somali people on the constitution. It urged the Transitional Federal Institutions to remain united, demonstrate strong political will, and focus on the timely implementation of the road map. It noted that future support to the Transitional Federal Institutions would be contingent on completion of these tasks and noted the Secretary-General's view that further extension of the road map would be untenable. The members of the Security Council expressed their readiness to support action against spoilers that seek to undermine the peace process, and peace, security and stability in Somalia.

The Council also expressed its grave concern at the continuing dire humanitarian situation in Somalia and the famine affecting the country and took note of the protracted nature of the crisis. It thanked humanitarian workers for their tireless efforts, welcomed the international response so far and urged Member States to contribute to the United Nations Consolidated Appeal for Somalia. It urged all parties and armed groups to ensure full and unhindered access for the timely delivery of humanitarian aid, and to take appropriate steps to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and supplies.

Overall, the Security Council stressed the need for a comprehensive strategy in Somalia to address the political, humanitarian and security issues and the problem of piracy, including hostage taking, off the coast of Somalia through the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders. It reiterated its full support to the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Ambassador Mahiga, and their work with the African Union and international and regional partners to address these challenges, including through the upcoming London Conference. The UN Secretary-General, Ban ki-Moon, is now preparing recommendations on Somalia and these are expected to be ready in two weeks. UN sources

suggest a Security Council resolution on the terms for an expanded AMISOM and assistance for Somalia could be ready before the London Conference on Somalia on 23<sup>rd</sup> February.

### **Continued military progress in Somalia....**

Last week Kenyan forces captured Fafadun, killing Al-Shabaab's commander in Gedo, Sheikh Hussein Hassan. Sheikh Hussein was one of those who went for training with the Taliban in the mid-1990s, and he is said to have been a close aide of Sheikh Ali Dheere and Al-Shabaab's Emir, Abdi Godane. He has been replaced by Sheikh Mohamed Bishaar who is reportedly building up forces for a counter-attack on the town at Taraqa, 15 kilometres outside Fafadun bringing in reinforcements from Bardheere 70 kms away. Kenyan troops in the town repulsed an attack on Saturday [7<sup>th</sup> Jan] and together with TFG and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a militia are expected to continue their advance. According to reports from the area at the end of last week, Al-Shabaab forces were leaving Buur Dhuubo on the road to Bardheere and additional Kenyan forces have been moving into Gedo region.

In the last few days, Kenyan planes have carried out a string of attacks on Al-Shabaab bases in Gedo region, claiming to have killed at least 50 Al-Shabaab fighters over the weekend. Al-Shabaab acknowledged the raids but denied the numbers killed. On Sunday [8<sup>th</sup>] there were reports that following the raids Al-Shabaab forces were leaving the Buur Dhuubo district and crossing back in to Bay and Bakool regions. Indeed, following these Kenyan airstrikes on Al-Shabaab positions in Gedo there have been claims that up to a thousand Al-Shabaab fighters retreated back across the Juba into Bakool region. The fighters were under the command of Moallim Jimaw, overall commander for Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions. The move, however, did not meet with the approval Amir Abdi Godane who has now relieved Moallim Jimaw of his command. Sheikh Mahad Omar Abdikarim, Al-Shabaab's governor of Bay and Bakool has been appointed military commander instead. The move has not been accepted by some of Moallim Jimaw's forces and Sheikh Mahad is reported to have felt it necessary to send some forces to take over positions occupied by dissidents. Some Al-Shabaab officials in Baidoa are also said to have been strongly critical of Moallim Jimaw's dismissal.

Meanwhile, Al-Shabaab has issued a new video on a jihadist website calling on Muslim youths in Kenya to join Al-Shabaab in its opposition to Kenyan forces in Somalia. The speaker is Ahmed Iman Ali who according to the United Nations

Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea is the head of the Muslim Youth Centre in Nairobi which has been recruiting and training youngsters for Al-Shabaab. The last Monitoring Group report said Ahmed Iman Ali has been based in Somalia since 2009 and commanded a force of up to 500 fighters most from Kenya. His latest video is aimed specifically at Kenyans and he is, unusually, speaking in Swahili rather than Somali, apparently aiming to recruit support in Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda as well as Kenya. Al-Shabaab has always tried to recruit foreign fighters including some from the US and the UK and its first major operation outside Somalia took place in July 2010, when suicide bombers killed 79 people and wounded many others at two nightclubs in Kampala.

