

A Week in the Horn

2nd January 2015

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News in Brief

Ethiopia

President Museveni, First lady Janet Museveni, Ministers and Ugandan high level officials have paid a three day visit to Ethiopia. The high level delegation led by President Museveni visited Gilgel Gibe III hydro power project and tourist sites in Arba Minch. Memoranda of Understanding were signed on health, energy and sister city twinning between Addis and Kampala. (See article)

The Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation has announced that Gilgel Gibe III, which is under construction at a cost of \$1.8 billion at a dam on the Omo river, could begin generating power by June and be fully operational by early 2016. Upon completion, Gilgel Gibe III will nearly double Ethiopia's energy output. (See article)

Getachew Mengestie, State Minister for Transport, told reporters that Ethiopia will start using Sudan ports to meet the growing demand of Ethiopia's burgeoning economy for import goods. He noted that, so far, Ethiopia has been using Sudan ports for export only. He also mentioned that efforts are also underway to make use of Berbera and Zeila ports for import of goods.

The Confucius Institute was inaugurated at Addis Ababa University on Monday (December 29). The opening of the institute will avail opportunities for students and the university community to explore the Chinese culture, learn the language and benefit from various exchange programs between Addis Ababa University (AAU) and Chinese Universities.

In a farewell ceremony held for the departing Ambassador of Nigeria, Ambassador Bulus Paul Lolo, President Dr Mulatu said Ethiopia welcomes the involvement of Nigerian investors and business people in a wide range of investment and trade areas for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. Ambassador Lolo noted that both countries business communities have jointly started close cooperation and exchange of views with a view to promoting investment and business ties.

Travel Pulse, the renowned travel website, says Ethiopia is on its way toward becoming a major travel destination in 2015 and hailed strategic moves made by the Ethiopian government to transform the tourism sector.

Eritrea

In an interview he gave to the state media, President Isaias Afewerki said Eritrea has embarked on drafting a constitution. He said the constitution seeks to close the gap between the rich and the poor.

Djibouti

Djibouti's government and main opposition group, Union of National Salvation (USN) have signed political dialogue framework agreement. According to the Agreement, opposition lawmakers will join the parliament, ending the boycott, and the two sides will further work on reforms of the country's electoral body.

Somalia

Somali officials told reporters that one of the most-wanted Al-Shabab leaders surrendered to authorities in the Gedo region of Somalia on Saturday (December 27, 2014). Zakariya Ismail Ahmed Hersi, who has a \$3 million bounty on his head, was hiding in a town near the border with Kenya. (See full article)

The Pentagon announced on Wednesday (December 31, 2014) that a U.S. airstrike has killed Tahlil Abdishakur, head of intelligence and security for the Al-Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia.

Prime Minister Shiekh Ahmed has handed over office to the new Prime Minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, in a ceremony held at Villa Somalia on Thursday (December 25, 2014). (See Article)

South Sudan

The United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, noted in a report published this week that the ongoing civil war in South Sudan has hindered the protection of children. The report notes that over 600 children were killed during the period between December 2013 and September 2014, adding that thousands of child soldiers were seen with state and non-state armed groups during the same period.

The South Sudanese government said on New Year's Eve that it would go ahead with preparations and plans to hold general elections. The Chairperson of the elections commission held discussions with the president and all the stakeholders, including other political parties and it was agreed that elections would be held in May.

The IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan strongly condemned reports of heavy fighting in Nassir, Upper Nile State, and near Bentiu, Unity State in South Sudan. The IGAD Special Envoys implored the warring parties to demonstrate restraint and immediately cease hostilities, in line with their repeated pledges to end the war.

Sudan

Sudan's State Minister for Information, Yassir Yesouf, accompanied by heads of major media outlets in Sudan, paid a three-day visit to Ethiopia from December 24-26, 2014. State Minister Yesouf met with Prime Minister Hailemariam and conveyed a message from President Al Bashir. He also held talks with Redwan Hussein, Head of the Government Communications Affairs Office with a rank of Minister, on ways to further strengthen cooperation on the media between Ethiopia and Sudan. (See article)

President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir of Sudan announced on Wednesday (December 31) that the general elections in the country would be held as scheduled in April 2015 and urged all parties to join the election.

Kenya

In his address to the nation, President Uhuru said the government will in year 2015 take the war against terrorism a notch higher for the sake of stability and the growth of the nation. The Head of State promised his government's commitment to ruthlessly tackling the threat of terrorism.

