

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs



A Week in the Horn



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Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Telephone: (+251) 11 151 7345
Fax : (+251) 11 151 4300

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Prime Minister Hailemariam attends BRICS summit in South Africa

The fifth BRICS Summit opened in Durban South Africa on Tuesday in the presence of President Jacob Zuma of South Africa, President Manmohan Singh of India, President Vladimir Putin of Russia, President Dilma Rousseff of Brazil and the newly elected President of China, Xi Jinping. The BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, accounts for 25% of the world's GDP and is home to 40% of the world population. It aims to promote peace, security, development and co-operation. The BRICS summits are international relations conferences held annually between the five nations in rotation. India hosted last year's summit. The two day Summit under the overarching theme, "BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialization" was the first meeting of the BRICS group, of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, in Africa; and South Africa had also invited various regional economic groupings including IGAD, as well as 15 African Heads of State and Government. Prime Minister Hailemariam attended in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union and as Chairperson of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development.

Underlining the continent's importance as a destination for investment for the BRICS states, the leaders of the group met with African leaders under the theme, "Unlocking Africa's potential: BRICS and Africa Cooperation on Infrastructure". Speaking in his capacity as Chairperson of the African Union, Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed the increasingly important role of emerging economies such as the BRICS, in the global economy. He pointed out that with Africa's economic growth gathering momentum at an average rate of over 5 per cent since the start of the millennium, despite the interruptions of the economic crisis in the developed world, the continent was set to become the next growth pole and take its rightful place in the global economy. The AU Chairperson described the relationship between Africa and BRICS as mutual, conducted as it was between a group of emerging global economies which have become the largest investors and trade partners in the continent and a fast growing continent with over a billion people. He described this as a win-win relationship, and said he was confident that both sides would be able to seize the immense opportunities that lay ahead.

Africa, however, Prime Minister Hailemariam noted, did still face huge infrastructural gaps posing major obstacles for sustaining its growth momentum. The shortfall was particularly significant in energy and transport. He therefore expressed his hope and expectation that the partnership with BRICS countries would provide much needed support to Africa's quest for visible infrastructural development. Africa's economic performance could be significantly improved if this was effectively addressed. He noted that a World Bank study had estimated that economic growth could be increased by up two per cent a year if the infrastructure deficit was resolved. He noted that the BRICS countries were already engaged in bi-lateral assistance to African countries and he looked forward to a visibly enhanced partnership in infrastructure development. In this context, he underlined the value of a funding mechanism for purposes of development in general and infrastructure in particular.



The Prime Minister, who is also the current chair of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, noted that the promotion of regional cooperation in Africa was critical in bridging the infrastructural gaps. Integration of Regional Blocks, he said, had major importance in enhancing competitiveness and in boosting trade and investment. He said funding infrastructure projects that help to integrate Regional Blocks would have paramount importance in boosting trade and investment, and help in enhancing Africa competitiveness. He added that it was gratifying to learn that the BRICS leaders were in agreement on this. He took the opportunity to hope that progress would be made sooner rather than later.

The BRICS Summit in its declaration, the eThekweni Declaration and Action Plan underlined the fact that BRICS states recognize the importance of regional integration for sustainable growth in Africa and for the continent's development and eradication of poverty. It strongly reaffirmed the BRICS support for the integration processes of Africa. The Summit also announced its support for African countries within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in their industrialization process through stimulating foreign direct investment, knowledge exchange, capacity-building and diversification of imports from Africa. It noted that "we acknowledge that infrastructure development in Africa is important and recognize the strides made by the African Union to identify and address the continent's infrastructure challenges through the development of the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the AU NEPAD Africa Action Plan (2010-2015), the NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI), as well as the Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plans that have identified priority infrastructure development projects that are critical to promoting regional integration and industrialization." The BRICS states, reaffirming their support for sustainable infrastructure development in Africa, pledged to stimulate infrastructure investment on the basis of mutual benefit to support industrial development, job-creation, skills development, food and nutrition security and poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa.