### **.....but dismay at the continued dispute over the position of the Speaker**

There has been growing concern over the continuing dispute in parliament over the claimed election of Madobe Nunow to replace Sharif Hassan as Speaker of the Transitional Federal Parliament last month. Disagreements among MPs over the effort to replace Sharif Hassan have led to fighting, even putting three MPs in hospital. The National Security Committee, chaired by President Sheikh Sharif, has been forced to pronounce on the issue, rejecting the legality of the election. Despite this, some MPs have continued to insist that Madobe Nunow should be seen as the legal Speaker. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Ambassador Mahiga has described the dispute as “particularly ill-timed, coming at a moment when the entire region, and indeed the international community as a whole, is scaling up attention and support for Somalia to advance the recent gains on the security and political tracks.” He called on all parties to put aside their differences and work together to implement the Roadmap and the Garowe Principles.

At the beginning of the week, IGAD’s Council of Ministers met to consider the progress made in the constitution-making process in Somalia and the gains made against extremists on the ground by the TFG and its allied forces with the support of AMISOM and neighbouring countries. It welcomed these, but in a subsequent press release the ministers also expressed concern that some leaders had failed to demonstrate “the required level of maturity” which was necessary for the implementation of the Kampala Accord and the political Roadmap in the context of the Garowe Conference on constitution making. It said the conduct of some parliamentarians and the illegal nomination of a new Speaker of Parliament demonstrated the danger posed by “negative elements and spoilers”. These actions were counter to the spirit and the letter of the

Transitional Federal Charter, the basis of the country's laws. Some of the individuals, who participated in these illegal activities, had also played similar roles in the past which could not be considered constructive or in support of peace. The Council of Ministers found such behaviour unacceptable. It said it showed a lack of appreciation for those who are continuing to sacrifice their lives for the peace and stability of Somalia, and called on all concerned to avoid further deterioration of the situation at a time when there was indeed some measure of hope.

The illegal nomination of the Speaker, said the statement, was counter to the spirit and the letter of past decisions and resolutions and would lead to the demolition of the foundation on which the current TFIs have stood since the establishment of the parliament in 2004 in Nairobi and its expansion in 2009 in Djibouti. The Council of Ministers therefore emphasized its resolve to take all appropriate measures against detractors and spoilers, external and internal, engaged in unconstructive activities which damaged the peace and reconciliation process in Somalia. It recommended strong action against any individuals continuing to undermine the peace and reconciliation process. It strongly supported the decision of the National Security Committee to reject the election of Madobe Nunow and called on all parties to enter into a dialogue to resolve their disputes peacefully. It commended the collective will and determination of the top leadership of the TFI's to remain committed to the implementation of the Kampala Accord and the Roadmap, as demonstrated by the Garowe Conference on ending the transition and ushering in a new phase of political transformation in Somalia. In conclusion, the Council of Ministers expressed its support for the Government and people of Somalia in their efforts towards rebuilding vital institutions especially in the areas of security and the rule of law.

### **The UN Security Council promises closer co-operation with the AU**

On Thursday [12<sup>th</sup> Jan], the UN Security Council unanimously passed SC Resolution 2033 (2012), which reiterated the importance of establishing a more effective relationship between the UN Security Council and regional and sub-regional organizations, particularly the African Union and the African Union Peace and Security Council, covering the areas of conflict prevention, resolution and management, electoral assistance and regional conflict prevention offices. It decided, in consultation with the African Union Peace and Security Council, to elaborate further ways of strengthening relations between the two Councils and stressed the need to enhance the predictability,

sustainability and flexibility of financing regional organizations when they undertook peacekeeping under a United Nations mandate.