Kenya's High Court has suspended some sections of the new security law, which was enacted two weeks ago. The court blocked eight measures until a legal challenge mounted by the opposition and rights group is heard.

President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda visits Ethiopia

President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni paid a three-day state visit to Ethiopia this week (December 27-29). Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom, and other senior officials greeted President Museveni when he arrived at Bole International Airport at the head of a delegation that included First Lady Janet Kataaha Museveni as well as Ministers and high-level government officials. The visit underlined the importance both countries attach to the need to make concerted efforts to advance the cause of regional peace and stability; to hasten regional economic cooperation and integration through regional hydro-power, rail, road and other infrastructure interconnectivity; to rejuvenate and enhance the scale, level and depth of the bilateral cooperative partnership between the two countries; to tap the all-round cooperation potential and renew and prioritize the historic people-to-people ties; to promote cultural exchanges; and to scale up high-level consultations on bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest. The visit reviewed the relationship and interaction between the two nations and mapped out the way forward for a more cooperative partnership on the basis of dignity, improvement and prosperity. It heralded new cooperation in the areas of transportation, energy, sister-city twinning and health. It also underlined the significance of placing Ethio-Ugandan ties at the centre of regional, continental and international affairs for the realization of common development and win-win outcomes.

President Yoweri Museveni and his delegation held talks with President Dr Mulatu Teshome of Ethiopia at the National Palace following the welcoming ceremony. During their talks, President Dr Mulatu commended the existing excellent bilateral relations between the two countries and praised Uganda's contribution to regional peace and security with particular emphasis on Somalia and South Sudan. President Museveni referred to the historic relations of the two countries, stressing that it was imperative that the two nations forged a strong cooperative partnership in economic and social affairs for the benefit of their two peoples. Hailing the positive engagement and the long-standing ties of the two countries, the two Presidents agreed to develop the momentum of a closer cooperative partnership and explore new areas of cooperation, including health, energy, and commerce, and further cement the strategic partnership. They also agreed to expedite this cooperative partnership through infrastructural links as these would be the key enabling and driving force for the effective promotion of trade, investment and business ties between the two countries.

Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Museveni, after having private discussions, led their respective delegations in high-level consultations on Friday (December 26) at the National Palace on bilateral, regional and global matters of mutual interest. Prime Minister Hailemariam thanked President Museveni and his delegation for accepting the invitation to Ethiopia for a visit aimed at intensifying the "exemplary relations" between the two countries. He said that the President's visit gave a positive signal for a new breakthrough to promote and broaden cooperation on bilateral, regional, continental and global issues. He noted that both countries had enjoyed close and historic bilateral relations and emphasized that Ethiopia was committed to the intensification and entrenchment of its bilateral ties with Uganda. He said the relations of the two countries in political and social areas had seen a steady rise and commendable growth. They exemplified an excellent African cooperative partnership. The Prime Minister noted that the two peoples had a long history of shared culture and languages, among other things, and they also belonged to one river basin, the Nile and the Great Rift Valley. The Prime Minister said "Uganda has a clear stand on the equitable utilization of the Nile water resource by all countries of the Basin," adding that Ethiopia appreciated and recognized the role played by Uganda and the leadership of President Museveni on the Nile issue. He said this shared vision had been shown "throughout the negotiating sessions on the Nile Basin Initiative, which culminated in the signing of the Cooperative Framework Agreement." He also emphasized that "with the imminent ratification of this Agreement by all its signatories we will enjoy unprecedented opportunities to use our comparative advantage for the betterment of the peoples of our sub-region."

Prime Minister Hailemariam said that the slow and indeed minimal expansion of infrastructure in the sub-region had heavily reduced trade and investment links. He stressed that both countries needed to undertake projects aimed [at building] infrastructure linkages as bridges of closer cooperation and partnership through bilateral cooperation and through the implementation of the IGAD Minimum Integration Plan. Noting the significance of the construction of the GERD and the impact its completion would have on the development of Ethiopia and the region, the Prime Minister said "our power interconnection project with Kenya and beyond is certainly going in the right direction, with funds from our development partners." He expressed his hope that Uganda would be part of this interconnectivity and share in the benefit of clean and cheap energy.

