

A Week in the Horn 16th March 2012

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Kenya's role in AMISOM; South Africa establishes diplomatic relations with Somalia

The Chief of the Defence Forces of Kenya has given details of the deployment of Kenyan forces in AMISOM to a Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Foreign Relations in Nairobi. General Karangi said that Kenya would deploy 4,660 troops as its contribution to AMISOM and that the Kenyan sector of operations would be commanded by a Kenyan commander. AMISOM will now have a military council and staff of 85, and its commander, currently a Ugandan officer, will have two deputies, one from Burundi and one from Kenya. Kenya will also provide the Spokesperson for AMISOM and its head of intelligence. AMISOM's staff will be made up of officers from Uganda, Burundi, Kenya and Djibouti and joined by Sierra Leonean officers once the battalion from Sierra Leone is deployed as expected in June. Kenyan forces, like other members of AMISOM will be paid a monthly allowance and receive accommodation, food, and medical cover including evacuation and treatment by the UN in case of injury.

On Friday last week [9th March], the AU Peace and Security Commissioner, Ambassador Lamamra said that the Chiefs of Staff of the troop-contributing countries had agreed that Djiboutian troops should be deployed in Belet Weyne by the end of April, and that 2,500 troops from Uganda and Burundi would be sent to Baidoa. Ambassador Lamamra said this would allow Ethiopian troops in both Belet Weyne and Baidoa to withdraw to Ethiopia as they wished to do. Ambassador Lamamra added that there was a possibility that Ethiopian forces might be asked by IGAD and the TFG to assist further but he noted that as Ethiopian forces were not part of AMISOM the cost of their operations was being covered by Ethiopia's own resources and budget. "I don't see how we can ask them to go further, to do more if there is no accompanying support package", he said, but he added that "if we [can] succeed to work out some support package for Ethiopia, we may be in a position to request that the government considers the possibility to help us elsewhere." Ethiopia has made it clear it wishes to withdraw as soon as possible but it has not ruled out the possibility of further action should this be requested or considered necessary. On Tuesday [13th March], President Sheikh Sharif met with Prime Minister Meles in Addis Ababa and much of the discussion revolved round the need to establish functional and

acceptable local administrations in the areas of Bay, Bakool and Hiiraan which would make it easy for Ethiopian troops to be replaced by AMSIOM forces in the next two or three months.

A meeting of the Joint Security Committee in Mogadishu on Monday [12th] agreed on the deployment of AMISOM forces into southern and central regions. In addition to the members of the committee, those attending included Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, Ambassador Mahiga, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, and representatives of the AU, the EU, Puntland and Galmudug and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a as well as AMISOM officers and the Chief of the Ugandan Defence Staff, General Nyakairima. Prime Minister Abdiweli said the decision would help TFG and allied militia forces establish security in areas from which Al-Shabaab had been driven out. General Nyakairima said AMISOM would deploy its forces in central and southern Somalia as soon as possible. Ugandan and Burundi forces will push out into Lower and Middle Shebelle regions and move into Bay and Bakool regions, taking over from Ethiopian forces in Baidoa. The plan also involves Kenyan and Sierra Leonean forces securing Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba regions, making Kismayo their headquarters. Djibouti forces will be in Galmudug, Galgudud and Hiiraan regions. General Nyakairima said he hoped Somalia would be completely peaceful by August when the transitional period ends. AMISOM Commander, General Mugisha said that Sierra Leonean forces would arrive 'soon' and that Kenyan forces had joined AMISOM to work with Somali national forces to liberate Kismayo before August. The TFG Minister of Interior and National Security, Abdisamad Mo'alim, confirmed the plans.

