

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

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### IGAD's Council of Ministers meeting

The 45<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the IGAD Council of Ministers was held on Wednesday this week (11<sup>th</sup> July). The session was chaired by the current chairman of the Council, Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn. Others attending were Mahmoud Ali Youssuf, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Djibouti; Richard Onyonka, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kenya; Abdullahi Haji Hassan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somalia; Grace Datiro, Deputy Foreign Minister of South Sudan; Dr. Hassan Eisa El Talib, Ambassador of Sudan to Djibouti and Permanent Representative of Sudan to IGAD, and Engineer Mahboub Maalim, IGAD's Executive Secretary. Also present, as invited guests, were Dr. Jean Ping, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Ambassador Renzo Rosso, Co-Chairman of the IGAD Partners Forum and Mr. Nick Wescot, EU Managing Director for Africa-European External Action Service. The session was the first ordinary session since 2009, although the Council has held six extraordinary sessions over the past year alone.

The meeting opened with a statement by Engineer Mahboub Maalim which briefly highlighted the milestones and achievements of IGAD over the past two years. He particularly noted the implementation of the Minimum Integration Plan and the Drought Resilience Programme, as well as sanitary standard-setting efforts and important developments in IGAD programmes on Agriculture and the Environment. He mentioned the launch of the Lamu Port Project and the Ethio-Djibouti Railway Project as important steps towards achieving the goals enunciated in the Horn of Africa Initiative which aims to connect up the region through infrastructure **to boost economic and political integration**. He noted the establishment of CEWARN, the launch of counter-terrorism and anti-piracy programmes, the role played by IGAD in the Sudan peace process and in stabilizing Somalia were a testimony to the fact that IGAD had evolved into a formidable regional organization. He called on IGAD member states and partners to further step up their support to help IGAD to achieve its goal of bringing about economic and political integration within the region. Nick Wescot lauded IGAD's achievements and said that the EU considered IGAD as a major ally in all affairs of the region and he cited the appointment of Alexander Rondos as EU representative to the region as a testimony to EU interest.

In their communiqué the Council of IGAD ministers welcomed Djibouti's Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union and the deployment of its troops in Somalia. These will be in post by 20<sup>th</sup> July. On Somalia, the Council called on all bodies to hold up any actions or utterances until the finalization of the current political process. It welcomed the recent naming of spoilers and the progress on political and security aspects of the peace process, reaffirming its full support for the conclusion of the transition period on 20<sup>th</sup> August. It expressed its appreciation to the troop-contributing countries – Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda as well as to AMISOM and its allies including Ethiopia.

On the peace process between South Sudan and Sudan, the Council saluted the contribution of Ethiopia to the peace process, called upon both leaders to pursue dialogue, commended the new strategic approach by the two parties to establish a common understanding of how to deal with outstanding issues as per the road map of the AU Peace and Security Council and the UN Security Council resolutions, commended the efforts of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, and congratulated the Republic of South Sudan on its first anniversary of independence. The Council noted that Eritrea had still not released information on the Djiboutian prisoners of war it holds and called on Eritrea to abide by international humanitarian law on the treatment of prisoners of war.

The IGAD Ministers called on African leaders to conclude the election of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and expressed its collective support for its own candidate, Erastus Mwencha, for the position of Deputy Chairperson of the Commission.

The Council unanimously endorsed the renewal of Engineer Mahboub Maalim as IGAD's Executive Secretary for a second four-year term. It decided to establish an inter-ministerial committee to speed-up the implementation of the Minimum Integration Plan, and resolved that Member States should take the lead in various thematic areas in IGAD: Djibouti to take the lead in issues of Maritime Security, **Ethiopia in regional infrastructure**, Kenya in Drought Resilience and other natural disasters, Sudan in issues of trade harmonization, and Uganda in issues of peace and security. It directed the Executive Secretary to consult the Republic of South Sudan to consider an area on which it can lead and undertake similar consultations with Somalia after 20<sup>th</sup> August.