The Prime Minister noted that the region was facing encouraging results as well as new threats, stressing

that fighting terrorism, poverty or political crises in the region necessitated practical cooperation between Ethiopia and Uganda. He extended his thanks for Uganda's role in bringing stability to Somalia and to South Sudan within the IGAD framework. He promised that Ethiopia would continue its support of the efforts of the South Sudanese political groups to reach a negotiated peaceful settlement; and he also pledged continuation of Ethiopia's firm stand to support Somalia in its efforts to bring durable peace and stability there.

President Museveni on his part stated that Ethio-Ugandan relations had been characterized and defined by ancient linkages amongst the two countries' peoples, by their similar geography, their shared resource of the Nile and by the ideological fraternity between their leaders. The President noted that cooperation between the two countries had yielded meaningful results in regional peace and stability and in other areas of engagement. Nevertheless, he said, much remained to be done. He pointed out that at present Ethiopian Airlines facilitated the only interconnection between Ethiopia and Uganda, and he stressed the need to construct a railroad project that could connect Uganda to Ethiopia through South Sudan. This would, he said, intensify trade and investment relations. He added that the construction of a railway link would be a bridge to promote the development of tourism in the region. He said: "the tourism sector needs to be strengthened in the region. This will lead to a lot of progress among all the countries in the region. Uganda and Ethiopia are gold mines for tourism. The Eastern African Region is endowed with snow-capped mountains and other historical sites that have the potential to attract tourists." President Museveni went on to emphasize that both countries could currently trade more effectively with each other by air, prioritizing easily transportable commodities, and that other goods for business and trade could be shipped by sea via Djibouti on to the Kenyan port of Mombasa. President Museveni said that the African continent was blessed with massive untapped hydropower energy potential, amounting to 360,000 megawatts, and Ethiopia was one of the major possible sources of such power. Uganda, he said, was keen to work together with Ethiopia in the areas of infrastructure, tourism, cross-border investment and trade.

Following their discussions, President Museveni and Prime Minister Hailemariam witnessed the signing of four Memoranda of Understanding covering health, energy, transport and the establishment of sister-city cooperation. Alemayehu Tegenu, Ethiopia's Minister for Water, Irrigation and Energy, and the Uganda State Minister for Energy, Simon D'Ujanga, signed an agreement aimed at deepening the partnership for increasing regional and bilateral hydropower trade and the promotion of human resource development and exchange of information in the energy sector. Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, and Mr Okello Oryem, Uganda's State Minister of International Affairs, signed a cooperation agreement on health with the objective of promoting an exchange of expertise and cooperation in global fora, as well as expanding areas of partnership in health. Ethiopia's Minister of Transport, Workneh Gebeyehu, and Uganda's State Minister for International Affairs, Mr Okello Oryem, signed the cooperation agreement on transport in order to advance a mutually cooperative partnership on civil aviation and on the development of land transport infrastructure and land transport services and safety. Ms Jennifer Musisi, the Executive Director of the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) and Diriba Kuma, Mayor of Addis Ababa City Administration, also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the establishment of sister-city cooperation, focusing on increasing exchanges of information and of people as well as other cooperation programs, laying foundations for the creation of positive interaction in historical, cultural and folk programs and in exhibitions and sports programs. The MoU also covered economic cooperation between business people and the respective chambers of commerce and industries of the two sister-cities.

At a joint press conference, President Museveni said: "we have been cooperating with Ethiopia on defense and security," and noted that Uganda's forces were safeguarding the cause of peace and stability in Somalia within the framework of AMISOM. He emphasized that Uganda was committed to cooperating more widely with Ethiopia, mentioning infrastructure, trade, investment, tourism and health. He said: "we shouldn't spend more time talking, we need to identify what kind of items we can trade using the existing infrastructure - air - and start right away." The President went on to suggest the importance of reactivating the Joint Ministerial Commission. Prime Minister Hailemariam said both countries were intending to work together in concert in railway interconnectivity through South Sudan and hydro-power trade through Kenya. The Prime Minister pointed out that the Addis Ababa-Juba line would soon proceed to Kampala, adding "we will also be connecting electricity to Kampala." This, he said, was the basic infrastructures that would help trade and investment in the region to flourish.