The meeting, chaired by President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, which holds the Council's rotating presidency, heard from numerous delegations, as well as Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, who noted that a more strategic relationship between the UN and the AU was made more compelling by the fact that Africa still accounts for the highest number of conflicts worldwide, and in addition to traditional threats, it was now facing new ones, including terrorism, maritime piracy, border disputes and climate change. He said innovative modalities, such as the hybrid operation in Darfur, had been devised to meet the fast-evolving realities on the ground, but this was only the beginning of a journey towards a more strategic relationship in the area of peace and security. Earlier this week, the AU Peace and Security Council had considered the Report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the Partnership between the African Union and the United Nations on Peace and Security: Towards greater Strategic and Political Coherence [PSC/PR/2(CCCVII)]. It had reiterated the AU's strong conviction that the AU and the UN needed to build "on progress already achieved and lessons learned to develop a stronger partnership" based on "an innovative strategic and forward-looking reading of Chapter V111 of the UN Charter". This, the Peace and Security Council said, should take into account Africa's evolving security landscape and the complexities of the challenges at hand. It stressed three principles that could provide the basis for a more effective partnership: support for African ownership of peace initiatives in Africa; flexible and innovative application of the principle of subsidiarity, including consultations prior to decision-making; and the taking into account of the familiarity of the AU and its regional mechanisms with conflict dynamics and their flexibility in dealing with security challenges, in line with the recommendations of the Prodi Panel Report.

President Zuma told the Security Council that the African Union had contributed immensely to improving peace and security, as well as to promoting democracy and respect for human rights in Africa. It had sought to give practical meaning to the vision of the United Nations Charter on cooperation with regional organizations. He also noted that the AU had developed a political road map that would have helped resolve Libya's political conflict, but this had been ignored in favour of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's bombing, with consequences that had spilled over into other countries. "The lessons we should draw from the Libyan experience is that



greater political coherence and a common vision between the African Union and the United Nations are critical in the resolution of African conflicts”, he said. Like other speakers he offered proposals for strengthening strategic cooperation between the UN and the AU, and greater strategic political coherence between the two in resolving, preventing and managing African conflicts. Kenya’s Foreign Minister, Moses Wetang’ula, Chair of the AU Peace and Security Council, said Africa was demonstrating renewed determination to deploy peace support operations in fragile and even insecure environments. That, he suggested, called for a shift in the United Nations doctrine on peace operations. The practice that the United Nations could only engage where there was a “peace to keep” meant failure to deal with some of the most challenging crises, leaving those situations in the hands of those least able and with the least resources. The result was “less, not more, security in the world”.

UN Secretary-General, Ban ki-Moon told the Council that the African Union was a vital strategic partner to the United Nations. AU and sub-regional organizations had significantly bolstered their role in building architecture for peace and security in Africa in the last decade. He mentioned the joint peacekeeping operation in Darfur (UNAMID), the combined efforts to combat the threat posed by the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and UN support to AMISOM. There were of course differences in dealing with complex and fast moving crises, but the issue was how to manage those differences – how to act together. Mr Ban told the Council that the UN-AU partnership could be enhanced in a number of ways, including the learning of new lessons and developing new tools, as well as intensifying engagement with civil society and women’s groups active in mediation and conflict prevention, particularly at the local level.

The prevailing view expressed by Council members was that the United Nations needed a strong African Union and the AU needed a strong UN. It was clear the AU sometimes felt the United Nations did not provide enough leadership and the UN felt the AU was sometimes slow to act. Most speakers stressed the value of moving forward together, to better meet the urgent challenges that confront everybody, with arrangements based on comparative advantages, complementary mandates and optimal use of resources and capacities.

In its preamble, the SC Resolution 2033 reaffirmed the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. It reiterated that cooperation with regional and sub-regional organizations in

matters relating to the maintenance of peace and security and consistent with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, could improve collective security. It recognized regional organizations were well positioned to provide an early response to disputes, expressed its support for the on-going operationalization of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. It recognized the need for predictable, sustainable and flexible resources, and for a comprehensive analysis of lessons learned. It took note of the Report of the AU and welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on United Nations-African Union cooperation in peace and security (S/2011/805).