The Council also urged the Secretariat to expedite the finalization of the new Treaty Establishing IGAD and submit this to the next Council of Ministers meeting. The Council urged the Secretariat to maintain the momentum on the roll-out of the Drought Resilience Initiative, adopted the Peace and Security Strategy as a comprehensive framework for IGAD initiatives in the region, and also expressed concern on arrears of contributions and called on member states to meet their obligations.

### **The 19<sup>th</sup> African Union Summit**

The week started with the 24<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives Committee meeting on Monday and Tuesday (9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> July) to discuss issues of peace, stability and security, in particular the current security situation in Mali and the tense relations between Sudan and South Sudan which were at the top of the agenda. The Permanent Representatives Committee considered proposals and recommendations to end the military conflict in Mali and bring the dispute between the two Sudans to a peaceful settlement as well as a number of other recommendations forwarded to the Executive Committee. Speaking at the opening of the meeting, the AU Commission Deputy-Chairperson, Erastus Mwencha, underlined the

importance of political stability on the continent stressing that continued problems between Sudan and South Sudan could undermine the work of the AU to bring about peace in the region, but noting that: "We take comfort in the recent negotiations facilitated by AU and the on-going efforts to facilitate the return to normalcy should continue."

The 21<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council officially opened on Thursday (12<sup>th</sup> July) at the African Union Headquarters. The Executive Council agenda covers consideration of the report of the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Draft Budget and the Recommendations of the PRC on the Commission's Report on Implementing Previous Executive Council Decisions. The Executive Council will be also considering a series of other reports, including the Report of the Conference of Ministers in charge of Gender and Women's Affairs (November 2011); the Report of the Fifth Joint Meetings of AU Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance, and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (March 2012); and the Report of the AU Conference of Ministers in charge of Border Issues (May 2012) as well as the Report of the High Level Panel led by former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria on Alternative Sources of Financing the African Union. Other subjects will include consideration of the Report, the Legal Instruments and Recommendations of the Ministers of Justice/Attorneys General, which includes the Draft Protocol on the Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Draft Protocol to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and the Report of the Commission on the Humanitarian Situation in Africa. The meeting will discuss the report of its own Ministerial Committee on Candidatures. It will also consider the election of three Judges for the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, but it seems the question of the election of the Commissioners for the African Union will be postponed until after the Assembly has elected the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. The two candidates are African Union Commission chairperson, Dr. Jean Ping, from Gabon, who is seeking re-election, and South Africa's Home Affairs Minister, Mrs. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. Neither candidate achieved the necessary two-thirds majority to win at the Summit of the Assembly in January.

Opening the Executive Council meeting on Thursday [12<sup>th</sup> July], the Council Chairperson, Nassiru Bako Arifari, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin, urged the AU's leadership to ensure that the issue of leadership was "put to rest", adding that a leaderless AU Commission risked undermining the credibility of the continent. "Our continent is faced with serious conflicts that need our attention and effectiveness of the union and the past six months had not been easy... In the face of all of this, we have a responsibility to maintain peace and stability on the continent," Arifari said. He said the AU remained concerned about the unresolved political situation in Mali, Somalia, Western Sahara and the latest developments between Sudan and South Sudan. "The union is determined to solve the Malian crisis and the situation in Sudan and South Sudan and in the face of all we shall remain focused to offer solutions to these crises," he said.

The Executive Council is also considering the reports of other AU organs, including the reports of the Pan-African Parliament, of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council of the Union (ECOSOCC), as well as the Reports on the Activities of the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption and on the Activities of the African Union Commission on International Law. The session will also be reviewing the items proposed by member states, including the offer of the Republic of Rwanda to host the 28<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and of the Assembly of the African Union in June/July 2016 and the offer of the United Republic of Tanzania to host the 29<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union in June/July 2017. The Executive Council meeting concludes today with consideration of the proposed draft decisions and declarations

for the Assembly and of its draft agenda. The Assembly itself opens its two-day Summit under the theme of “Boosting Intra-African Trade” on Sunday [15<sup>th</sup> July].

