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### *The Fifth EU-IGAD Ministerial Meeting*

The Fifth Ministerial Meeting between the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the European Union (EU) was held here in Addis Ababa on 3<sup>rd</sup> April. The meeting was co-chaired by Hailemariam Desalegn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, current Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers, and Mr. Villy Søvndal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark on behalf of the EU High Representative, Ms. Catherine Ashton.

In his welcoming remarks, the Deputy Prime Minister noted that the partnership between IGAD and the EU had been increasing across all sectors of cooperation as the adoption of a "Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa" and the appointment of an EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa testified. Emphasizing the global effects of terrorism and instability, he explained that any circumstances that posed a threat to the peace and security to the region also affected the international community as well. This necessitated the close cooperation and collaboration of IGAD and the EU. In this regard, IGAD appreciated the appointment of the EU's Special Representative to the Horn of Africa, a step that would further strengthen the cooperation between the two organizations especially in the areas of peace and security and would contribute to the stability of the whole region.

The Horn of Africa Initiative was initiated by the European Commission in 2007 as part of EU's response strategy for the Horn of Africa. It had enhanced cooperation between IGAD and the EU and benefited the people of the region through the implementation of various agreed projects which would facilitate and increase people-to-people relations. The Horn of Africa's Resilience Initiative (SHARE), introduced last month by the EU, was another important initiative that would increase the resilience of the communities of the region most affected by the recurrent drought. The program which integrates humanitarian assistance with long term development is in line with what IGAD member states have been striving to achieve. It will certainly enjoy the full support of member states. The Deputy Prime Minister also took the opportunity to explain the role of IGAD in conflict

prevention, management and resolution as well as in humanitarian affairs, infrastructural development, food security and environment protection, and the revitalization process underway to carry these out effectively.

Hailemariam also expressed Ethiopia's commitment to the development of green energy as demonstrated by the number of projects under construction. He said it planned not only to ensure access to power for Ethiopia's nationals but also to share the excess with neighboring countries, and so contribute to energy access throughout the region. Ethiopia, he said, was engaged in other regional integration projects including road and railway links with its neighbors and was therefore contributing significantly to the achievement of IGAD's Minimum Integration Plan. He pointed out the importance of continued EU support for such kinds of development programs. This was crucial for the realization of the regional integration process.

For his part, Mr. Villy Søvndal said that overall cooperation between the EU and Africa had been growing and that the EU wanted to strengthen cooperation with IGAD in the areas of economic integration, terrorism, and piracy. He underlined the importance of linking states with infrastructure and the need to continue cooperation between IGAD and EU in areas of peace and security. IGAD, he said, was the key instrument for regional integration and added that the EU would continue its financial support, essential to ensure security and stability in the region.

The meeting discussed regional issues including Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan, and Eritrea. Deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam briefed the EU delegation the situation and the political process in Somalia which was steadily improving. He said IGAD was trying its best to stabilize the Horn region and that every member country with the exception of Eritrea was firmly involved in pacification efforts. Security in Somalia was improving, he said, but the political process needed to get more attention. He underlined the necessity of having an inclusive administrative and government structure in Somalia and reiterated the need to work closely to meet the deadlines set for the parliament and for the launching of the constitution. He called on the international community to support the efforts to stabilize the areas liberated from Al-Shabaab. Top level initiatives should be supplemented by others at the grass roots level. The enabling situation in Somalia today, he said, encouraged action and to make better use of the opportunities available. He noted that Ethiopia was working very closely with TFG forces on the ground to establish and strengthen institutions. With regard to the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, the Deputy Prime Minister said they would leave Somalia after handing over liberated places to AMISOM forces so as to avoid any vacuum in the process.

On Sudan, the Deputy Prime Minister explained that Ethiopia as Chair of IGAD and Kenya as Chair of the sub-committee on Sudan were working very closely to encourage the two sides to settle their disputes through dialogue and mutual trust. On Eritrea, he briefed the EU delegation about the regime's consistent engagement in destabilizing the region, noting that no single country in the region had been immune to Eritrea's disruptive activities. Eritrea had strained its bilateral relations with the majority of IGAD members. Ethiopia, the Deputy Prime Minister noted, had repeatedly been trying to engage Eritrea in dialogue but the latter had responded with a deaf ear. Ethiopia, he said, would continue with its efforts to settle this and other issues through dialogue and normalize relations. He

explained that Ethiopia had been trying to encourage the Security Council to impose further sanctions on the Eritrean government but the international community had not been prepared to put sufficient pressure on Eritrea to make it behave properly. Hailemariam explained that EU had a responsibility to make sure such sanctions are strictly implemented.