Following the recent decision of Al-Shabaab to appoint Sheikh Hussein Dahir 'Aweys' as its commander of operations in southern Somalia, Al-Shabaab has reportedly reorganized its command structure in Lower and Middle Juba regions, removing its militia commander Sheikh Abubakar Ali Aden, for failing to succeed against Kenyan, Somali National Forces and allied militias, including Ras Kamboni and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a forces. According to SomaliaReport, Sheikh Abubakar has been replaced by Sheikh Abdirahman Hudeyf, a judge of Al-Shabaab's Juba regional court. At a meeting in Dinsoor ten days ago, Sheikh Hassan Dahir and Sheikh Muktar Robow discussed new tactics with local Al-Shabaab commanders and demanded further recruitment of fighters. Plans include increased guerrilla hit and run attacks, night attacks and more suicide bombings and assassinations. Warnings were given to traders not to deal with Ethiopian troops on threat of death, and Sheikh Muktar Robow warned that Al-Shabaab would target anyone who works with anti-Islamist groups in Somalia. Subsequently, Al-Shabaab claimed that the attack on Yurkut on the road between Luq and Baidoa on Saturday last week [10th March] was part of their new approach. Ethiopian troops drove off an attack on a military convoy and a military post in the village, and according to TFG officers nearly 40 Al-Shabaab fighters were killed. Ethiopian forces are now expected to advance towards Waajid, some 80 kms east of Luq and just inside the border of the Bakool region, and about 100 kms north-west of Baidoa. Residents suggest that Al-Shabaab is preparing to try to defend the town.

The UN Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden, visited Baidoa at the weekend to assess humanitarian needs for the area. He met with government officials, including the TFG's chairman for Bay region, Abdifitah Mohamed Ibrahim 'Geesey', local elders and NGOs and leaders of the Internally Displaced Persons camps at Baidoa. Abdifitah said that the UN had been unable to deliver any humanitarian assistance for the last three years, and Mark Bowden confirmed that UN agencies would now return and re-open their offices in Bay region to deliver humanitarian assistance.

Meanwhile, South Africa has announced that it is establishing diplomatic relations with Somalia. The announcement was made on Tuesday [13th March] by South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, in Pretoria after a meeting with Somalia's Foreign Minister, Abdullahi Haji Hassan when they signed an agreement to set up formal diplomatic relations. South Africa's High Commissioner to Kenya will be accredited to

Somalia until circumstances allowed an embassy to be opened in Mogadishu. The South African Minister also announced that South Africa was committing R100 million (US\$13 million) for capacity and institution building and support in key government sectors. The South African minister said South Africa was also ready to share its experience in constitution-building with Somalia. She noted that South Africa would be happy to receive Somali diplomatic representation in the near future. Abdullahi Haji Hassan thanked South Africa for its support and said it could learn from South Africa's peace building and constitution-building activities. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane noted that a political solution was the only option to resolve the situation in Somalia, and she encouraged all stakeholders remaining outside the peace process, including Al-Shabaab, to lay down their arms and to participate in talks to ensure a Somali owned process. She voiced her concern about the continuing violence in Somalia and the on-going problem of piracy along the East African coasts. Two South Africans were captured by Somali pirates off the Tanzanian coast in October 2010 and are still captive.

Sudan and South Sudan agree on status of nationals and boundary demarcation

Following a week of talks in Addis Ababa, on Tuesday 13th March Sudan and the South Sudan signed agreements on issues of nationalities and on demarcation of their boundaries. The framework agreement on nationality gives nationals of each state the right to enjoy "the four freedoms [namely] freedoms of residence, freedom of movement, freedom to undertake economic activity and freedom to acquire and dispose property". In other words, this provides citizens basic freedoms in each other's nations. Citizens of the other state can live, work and own property on either side of the border and travel between the two nations. In order to follow up implementation of this agreement, the two parties have agreed to establish a standing Joint High Level Committee on the Status of Nationals of the Other State, comprising representatives of the ministries of internal affairs and other interested bodies.

The parties also agreed to cooperate to provide the nationals of each state with appropriate identification and other relevant documents relating to their status, work and residence permits. The parties also agreed to the involvement of the AU's High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to help convene the first meetings of the joint committee and also facilitate implementation of the agreement.