The resolution decides to take effective steps to further enhance the relationship between the United Nations and regional and sub-regional organizations, in particular the African Union, and encourages continuing involvement of regional and sub-regional organizations in the peaceful settlement of disputes, including through conflict prevention, confidence-building and mediation efforts. It reiterates the importance of establishing a more effective relationship between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council and takes note of their respective strategic visions. It stresses that coordinated efforts should be based on their respective authorities, competencies and capacities. It encourages regular interaction, consultation and coordination, recognizing the need for developing effective long-term strategies. It calls on the international community to assist the efforts initiated by the African Union and sub-regional organizations for peaceful settlement of disputes and the resolution of conflict and encourages the Secretary-General to maintain close consultations with the AU and Regional Economic Communities. It underscores the importance of expediting implementation of the 2006 United Nations-African Union Ten-year Capacity-Building Programme mainly focusing on peace and security, and reaffirms the vital role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response, and post-conflict reconstruction. It urges the Secretary-General to work to ensure that UN agencies working with the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa deliver coordinated support to the African Union.

The resolution encourages the UN-AU joint task force on peace and security to continue to focus on strategic and country-specific issues and requests it to consider ways to enhance cooperation on conflict prevention. It supports further interaction between the United Nations Secretariat and the African Union Commission to exchange information and mutual briefings. In consultation with the AU Peace and Security Council, it calls for more effective

annual consultative meetings, the holding of timely consultations, and collaborative field missions. It stresses the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing regional organizations when undertaking UN peacekeeping, and welcomes financial support provided by the AU's partners towards its peacekeeping operations. It requests that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the AU, conduct a comprehensive analysis of lessons learned from practical cooperation, and include an assessment of progress in his regular reporting to the Security Council. The Security Council decides to remain seized of the matter.

### **The 18<sup>th</sup> AU Summit takes place in Addis Ababa, 23<sup>rd</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> January**

The 18<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government will officially start on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January. The theme of the Summit will be "Boosting intra-African trade". The 23<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) will take place from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> January and consider the reports of the sub-committees on structures, multilateral cooperation, contributions, economic and trade matters and the report on NEPAD as well as the report of the Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine in Africa. The Permanent Representatives will also consider the working documents and draft decisions to be presented to the 20<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, the Foreign Ministers of the member states. The Executive Council will meet from 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> January at the AU headquarters to discuss the reports of ministerial meetings organized by the AU Commission during the previous six months. They will also consider the Commission's report, the recommendations of the Permanent Representatives on implementation of previous decisions of the Executive Council and of the Assembly, reports of other AU bodies including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Court as well as consider items proposed by Member States, and the report of the ministerial committee on candidatures. The AU Commission ends its current four year mandate in January. The Heads of State and Government will be electing the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and the Executive Council will elect Commissioners of the African Union, ten members of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and one judge for the AU Ad-hoc Administrative Tribunal.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union will take place on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> January, and it will be preceded on 28<sup>th</sup> January by the inauguration of the new African Union Conference Centre in the presence of

the Heads of State and Government. At the opening ceremony on 29<sup>th</sup> January the Assembly will pay tribute to the memory of the late Professor Wangari Maathai, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and former Presiding Officer of the ECOSOCC of the African Union and the late Mrs Elisabeth Tankeu, AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry. The Summit will consider the recommendations of the Executive Council and the report of the Peace and Security Council as well as the reports of Prime Minister Meles, Chairperson of NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) on NEPAD, and on Africa's preparation for the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 17), held in Durban last month, and the reports of President Sassou Nguesso of the Republic of Congo, Coordinator on Africa's preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), of President Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone, Chairperson of the Committee of Ten on UN Reforms and of President Kagame of Rwanda, on the 4<sup>th</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Busan, South Korea in November. It will adopt the declaration of the Summit on its theme "Boosting intra-African trade" and agree the date and place of the 19<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, according to the election of the AU Chairperson.

### **No New Year change - Asmara continues to accuse the world**

The Eritrean regime is continuing to recycle its accusations against the world at large, producing what is by now almost pro forma invective against what it calls Eritrea's 'sworn enemies'. The latest effort is asking the UN Security Council to disband the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea. This is accused of being 'biased' and with "no concern for evidence whatsoever." For the regime in Asmara a smoking gun cannot be considered close to acceptable evidence even when it is discovered in its backyard. At the same time it continues to assert that its own all-too-frequent protestations of innocence should be considered as conclusive evidence. Eritrea's leaders apparently believe that even their most preposterous claims must be seen as true. Given this mindset, it is very difficult to see how they would be able to accept the report of any new Monitoring Group as credible. The regime fell short of recommending any names for its preferred monitoring group, but on past experience it would hardly be any surprise if it was to put forward the names of the very Eritrean army and civilian officials involved in the regime's cross-border adventures as potential candidates!