The head of the EU delegation reiterated the need to ensure that the transition in Somalia ended in August. He noted that with regard to security, AMISOM should secure the liberated areas and that Somalia's national security forces should then be strengthened to ensure continued security in these areas. He stated that there should be no gap between security advancement and political progress. Mr. Villy Søvndal also encouraged IGAD to continue with its good work concerning Sudan and South Sudan. In the joint communiqué issued at the end of the meeting the two sides expressed support for the AUHIP-led negotiations on outstanding issues between Sudan and South Sudan. They acknowledged the importance of IGAD's role in the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the importance of a coherent and coordinated approach by the international community and regional actors in support of the current process to reach negotiated solutions on the outstanding issues. Both sides recognized that normalizing Eritrea's relations with the other regional countries would be an important stabilizing factor for the Horn of Africa.

During its visit, the EU delegation also conferred with Prime Minister Meles who noted that the EU had taken an appropriate stand to help ensure peace and stability in the region. He stressed the need for a strong partnership between the EU and IGAD to secure durable peace and stability in Sudan, South Sudan and in Somalia. He said that besides military support, political work was also required to maintain peace and stability in Somalia. Mr. Villy Søvndal, for his part, said that the EU was ready to provide support towards the stability of Somalia and added that it would support the peaceful resolution of disputes between Sudan and South Sudan. He also noted that Ethiopia was registering fast economic growth and playing a key role in assisting peace and stability in Africa, and that Denmark was keen to work closely with Ethiopia in all areas.

### *The Grand Renaissance Dam one year on*

The grand renaissance dam has turned one year this past week. The day was marked throughout Ethiopia with festivities. It was a year of enthusiasm and great expectations for Ethiopians from all walks of life and every corner of the world. The level of enthusiasm the launching of the dam generated a year ago is as alive today and there is every reason to believe this will continue to be the case years - even decades from now. This, after all, is the beginning of the renaissance of Ethiopia and a harbinger of good days to come. The launching of the grand renaissance dam is a milestone in Ethiopians' quest for regaining their glorious past in more ways than one.

Politically speaking, the Renaissance Dam signifies the collective will of the peoples of Ethiopia to cast off the debilitating image that has long characterized them as poster children of hunger and starvation. It showed the unshakable resolve of the people and government of Ethiopia to capitalize on the monumental gains they have achieved since the heralding of the democratization process a little over two decades ago. It was a testament to the efficacy of the political experiment started 20 years ago to put in place a

system of governance that can accommodate the diversity of the people of Ethiopia. It is a living proof of the great distance that Ethiopia has come from the untold misery inflicted upon its people by successive despotic regimes to a progressively growing, vibrant pluralistic society that it is now becoming.

The Renaissance Dam has brought together tens of millions of Ethiopians irrespective of ethnicity, religion, political persuasion or background. It has proved to be a common bond for the success of which all Ethiopians are firmly united. This has clearly shown that when it comes to ensuring the rebirth of a prosperous and democratic Ethiopia, Ethiopians have little, if any, time for petty squabbles that often permeated our politics in the past.

Economically speaking, not only will the completion of the Grand Renaissance Dam go a long way in increasing the country's capacity to generate green energy, it is also a testament to the success and effectiveness of the various economic policies the government has put in place to ensure sustainable economic growth and development. What the Dam signifies more than anything else is the fact that Ethiopia has now the capacity to finance huge infrastructural projects without having to worry about others putting pressure on its development efforts for one reason or another. The Grand Renaissance Dam is a project that is wholly owned and financed by Ethiopians. Billions of birr has already been contributed by Ethiopians as a display of unshakable resolve to carry this noble mission through to a successful completion. Gone, indeed, are the days when Ethiopians have to knock at others' doors to secure a green light for carrying out any national development project. It is this sense of self-sufficiency that makes this undertaking all the more important.