In the agreement on the demarcation of their common boundary the two parties are setting up a committee to demarcate the boundary in accordance with the physical description, delimitation and corresponding recommendations of the Technical Committee for Border Line Demarcation between North and South Sudan of January 1956. The parties said they agreed on the demarcation exercise in order to contribute to the maintenance of peaceful co-existence between the two states and both recognized the urgent necessity to demarcate their boundaries. A Joint Boundary Commission is to be established within two weeks to handle the demarcation process. This will manage and supervise the demarcation and maintenance of the boundary pillars and beacons. The Joint Demarcation Committee will also establish a Joint Technical Committee consisting of equal numbers of surveyors, cartographers and other appropriate experts and will develop a detailed plan to accomplish the demarcation process.

These agreements on two of the three most contentious issues between Sudan and South Sudan were signed by the chief negotiators, Idris Abdelkadir of Sudan and Pagun Amum of South Sudan in the presence of the co-chairs of AUHIP, Thabo Mbeki and Pierre Buyoya and of Ambassador Ramtane Lamamra, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security. They will now be signed by President Salva Kiir of South Sudan and President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan at a summit to be held in the South Sudan capital of Juba in the next week or two. The AUHIP chairmen are travelling to Khartoum and Juba to discuss the process. Before the summit the Joint Political and Security Mechanism is due to meet to discuss common concerns and challenges. This is the

committee charged with monitoring the non-aggression pact signed earlier this year – both sides have accused the other of violating this accord.

The early stages of the discussions last week were characterized by harsh words from both sides, but by Tuesday [13th] there was recognition of the need to change the approach and to work as partners rather than adversaries. This is, of course, vital for the co-existence of two states which complement each other so closely economically and socially. AUHIP played a determinant role in these successful sessions, and will continue its role in finalizing the remaining unresolved issues of which the most important is oil. The two sides still remain far apart on this bitter and costly dispute, and further talks have been postponed until after the forthcoming summit.

Meanwhile, Kenya is taking a new regional diplomatic initiative to mediate the oil dispute between Sudan and South Sudan. President Mwai Kibaki launched the initiative following a request from President Salva Kiir during his recent visit to Nairobi to participate in the ground breaking ceremony at the site of the proposed Lamu port. Kenya's Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, has visited Kampala where he met President Yoweri Museveni to seek Uganda's support for this new IGAD initiative. Kenya's Vice President, Kalonzo Musyoka, is shortly travelling to Khartoum, and Foreign Minister, Moses Wetangula is visiting Mogadishu, Addis Ababa and Djibouti on a similar mission.

Talking, not shooting is the only choice for Eritrea

Early yesterday morning, the March, units of the Ethiopian Defence forces attacked military targets 18 kilometres inside Eritrea. The targets were three military camps where the Eritrean government has been training and arming terrorist and subversive groups, including the one which recently attacked, killed and abducted European tourists in the Afar Regional State. The Ethiopian military units returned safely after successfully carrying out this limited military measure intended to safeguard security along Ethiopia's border with Eritrea. This was a careful, calculated and proportional response to the continued destabilizing activities being carried out by Eritrea and specifically a response to the recent attack against innocent tourists in the Afar region. It is a message to the Eritrean regime that none of its aggressive activities will remain unanswered. Ethiopia believes this response will convey a very clear message to the Eritrean government that violation of its borders cannot continue indefinitely.

Already, it's far from clear that the regime in Asmara has the stomach for learning lessons. In a statement yesterday, the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs resorted to its usual exercise of externalizing responsibility. Its statement stopped short of fully acknowledging the operations, though interestingly it claimed they were no surprise since, according to the Ministry, "Ethiopia had long succeeded with the support of its superpower handlers to deny Eritrea its capability to defend itself through sanctions." It isn't entirely clear if the statement was trying to explain away the failure of Eritrean forces in their attempt to respond to yesterday's operation, but more interestingly, it suggests the regime still appears to believe it takes a coalition of superpowers to make it change its mind about resorting to adventurism as the means to promote its interests.