Before leaving for Kampala on Sunday, President Museveni, accompanied by First Lady Janet Museveni, and his delegation, also visited the Metals and Engineering Corporation (METEC) in Bishoftu town in Oromia

Regional State. He also visited the Gilgel Gibe III hydro-electric power generation project and cultural and other sites in and around Arba Minch town in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. In Arba Minch, President Museveni thanked the people of Gamo Gofa for the warm welcome given to him and his delegation, describing this as solid proof of Ethiopia's uniquely hospitable culture. He said the southern part of Ethiopia shared numerous common elements with Uganda in terms of language, culture, music, dance and geography. He promised to send a team of anthropologists to study these. Senior government officials from Uganda stressed that both countries needed to pool and share their strengths to deepen cooperation and speed up progress towards regional peace, stability and prosperity. They expressed Uganda's readiness and desire to work together with Ethiopia and expand and encourage people-to-people relations to enhance bilateral ties. Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom emphasized that expediting investment and trade ties through massive infrastructure projects ought to be scaled up through the concerted action of both countries. He said Ethiopia, Uganda and Kenya needed to coordinate the infrastructural links from Mombasa to Kampala in order to improve intra-African trade; he also promised that Ethiopia would fully support the proposed Ugandan anthropological study.

President Youweri Museveni's successful three-day state visit clearly demonstrated the clear desire of both Ethiopia and Uganda for more practical cooperation on bilateral, regional, continental and global issues and their wish to reinvigorate their historic ties in the interest of their shared vision in a common development and win-win approach for the betterment of their two peoples.

Al-Shabaab's head of intelligence killed in airstrike

According to the Somali National Intelligence and Security Agency, a U.S. airstrike on Monday (December 29) killed a leading member of Al-Shabaab. Abdishakur Tahlil was identified as Al-Shabaab's chief of intelligence. A Somali defense official said Abdishakur Tahlil was believed to have masterminded a number of recent Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya, including the murder of 36 non-Muslim miners in the town of Mandera earlier in the month. Rear Admiral John Kirby, Pentagon press secretary, originally announced the airstrike in a press statement but did not name the target or make any comment on the success of the operation, merely saying the airstrike, which took place in the area of Saakow, was targeting a senior leader of the Islamist militant group. However, on Wednesday (December 31) the Pentagon said that "Tahlil Abdishakur, chief of Al-Shabaab's intelligence and security wing, was killed in a US airstrike in Somalia" on December 29. It added: "his death will significantly impact Al-Shabaab's ability to conduct attacks against the government of the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Somali people, and US allies and interests in the region."

The death of Abdishakur Tahlil comes four months after a U.S. airstrike killed the then leader of Al-Shabaab, Ahmed Abdi Godane in September. It also took place just three days after the capture of a former leading figure in Al-Shabaab, Zakariye Ismail Ahmed Hersi. This was announced on Saturday (December 27) by Somali military authorities in the Gedo region. They said Zakariye Hersi was taken prisoner in a raid in the town of El Wak. General Abbas Ibrahim Gurey, the commander of Somali government troops in the southern Gedo region, said the authorities had received a tip-off from members of the public that Al-Shabaab suspects were hiding in a house. General Gurey said that Zakariye was captured with his secretary; neither had put up any resistance. According to officials, Zakariye had been hiding out for over a year near El Wak in the Gedo region bordering both Kenya and Ethiopia.

Zakariye was one of seven Al-Shabaab leaders for whom the US posted rewards totaling US\$33 million in June 2012. Of these, Ahmed Abdi Godane, was killed in September this year; Ibrahim Haji Jama (Al-Afghani) was killed by Godane in June last year; and two others, Mukhtar Robow (Abu Mansur) and Zakariye Ismail Ahmed Hersi, fled to avoid being killed by Godane and disassociated themselves from his leadership, if not from Al-Shabaab. Another, Fuad Mohamed Khalaf 'Shongole', made it clear he wanted to see major changes within the group's policies including curbing the powers of the 'Amniyaat', previously Godane's personal intelligence and assassination squad, making efforts to limit civilian casualties during bombings and reducing the role of the emir within Al-Shabaab. He also wanted to close the group's secret detention centers and initiate reconciliation talks with the critics of Godane, such as Mukhtar Robow, and others like Zakariye Ismail, who have been or are in hiding. Others, including the military commander, Bashir Mohamed Mahamoud, and the current emir, Ahmed Diriye 'Abu Ubaidah', who replaced Godane, want to keep closely to Godane's policies of brutality, assassination of rivals and mistrust of foreign jihadists. Since Ahmed Diriye took over as head of Al-Shabaab he has been placed on the UN list of international terrorists subject to sanctions, and the Somali government has placed a US\$2 million bounty on his head.