But more importantly, the Renaissance Dam is also about reclaiming Ethiopia's glorious past through our efforts to extricate the country out of the back-breaking poverty that has characterized it for the last many decades. The Grand Renaissance Dam certainly is a monumental engineering feat in its own right but as the name itself implies, the Dam is also about ushering in Ethiopia's Renaissance—a day when all Ethiopians would be able to hold their chins up with pride on their success at regaining Ethiopia's rightful place in the community of nations. As Prime Meles aptly put it, the Grand Renaissance Dam is not by any means the largest project in Ethiopia's quest towards ensuring its national rebirth, but only a great page in the first chapter of that journey. And as such, the undertaking to build the Dam is a harbinger of ever larger and more impressive development projects to come.

#### *.....while anniversary celebrated*

It is just a year since Prime Minister Meles Zenawi laid the corner stone of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, a multi-billion dollar hydro electric project being constructed on the Abay River, the Blue Nile, in the Guba *woreda* of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State. The National Committee for Public Mobilization celebrated the anniversary on 1<sup>st</sup> April with various events, both in Addis Ababa Stadium and at the project site, designed to encourage to strengthen even further the already overwhelming public support for the project. On the eve of the anniversary a football match was held between a team of higher officials and prominent artists and between the two most prominent premier league teams, St. George and Ethiopian Coffee. At the conclusion of the day, trophies were

awarded to the winning teams and to the best players. Prominent singers and circus groups also presented various entertainments. The events were attended by the Chairman of the National Committee, Hailemariam Desalegn, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister as well as senior government officials, dignitaries and thousands of residents of Addis.

On the occasion, the symbolic trophy awarded to the Ethiopian people was also paraded round the stadium, as part of its tour of all the regional capitals to underline the overwhelming public participation in purchasing bonds to finance the project. Half a dozen songs on the project, involving more than 70 artists were inaugurated at the event and the Cinema Producers Association pledged to contribute all the revenues collected from cinemas in Addis on that day to project. Citizens from various areas of the country also took the opportunity to pledge to purchase the government bonds to finance the project.

In a speech delivered on the occasion, the Deputy Prime Minister noted that as the country marked “the first anniversary of the launch of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance the Dam the astonishing participation of the Ethiopian People living at home and abroad in purchasing government bond to finance project has proven the correctness of the government decision to build the project solely based on local finance sources”. He added that the National Committee had raised over seven billion birr in the past year. This, he emphasized, was due to the determination of the public to build the dam by Ethiopia's own financial efforts and this had been demonstrated by the enthusiastic participation in public bond sales and other contributions. Referring to the status of the project the Chairman said the project performance over the year had been very satisfactory, and as a result 7% of the project had been completed. The Deputy Prime Minister called on the public to continue with the support it had shown over the year until the project was finally completed.

At the project site, senior officials were briefed by the project manager on the overall performance and status of the project. During the year, civil works related to the excavation of two billion cubic meters of soil as well as the mobilization of the necessary equipment for the project had been accomplished. A road to the project site had been built and project offices and a residence camp for workers at the site were also completed. A briefing pointed out that the project will contribute significantly to the transfer of knowledge as the electromechanical works are being carried out by the Ethiopia Metal Fabrication Corporation. The project currently employs some three thousand workers, of whom a hundred or so are expatriate staff.

When launched the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam was planned as one of the biggest dams in Africa with initial design capacity of 5200MW at an estimated cost of 80 billion birr. However, the design has now been revised to increase capacity to 6000MW and the project is now expected to be completed within 5 years at a smaller cost than the original estimate. On completion, the project will help make Ethiopia the power hub of East Africa and provide a further boost to regional integration and development efforts in the Horn of Africa.

## *Somalia: Bombings continue but real progress towards normality in Mogadishu.....*

Despite this week's suicide bomber at the recently reopened National Theatre in Mogadishu, and occasional mortar attacks apparently aimed at the Presidential Palace, as well as other incidents, Mogadishu is "making a remarkable comeback". Construction is going on everywhere, with new hospitals, schools, houses, shops and other buildings rising out of the rubble of twenty years of conflict. In the past few months, over 250,000 people have returned to their former homes; the city administration is beginning to repair streets and put up street lights. Restaurants are opening, businesses restarting. Soccer and basketball have been revived. Games, watched by men and women together, are common. Jobs are becoming available and the growing international interest, symbolised by Turkish airlines twice weekly flights to Mogadishu, offer real hope of progress. Turkey which has opened an embassy in Mogadishu, is also investing in infrastructure in the city, renovating and rehabilitating the airport, repairing the National Assembly building and putting up a conference center. It has rebuilt one hospital and is rebuilding two others. It will be hosting a follow-up conference to the February conference on Somalia in London in Istanbul in June. The TFG hopes that other countries will follow Turkey's example and start to invest in the city.