Eritrea's Information Minister went beyond this to call Ethiopia's claim a deliberate ploy to deflect the international community's attention from internal problems. This, of course, is one of Eritrea's more frequent mantras. However, more unexpected is the fact that even the usually more fiery of the regime's officials have not been as assertive or as keen to indulge in sabre-rattling as usual. Indeed, according to him, Asmara is resisting being "dragged into this acrimony and provocation." This is surprising coming in the wake of a successful Ethiopian operation against Eritrean forces. To make up for this apparent lack of bravado, Minister Ali did however, if somewhat cautiously, suggest Asmara was considering its next line of options. He said that

Eritrea was well aware of the price of war having fought for its independence for 30 years and would therefore not be dragged into conflict again. He has apparently already forgotten that Eritrea only a decade ago launched an unnecessary and futile invasion of Ethiopia which cost at least 20,000 Eritrean lives. In this context, the regime would be well advised to come to terms with the fact that it does not have either the wherewithal or the intent to engage in any full-scale campaign against Ethiopia. Now it is clear that even its incessant destabilizing activities will not remain unanswered in the future, it would be wise for the leaders of Eritrea to moderate their obstinacy and to give dialogue a chance.

If indeed the real problem between Eritrea and Ethiopia is, as the Eritrean regime claims, the unresolved border dispute between the two countries, even though it is basically a non-issue, then the only way out of the dilemma is talking and not shooting. And indeed, the latter choice has long since ceased to be any choice for Asmara. Ethiopia firmly believes that disputes between two neighbouring countries can and should only be solved by peaceful means. Based on this principled position, Ethiopia has repeatedly expressed its firm desire to engage in dialogue and negotiations with the Eritrean government. Despite these numerous efforts to reach a peaceful and negotiated settlement, the Eritrean government has chosen to continue with belligerent attacks on civilians and infrastructural targets through its surrogate terrorist groups. Given its consistent and steadfast adherence to this peaceful approach, it is dismaying that Eritrea has continued to escalate its activities as demonstrated by the recent killings and abduction of tourists inside Ethiopia. It is this that has meant Ethiopia must reserve its right to take retaliatory measures against Eritrea's violence. Nevertheless, the Ethiopian Government still upholds its determination that the problems between Eritrea and Ethiopia can only be resolved through negotiations and dialogue.

A Forum on Business and Investment in Rome

A Business and Investment Forum featuring the opportunities available in Ethiopia was held in Rome from 7th to 9th March, with an Ethiopian delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hailemariam Desalegn. The delegation included representatives of about fifty Ethiopian public and private companies engaged in agriculture, agro-processing, construction, textile and garments, leather and leather products, shoe manufacturing and tourism. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister held talks with Italian Foreign Minister, Giulio Terzi di Sant' Agata, with discussions covering a wide range issues of bilateral, regional and global concerns of mutual interest. Following the meeting with the Foreign Minister, a round-table discussion was held at the Italian Foreign Ministry with Italian public enterprises engaged in the financing and facilitation of private investments in developing countries. These included organizations like SIMEST (Financing of Italian Investments and Businesses), SACE (Facilitation of Investment Guarantees), UNIDO, Assafrica (the Association of Italian Investors and Businesses engaged in Africa), the Italian Institute of Foreign Trade, and a number of Italian banks.

In all these discussions, the Ethiopian delegation highlighted the existing political goodwill of both governments to encourage business and investment relations, inviting the participating public enterprises and the Italian government to make good use of the opportunities available in Ethiopia and facilitate the necessary financing for Italian companies wishing to do business there. Presentations on Ethiopia's current five-year Growth and Transformation Plan highlighting the possibilities and developments taking place in the infrastructure sector were made by Tadesse Haile, State Minister of Industry, and by Mehret Debebe, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation.