Eritrea, whose leaders insist they have 'very close relations with Somalis and Libyans' because of common colonial background, are still adamant in their

opposition to the TFI's or anything that appears to legitimize the current transitional arrangement in Somalia. Despite this, it said last year that it supported Kenya's intervention in Somalia. Now, however, it is once again accusing Kenya for its 'uninvited' intervention against resolution 1725 (2006). Consistency is hardly something that the regime in Eritrea pays much attention to with the single exception of falsehood. It no longer appears to have any sense of shame.

In the face of the world's denunciation of its destabilizing activities throughout the region, the regime is now making the counter-claim that countries in the region are campaigning to unseat it 'because of its independent political line.' Nobody knows what this independent line is, but it appears that the regime fancies itself too strong to be overthrown by any other single entity. That, of course, is why the dear leader and patriarch of the regime keeps blaming the west and particularly the US for being behind plots to overthrow the regime. According to him, the CIA does nothing but concoct plot after plot to destroy his regime. Surprisingly, the regime's latest statement for the first time mentions the Eritrean opposition's Hawassa conference last month as part of this western campaign to remove it. The idea that the regime might have earned this opposition by its own activities is a concept that appears lost on the authorities in Asmara.

On a similar note, the Eritrean government is now accusing Ethiopia of jamming its 'truth-serving TV' in an attempt to hide the truth. The point being made here appears to be that Ethiopia is so scared of the Eritrean leader's wonderful, lengthy and repetitive 'analyses' of world affairs that it is prepared to waste millions of dollars jamming Eritrea's television transmissions. Oddly, these television transmissions allegedly jammed by Ethiopia can still be seen easily and clearly in Ethiopia, and in fact Eri-TV's apocryphal stories about Ethiopia and the rest of the world are popular comic shows for most Ethiopians. Logic, of course, and accuracy have never been Eritrea's leaders' forte.

What, unfortunately, remains obvious is that the regime in Asmara has no intention of mending its ways. Nor is it prepared to try and engage the region or the world in a civilized and responsible manner. Its preferred approach continues to be one of antagonizing everyone that dares to criticize its unnecessary, and frankly repulsive, behaviour. The regime's lengthy declarations since the onset of the new European year make it abundantly clear that as far as the regime in Asmara goes, old habits die really hard.

## **News and Views:**

### **Sudan to establish special court for Darfur**

On Tuesday this week [10<sup>th</sup> Jan], the Sudanese justice minister Mohamed Bushara Dousa appointed a special prosecutor for Darfur and announced a special court to handle the “gravest” crimes committed in the Darfur region would be established soon. Ahmed Abdel-Motalib has been given the mandate to investigate all the alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur since February 2003, with offices in El-Fasher, the capital of north Darfur. The announcement is part of the requirements of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur signed between Khartoum and the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM) last July. A human rights commission is also being set up in Darfur as well on orders of President Omer Hassan al-Bashir. The position of a special prosecutor for Darfur was originally set up in 2003 but previous appointees failed to try or bring charges against any individuals, and the failure by the Sudanese judiciary to act on Darfur led the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in March 2005 to refer the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) after a UN international commission of inquiry concluded that the Sudanese judiciary was unwilling or unable to carry out credible prosecutions in the war ravaged region. The ICC then charged three individuals from the government, President Al Bashir, South Kordofan governor, Ahmed Haroun, and militia leader, Ali Kushayb with war crimes and crimes against humanity, and President Al Bashir with genocide.