In addition to the series of bilateral contacts in the margins of the PRC and Executive Council sessions, there have as usual also been a number of other meetings. These have included, on Wednesday, [11<sup>th</sup> July] the 44<sup>th</sup> NEPAD Steering Committee meeting; the Special Regional Inter-Ministerial Committee meeting on the Situation in the Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo; and the Preparatory Meeting, at ministerial level, of the Committee of Ten on the United Nations Reforms as well as the first of a series of meetings of the African Peer Review Mechanism which last until Saturday [14<sup>th</sup> July].

On Thursday [12<sup>th</sup> July] there were meetings of the Ministerial Committee on Candidatures and of the Ad-Hoc Ministerial Committee on the Scale of Assessment. The ECOWAS Commission and the NEPAD Coordinating and Planning Agency held a signing ceremony for the ECOWAS/NEPAD Grant Agreement on the Business Incubator for African Women Entrepreneurs. On Friday [13<sup>th</sup> July] there is the launch of the African Solidarity Initiative at ministerial level and a meeting of the Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS. On Saturday [14<sup>th</sup> July], the AU Peace and Security Council is meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government to consider the situation in Mali and between Sudan and South Sudan, and this is followed by the 27<sup>th</sup> Summit of NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) and by meetings of the High Level Committee of Heads of State and Government, Chairs of the Regional Economic Communities on Intra-African Trade, the Committee of Ten Heads of State on UN Reforms, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government on the Election of Members of the Commission. In addition, meetings of the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS will be held from Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> July until the end of the Summit on 16<sup>th</sup> July.

### **South Sudan's first anniversary of independence**

On Monday this week, 9<sup>th</sup> July, South Sudan marked the first anniversary of its independence colourfully in the presence of Heads of States and other dignitaries in its capital, Juba. Among those present were Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, former South African president Thabo Mbeki, who is mediating the AUHIP talks, and Sudan's Deputy Foreign Minister. The Ethiopian delegation was led by Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn.

The main event of the celebration, including a military parade, took place at the Dr. John Garang Mausoleum, dedicated to the man who led South Sudan's forces during the long civil war. President Salva Kiir addressed a large and enthusiastic gathering, noting that South Sudan had “fought for our right to be counted among the community of the free nations and we have earned it.” At the same time, he added, the country must do more to cut corruption, and move away from donor support: “We still depend on others. Our liberty today is incomplete; we must be more than liberated. We have to be independent economically”. He went on to add: “Next year, when we celebrate the same occasion, we must be in a better shape than we are today. He also said that he would be reducing the number of the ministers in the cabinet as part of the country's efforts to reduce expenditure.

In a message to the people of South Sudan, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that "South Sudan can now proudly walk the world stage as a country" but warned much more needed to be done. "The road ahead will not be without challenges, but I am confident... South Sudan will overcome any obstacles and succeed in becoming a prosperous nation." US

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton also sent a congratulatory statement in which she said South Sudan had made strides in nation-building and on building a legal framework.

Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, congratulated the people and the government of South Sudan on behalf of the Ethiopian government and people. Reflecting on the hard won independence of South Sudan, he said that the day was "indeed a momentous day on which we all should reflect on how we should take this opportunity to try and bring about the realization of the enduring dreams of an entire nation". He reiterated Ethiopia's firm support for "all your endeavours to find a lasting solution with your neighbours in the Republic of Sudan", encouraging South Sudan to everything possible to make the whole peace process with Sudan work effectively, adding "you owe it to your people and to the noble objectives that set in motion your independence movement".

He said that South Sudan's hard-won independence offered the opportunity to chart out a new chapter that will help it deliver on its promises to work towards achieving the aspirations of its people for a better and dignified future. It was necessary to exert every effort towards a lasting solution to the many challenges the country faced. It was no time for any zero-sum political exercises or petty squabbles. The Deputy Prime Minister said that Ethiopia heartily supported all efforts to find "a lasting solution with your neighbours in the Republic of Sudan". He quoted an earlier statement by Prime Minister Meles on the need to work towards "maintaining soft borders with your brothers in the north with a view to ensuring that your two nations will remain viable states both in terms of peace and economic prosperity."

Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed that Ethiopia shared history, culture and more importantly, a brighter future as well as borders with South Sudan. The cooperation on mutually beneficial infrastructural projects was a testament to Ethiopia's enduring interest in and commitment to a common future. He had high hopes that the relationship between the two countries would be rewarding for both, and in extending the best wishes of the Government and peoples of Ethiopia to the Government and peoples of South Sudan, he underlined that Ethiopia would always remain faithful to the prospect of a bright future for both countries.

### **Sudan/South Sudan talks continue this week**

The latest round of talks started on Thursday this week [12<sup>th</sup> July] following the adjournment last weekend for celebration of South Sudan's Independence Day on Monday. The two parties met in Addis Ababa and have now moved the venue to Bahr Dar in Amhara Regional State. Before adjourning they verbally adopted a "strategic" approach focusing on the creation of a demilitarized zone along the border, pledging to cease hostilities along it. According to officials on both sides, the new approach is hoped to lead to the quick progress needed to meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> August deadline set by the UN Security Council to conclude the talks on oil, citizenship, the status of Abyei and other issues. The official spokesman of Sudan's team in the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, Omer Dahab, confirmed that the new round of talks would be based on the new "strategic" approach.

Last weekend, Sudanese Defence Minister, Abdelrahim Mohamed Hussein, said the two parties had agreed to an "unequivocal commitment ... to never solicit force to settle their disputes and differences and to commit themselves to the cessation of hostilities." He said that the two sides also agreed "to strengthen [and] enhance the political will which is happily once more existing between the two countries." Defence Minister Hussein underlined that the two parties had resolved to discuss the other remaining issues while respecting fully the 2<sup>nd</sup> August deadline set by the United Nations. South Sudan's chief negotiator, Pagan Amum, said he was pleased

with the “new spirit” at the latest round of talks and said his country was committed to improving relations with Khartoum. “We are going to discuss all issues, security, economic, that includes trade and oil ... and we have committed ourselves to resolving the border dispute,” he said. He noted that the issue of the disputed Abyei region would also be addressed and that both sides had agreed on creating an open border to promote bilateral trade. The head of the AU’s High Level Implementation Panel, Thabo Mbeki, praised the two sides for their renewed commitment to peace. “We are convinced ... the approach that the parties have taken indeed creates the basis for a speedier resolution of these outstanding questions,” Mbeki said.

Meanwhile at its 5<sup>th</sup> meeting in Abyei town last Saturday (7<sup>th</sup> July), the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) signed the Terms of Reference for the Joint Military Observer Committee (JMOC). The JMOC, made up of equal number of members of the Sudan Armed Forces and the South Sudan Peoples’ Liberation Army is a security mechanism mandated to guarantee peace and security for the residents of Abyei region. Assisted by Joint Military Observer Teams, it is expected to observe, monitor and report on the deployment of any unauthorized forces in the Abyei area. It is also expected to monitor the existing situation in the area, including free movement of civilians, as well as any potential threats to social cohesion, communal clashes, criminal activities or incursions of illegal groups or militia. The African Union Chairperson, Dr. Jean Ping, welcomed the signing and encouraged the two parties to establish the Abyei Police Service and the Inter-Governmental Task Force for Humanitarian Assistance to support the AJOC. He also urged both President Omar Hassan al Bashir and President Salva Kiir Mayardit to set up the Abyei Executive Council and the Abyei Area Administration as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the two Presidents may meet on the sidelines of the AU Summit during Sunday and Monday. Both are expected to attend.

### **Ethiopia and Rwanda set up a Joint Ministerial Commission**

On Wednesday this week, (11<sup>th</sup> July) Ethiopia and Rwanda signed an agreement to set up a Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) as well as a Strategic Partnership Agreement and a General Co-operation Agreement. The signing ceremony follow discussions between the respective delegations led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hailemariam Desalegn, and Rwanda’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Louise Mushikiwabo, who was accompanied by a number of senior Government officials.