The main purpose of the visit to Rome was the convening of the Ethio-Italian Business Forum which took place on 8th March in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam and the leadership of Confindustria, the Confederation of Italian Industrialists. Some 300 participants from the business communities of both countries took part. Statements and presentations were made by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Vice President of Confindustria, the Italian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ethiopia's State Minister of Industry and representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Development Bank and of the Privatization Agency as well as of UNIDO, Assafrica and other organizations. In the afternoon business-to-business discussions were held between Ethiopian and Italian entrepreneurs. These culminated in an encouraging number of contracts and agreements being concluded between the two sides.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister and his delegation also met and held discussions with the President of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Italian Senate, Senator Lamberto Dini, and with representatives of a number of Italian companies which have decided to invest in Ethiopia in various sectors. These include renewable energy, agro-processing, leather and shoes, fashion and design and infrastructural development. The delegation also met with members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Rome. The Deputy Prime Minister briefed the Diaspora on political, economic and social developments in Ethiopia, with an extensive account of the Renaissance Dam and on the need for the Diaspora to contribute its share to this national endeavour.

Horn of Africa Initiative: infrastructural conference

A two-day conference for the Horn of Africa Initiative with the theme of "Interconnecting member states of the Horn of Africa for Peace, Security and Sustainable Development" took place in Nairobi this week on 12th and 13th March. Organized by IGAD and the EU commission, it brought together relevant ministry officials from IGAD member states, invited experts, development partners and representatives of the EU, the African Development Bank and other regional and international organizations. Ethiopia's eight-person delegation was headed by Ahmed Shide, State Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

The Horn of Africa Initiative originated with the European Commission as part of the EU Political Partnership for Peace, Security and Development in the Horn of Africa. It is intended to be a pragmatic framework of cooperation regardless of historical, institutional or political difficulties. This week's conference was called to demonstrate how member states can deal with enemies of cooperation and peace, and to alert investment banks and development partners about key regional infrastructure projects in the region which need financing and development. The conference also provided a show-case for priority regional infrastructural projects in the areas of transport, water and energy.

In his opening remarks Mr Ahmed Shide spoke of the necessity for IGAD to take bold decisions and focus on laying the foundations of regional integration through building the necessary infrastructure. He noted that the adoption of the Minimum Integration Plan by IGAD at its 20th summit provided a coherent framework to guide the priority development programmes encompassed by the Horn of Africa Initiative. He urged the international donor community, development partners, infrastructural funding agency and private sector investors to get involved in these prioritized regional projects.

Engineer Mahboub Maalim, the Executive Secretary of IGAD, underlined that the Horn of Africa Initiative was part and parcel of the Minimum Integration Plan, noting that out of the US\$7 billion required US\$2 billion was already available. The gap is expected to be covered by those concerned about development in the region and the private sector. Dr Elham Ibrahim, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, stressed that the conference was in line with the

2012 AU summit theme of “Boosting Intra-African Trade”, which can only be realized by improving the regional infrastructural interconnections. As chair of the IGAD Partners’ Forum, Italy welcomed the initiative and stood ready to provide support. The EU also confirmed its political and financial commitment to regional economic development and political cooperation. The two day conference was the first such IGAD conference on infrastructure and provided a rare opportunity for regional discussion on the issue.

The 2011 Report on the MDGs: Ethiopia commended

The 2011 Report to assess the progress of African states towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was jointly produced by the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. In the report, the top performers, among which Ethiopia is one, were commended for their efforts in achieving some of the MDGs ahead of schedule. Notwithstanding the impact of the food, fuel and financial crises between 2006 and 2008, the report stated that some African countries, including Ethiopia, did manage to make real strides in poverty alleviation. It also ranked Ethiopia among the top performers in reducing poverty and infant mortality rates.

The report cited Ethiopia’s Productivity Safety Net Programme (PNSP) as an impressive and enviable success. Between 2005 and 2008, the PNSP provided for the construction of numerous community assets. These included the building of 2.1 million kilometres of stone embankments to prevent soil erosion and improve water conservation; the planting of over a billion trees to provide for shade and improve soil and water conservation; 7000 kms of small-scale irrigation canals; and 191,600 ponds and water reservoirs to hold water for agricultural purposes. The programme also prevented vulnerable people from being forced to sell their assets as a result of external shocks and at the same time allowed for increasing the household incomes of beneficiaries. It also improved food security for nearly eight million people who had previously relied solely on emergency food relief. The report indicated that this innovative programme had contributed to a reduction of around 41 per cent in malnourishment between 1990 and 2007. The cumulative effect of all these efforts, the report underlined, was a 30 per cent reduction in the country’s overall poverty level.