As Ambassador Mahiga, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, has noted this is the first time for twenty years that Mogadishu has been under one single authority, and security is now expanding outside the city. Last weekend, AMISOM and TFG forces seized control of Daynile airport and several Al-Shabaab bases in the area on the edge of Mogadishu's north west, clearing the district of Al-Shabaab terrorists after heavy fighting. This was the last major base area of Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu and its outskirts and AMISOM's Deputy Force Commander, Brigadier Audace Nduwumunsi, said this success would allow AMISOM to consolidate security in the district and then "focus on expanding operations beyond Mogadishu". Control of the Daynile district also opens the road for an advance towards the towns of Afgoye, Elasha and Lafole still controlled by Al-Shabaab on the road towards Baidoa, from which TFG forces, allied militias and Ethiopian troops recently expelled Al-Shabaab .

Elsewhere, there were other successes last week when Ethiopian and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a allied forces seized the main base of Al-Shabaab in central Somalia, capturing the town of El Buur as well as the strategic center of Maxaas. These control links between some of the most important towns and cities in Galgudud region. The TFG Minister of Information, Abdiqadir Husayn Mohammad, described it as a "big victory for the Somali government and its people, especially for the residents of the two towns and other localities freed from the terrorists." The Minister stressed that the government now had the responsibility for stability in the area. It would not allow anybody to carry out acts of revenge based on self-interest and suspicion but it would bring justice. He urged residents to remain calm and stay in the towns. He also called on "the misled youth fighting alongside Al-Shabaab" to take advantage of the amnesty offered by the government under which a considerable number have surrendered.

### *...While Al-Shabaab's leadership disputes continue*

At the weekend, Sheikh Hassan Dahir 'Aweys', now Al-Shabaab's military commander in southern Somalia publicly disagreed with comments by Al-Shabaab's leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane 'Abu Zubayr' that that only Al-Shabaab could wage a jihad inside Somalia. Sheikh 'Aweys' responded that membership in a jihad was open to all. He said that it was better to have many Islamic groups and then unite them later on - "this is how we have been carrying on for the last two decades", he added. Sheikh 'Aweys', a former military leader of Al-Itihaad Al-Islamiya in the early 1990s, later went to Eritrea where he set up the Alliance for the Rehabilitation of Somalia after the defeat of the Islamic Courts Union in 2006, and later headed Hizbul Islam until it was forced to merge with Al-Shabaab in 2010. He was also quoted as saying that where the operations of Al-Shabaab are wrong "we should correct it." Sheikh 'Aweys' also said Ahmed Godane's statement was "not credible", and went on to criticise the way Al-Shabaab had made the killing of civilians lawful by making up its own laws. "Al-Shabaab was not formed to spill the blood of civilians", he said. According to Somali sources, Ahmed Godane as leader of Al-Shabaab opposed Sheikh 'Aweys' rise in Al-Shabaab and was against him getting any official position in the organization despite the uniting of Hizbul Islam with Al-Shabaab. Sheikh 'Aweys' however has the support of other influential Al-Shabaab leaders including Sheikh Muktar Robow and Fuad Mohamed Shongole.

Sheikh 'Aweys' in fact has openly challenged the decision of Al-Shabaab in February to amalgamate with Al Qaeda when Al-Shabaab pledged allegiance to Al Qaeda. This union with Al Qaeda was seen by some as an attempt to foil the plan to establish an "Islamic Emirate" in Somalia, announced in December at Baidoa at a conference organized by ex Al-Itihaad members including Sheikh 'Aweys', Sheikh Muktar Robow and others. The meeting was boycotted by Ahmed Abdi Godane and the foreign jihadist elements in Al-Shabaab. Sheikh 'Aweys' told local journalists that the union with Al Qaeda was shameful and people should not "wear something alien". Even if all Islamic rebels joined Al Qaeda, he said, this did not mean they replaced the jihadist agenda and it did not mean Al Qaeda could replace the "Islamic Caliphate".

As we have noted previously, there have been other indications of strains within Al-Shabaab' leadership following its series of military defeats and withdrawals, whether tactical or enforced. It was only last month that Abu-Mansoor Al-Amriki put out a video airing his fears of being assassinated by other elements within Al-Shabaab. There were subsequent reports that Al-Amriki had been arrested.