In his opening remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister welcomed the delegation from Rwanda and thanked them for accepting the invitation to sign the agreement to establish the Joint Ministerial Commission and the Strategic Partnership and General Co-operation Agreements. Ms. Mushikiwabo expressed her appreciation for the warm welcome she and her delegation received and for the successful preparation of the signing ceremony. Both sides agreed the meeting had been convened in a cordial spirit of fraternal cooperation and understanding.

Ato Hailemariam Desalegn noted that there were many mutual benefits from cooperation between Ethiopia and Rwanda. The two countries had a great deal in common and more importantly they also shared similar objectives with regard to the building of a strong and united Africa within the framework of the African Union. They had always acted in collaboration for the economic, political and social betterment of the peoples of Africa. This in turn also increased the effect of their bilateral relations and enabled them to play a more effective and coordinated role at the continental level. With these new agreements, said the Deputy Prime Minister, the cooperation that had already been achieved could be extended and continued with even more vigour, purpose and determination in various areas, enhancing the close friendship and cooperation that had been developed over many years by both countries.

This, the Deputy Prime Minister said, exemplified the same spirit of cooperation as the two countries demonstrated in working together to bring peace, security and stability to the continent.

Both sides expressed their willingness to see diversification of their relationship. During their discussions, both ministers stressed the need to draw up various Memoranda of Understanding and agreements in the areas of agriculture, education, health, culture, gender, immigration, infrastructure, water and energy, trade and investment as well as regional integration, peace and security. At the conclusion of their talks, the Ministers signed the agreement establishing the Joint Ministerial Commission and the two agreements on Strategic Partnership and General Co-operation. They also agreed that there should be further discussions to develop and negotiate separate agreements and memoranda in various areas. It was also agreed that officials would provide reports on the implementation of the agreements at the next meeting of the Joint Ministerial Commission. To follow up the agreements and ensure full implementation of the decisions taken, the Joint Ministerial Commission agreed that a review session by senior officials of the relevant ministries of both countries should take place before the Commission's next meeting. It was agreed that the various sectors would remain in regular consultation on matters of mutual concern.

### **A Delay in the opening of Somalia's National Constituent Assembly**

Somalia's National Constituent Assembly did not open on Thursday [12<sup>th</sup> July] as scheduled under the Roadmap. The TFG Minister for the Constitution and Reconciliation, Abdirahman Hosh Jibril, was quoted as saying that some elders had not yet submitted their list of members for the Assembly and that only 500 names out of the required 825 had been given. He promised that the remaining 325 would be selected shortly. The National Constituent Assembly, which is to consider the draft constitution and make nominations for a new parliament, was scheduled to convene on 12<sup>th</sup> July. The names for the Assembly are being chosen by a 135 strong group of Traditional Elders. One group of the elders, however, are apparently holding up the process over concerns about the draft constitution. The Chairman of the Hawiye clan elders, Mohamed Hassan Haad, is reported to have said that the Council of Elders first wanted a chance to review the draft constitution, stressing that there might be some important corrections that had to be made. It also appears that some elders believe that once they have presented the names for the Assembly, they will have no further role in the political process. Holding up the names, which have already been chosen, allows the elders to continue to exert some influence.

The U.N. Special Representative for Somalia and head of the UN Political Office for Somalia, Ambassador Mahiga, said the elders had the right to express their concerns, though they did not have the authority to make decisions about the constitution or to withhold names for the Constituent Assembly. It was, he said, the members of the Constituent Assembly, rather than the elders, who have to vote on the constitution. The role of the Council of Elders, he added, was to represent the broad range of Somali clans and sub-clans and lend legitimacy to the process. Discussions are, of course, likely to continue in the Constituent Assembly about some aspects of the draft constitution. If approved, the constitution will only serve as a provisional constitution until a national referendum can be held. The deadline of 20<sup>th</sup> August for the end of the transition remains firm as the International Contact Group on Somalia meeting last week in Rome, and the IGAD Ministerial meeting in Addis Ababa this week, reminded all Somali stakeholders and the Signatories to the Roadmap.