Ethiopia was on the list of African countries leading in the reduction of malnutrition and the country’s strong economic performance and its efforts to improve pro-poor economic growth were specifically mentioned as the main driving forces enabling the country to reduce malnutrition in a sustainable fashion.

With respect to universal primary education, Ethiopia was in the majority of African countries that are set to achieve universal primary enrolment by the target date of 2015. The report indicated that this improvement had been driven by specific interventions backed by a resolute political will to achieve universal primary education and by adequate resource allocations. The report recalled the country’s low initial net enrolment rate (24 per cent in 1990) and commended the “massive achievement” of reaching the figure of 86.5 percent in 2008/09. It is actually now over 97 percent. This robust progress was based on, among other measures, construction of class rooms; 16,000 were built in 2004 and 25,000 in 2008/09. Of these, 80 percent are in rural areas. In addition, the report noted that education had been emphasized in public policies and prioritized in public spending.

Ethiopia is again cited as the best performer in Africa concerning improvement in women’s share in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector. This is attributed to the government’s special emphasis on small and medium-size enterprises as an effective means of creating job

opportunities for women. Ethiopia also features in the best performing countries' list for the reduction of child mortality, with a 50 percent fall between 1990 and 2009. The report notes that with its very high population and a very high initial under-five mortality rate, it was a particularly difficult challenge for Ethiopia to achieve this reduction. The country is, however, now on track to meet the target by 2015. Several factors are involved in this, not least the crucial part played by political will to reduce child mortality. In addition, the country has greatly expanded the supply of health workers in rural areas to provide information and advocacy on nutritional and vaccination information, and general child medical advice to mothers. The country is registering tremendous progress in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases as well as ensuring access to safe drinking water.

Since the 1990s, reducing poverty and ensuring real human development have been the major objectives of the government of Ethiopia. This vision is explicitly incorporated in various government development policy documents. The MDGs have played a central role in informing government policies and several national and sector specific policy documents are closely aligned with the MDGs. Indeed, the MDGs are well placed in the national development context of the country. In line with the objective of poverty reduction and social development, the government has spent more than 60 percent of total expenditure on pro-poor-oriented sectors, including agriculture, education, health, and water and road development during the last ten years. This demonstrates its real levels of dedication to bring about pro-poor economic growth and fully achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Last week, of course, the World Health Organization and UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply and Sanitation also reported on overall progress towards achieving the MDG targets for sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The report dates from 2010, and at that date the target for drinking water was being met. Since 1990, more than 2 billion people have gained access to improved drinking water. However, although 1.8 billion people have gained access to improved sanitation since 1990, overall the sanitation target is not being met. UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon said it was essential to accelerate progress before the 2015 target date, noting also that some regions particularly sub-Saharan Africa, were lagging behind. In addition, he noted that rural dwellers and the poor often missed out on improvements to drinking water and sanitation. Reducing these disparities, he said, must be a priority. In July 2010, the UN General Assembly recognized that safe and clean drinking water and sanitation are human rights, deriving from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as to the right to life and human dignity. In other words the right to water and sanitation is now anchored in the framework of the right to an adequate standard of living, making it as legally binding as all other rights inscribed in UN treaties.

In fact the figures in this report date from 2010, and considerable progress has certainly been made since then. The report notes, for example, that Ethiopia was within 5-10% of achieving the drinking water target at that time, and that less than 50% of the population had access to improved water sources. Now, eighteen months later, it has more than reached the target. The use of surface water has also gone down sharply. At the same time, the government remains very aware that there are millions of people who still do not have access to improved drinking water sources, especially in pastoral areas which have been affected by drought over the last couple of years. There is also a disparity between the improvement in urban areas and rural areas. The figures in the report indicate that between 90-100% of the Ethiopian population in urban areas has access to improved drinking water, but the figure for rural areas in 2010 was still less than 50%. It is now much higher but it still remains less than urban areas. Sanitation was more disappointing, though the estimates were that overall the world was within 10% of being on track. Less than 50% of the population of Ethiopia had improved sanitation facilities by 2010,

and there was a similar divergence between urban and rural areas. Since 2010 the situation has again improved substantially and Ethiopia now expects to achieve the target by 2015.