The comments of Sheikh 'Aweys' immediately gave rise to fresh suggestions that it might signal the possibility of including the so-called nationalist elements in Al-Shabaab in the peace process. This is something that has also been raised by Sheikh Muktar Robow who told Somalia Report last month that he would be willing to negotiate with the TFG if the TFG first agreed to various conditions of which the most important included the withdrawal of all foreign troops, the building of a coalition government and the establishment of a constitution that must be based on Sharia law. The reports of divisions within Al-Shabaab's leadership have encouraged this sort of speculation but as others quickly pointed out it would need rather more than these comments to accept Sheikh 'Aweys' as a "reformed" person. One editorial stressed that "acceptance of his reform must

come with the condition that he quit Somali politics altogether, seek national forgiveness and withdraw himself into seclusion. The blood of innocents killed by organizations for which Colonel Aweys sat at the top as leader is still fresh in the minds of many." It goes on "[He] must be willing to surrender weapons, must allow loyal fighters to undergo national rehabilitation programs and he must withdraw from Somali politics".

Meanwhile, last weekend Al-Shabaab again warned Kenya that it would suffer retribution and revenge for Kenyan military operations against Al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia. "The Kenyan public must be aware that the more Kenyan troops continue to persecute innocent Muslims of Somalia, the less secure Kenyan cities will be; and the more oppression the Muslims of Somalia feel, the more constricted Kenyan Life will be. Such is the law of retribution." There have already been a number of hit and run grenade attacks on innocent civilians in Nairobi including an attack in early March which killed four and injured another 40 though Al-Shabaab has denied involvement in these. Nor has it admitted responsibility for two grenade attacks last weekend in Mombassa where two Kenyans were injured and another in the nearby small town of Mtwapa where a woman was killed and 20 injured. This was the first such attack in Mombasa, a major tourist destination, and Prime Minister Raila Odinga emphasized that Kenya remained a safe destination for tourists: "Kenya is safe. Tourists should continue to come to Kenya and the government will protect them." Internal Security Minister, George Saitoti, said the authorities would not tire of hunting for Al-Shabaab. They had ruined their own country, he said, and now they were trying to ruin Kenya's economy.

### *Consultative Forum on Sudan and South Sudan urges restraint*

The Consultative Forum of International and Regional Actors on the Sudan and South Sudan met in Addis Ababa on 29th March. Participants were the African Union, the United Nations, the Arab League, IGAD Member States, UN Security Council Permanent Members, UNAMID, UNAMISS, UNISFA, Benin and Nigeria, Chad, Central Africa Republic, Qatar, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the EU and the Organization of Islamic Conference. The meeting heard a number of briefings and reports, and after a series of discussion, questions and answers, and suggestions, the Forum released a communiqué emphasizing the need for maximum restraint by both sides on current border military skirmishes.

The Forum insisted the delegations of the Sudan and South Sudan should continue to work for the continuation of two viable states and that they should display a spirit and mood of cooperation. The meeting appreciated the AU's involvement to alleviate the effects of the long civil wars in the Sudan through the CPA and deal with post independence problems for South Sudan through AUHIP. The forum emphasized that the oil shutdown resulted in a budget loss for the Sudan and was leading to an economic crisis for both sides. It called on the two parties to make maximum efforts at restraint over the ongoing clashes along the border and to continue their dialogue to overcome other post independent issues. The Forum further urged the two sides to bring an end to their accusations against each other, resume the presidential talk as scheduled and speed up boundary re-demarcation to help address the root causes of other internal problems. The Forum also called the two parties to be loyal to the non-aggression and cooperation, citizenship and demarcation agreements signed earlier. The parties needed to take



confidence building measures and hold back from military measures that will increase further tension. The Forum also elaborated its concerns about internal democratic reforms in both countries as these would have a direct effect on the ongoing dialogue to solve outstanding issues between the two sides.

On Abyei, the Forum made it clear it appreciated the strong Ethiopian UNISFA force and valued the efforts of the Mission to encourage peace and stability and the beginnings of inter-community dialogue. However, it also expressed its concern over the continuity of a number of inter-community issues, including the return of the IDPs particularly Ngok Dinka to their original homes, the withdrawal of unauthorized SAF forces, the Sudan Police and the SPLA forces, the issue of resources like water and the need to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of the AJOC as well as of the Abyei administration which still needs close attention to encourage peace and stability in the area.