This week, Ambassador Mahiga addressed an open letter to Somalis. He underlined that "the end of the transitional period will be an important benchmark, but it is time for us all to begin

to look past 20<sup>th</sup> August and think about the future political dispensation of Somalia.” He added: “Let me urge all Somalis who are stakeholders in the peace process to sustain the political commitment for a broad-based, inclusive and representative post-transitional arrangement. Somalia deserves a political dispensation based on election, not just selection. Ambassador Mahiga said that the adoption of the provisional constitution would indeed be a watershed, but added “let me make an important point: this approval will not be the end point of the constitutional process but the beginning of a new chapter.” He went on: “The Somali people will have ample opportunity to provide input and amendments to the document in the post-August period ahead of a public referendum to be held before the end of the new parliament’s first term.” It was clear, he said, that this was the moment for Somalia to make headway on its path to peace and development: “We must work together to seize this golden opportunity for peace; the world is looking to the future of Somalia and sees a state that serves the Somali people with effective governance through representative, inclusive and accountable institutions at all levels.” Ambassador Mahiga warned of the danger of parties trying to spoil the progress achieved so far: “There will always be a place for vibrant discourse and spirited disagreement”, he said, “but determined action will be taken against those who are willing to undermine and subvert the process. The international community will simply not tolerate spoilers when we are so close to achieving real progress.

Meanwhile, on the ground, Somali National Forces and AMISOM troops have continued to expand their control outside Mogadishu. This week, they advanced beyond the town of Afgoye, 30 kilometres west of Mogadishu which was liberated from Al-Shabaab control at the end of May, to take a major Al-Shabaab's training base at Laantabur. This is another 10 kilometres beyond Afgoye to the south west on the road to Merka which according to TFG commanders will be one of the next targets for government forces. Laantabur was one of six Al-Shabaab training centres and a major base for the extremists. Its loss is considered to be a major setback for the Al Qaeda-linked group. Al-Shabaab has lost several key positions in the last few months, including Afgoye, Baidoa and Afmadow. AMISOM commander, Lt.-General Gutti, said the operation had been designed to enhance security in Mogadishu, denying Al-Shabaab another base from which to launch attacks on the city: “Our aim is to ensure the people of Somalia can continue to pursue national reconciliation free of the fear of terrorist attack,” he said.

### **US “behind all the international efforts to destabilize Eritrea”**

Once again, Eritrea is claiming that the international community is trying to destabilize Eritrea by its accusations that Eritrea has been supporting opposition and terrorist elements in the region, threatening all its neighbours. The most recent statement of the Eritrean Foreign Ministry and letter to the UN Security Council, however, makes abundantly clear the tendency of Eritrean leaders to complicate matters for themselves rather than take up the alternative of simply behaving normally.

These latest responses to critical comment are almost routine but there is a greater emphasis on anti-American invective than in similar past diatribes. The US is behind every move in any form in any part of the world critical of the Eritrean regime, and all of which are aimed at “demonizing the regime”. The US State Department, for example, is busy concocting all kinds of canards to destabilize Eritrea and to effect regime change. That is why it is fabricating stories about the dire level of human trafficking. The fact that thousands of Eritreans often find themselves victims in the hands of ruthless traffickers in Sinai and other places is entirely the responsibility of the US administration.



The recent appointment by the UN of a Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Eritrea is also claimed to have the fingerprints of the US Administration all over it. The regime appears to believe that its now obvious and well-known persecution of its citizens for such 'crimes' as belonging to a Protestant church is the fault of the US Administration. The US Administration is the preferred villain even above the NGOs which campaigned so vociferously against the regime and which were, in fact, largely responsible for the UN Human Rights Council decision.

The Eritrean statements go further in alluding to what Eritrea claims were a series of military offensives by Ethiopia. These were perpetrated at the behest of the US administration as another element in its campaign to destabilize Eritrea. Eritrea's leaders, despite the country's virtual economic and military emasculation, want the world to believe that they are still too powerful for Ethiopia to match them, and hence it is the US Administration's active efforts which lie behind Ethiopia's every move. Eritrea's leaders tell us again and again that the US Administration is suffering sleepless nights over the astounding prosperity and economic success that Eritrea has achieved over the years thanks to its policy of self-reliance.