The report stressed that overall rural access to water and sanitation remained much lower than urban access and that splitting urban and rural data, as might be expected, showed disparities between the richest and poorest population quintiles. It also points out that its definitions and data sources are often different from those used by national governments, that estimates made in the report are likely to differ from national estimates, and that changes will have occurred since 2010. Overall, however, there is still much that can be done. As UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon noted there are still 780 million people in the world without access to an improved drinking water source, and many more without access to improved sanitation: "It is essential to accelerate progress in the remaining time before the MDG deadline".

News and Views:

Ethio-German Political Consultations held in Addis

The second round of the yearly bilateral political consultations at Director General level between Ethiopia and Germany were held here in Addis Ababa on Wednesday 14th March. The two delegations were led by Ambassador Grum Abay, Director General for European Affairs, and Ambassador Walter Lindner, Director General for African Affairs at the German Foreign Ministry. The two sides considered the implementation of understandings reached during the first bilateral political consultations which were held in February 2011 in Berlin. The discussions also focused on regional issues, including the latest developments in the Horn of Africa sub-region as well as domestic political and governance issues. These political consultations once again demonstrated that Ethiopia and Germany have reached largely similar assessments on the agenda items that were discussed. They agreed to work closely in the realization of the understandings reached during the meeting. The talks were held in an open and friendly manner and can be considered a reflection of the strategic importance of the relationship that exists between Ethiopia and Germany. The next round of political consultations is scheduled to be held in Berlin in 2013.

Kenyan authorities blame Al-Shabaab for Nairobi grenade attack

Last weekend [10th and 11th March], grenade attacks at a Nairobi bus station killed six people and wounded over twenty others. The Kenyan authorities blamed the blasts on Al-Shabaab. Police Spokesman, Charles Owino, said the attack was a cowardly act by Al-Shabaab elements, adding "we will not relent in the war. We will get them and we will continue with the war." A few hours earlier the police had issued a warning that attacks by terror groups might be imminent and urged Kenyans to remain vigilant in crowded areas and report any suspicious characters to authorities. Kenya's Internal Security Minister, George Saitoti, said, "Obviously we suspect this attack to be linked to Al Shabaab, and we are going to pursue them within and into Somalia." Kenyan Vice President Kalonzo Musyoka, visiting the victims of the attack at the Jomo Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi, said "This is an act of people who think that they can puncture [our] resolve to fight terror. It is a difficult moment but it should strengthen our resolve and I am sure we will win." Somali Islamists denied being behind Saturday's grenade blasts, and a press release from Al-Shabaab spokesman, Sheikh Abdulaziz Abu Musab, said Al-Shabaab "bears no responsibility whatsoever for the turbulence". However, a senior Al-Shabaab official in Gedo region, Sheikh Adam Mohamed Barre, did claim that the attack had been carried out by Al-Shabaab fighters and said more suicide attacks would take place in Nairobi. Whether or not Al-

Shabaab was responsible, the explosions were clearly the work of sympathizers and a response to the calls for attacks against Kenya by Al-Shabaab leaders in recent weeks. A previous grenade attack in Nairobi in October last year, shortly after Kenyan forces crossed into Somalia, killed one person and wounded thirty others.