There has been some confusion about Zakariye Hersi's recent activities and role. In 2012 when the US bounty

of US\$3 million was placed on his head, he was described as Al-Shabaab's head of intelligence. Abdishakur Tahlil, who was killed in Monday's airstrike, was his replacement. Somali State Radio Muqdisho described him over the weekend as "the general secretary of Al Shabaab's finance department". In an interview after his capture he claimed that while he had been a member of Al-Shabaab, he had left the organization 18 months earlier, and also claimed that he had never been Al-Shabaab's head of intelligence but had held the position of head of regional administrations and a commander of Al-Shabab militias.

Al-Shabaab, which predictably tried to play down Zakariye Hersi's surrender and arrest, said he had "abandoned the organization more than a year ago." An Al-Shabaab official said all the information on military activities or plans that Zakariye knew had been changed since he left and "therefore the so-called defector has no intelligence value to offer to our enemies." Al-Shabaab suggested the news of the defection had only been released in order "to shift attention" away from Al-Shabaab's recent attack on AMISOM's headquarters in Mogadishu though this had promptly dealt with by AMISOM forces.

Al-Shabaab has claimed that Zakariye Hersi's surrender should not be seen as evidence of any weakening of the movement, but in fact, his surrender, though the most important, is merely one of many defections that have taken place in the last few months since the death of former Al-Shabaab leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane. Al-Shabaab has also been losing fighters recently as international jihadists have begun to see ISIS in Iraq and Syria as more promising areas for their activity. It has also been suffering defections to the Government following the offer of amnesties for its members. The rate of defection has been slow but it underlines that the Government is unlikely to treat defectors harshly or punish many of the youngsters who joined Al-Shabaab, whether willingly or unwillingly.

In fact, since taking Godane's place, Abu Ubaidah has been faced by the continuing success of Operation Indian Ocean, the joint military activities of the Somali National Army and AMISOM, which have been steadily pushing Al-Shabaab forces back. Earlier this week the Somali National army captured the strategic town of Daynunay, 45 kilometers outside Baidoa. It had been an Al-Shabaab stronghold for over two years and been used as a center to launch raids on travelers and attacks on government and AMISOM troops. On Monday (December 29) Somali government forces of the April 12th Division, aided by AMISOM troops also announced they had liberated a number of areas in Hiiraan from Al-Shabaab.

These included Hero Lugole, Rahale, Jar, Janbiley, Burweyn, Mirgab and Anfac. The divisional commander, Colonel Mohamud Mohamed Qafow said the troops were transporting a food aid convoy to the town of Bulo Barde that Al-Shabaab had been attempting to blockade for the last ten months.

Overall, during the last year, despite a number of political and economic hiccups, the situation on the ground has improved significantly. Ethiopia officially joined AMISOM in January and gave the Mission a major boost, increasing its numbers of 17,700 to over 22,000. This marked the start of a series of successful offensives which have forced Al-Shabaab out of most of their strongholds in Upper and Middle Shebelle regions, in Hiiraan and Juba regions and most recently in Lower Shebelle and now Bay and Bakool. These successes and the deaths of a number of senior Al-Shabaab figures, haven't, of course, prevented Al-Shabaab from mounting attacks, but as military operations have continued to achieve successes, other things have changed. During the last year, a significant number of Somalis in the Diaspora have returned and Mogadishu has seen something of a construction boom. A number of the more usual aspects of a capital city have begun to appear, including football matches, new banks and restaurants. Turkey is constructing one of East Africa's largest medical facilities, the Turkish Hospital in Mogadishu. It has also pledged to renovate the Aden Abdille International Airport and the port in Mogadishu.

Sudan's State Minister for Information visits Ethiopia

Sudan's State Minister for Information Yassir Yesouf paid a three-day visit to Ethiopia last week (December 24-26). He was accompanied by a large media delegation including the General Manager of the Sudan News Agency (SUNA), Awad Jadain; the General Manager of the Radio and Television National Corporation, Al-Samwal Khalf-Alla; the Chairman of the Sudanese Journalist General Union, Al-Saddiq Al-Rizaqi; and the Editor-in-Chief of Akhbar-Al-Youm, Ahmed Al-Balal, as well representatives of the Sudan Media Center, the Al-Shorouq and National TV channels, and the Sudan News Agency. During his visit, the State Minister and delegation met Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and the Head of the Government Communications Affairs Office with the rank of Minister, Redwan Hussein, and paid visits to the Ethiopian News Agency and the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation.