The Forum also expressed its concern over the peace and stability of Darfur though it appreciated the progress that had been made. It urged the non-signatory forces to narrow their differences with the government and called on the government to be flexible enough to involve all parties. The Forum also called on both parties to work to meet the principle of two viable states to complement to each other. The AUHIP was requested to continue its efforts and do its utmost to ease the ongoing military skirmishes between the two countries. The Consultative Forum further urged the Government of the Sudan to accept and allow access by humanitarian organizations to the war-affected civilians in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile regions.

### *The Nile Tripartite Technical Committee*

Ethiopia's announcement of the decision to build the Renaissance Dam on the Abay River, the Blue Nile, was met with unprecedented popular support in Ethiopia though, as might be expected, it also caused some worry in Egypt and Sudan. To encourage a spirit of cooperation between the three countries and demonstrate how the construction of the dam will benefit all, Ethiopia has made a number of efforts to reassure those concerned. It delayed ratification of the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement till the election of Egypt's new government. It also called for dialogue on the construction of the dam ignoring any hawkish statements from Egyptian academics and politicians. Thirdly, and most strikingly, Prime Minister Meles on a visit to Cairo agreed to the establishment of a joint tripartite technical committee of experts to study the possible effects of the dam on Sudan and Egypt. Given Ethiopia's decision to build the dam on its own and exercise its right as a riparian country to use the river's waters, this was a reassuring move. It also underlined Ethiopia's commitment to the principle of reasonable and equitable utilization of the river. The construction of dam will be of great benefit in reducing water lost through evaporation, preventing siltation and offering the potential of providing energy to Egypt and Sudan.

It should be added that the technical tripartite committee will also be able to play a role in expanding the rapprochement between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Its activities will provide opportunities for greater cooperation within the rapidly evolving political terrain in Egypt and also in Sudan. The results of the committee's report will certainly have political as well as technical significance, and will be able to contribute to easing tensions

among the riparian states. The Nile Tripartite Technical Committee is to have two experts from each of the three countries involved, together with another four foreign experts. Its mandate is to assess the possible effects of the construction of the Grand Millennium Renaissance Dam on the downstream countries. The committee is expected to submit its independent report within six to nine months and it began in January by setting out the criteria for the choice of foreign experts.

There can be no doubt that the committee will be able to play a significant role in clearing up the doubts and imagined threats that the downstream countries fear as a result of the dam's construction. The fact that the committee includes experts of all three countries gives it a rare opportunity to objectively assess the impact the dam will have. Ethiopian studies have already made it clear that the dam will have no detrimental effect on the interests of downstream countries. It has also the benefits the dam will offer in terms of controlling downstream flooding and the export of renewable energy.

These views are also supported by a number of Egyptian hydrologists. A study by hydrologist Hytam Awad from the University of Alexandria has demonstrated that during the flood season, August and early September, most of the Nile water arrives in Lake Nasser where it is stored for approximately ten months until the peak agricultural season in July the following year. During this period, approximately twelve percent of the stored water will evaporate. If the water is stored by the Renaissance Dam in Ethiopia there will be significantly less evaporation, and at least half of this amount will be saved. The fact that the dam will be used for hydroelectric power generation also mitigates any fear that it will lessen the flow.

In spite of this research on the subject, a number of Egyptian politicians and academics still remain wary of the project. This is where the composition of the Committee will play a role. One of the benefits of its work towards greater cooperation arises from its composition and mandate. With experts from all three countries it will have a vital role in debunking claims of any minority opinions bent on dismantling the efforts to build trust among member countries. Its report will provide an objectivity that is impossible to deny. It will also offer the chance to create a building block for further cooperation. Apart from silencing the hawks in Egypt, it will also offer the new government a strong reason to push on with stronger cooperation between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Given the Blue Nile supplies around eighty percent of the Nile waters the importance and the value of cooperation is obvious. Egypt's experience and expertise in hydro-power work offers the chance of closer co-operation between Egypt and Ethiopia. This will have a positive role in conservation of the flow of the Nile which has become increasingly erratic in recent years. Equally, Ethiopia's export of energy could lead to wider economic integration and bring Egypt and Sudan to the negotiating table on the wider issues of the whole Nile Basin Initiative and the development of the River.