They agreed to establish a New Development Bank for mobilizing resources to fund infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries. South African President Zuma said after the Summit that "we instructed finance ministers to look into this matter and are ready to launch the bank," but any launch still seems some way away. They agreed to establish a Contingent Reserve Arrangement with an initial size of 100 billion US dollars to help BRICS countries forestall short-term liquidity pressures, provide mutual support and further strengthen financial stability. The progress of these two initiatives will be reviewed at the BRICS' next meeting in September 2013 in Russia. They are also considering a proposal that the next Director-General of the WTO should be from a developing country. One important achievement was the establishment of a BRICS Business Council to bring together the leading business structures of the five members.



South Africa – Ethiopia Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting

The third meeting of the South Africa- Ethiopia Joint Ministerial Commission was held in Durban on Thursday (March 28th) 2013, with Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and Ms Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Co-operation of the Republic of South Africa leading their respective delegations. The discussions were characterized as being conducted in a spirit of friendship, mutual support and understanding reflecting the prevailing close relations between the Peoples and the Governments of South Africa and Ethiopia.

Minister Nkoana-Mashabane opened the meeting, expressing her appreciation for the efforts made by both parties following the signing of an Implementation Plan at the previous session of the Commission. She commended the work of the Senior Officials of both countries who had met in November 2012, in line with the Implementation Plan and hailed the progress made by both parties in advancing the bilateral trade and economic relations. Dr. Tedros expressed his appreciation for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the Ethiopian delegation and reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to the Implementation Plan to ensure the strengthening of the bilateral relations for the betterment of the citizens of both countries.

On bilateral matters, the two parties reviewed the outcome of the Senior Officials' Meeting held in Pretoria in November 2012 and areas of discussion covered Trade, Industry, Investment, Agriculture, Science and Technology, Water, Energy, Transport, Tourism, Arts and Culture, Capacity Building and Education. The meeting urged the Senior Officials of both sides to redouble their efforts in expediting the implementation of signed agreements. Both parties expressed their satisfaction over prevailing warm relations at political level and underscored the importance of improving commercial interaction by opening market access and reciprocal promotion of investment opportunities to each other's business sectors. They therefore welcomed the announcement, in July 2012, by a South African company, Pretoria Portland Cement Company Limited which, with the support of the Industrial Development Corporation, had secured a significant stake in the Habesha Cement Share Company of Ethiopia. The two parties welcomed the commitment by Trade and Industry South Africa (TISA) to lead a business delegation to Addis Ababa in April 2013.

In the political field, the Ministers expressed their satisfaction at the ongoing cooperation achieved between the two countries. They further noted the continued efforts to strengthen and improve coordination and consultations especially with regard to strengthening Regional Economic Communities and the African Union for the advancement of regional and continental integration. They exchanged views on the latest developments in their respective regions and in the rest of the continent.

With regard to the situation in Somalia, they welcomed the new Somali Federal Government under the leadership of President Hassan Mohamud and committed themselves to supporting Somalia in achieving its goals for peace, security, and development. Minister Nkoana-Mashabane took the opportunity to inform Dr Tedros that South Africa would be hosting the next International Contact Group meeting on Somalia.



With regard to Sudan and South Sudan, the Ministers welcomed the agreement reached on March 8th, on the implementation matrix of the September 27th 2012 agreements. They further expressed their satisfaction with the announcement by the Government of Sudan that it will hold direct talks with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North. In addition, the two Ministers emphasized the need for the international community to support the mediation efforts of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel in finding a solution to the impasse between the two parties particularly over the status of Abyei and other disputed areas.

It was agreed that the next Senior Officials' Meeting of the Joint Ministerial Commission will be held in Addis Ababa before the end of 2013. It was also decided that the next Joint Ministerial Commission meeting will be held in 2014 in Ethiopia.



The EPRDF Organizational Congress concluded this week

The Ninth Organizational Congress of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) which started on Saturday (March 23rd) concluded on Tuesday (March 26th) in Bahr Dar, the capital of Amhara Regional State. The Congress, the first to be held since the passing of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in August last year, was held under the theme "With the thoughts of Meles, strong organization and development forces for the Renaissance!!!". The Congress was opened with a minute's silence in honor of the late Prime Minister Meles who committed the whole of his life to the cause of the Front and the nation. The Congress, at the end of its four day meeting, re-elected Prime Minister Haile-Mariam Desalegn and Ato Demeke Mekonnen as EPRDF's Chairman and Deputy Chairman, respectively.