In his meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam, State Minister Yesouf, who appreciated Ethiopia's support

of Sudan in international fora and of Sudan's National Dialogue and the success of the goals set by the National Dialogue, conveyed a verbal message from President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir. He also noted that both leaders were determined to consolidate cooperation in all fields, including the economy, regional security, cultural areas and people-to-people relations.

Prime Minister Hailemariam emphasized Ethiopia's commitment to further deepen the excellent bilateral relations between Sudan and Ethiopia. He welcomed the visit of the Sudanese media delegation and indicated that the political leadership of both countries supported efforts of cooperation by their respective media to serve the interests of the two countries. He said that Sudan and Ethiopia shared similar views on issues of mutual interest. He stressed that the media and information services in the two countries needed to contribute to bolstering bilateral relations further and in explaining their respective government policies. Prime Minister Hailemariam said Sudan and Ethiopia enjoyed a strong partnership in economic, cultural, investment and trade areas, but he highlighted the need to further deepen and broaden this for the benefit of the peoples of the two countries. The Prime Minister noted that the National Dialogue in Sudan was an important initiative, and said it was something in which the media could play an important, indeed a key, role by keeping people and the outside world informed on the progress made in resolving political problems in Sudan.

State Minister Yesouf also met with Redwan Hussein, Head of the Government Communication Affairs Office with the rank of Minister. Their discussions focused on the reactivation of agreements in media cooperation, particularly in cooperation between the two news agencies in radio and television, exchanges of information, training and reciprocal visits. Draft proposals were exchanged between the Sudan News Agency (SUNA) and the Ethiopian News Agency (ENA). The delegation paid visits to the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation and ENA and exchanged views with the heads of these organizations on ways to start cooperation in broadcasting production, news sharing, training and other issues.

During his stay in Addis, Sudan's State Minister of Information spoke with journalists on the current political situation in Sudan, the issue of the Nile, the negotiations going on between Sudan and rebel groups and other issues. In relation to Sudan's upcoming election, the State Minister said that eighteen parties had applied to take part in the election. He said "there are a few parties that have formed an alliance with the ruling party; but that doesn't mean that they are not participating in the election. And over 30 million voters have registered; accounting for 70% of the general population that is eligible to vote." The State Minister noted that the National Dialogue is open to all parties. He said there were no exceptions for participating in the Dialogue: "All parties are invited to take part in it. Most of them have started participating in the Dialogue and there is no quorum for the discussion." He added: "there is no alternative for the nation other than a comprehensive discussion of its problems."

Mr Yesouf elaborated on issues that appear to be affecting negotiations between the SPLM/N and the Government. He said there was a requirement to start negotiations with the SPLM/N on the issue of South Kordofan and the Blue Nile State. "One of these requirements is the tripartite agreement which has been adopted by the Arab League, the AU and the US, regarding access to humanitarian assistance; and another is UN Security Council resolution 2046 which stipulates that my government and SPLM-N should be involved in negotiations, after fulfilling requirements. We started negotiations, but they failed nine rounds of talks because SPLM-N rejected the requirements in the middle of the negotiations." Mr Yesouf noted that the ruling party had gone out of its way in its efforts to negotiate over the specific problems in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. He said the Government was ready to negotiate on the security arrangements, humanitarian issues and on the political arrangements of the two states. The demand for humanitarian access by the SPLM/N, he said, did not meet the tripartite Arab League, the AU and the US requirements, adding that it was not a genuine demand but rather aimed at getting military support from neighboring countries. He said: "they are using the humanitarian issues as a cover to strengthen their military capability and destabilize the nation." Mr Yesouf also said that with regard to the accusations of attacks on civilians, the blame should go to SPLM-N itself. There was, he said, war in the area: "the party to be held accountable for any civilian damage is the one responsible for or controlling the area; they should evacuate civilians. The reality is different. They are attacking the Sudanese army, using civilians as a cover. This cannot be acceptable to anyone."