The oddest part of Eritrea's accusations aren't so much the focus on the US Administration responsibility for everything that goes wrong in Eritrea, but the supposed reasons for this. The motive for the continuous US attacks on Eritrea through its series of trumped up accusations is partly US fear of Eritrea's policies of self-reliance and partly in order to deflect the international community's attention away from what they refer to as the "virtual demarcation" by the Eritrea Ethiopian Border Commission.

This, of course, is a legal nonsense as indeed Eritrea originally called it, but what is even odder is that it is actually a non-issue. In the first place the implementation of the EEBC Decisions has nothing to do with anybody except Eritrea and Ethiopia. To the extent that any other entities, including the US, actually have a role, this is merely encouraging the two parties to make bona fide efforts to seek ways to implement the Decisions, in other words to open the necessary dialogue to determine the physical demarcation of the border. This is normal international practice and the necessity has been obvious for nearly a decade, during which time Eritrea has persistently refused efforts by dozens of people, including US officials, to help. The regular response of Eritrea's leader has consistently been an incomprehensible "resolute rebuff".

Equally, Ethiopia does not need anyone's support to address its differences with Eritrea. As far as implementation of the EEBC decision goes, Ethiopia has always said it is ready to sit down with the Eritrean leadership anywhere, at any time and at any level and without any preconditions to work out the physical demarcation of the border.

Eritrea's destabilizing activities in the region are, of course, another issue. Ethiopia, along with other countries in the region, has persistently been trying to seeking diplomatic solutions to bring this activity to an end. The sanctions that have been imposed on Eritrea were due in large measure to this collective effort on the part of the countries in the region. More importantly, perhaps, Ethiopia does not need any outside support to deal with Eritrea's destabilizing activities against Ethiopia. President Isaias virtually admitted this in his most recent interview with Press TV.

As the Eritrean leadership is now fully aware, Eritrea's acts of destabilization have been and will be met with calculated and proportional force. That is Ethiopia's right and Ethiopia does not need to ask for permission from outside to exercise it. Whatever Eritrea's leaders may admit, this is now a fact that they will have to live with. It should be very clear that the only

option left for Eritrea is to talk not to shoot. Continuation of the latter will certainly lead to the regime's undoing. In fact, the leaders of Eritrea face a stark and single choice: to come clean about destabilization activities in the region and prove that one can behave normally. In reference to relations with Ethiopia, dialogue is the only viable option, and the ball, obviously, is in President Isaias' court.

## News and Views

### Ethiopian Telecom law affirms Skype's legality

On Wednesday [11<sup>th</sup> July], the Ethiopian Parliament approved the draft Proclamation on Telecom Fraud Offences as Proclamation 761/2012. The draft legislation had been referred to the Science, Communication and Technology Standing Committee of the parliament on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2012 for further consideration. The House of Peoples Representatives approved the new law after revisions made to the draft by the Committee. The new legislation cancels the previous prohibition on private use of VOIP services under the 2002 Telecom legislation which included Skype and Google Talk. It does, however, prohibit the provision of telecom operator services without a permit. In recent weeks the Government has clarified the confusion that arose over the draft law after mistaken reports that it was intended to criminalize the private use of Skype and other VOIP services. Ato Shimelis Kemal, the Minister of State at the Government Communications Affairs Office, made it clear that the use of VOIP, including Skype and Google Talk and similar services was not banned and that the proposed law was aimed at controlling service providers that operate without paying taxes for the revenues generated through these services.

### The World Bank approves loans for Kenya-Ethiopia power project

The World Bank yesterday [12<sup>th</sup> July] approved loans for Ethiopia and Kenya totalling US\$684 million to finance a cross-border power-line. This is the first phase of a \$1.3 billion project to develop a regional power grid in East Africa. Ethiopia gets US\$243 million, and Kenya will have the use of US\$441 million. The World Bank says the financing will "allow Ethiopia to sell power needed in Kenya, which faces severe power shortages as its economy blossoms from new oil and gas discoveries." World Bank Vice-President for Africa, Makhtar Diop, explained that the project "**will expand access and lower the cost of electricity supply to homes and businesses across Kenya and help to reduce thermal power emissions in Kenya, a clear benefit to the region's environment.**" Ethiopia would also benefit from additional revenue from the sale of electricity to Kenya and the new jobs that would be created from the construction and installation of the power lines. **Regional economic integration is at the centre of Ethiopia's foreign relations policy and strategy** and the country is undertaking a number of different projects with its neighbours to promote integration and mutual development.