In his opening speech to the Congress on Saturday, the EPRDF Chairperson, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, said that assessing EPRDF's internal organizational strength and its leadership role, electing its next leaders and putting forward directions to be followed in the future would be among the agenda items to be emphasized at the Congress. While expressing his gratitude to the public for offering support and playing their role in the economic growth being registered in the country, the Prime Minister stressed that the Congress had the responsibility of ensuring the sustainability of the ongoing economic growth. He highlighted the achievements gained in various sectors and also pointed out limitations encountered in the implementation of development plans that needed to be discussed by the Congress.

In its session on Monday, Congress deliberated on the succession plan being implemented by its member organizations: the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO) and the Southern Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (SEPDM). EPRDF affiliate organizations also expressed their support and solidarity with the Front in speeches from their leaders. The Chairperson of the EPRDF and of the SEPDM, Prime Minister Hailemariam, said the Front's leadership succession has been continued according to previous plan, adding that members of the leadership who retired in the first round in 2010 were still able to offer a highly significant contribution to the organization in terms of analyzing and refining the front's organization and ideology. EPRDF Central Committee member, Ato Bereket Simon (ANDM), said the objective of EPRDF's leadership succession plan was to ensure the continuance of the front's line of struggle allowing younger party members take over responsibilities from senior party leaders step by step. Ato Abay Tsehaye of the TPLF noted that the source of succession were junior and middle ranking figures who would become successful leaders if equipped well. OPDO chairperson, Alemayehu Atomsa, said the succession plan provided a valuable mechanism for would-be retirees to continue their support for the party. The Congress agreed to continue to implement the inter-generational changes in the direction of the ERPDF as defined by earlier congresses.

The Congress also set out a series of directives and directions which it described as vital for democratization and good governance. It underlined the importance of radically improving performance in all areas of government and in good governance by fighting rent-seeking and maladministration.



It underlined the importance of working with EPRDF affiliated regional parties, and pointed out that the EPRDF would continue to work with opposition parties on the basis of a culture of dialogue within the constitutional framework. The Congress discussed the problems of cross-border incursions and decided to intensify action to address development problems while taking administrative and legal measures against administrators where necessary. In the debate about the problem of fundamentalism, it decided on methods to oppose and criticize such lines of thought as well as to support the strict enforcement of the law. It also discussed on other social and economic development activities in the country.

The Bahr Dar Congress took note of the impressive double-digit economic growth registered for the last nine years and of the popular enthusiasm for implementing the development plans of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi following his untimely death. It noted the smooth power transition of power. Taking into consideration the fact that EPRDF was continuing to win and keep the confidence of the public at large, the Congress critically assessed the implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan over the last two and half years, and put forward directions for the remaining period. The Plan ends in 2015.

The Congress concluded by adopting an 11-point Resolution, underlining the EPRDF's determination to continue with its impressive economic and social development efforts, as well as building a democratic system of governance. The Resolution underlined the Congress' commitment to eliminate any possible rent-seeking practices, to free itself from this problem and work without any partisanship for the interests of the peoples according to the democratic and developmental practices now being put in place. It recognized the growth registered in agriculture during the 2004 production year (Ethiopian calendar), and emphasized its determination to curb rising inflation and apply the necessary efforts and synergies to register further growth in the sector. It reaffirmed the Front's commitment to encourage the attainment of industrial targets by transforming small and micro enterprises into middle level industries. Recognizing that major infrastructure projects such as roads, hydro power plants, rail ways, and water projects are well underway; and considering that some have suffered delay and are sub-standard, the Congress also pledged to strive for the successful implementation of outstanding projects utilizing public money effectively and raising the necessary financial resources. With regard to education and health services, the Congress expressed its determination to reach the lowest possible rates of maternal and child mortality, and affirmed its commitment to producing skilled manpower for sustaining the rapid economic growth of recent years and narrowing existing gaps caused by capacity limitations and attitudinal problems. It also pledged to stamp out any religious extremism aimed at undermining the equality of religion and the country's traditional religious tolerance. It vowed to maintain the legacies of the late Prime Minister Meles and expressed the Congress's commitment to efforts aimed at documenting the late Prime Minister's contribution as a living testimony to the history of the Ethiopian peoples and their share of the causes of Africa.