### **US bank’s wire transfer reopened to allow limited remittances to Somalia**

Sunrise Community Banks, a group of businesses providing money transfers between Minnesota where the largest Somali community in the US resides, and Somalia, has announced that it is re-opening its “hawala” service to allow transfers in small dollar amounts. On 30<sup>th</sup> December, fifteen Minnesota “hawala” companies had to stop accepting financial wire transfers to Somalia because the bank that handled most of the transactions refused to continue operations over fears that it risked violating U.S. regulatory and anti-terrorism finance laws. The Somali Prime Minister, Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, said his Government had sent a memo to the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and to other authorities asking them to call off the decision as it had the potential to cause economic disaster to many Somalis and even a collapse of Somalia’s unstable economy. Now, the government has responded and lifted the ban. Customers can send sums of up to US \$500, and more than this in

“emergencies”. Dealers and local agents said “hawala” companies in the State of Minnesota have now been allowed to reopen their doors. Some service providers and business people said the US government’s change of heart was to be welcomed but many others were unhappy, arguing that US\$500 was too small an amount to cover the needs of their families. The Somali Mission to the UN said the decision would not cover long-term needs, but it would bring “a degree of relief” to those in the Diaspora who complained their families had been unable to pay rent and faced eviction due to the block on remittances.

### **The National Union of Somali Journalists’ conference**

Last week, the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) organized a conference for media owners, managers of radio and TV stations, journalists and others. It was the first such meeting, and among those present were journalists and officials from Kulmiye Radio, Xamar Radio, Jubba Radio, Risaala Radio, Raxanreeb Radio-a web-based radio, Codka Nabadda Radio, Danan Radio, Simba Radio, Somali Chanel Television, Horn Cable Television, Royal Television, S24 Television and Somali National Television and Radio. In his opening remarks, the Secretary General of NUSOJ, Mohamed Ibrahim, thanked participants for their active support to the union and presented a six-monthly report of activities. The conference discussions covered the current conditions for Somali journalists, the prospects of training, cooperation between radio stations, a safety fund for Somali journalists and how radio stations might contribute, contracts, union membership fees and the importance of extending union membership to all Somali journalists as well as the outcome of the recent union campaign for justice for journalists and the best way to put pressure on the government in order to bring killers of journalists to justice. As requested the union produced a comprehensive and transparent plan for a safety fund with details of how and where funds would be used to help the families of journalists who had been killed and educational opportunities for their children as well as assist jobless journalists and provide for emergencies. The conference stressed the need to speed up implementation of the fund to safeguard the rights of journalists particularly those in media organizations which have not developed employment agreements. Participants recommended that the union encourage all journalists to join and strengthen the unity of journalists and media groups. They also urged the government to speed up investigations into the death of the late Abdisalan Sheikh Hassan, shot and killed by a man in Somali army uniform last month. His death brings to at least 24 the number of media personnel who have been killed in Somalia since 2007.

## Christian, Muslim leaders' peace conference in Addis Ababa

Christian and Muslim religious leaders of Africa convened a peace conference in Addis Ababa to discuss issues of peace and development in Africa this week. Organized by the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), an organization founded in 1959 to promote peaceful coexistence in an interfaith environment of Christians and Muslims, the conference underlined the need to take and maintain shared positions and responsibilities among religious leaders on Africa's peace and development and align their respective followers with this idea of "shared position and responsibility". Religious leaders note that the issue of the continent's peace, development and unity in effect concern all sections of society and should not be left to governments alone, though they stress the need to work jointly with governments for this to happen. The conference, which was attended by religious leaders from eight countries, Egypt, Tanzania and Zanzibar, Madagascar, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ethiopia, emphasized its appreciation of Ethiopia's culture of tolerance of different religions and suggested that such religious tolerance based on equality and mutual respect should be fostered in other African nations. Inevitably, Nigeria was a major focus of attention after the recent conflicts in Jos and Boko Haram attacks elsewhere. The sixty Christian and Muslim leaders unanimously agreed a "Statement on the Prevailing Situation in the Federal Republic of Nigeria", deploring the indiscriminate killings and destruction of property including places of worship, calling on all Muslim and Christian Religious Leaders in Nigeria as well as their members to avoid any action or inaction that might lead to the heightening of tension or aggravation, and encouraging them to create a platform for effective engagement in intra-Muslim and intra-Christian discussions. The conference criticized what it called the dangerous politicization of religion and called on governments at every level in Nigeria, local, state and federal, to intensify security measures. It also encouraged the political elite to refrain from unguarded utterances, and called on the media to contribute to peace-making rather than incite conflict. The conference agreed that dialogue between Muslim and Christian leaders was valuable. There was much to talk about in terms of peace and development in Africa. If people do not talk together, if conversation dies, there must be a danger that conflict would take off.

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