Sudan is looking to boost its oil and gas exploration

Sudan's State Oil Minister, Ishaq Adam Gamaa, said over the weekend [11th/12th March] that Sudan was actively looking to narrow the gaps between oil demand and production following the loss of oil fields after the independence of South Sudan in July last year. The Oil Ministry has opened the bidding for six blocs for exploration (Blocs 8, 10, 12B, 14, 15 and 18) spread across the country. Around 60 firms from China, other Asian countries and Europe as well as from the Americas, including Brazil, are said to have expressed interest, and ten bids have so far been received from companies who want to explore the new oil and gas blocs. The bidding deadline will expire at the end of March. Some of the new blocs are located in areas including Blue Nile and South Kordofan States where there are conflicts currently going on. Some energy analysts have expressed their concern that Sudan would first need to manage and improve the security situation before it can expect results from these efforts to boost exploration or to find and develop any significant new finds. Although the focus of the exploration is expected to be on oil, the State Oil Minister noted that Sudan has already identified a considerable amount of gas and although gas wasn't currently the focus of the operating companies the government does want to increase its emphasis. It would like to increase gas production to help meet rising local demands for power and cooking fuel. He mentioned that a 400MW power plant in al-Fula in South Kordofan would be operational by 2013 as part of these efforts.

Workshop on religious institutions' role in image building

This week, the Ethiopian Inter-Religious Council, a consultative forum of the six major religious institutions in Ethiopia formed in 2010, held a workshop to review efforts in image building. The workshop was attended by the religious leaders: His Holiness Abune Paulos, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; Sheikh Ahemedin Abdullahi Chello, President of the Ethiopian Council for Islamic Affairs; His Holiness Abune Birhane Eyesus, Archbishop of the Ethiopian Catholic Church; the Reverend Alemu Sheta, Secretary General Evangelical Fellowship of Ethiopia; Pastor Alemu Haile, President of the Ethiopian mission of the International Seventh Day Adventist Church; and the Reverend Waqsiyum Edosa, President of the Ethiopian Mekane Yesus Evangelical Church. Also participating were Dr. Shifferaw Tekelemariam, Minister of Federal Affairs, and Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, State Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Berhane told participants that Ethiopia's image did not reflect the changes arising from the country's dynamic development. Image building had lacked coordination. He explained the government now plans to establish a public diplomacy board where all stakeholders will be represented, and which will streamline all their efforts, and he also outlined the efforts being made by the Ministry's Public Diplomacy department to encourage image building. Dr Shifferaw emphasized that the constitution guaranteed the freedom of religion but in the face of foreign-backed efforts to attack this, religious institutions need to work hard to maintain the age-old tradition of religious tolerance in Ethiopia. Dr Shifferaw said his ministry would work closely with the council to build Ethiopia's image. The religious leaders stressed the peaceful coexistence among religious institutions and vowed to work seriously to promote the image of the nation in various ways.

Energy developments in Eastern Africa

The Norwegian Oil Company Statoil last month announced it had found large volumes of natural gas off the coast of Tanzania. Statoil said the find was huge: “our biggest ever discovery as an operator outside Norway”. It also confirms East Africa’s new reputation as one of the energy world’s most promising new frontiers. The threat of piracy might loom large in this area, but it has not prevented a new scramble for concessions, led by some of the world’s biggest oil companies. Suddenly Mozambique and Tanzania, which until recently did not even feature on the world energy map, have become some of the gas industry’s hottest properties. This interest was underlined last month when Royal Dutch Shell and Thailand’s PTT Exploration, launched rival offers for Cove Energy, a small Africa-focused oil and gas explorer with an 8.5 per cent stake in a big gas field in Mozambique. Two state-owned Indian groups, have also expressed an interest in bidding for Cove. India’s Petroleum Minister said that in order to achieve energy security, India needed to invest more intensively across the globe. The biggest finds in the region have been offshore Mozambique, by Anadarko Petroleum and Cove, and by ENI of Italy. ENI called their discovery one of the most important it had had in terms of the quality of the reservoir, its size and the markets it was close to. The head of ENI’s exploration and production division called the find “transformational.” These two fields combined could contain up to 60 trillion cubic feet of recoverable resources of gas, nearly as much as Kuwait’s entire reserves. That could be enough to turn Mozambique into a highly profitable major exporter of liquefied natural gas to China and India.