On the Nile, State Minister Yesouf pointed out that: "The Nile is a river that belongs to all its riparian countries, and that is the very reason for Sudan to support Ethiopia's development projects." He noted that the relations between Egypt and Sudan were good, and said that during a visit to Egypt the previous week he had met with President El-Sisi and discussed the issues of cooperation between the two countries. Mr Yesouf said they had also discussed "the potential that the three countries have: Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia.

For instance, the three countries combined population is estimated to be 200 million, which is huge and a good asset and a strong power that can lead the whole region to shared benefits.” He emphasized that “with regard to the Nile, the Sudanese position is very clear. No country will be affected by Ethiopia’s hydroelectric dam. The Nile is for the benefit of all the riparian countries and the region. All countries, I think, have accepted this Sudanese position on the Nile.” He stressed that media representatives and journalists needed to make fair and balanced reports about the GERD and to take care their reports would not breed suspicion within Eastern Nile Basin countries, including Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. He proposed that representatives of media associations drawn from the three countries should set up an organization to cover all three countries to ensure the delivery of balanced and fair reporting about the GERD.

The second Track II Water Diplomacy Workshop in Khartoum

The second Track II Water Diplomacy Workshop for the Eastern Nile Basin was held on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (December 30-31) in Khartoum. Participants for this Track II, or Citizens Diplomacy workshop, were drawn from Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) experts, members of civil society, academia, and research institutions, the media, women and youth groups as well as diplomats from Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Sudan. The workshop was a continuation of the first workshop organized by the Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO) held in February 2014 in Adama in Ethiopia. This second workshop was a result of the positive responses to the first workshop and the many requests that ENTRO received to organize another meeting. Regrettably, no one from Egypt participated in the workshop as Egypt’s freeze of its activity in ENTRO has still not been lifted.

According to ENTRO, the workshop was organized "in a bid to widely disseminate the potentials of water diplomacy for opening opportunities for Eastern Nile stakeholders to positively influence breakthrough outcomes by providing new insights." Water diplomacy, which is based on the virtue of bringing actionable solutions to problems pertaining to the management and utilization of trans-boundary watercourses, has become essential in bringing different stakeholders together so that differences can be resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding. In this context, Track-II diplomacy is seen as emphasizing people’s diplomacy. It focuses on bringing professional citizens of the riparian states into the process and is expected to be instrumental in assisting Track-I diplomacy (government-to-government diplomacy) to solve differences. In the Nile Basin, the immense contribution of Track-II diplomacy was seen in facilitating discussions between professionals in the Basin during the Nile-2002 Conferences in the 1990s before the establishment of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI).

Ato Fekahmed Negash, Executive Director of ENTRO, opened the workshop and noted that facilitating the role of Track II diplomacy was essential to enhancing dialogue in the Eastern Nile. Sudan’s Minister of Water and Electricity, Ambassador Mutaz Moussain, in remarks delivered by Dr Babiker Abdala, said that, as no one can live without water, what happened to the Nile was a concern for all the riparian states and required all their cooperative efforts. During the workshop, professional experts presented six research papers on issues including the concept of water diplomacy; cooperation and conflict in the Eastern Nile; international law in alternative dispute resolution and Innovative Problem Solving Workshops. In one way or another, all the research papers stressed the importance of cooperation in the management and utilization of the Nile waters and the role of Track-II diplomacy in enhancing cooperation and assisting decision makers at the level of government-to-government dialogue and negotiation.

The workshop ended with the release of the Khartoum Statement on "Eastern Nile Cooperation. The preamble notes deliberations on Citizens’ (Track II) diplomacy, and appreciates the progress the sisterly Eastern Nile countries of Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Sudan have made in fostering technical and institutionalized cooperation to manage the common Nile water resources to benefit their peoples and to sustain the integrity of the river system. It refers to becoming familiarized with and inspired by enhanced awareness of the potential roles citizens’ can play in promoting trans-boundary cooperation. It notes the remaining challenges for producing lasting arrangements in the region as well as the absence of representatives from Egypt and Egyptian citizens.