### Inflation rate falls for the fourth consecutive month

Ethiopia's inflation rate has fallen for the fourth consecutive month in June, and now stands at 20.9 per cent. The rate of inflation was 25.5 per cent in May. According to the Central Statistics Agency Office the steady decrease is due to a slow fall in food prices. The Central Statistics Agency said on Monday [9<sup>th</sup> July] that food inflation had dropped to 21.5 per cent, down from 29.2 per cent in May, while non-food inflation in fact rose slightly to 19.8 per cent from 19.6 per cent. Prices have shown no change compared to a rise of 0.9 per cent in the previous month. The IMF's latest reports say that rising inflation rates remain a challenge to Ethiopia's growing

economy, and the Government has been working over the past year to get the inflation rate down to single figures. The steady decrease over the past four months is seen as a positive development in that respect. Ethiopia's economy has seen a tremendous development in the past few years with increased coffee earnings as the country has become Africa's biggest producer, as well as growing gold, oil seeds and livestock exports. The Government expects GDP to show an increase of 11 per cent for 2011/2012 for an eighth consecutive year of double digit growth.

### **UN humanitarian officials visit central areas of Somalia**

A team of UN officials led by Mark Bowden, U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative for Somalia has been visiting areas of central Somalia to evaluate the scale of the humanitarian crises in the area. Mr. Bowden was in Dhusamareb in Galmudug region at the start of the week where he held talks with officials of the pro-government militia, Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a, who administer the town and control the surrounding area. He then went on to Garowe, the capital of Puntland, where he and his team have been holding talks with Puntland officials including Puntland President, Abdirahman Mohamed Farole who urged the UN to scale up the delivery of humanitarian aid to Puntland. Discussions centred on ways to tackle the humanitarian problems of Puntland and Somalia as a whole. Subjects included the creation of new camps for refugees in Puntland, the facilitation of repatriation for those who wished to return to their home areas and the delivery of humanitarian aid to locals in remote areas of Puntland. Another issue that was discussed was ways to tackle increasing desertification arising from human activity. On Wednesday, (July 11th) the UN group were at the port of Bosasso where they visited the victims of the fire at the Ajouran Camp, and held talks with ministers and security officials.

### **Welcome for a UN Special Rapporteur on Eritrea**

The establishment of a Special Rapporteur on Eritrea by the UN Human Rights Council has been welcomed by Eritrean human rights organizations. The UN Human Rights Council agreed that a Special Rapporteur would be appointed at the September session of the Council and report back at the 23<sup>rd</sup> session next year. Human Rights Concern-Eritrea, a UK-based organization, said that the Human Rights Council resolution last Friday sent "a clear signal that human rights concerns must supersede other considerations" in Eritrea. Christian Solidarity Worldwide said it expected the new appointment to focus increased attention on human rights in Eritrea and another organization said "the Government of Eritrea has been presented with an opportunity to change the course of its human rights record. It should fully cooperate with the new special Rapporteur and put an end to the chronic abuse of human rights in the country." The Human Rights Council's resolution, adopted by consensus, strongly condemned the "continued widespread and systematic violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms committed by the Eritrean authorities." It also condemned cases of arbitrary and extrajudicial execution, enforced disappearances, the use of torture, arbitrary and incommunicado detention in inhumane and degrading conditions, as well as severe restrictions on the freedoms of expression, religion, peaceful assembly and association. It noted that there were between 5,000 and 10,000 political prisoners, and also strongly criticized the forced conscription of citizens for indefinite periods, reported coercion of minors into the military and the mining industry, intimidation of family members of those suspected of leaving and a shoot-to-kill policy at the border to try to prevent people fleeing the country.