The Congress also elected members of the EPRDF Central Committee from its member organizations: 45 members from TPLF, 65 from ANDM, 80 from OPDO and 65 from the SEPDM; as well as 9 members from each organization to the Executive Committee of the Front. Representatives of parties from over a dozen countries attended the opening ceremony of the Congress, several conveying messages of solidarity.



South Sudan and Regional Consensus along the Nile

"South Sudan does not recognize, and I underline does not recognize, the content of the 1959 [Nile Water] agreement". These were the words, last week, of South Sudan's Water and Irrigation Minister Paul Mayom. In further proof of the growing consensus on Nile matters throughout the region, South Sudan has expressed its opposition to the controversial 1959 Nile water agreements between Sudan and Egypt. The Minister explained that "having been under Sudan at the time, we could not say anything: today we say we have nothing to do with this agreement".

Following a recent visit to South Sudan by a high profile Egyptian delegation led by Prime Minister Hisham Qandil reports surfaced of a possible agreement between the two countries on the Nile. However, Mr. Mayom underlined that the two countries had only signed Memoranda of Understanding on education, agriculture and investment, not on the Nile. Mr. Mayom also highlighted South Sudan's recent accession to the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) pointing out that the country's membership in the organization was further proof of its commitment to "reasonable and equitable utilization of Nile water resources". He emphasized that "having joined the NBI [we] are already a long way towards joining the Cooperative Framework Agreement". The Cooperative Framework Agreement has already been signed by Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania and Burundi, a majority of the Nile Basin countries. Mr. Mayom suggested that Egypt and Sudan's persistent refusal to ratify the agreement was because it negated the widely disregarded Nile Waters agreement of 1959 which gave a disproportionate share of the water to the two countries. According to those agreements, Egypt received 51 billion cubic meters per year while Sudan had a share of 18 billion annually, essentially giving the two countries sole rights to the water at the expense of the rest of the Basin.

In response to Mr. Mayom, his Egyptian counterpart, Mohammed Bahaa el-Din, described the move as a show of hostility as South Sudan had not notified Egypt of its intention to sign the Cooperative Framework Agreement. Egypt has consistently defended its historic rights to the Nile's water by arguing that both the 1959 agreement, as well as a 1929 colonial accord, stipulated that the approval of all Nile Basin states must be gained before the implementation of any projects along the river. However, the position of CFA signatory countries on this has always been quite clear. No agreements written and ratified under British colonial rule can be admissible today, as the countries on whose behalf Britain signed those agreements have now gained their independence and are not party to those agreements. Nor indeed was Ethiopia.

Mr. Mayom's comments on South Sudan's position came on the heels of the official launch of a new Nile Basin Initiative project, the Nile Cooperation for Results (NCORE). The project, which was announced at the recently convened 38th Nile Technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC) meeting at the NBI Secretariat in Entebbe, Uganda, was developed to strengthen platforms and knowledge-based analysis of trans-boundary options for sustainable basin-wide cooperative planning, management and development of member states' water resources. As part of the NBI, South Sudan is among the countries set to benefit from this two-year \$15.3 million project, funded by the German government, the NBI trust fund and the Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA), a trust fund administered by the World Bank.



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Fax : (+251) 11 151 4300

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According to the NBI Secretariat, "the NCORE project is the first phase of the five-year Nile Basin Climate Resilient Growth Program (NBCRG) supported by a number of donors and a constituent part of NBI's overarching five-year strategic plan for the period 2012-2016". The project will be implemented in three components, focusing on advancing Nile Basin-wide cooperation and analysis, promotion of sustainable development and planning in the Nile Equatorial Lakes region, as well as dam safety related initiatives. The Executive Director of the NBI Secretariat, Teferra Beyene, added that "efforts are underway, with the help of our development partners, to ensure the full implementation of the five-year strategic plan."

This underlines the growing regional consensus on the utilization of the Nile River's water as partnership across the Basin continues to increase. And as Mr. Mayom said, it can be hoped that South Sudan's expected ratification of the CFA will act as a catalyst for more comprehensive and substantive cooperation along the Nile.



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Villifying Villagization: more unsubstantiated claims

Ethiopia's villagization program has become a favorite subject for politically motivated critiques by advocacy organizations and human rights groups who appear to have the aim of trying to stop all development and humanitarian aid to Ethiopia. Over the years some of these have made it their business to criticize almost all and every development activity carried out by the Ethiopian government, whether it is the building of dams for hydropower, agricultural extension programs, support for local development structures, funding for local health and education programs and almost all other developments in the regional states of Ethiopia.