In the light of these points and the Statement issued after the conclusion of the conference, the participants reiterated that they would commit themselves to encouraging and supporting our countries' efforts in search for a common ground and win-win outcomes, providing platforms that build an enabling environment for trust and confidence promotion as individual Eastern Nile citizens and members of professional communities. They agreed to cultivate a culture of mutuality, concern for, and appreciation of, each others'

needs and interests and emphasize their duty as citizens of the Eastern Nile to work toward sustaining the life line - the common Nile water resources - in the midst of the threat of Climate Change and development pressures; promote dialogue and collaboration among Eastern Nile professionals, mass media, civil society, scientific and diplomatic communities in a bid to generate a range of creative, breakthrough feasible options that satisfy the needs of all our countries. The participants urged and encouraged Egypt to come on board and join hands with other sub-basin countries for a sustainable solution in the region. The participants also urged the governments of the Eastern Nile Countries to encourage and support Citizens' diplomacy to take root at all levels across the sub-basin.

Gilgel Gibe III Dam to support growth and integration in the Horn of Africa

The Green Growth Strategy of Ethiopia is fully integrated with its Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) which aims to comprehensively improve the living conditions of the Ethiopian people by reaching middle-income status by 2025, along with carbon-neutral growth. The five-year GTP, **which ends [this] year**, is being followed by GTP II. This, currently under preparation, will have similar targets, and be based on the same four pillars of the country's Green Growth Strategy, its Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy, of which power is one of the main components. Indeed, the power strategy of the country is specifically based on combining economic growth efforts with reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Ethiopia has decided to focus on deploying renewable, clean power generation as a priority, with expansion of hydropower generation as one of its major categories as it is endowed with 45,000 MW of hydro power potential.

The target of this power generation policy is to expand production of electricity from renewable energy for domestic and regional markets. Ethiopia believes the growth in different sectors and the impressive momentum of recent economic development that it has achieved can be sustained by the increasing generation of power and electricity. Electricity powers cities and is instrumental in almost all applications, from fuelling industrial activities to pumping water for irrigation and improving production and productivity in agriculture, still the major element in the country's economy. Electricity, if it is not adequately scaled up to support development, also risks becoming a very real bottleneck to growth, as underlined in Ethiopia's strategy documents. These also note that in order to support the level of economic development at an annual growth rate of more than 10% to which the government aspires, the country needs to expand power supplies at a rate of more than 14% per year. In terms of natural resources, Ethiopia has abundant resources to meet such demands. Apart from hydropower, Ethiopia's energy policy aims to harness geothermal and solar resources, all of which produce virtually zero greenhouse gas emissions, for delivering electricity to the country and to the region, and are enormous.

One of the major hydroelectric power projects that will be completed in the coming June, is the Gilgel Gibe III hydroelectric project. At a height of 243 meters, the Gilgel Gibe III hydroelectric dam is going to be the highest Roller Compacted Concrete dam in Africa and will nearly double the present electric power generation of the country with an installed capacity of 1870 MW. The power that Gilgel Gibe III will provide for Ethiopia's internal development is paralleled by the benefits it will provide for regional countries as well. Gilgel Gibe III will also have multi-dimensional benefits by exporting energy to other countries in the region including Kenya, and will visibly contribute to realizing the integration of the East Africa region and IGAD. A power transmission line connecting Ethiopia and Kenya is well underway. Gilgel Gibe III will also assist in the development of neighboring countries by providing cheap and clean electricity and sets an example for other countries that green growth is the right path for achieving sustainable development. It will thus contribute to the economic growth of the peoples in the region and encourage economic integration between them, with an annual energy production of 1870 MW. It will be an important element in the long-term plans of Ethiopia to use its potential 45,000 megawatts to integrate the region through power links and expedite regional economic integration.

Last Saturday (December 27) during his state visit to Ethiopia, President Museveni, of Uganda and his delegation of Ministers and other high level officials and their Ethiopian counterparts visited the Gilgel Gibe III Dam. After the visit President Museveni said Ethiopia was exemplary in harnessing the country's resources towards sustainable development. He described Ethiopia's natural topography as convenient for power generation and said this will help in its expanding power generation within the region. The President also noted that Ethiopia's power connections with Kenya would enable Uganda to benefit and import energy from Ethiopia. Foreign Minister Dr Tedros, emphasized that Gilgel Gibe III would play a key role in realizing regional energy interconnections and mutual development among all the countries of the region. He noted that the Dam would not only bring regional economic integration but it would also contribute significantly

to strengthening people-to-people relations among the countries of the region and assist in bringing peace and stability to the Horn of Africa and East Africa.

**Dear readers, we wish you all a Happy Gregorian New Year and
Happy Maulid to all our Muslim readers**