The committee's report can also be expected to have added benefits with immediate effect on, for example, the issue of the Jonglei canal. The wetlands in South Sudan known as the Sudd is a vast marsh land where a significant volume of the White Nile water is lost. The White Nile enters the Sudd with an average flow rate of 1,048 cu. mts/second and leaves it with an average flow rate of 510 cu.mts/s. Nearly half is lost. The Jonglei Canal Project was initiated by Egypt in 1979. This was the aim to build a 360 km canal to bypass the

Sudd but the project was halted during the civil wars. Recently, Egypt has shown some interest in trying to restart the project. Successful cooperation between Egypt and Ethiopia on the Renaissance Dam would lead to greater trust between the riparian countries, particularly South Sudan and the downstream states. It also increases the possibility of translating a possible trade in energy into wider economic integration between the Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia or even more widely.

There can be no doubt that the Renaissance Dam will have major benefits. In a region where mutual suspicion has long loomed large the composition of the Committee, its mandate and its independence will undoubtedly provide a real opportunity to start afresh on concepts of cooperation and raise it to a greater and more profitable level.

### *President Isaias' Conspiracy Theories*

President Isaias of Eritrea wrote a letter to the Security Council on March 27, 2012 as a follow up to his Foreign Minister's previous letter requesting the Security Council to take action against Ethiopia for its "continued occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories" – a reference to the Eritrean regime's stock-in-trade in international diplomacy. In this letter, President Isaias promised to take up a subject other than his usual diatribe against the entire world and more particularly the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia which the regime berates every time opportunity presents itself. According to President Isaias, while his letter was different in substance from his previous letters, he then concedes that it is an integral part of "our latest petition submitted to the UN Security Council...in connection with, and in response to, the cynical public statement issued by the authorities in Addis Ababa to "legitimize" the illegal and provocative attacks against Eritrea."

But his promise of a different substance in his latest submission proves just a promise as soon as President Isaias begins his usual invectives against the United States and particularly "its intelligence agencies" whose "financing, operational guidance and diplomatic cover" for destabilizing activities not only in Eritrea but throughout the region "are well-known indeed." He was once again putting the blame on Ethiopia's exercise of self-defense in the face of Eritrea's destabilization activities on the US Government and the CIA. There is nothing new or different about President Isaias' routine accusation against the US or the CIA for everything that goes wrong in Eritrea. Nor is he willing to even admit for a moment that it is his regime, not Ethiopia or the US, which has been sanctioned by the UN Security Council three times in a span of two years, not to mention the fact that Eritrea is the only country to ever be sanctioned by the UNSC following the unanimous request of the African Union – unprecedented in the history of the continental organization. What ever the world view President Isaias subscribes to, he apparently believes he and his cabal of sycophants are the only people in the entire world who are capable of making an objective judgment about justice in international law, having fought, as his regime likes to repeat ad nauseum, for thirty years to achieve Eritrea's independence.

It is not entirely clear if President Isaias really thinks people including his closest advisors would take his farcical claims seriously. But he has repeated this same line in his latest letter too. What is more interesting in this letter is not just the claim that all was the US and CIA's work, who apparently are scheming day and night to topple a regime that has

“survived their many plots.” What is interesting, though not in any way a novelty – however, was the tone with which President Isaias is making this latest accusation and the bizarre request he makes of the UN Security Council. His choice of words is also telling when he says the “accusation” against the US or the CIA is neither made for “propaganda consumption” nor “driven by far-fetched inferences based on “conspiracy theories.”” “Our accusation,” he reassures the UNSC “is firmly rooted on hard facts and evidence.” Hopefully, President Isaias is not suggesting that he has CIA operatives in his custody, and if he does, he’ll almost certainly point to the very officials he has long incarcerated because “they conspired with ‘Woyanne’ and the CIA” at a time of war with Ethiopia.

What is rather bizarre is that President Isaias has the audacity to call for the UNSC to “form an independent, transparent and accountable inquiry body to investigate and ascertain the validity of our case so that it may take appropriate remedial measures.” Strangely enough, it is such independent body instituted by the UNSC – the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea – that the President of Eritrea routinely characterizes as illegal and untrustworthy simply because it dared to call a spade a spade. While President Isaias has not said a word as to what kind of member composition would ensure the level of “transparency” palatable enough for the regime in Asmara, it is not entirely far-fetched to assume that he would be more than willing to volunteer to hand pick the members of that body he is lobbying the UNSC to institute yet again. He would, for good measure, pick his henchmen with him chairing that body! In the bizarre circus that is Eritrean politics, that is not an entirely unlikely scenario.