The style and tenacity of the current campaign against villagization, especially in the Gambella Region, is similar to accusations made by Human Rights Watch made earlier and other reports it has made against the government. The only difference in this latest attack, alleging the government is forcibly resettling people in Gambella region and beating, killing or raping those who opposed the program, is that it is coming from a much less well known organization called Inclusive Development International. The group claims it has been behind the claim that World Bank funds given for the Protection of Basic Services program are against the Bank's policies over involuntary settlement and protection to indigenous people.

Inclusive Development International is a California-based group which submitted a complaint on behalf of a few Anuak refugees to the World Bank's Inspection Panel. This is an internal watchdog group which checks whether Bank projects violate the Bank's own regulations. The Inspection Panel, after interviewing other refugees in Kenya and South Sudan, recommended further investigations to check if there was any link between the allegations of coercion in the villagization program and the Bank's Protection of Basic Services program which pays for civil servants involved in health, education and other developments in rural areas. The Executive Board of the World Bank is now considering the panel's report.

The story was promptly picked up by many news outlets who gave it the spin that the World Bank's independent inspection panel had ordered the Bank's management to verify whether the PBS funds given to Ethiopia are used for "forced resettlement." The problem with this and similar allegations is that they are exactly similar to those made earlier by Human Rights Watch and others that villagization is enforced, that villagers are being driven off their land by military action, that the land is being cleared for industrial use, that the government has never consulted local people or carried out environmental studies and so on. All of these have been repeatedly refuted by people who have investigated the allegations on the ground.

Neither Inclusive Development International nor Helen Epstein nor indeed any other similar critics appear to have made any effort to investigate on the ground, to speak to federal or regional government officials or members of the kebeles at local level. It is elementary to suggest that any competent journalistic or other investigation should try to research the claims made and make some effort to validate them, not least to try to see if there is any political element in the claims. It might be added in the context of these allegations that Anuak also live in neighboring countries.



In fact, these claims suffer from serious methodological flaws, not least the fact that they originate from testimonies made by unidentified witnesses which are seldom given any independent or serious scrutiny. The claims of Inclusive Development International echoed in Helen Epstein's recent article "Why are we funding Abuse in Ethiopia?" does not provide any criteria of credibility. There is no indication that any of the allegations were checked on the ground or any inquiry made at the places alleged to have seen these supposed violations. Nor is there an indication of any effort to check facts. Accuracy remains in very short supply. For example, again and again, the claim is made that Ethiopia has distributed 3.6 million hectares of agricultural land to foreign investors. The reality is that some 330,000 hectares have been allocated, 80% to domestic investors. 3.6 million hectares is the area that has been set aside for agricultural development generally.

Where investigations and enquiries have been made, the conclusions are very different. Following a recent visit by a UK Parliamentary delegation, Sir Malcolm Bruce, Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for International Development, said in an interview that "DFID and other agencies have monitored the villagization program undertaking a dozen visits to the region, and regarding most of the allegations, what these review missions have concluded is that they could not substantiate the claims. They have not categorically rejected these allegations, but to the most part, they have not been able to return with evidence to substantiate the accusations." He added: "We cannot make discussions based on allegations".

DFID was the target of a recent article in the London Review of Books by Ben Rawlence of HRW who also managed to suggest that aid to Ethiopia was getting too much. Dismissing the fact that, as he admitted, the government had been making progress towards some of the UN's Millennium Development Goals (actually it is likely to achieve then all, one of the very few countries to do so), he wrote a report alleging that government services, funded by DFID through the donor funded Protecting Basic Services program, were being used as weapons to starve, intimidate or reward people into supporting the ruling party. The 'report' did not produce any independent or reliable evidence of systematic misuse of aid as he claimed and it was strongly criticized by DIFD, donors, embassies and all NGOs working in the regions to which the claims refer. Nobody was prepared to back up the claims in the report. The report itself, typically, provided no details sufficient for the government or anyone else to investigate any of the specific allegations. As usual, HRW said the report and the claims it made must be taken on trust. Given how often these sorts of allegations are proved to have no basis in fact, this is difficult.