As bizarre as President Isaias’s call for an independent body may be, it is not, however, for the first time that such a request was made by the regime. Eritrea also very recently called on the UNSC to fire the entire UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea because its findings about Eritrea’s destabilizing activities were “illegal and unjust.” Nor has the UNSC itself been spared from President Isaias’s carpet-bombing against anyone who appears to have even a slightly different opinion on issues he strongly feels about. The only plausible explanation that can be offered regarding his letter and the bizarre request made of the UN Security Council is that the President’s paranoia has reached schizophrenic levels of the highest order. And as he himself inadvertently suggested, his is a clear case of obsession with “conspiracy theories.” In the west they have medical institutions for people with just that obsession. In Eritrean politics, that is a verifiable reality.

### *News and Views*

#### *Ethiopia-South Sudan Border Regions Administrators meeting*

The first Joint Adjacent Border Regions Administrators/Governors meeting between the Adjacent Regional States of Jonglei, Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria States of South Sudan and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples and Gambella National Regional States of Ethiopia was held in Gambella, Ethiopia, from 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March. A major objective was the strengthening of political, economic, social and cultural relationships between the two countries, and issues of high importance to both states were discussed during the meeting including problems of anti-peace forces and various criminal matters as well as people-to-people relations. The meeting was friendly and cordial with both sides expressing their understanding of each other’s views and

recognizing the existing strong relationship between the two countries. The South Sudanese delegation made a point of its appreciation of the work and effort made by the Ethiopian government in regard to peace and security along the border areas. The two countries agreed on the need to work together on issues of disturbances across the borders and on the sharing of intelligence information about any activities by anti-peace forces. They also agreed to establish early warning systems and rapid response mechanisms along the border areas. Furthermore, both sides accepted the value of having joint patrols along the borders and agreed to undertake joint and simultaneous disarmament activities on both sides of the border. On specific criminal issues, the two sides agreed to establish immigration posts and check points along the border and to sign a Memorandum of Understanding on immigration to address issues connected to the smuggling of small arms and the illegal movement of peoples and goods across the border. In regard to people-to-people relations, the meeting emphasized the existing peaceful co-existence between the peoples of the adjacent regions. They also agreed to cement existing cooperation and to exchange information on pastoralists and on nomadic movement, to form joint cross-border committees to address problems and consult regularly with the government administrations on the ground on both sides of the border.

### ***Somali PM says Al Shabab suicide bombing sign of weakness***

Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Gaas said TFG would not be deterred from fighting al-Shabaab, following a suicide bomb blast at an event in the capital. At an event celebrating the one year anniversary of Somalia National Television. An al-Shabaab agent, reportedly a woman, strapped herself with explosives and targeted ministers, MPs and various officials at the event. But the main target was Prime Minister Gaas who at the time was giving a speech at the event. He escaped unharmed. "This will not scare us nor will it deter us from our path. Al-Shabaab is facing defeat that is why they are reverting to weak and despicable tactics such as these. Innocent civilians were killed in the blast and the TFG government is working to improve security so such attacks like these do not happen," said PM Gaas. Among the dead were the President of the Somalia Olympic Committee Aden Yabarow Wilsh, and the Somali Football Federation Chief, Said Mohamed Nur. Unconfirmed reports say the minister of planning and international cooperation was seriously injured. Al Shabab has claimed responsibility through their twitter page.

### ***PM Meles confers with the Sudanese delegation***

PM Meles expressed Ethiopia's desire to further strengthen existing relations with Sudan in all aspects in particular in infrastructure development such as roads, electricity and telecommunication sectors during a meeting with the Sudanese delegation led by Minister of Interior Affairs of Sudan, Enrahim Mohammed Hamid here in Addis. Meles also said Ethiopia was keen to enhance friendship with neighboring Sudan to further intensify people-to-people ties. The economic, trade, investment and security sectors, among others, are areas Ethiopia sought to enhance its relations with Sudan, the Prime Minister added. Concerning the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan, PM Meles said Ethiopia would exert utmost efforts to find peaceful solutions to the misunderstandings between the two countries. Mr. Hamid on his part said Sudan considers the existing friendship with Ethiopia as exemplary.