The kind of response made by HRW and others to criticisms of their claims is more or less standard. Donors haven't investigated and merely claim the problems don't exist. And this, of course, is simply untrue. There have been repeated investigations including at least two substantial surveys by donors, in 2011 and last year, as well as other checks on the progress of what has been identified by almost all those involved as a voluntary process. As we reported in a Week in the Horn recently, in June last year, for example, DFID, USAID, the UN and Irish Aid, carried out a detailed investigation into the villagization process in Gambella Regional State where the project is expected to involve up to 45,000 households. As of mid 2012, some 30,000 households had moved and the report concluded that the first year's operation seemed to have over-achieved targets though the second year had under-achieved.



The mission's report noted clear improvements in conditions in the new villages since the previous visit, with water pumps installed and were working, homes made safe from flooding, schools provided and road access improved, though it also felt more could still be done over health facilities at the new sites.

They found no concern over food supplies, in part because some people had continued to cultivate their original land and been able to move back and forth between new and old sites. The mission's report specifically noted, as did the earlier mission, that it found no evidence of forced relocation or systematic human rights abuses. Certainly, a number of people interviewed said they didn't want to move and there were some claims of unmet promises, but the mission found that communities that objected to moving had stayed. It might also be added that both missions concluded that there was no indication of any previously settled land being used for commercial farming. All villages, with one exception, reported having continued access to their original land.

Overall, these missions, like all other investigations on the ground, found nothing to substantiate the wilder politically motivated claims made by opposition politicians in exile, by members and supporters of opposition groups or by human rights advocacy organizations. Certainly the donors and other investigations have found that not everything has always worked as smoothly as it should, and there had been some hiccups. It is not surprising in such a substantial program that there have been some questions over details of scale, speed and implementation capacity. The value of the donor and other investigations on the ground is that they allow defects to be identified and remedied as quickly as possible. In fact, all the genuinely independent investigations underline the improvements that villagization has brought to the lives of the people in Gambella Regional State, and other areas in Ethiopia. The program is making it far easier for the government to deliver basic services, including health centers, schools, water supplies, roads and other developments. For the great majority of those involved the results are certainly welcomed.



News in Brief

President Mohamud of Somalia attends Arab League Summit

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia on Wednesday (March 27th) gave a presentation of his government's plans to the Arab League Summit in Doha, including the government's aims of extending public facilities and government structures to all regions of Somalia as soon as possible and of its support for peace and unity for the whole of Somalia. The two day Summit (March 26th-27th) was preceded by a Foreign Minister's meeting at the weekend. The Summit was opened by the Emir of Qatar, Emir Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani who opened the conference by inviting the opposition Syrian National Coalition to take Syria's seat at the Summit. In his opening speech the Emir touched on the fighting in Syria, the Afghan government peace talks with the Taliban, Palestine and said it was the duty of the Arab countries to lend a helping hand to the new government of Somalia. The Emir said that he was aware of the great change in Somalia and his government would give them full support. He asked other Arab countries to help their Somalia brothers and offer them a helping hand. President Mohamud has had a number of bilateral meetings with Arab leaders to brief them on the government's aims and activities and its efforts to achieve peace, equality and justice in the country. On Thursday, President Mahmoud went to United Arab Emirates to meet UAE President, Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to discuss ways of enhancing relations between the two countries in addition to issues of common interest.

Sierra Leone troops praised before leaving for Somalia

President Ernest Koroma of Sierra Leone on Wednesday (March 27th) told a battalion of Sierra Leone troops on the way to participate in the AU Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) that they were on "a great journey of peace". The 850 troops were on the eve of their deployment in Mogadishu and they were addressed by the President during a break in their training. The President said the soldiers were about to start on "a journey of peace, a journey of charitable gallantry, a journey to showcase how a transformed nation and its transformed military could be a force for democracy, peace and reconciliation". He told the troops that they had overwhelming superiority in logistics, organization and global good will and they went "with the hopes and prayers of Sierra Leoneans everywhere." Sierra Leonean Television which covered the event said Sierra Leone had expressed the wish to assist in bringing peace to other countries and the battalion would be deployed in Mogadishu in early April.



News in Brief

A Somaliland delegation in the UAE

President Ahmed Mahmud Silanyo returned to Hargeisa this week after a five day visit to the United Arab Emirates. He had headed a large delegation which included the first lady, Amina Mohamed Jirdeh, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Dr Mohamed Abdilahi Omar, of Finance, Abdiaziz Mohamed Samale, the Minister at the Presidency, Hirsi Ali Haji Hasan, of Agriculture, Professor Farah Elmi Gedole, and other officials. The delegation held talks with UAE ministers as well as other officials on possibilities for enhanced cooperation in development in different sectors, including health, education, skills training, job creation and the economy of Somaliland. President Silanyo said the matter of support for the construction of the Erigavo-Burao road had also been discussed. Foreign Minister, Dr Omar, described the visit as successful and said it had raised Somaliland's bilateral relations with the UAE "a notch higher."

"Sufficient foreign currency" for the national economy says the CBE

The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) announced on Wednesday (March 27th) that the foreign currency available for the national economy was "sufficient" for the country's needs. The Bank's Business Development Director, Yesehak Mengesha, speaking to journalists said there should be no concern over a possible scarcity of foreign currency. Any fear of this, he added, was created by a failure of proper utilization. He said "only 50 per cent of the total foreign currency provided by the bank has been utilized by customers" so the current rumors of any shortage are baseless. He said the Bank was supplying adequate amounts of foreign currency both in the private and the public sectors, taking into consideration the country's overall developmental activities. The CBE's Vice- President, Mohammad Nuredin, added that the Bank monitors and predicts the inflow and outflow of foreign currency every fifteen days, taking customers' demands into consideration, it was able to meet the demands of its customers properly. He said the export sector and remittances were the major sources of foreign currency, and that the Bank was currently expanding its branch offices in different parts of the country with a view to increasing foreign currency inflow.

The National Intelligence and Security Service foil an Al-Shabaab plot

Ethiopia's intelligence agency, the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), today (March 26th) confirmed it had recently foiled a kidnap plot in Dolo Ado by a group with links to Al-Shabaab. The group was "caught red-handed with arms as they plotted to carry out the kidnappings" the NISS said in a statement. The plot was apparently aimed at foreigners working for the United Nations World Food Program and the United Nations Development Program. According to the NISS the group's aim was to seize the foreign officials and take them across the border into Somalia in a bid to extract ransoms from their institutions and their families. The arrests followed on from earlier operations, two months ago, when 15 militants accused of being trained in neighboring Somalia by Al-Shabaab, were detained.



News in Brief

Ethiopia: trying to restore its lost heritage

Ethiopia is battling to bring back more than three thousand artifacts scattered around the globe, a substantial part of its historic heritage. According to Wolde Darsema from the Heritage Management Authority thousands of historic items, ranging from the monumental to the miniscule, are to be found in museums or in private hands in France, Israel, Vatican, Germany, Italy, the UK and elsewhere. The Authority said that in addition to the more obvious and better known items in museums it is also working to bring back artifacts in the hands of individuals through diplomatic channels, to buy back items or to persuade people to present them back to Ethiopia. Efforts so far have managed to recover the Axum Obelisk, the gold Lalibela cross and a handful of other historic items. Wolde Darsema said that the task of recovering many of these items was particularly difficult as many are in private hands, and museums remain reluctant to part with items however obtained. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is cooperating with the Heritage Management Authority, and the MFA Spokesperson, Ambassador Dina, says the Ministry is working to obtain the return of various artifacts through bilateral channels.

A new Under-Secretary-General at the United Nations

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, announced on Monday (March 25th) that Tegegnetwork Gettu of Ethiopia had been appointed Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management. Mr. Gettu, who is replacing the outgoing Jean-Jacques Graisse of Belgium, was previously serving as Assistant Secretary General and Regional Bureau Director for Africa in the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Mr. Gettu has had over 30 years management experience at both national and international levels, most notably as Chief of Staff and Director of UNDP's Executive Office in New York and as United Nations Resident Coordinator in Nigeria till 2006. Before joining the UN he was a fellow of Columbia University and Assistant Professor and Lecturer at the University of Rochester in the United States.



About

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

A Week in the Horn is essential reading for policymakers, the diplomatic community, corporate leaders, academia and interested citizens of the region.

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Special Contributors:

Media Contributions:

Audio-Visual Department

Design Editor:

Frezer Haile

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Telephone: (+251) 11 151 7345
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