

A Week in the Horn 2nd November 2012

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AMISOM gets a week's extension from the UN

On Wednesday this week [31st Oct], the UN Security Council provided a technical roll-over of the UN support package for AMISOM, the African Union's peacekeeping mission in Somalia, and a seven-day extension of the current mandate while the Security Council further considers AU requests to review the arms embargo on Somalia with a view to facilitating the provision of arms and other military equipment to the Somali security forces within appropriate modalities. The Security Council voted unanimously to extend the U.N. mandate of the African Union's AMISOM peacekeeping force. This was due to expire on Wednesday. It has now been extended until 7th November and Council diplomats have said that they would prepare a resolution to extend the mandate for a full year.

The Council's closed-door discussions on Somalia were interrupted by the Superstorm Sandy earlier the week when it hit New York and the US East Coast. With the Security Council chambers flooded, Wednesday's meeting had to take place in temporary container-like structures intended for the secretariat during renovation of the main buildings due to finish next year.

The African Union wants the Security Council to review the arms embargo to help the country rebuild its army and consolidate recent military gains against Al-Shabaab. The Somali government wants help to strengthen its poorly equipped military. The AU also asked for the additional support necessary for the civilian and maritime components of AMISOM to take into account urgent needs arising from the realities on the ground. This support is expected to go a long way towards assisting in the stabilization of areas recovered from Al-Shabaab group and ensure improved surveillance of Somalia's coast.

Somalia's ambassador to Kenya, Mohamed Ali Nur, said it was time to increase the capabilities of Somalia's military, after a year of military and political progress. "Now we are a government and a sovereign country and we will request through the UN to lift the arms embargo so we can arm our forces," Ambassador Nur said. He said "AMISOM troops can't stay there forever. We want our Somali forces to be trained; it will be difficult and it will take some time but it has to be started." President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has asked the UN to adjust its arms embargo so that the government can bring in rifles, light machine guns, mortars and rocket-propelled

grenades with which to fight the militants. Diplomats caution that the government needs to have the capacity to track and control any new imports of weapons.

The AU and AMISOM also requested the UN embargo on the export of charcoal to be lifted in order to allow for the export of the huge stocks of charcoal captured at the fall of Kismayo, amounting to some 4 million bags. The Security Council banned the export of charcoal from Somalia when it was Al-Shabaab's main source of income, and there is apparently concern that the sale may be carried out by people who might still have connections with Al-Shabaab. According to the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, charcoal exports from southern Somalia in 2011 generated over \$25 million for Al-Shabaab.

Ethiopia's National Flag Day

Monday (29th October) marked the celebration of Ethiopia's fifth annual National Flag Day with national flags flown across towns, cities and regions throughout the country, and Flag Day celebrations observed throughout the country. The occasion was held under the common theme: "Holding our flag high, we shall realize the Ethiopian Renaissance as initiated by its great architect Meles". With the country still in mourning the loss of the late Prime Minister, the National Flag Day celebrations were another opportunity to honour and praise his leadership. Indeed, in tune with the theme of the Flag Day, members of the public at the National Stadium and elsewhere emphasized their commitment to realizing the vision outlined by the late Prime Minister Meles.

The day's festivities culminated at the Addis Ababa National Stadium where representatives from the government, and the military, among them the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Samora Yenus, the police, religious institutions and foreign dignitaries as well as thousands of city residents participated. The Chairperson of the Flag Day National Organizing Committee and Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, Abadula Gemedo, opened the celebration with a speech highlighting the importance of the day in building national consensus on the nation's developmental and democratic goals. Ato Abadula urged the general public to fight the scourge of poverty that has plagued the country for so long by uniting its efforts under the policy of growth and transformation. He called on the current generation to use the flag as a weapon against poverty, evoking the memory of their forefathers who had used it to defeat foreign aggressors.

The guest of honour, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Ato Demeke Mekonnen, stressed that "by eradicating poverty we will preserve the honour of our flag as we have done throughout our history through immense collective sacrifice". Ato Demeke expressed his hope that the national flag would act as a common thread between the present and the future, facilitating the transfer of constitutional and democratic values to coming generations. He called on the general public to intensify their efforts in order to maintain the rapid and sustainable development that the nation is currently experiencing. The Deputy Prime Minister also underlined the government's determination to improving the livelihood of urban dwellers through increased generation of jobs and the implementation of development schemes aimed at making towns more habitable.

The Deputy Prime Minister, joined by members of the Federal Police and Defense Forces' Guard of Honour, then raised the national flag while all those present joined in singing the National Anthem. Following the raising of the flag, the President of the Federal Supreme Court, Tegene Getaneh, conducted an oath-taking ceremony, reaffirming the nation's commitment to economic growth and prosperity. The celebrations were also accompanied by a parade of

hundreds of children in cultural clothing, exemplifying the plural and diverse nature of Ethiopian society. They and the others in the stadium waved the flags of Ethiopia and of the Regional States and sang national songs.

Later in the day, officials and staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held their own Flag Day celebrations at the Ministry's premises. Ambassador Fisseha Yimer, led the event on behalf of the acting Foreign Minister, and emphasized the significance of the celebration as an example of the nation's sovereignty, equality and national pride. He noted that "the establishment of a new constitutional order has instead turned the flag into an endeared emblem of the people, signifying their shared aspiration to building a new Ethiopia on the basis of democratic principles." This contrasted with the past when the flag had served the interests of a repressive government. He called on the staff of the Ministry to contribute their share towards realization of the late Prime Minister's vision of the Ethiopian Renaissance. Raising the flag and oath-taking concluded the ceremony.

National Flag Day has traditionally been celebrated during the second week of September. This year the celebration was postponed to 29th October due to the untimely death of Prime Minister Meles in August.

The 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies

This week over 300 scholars from Ethiopia and across the world participated in the five day 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies being held in Dire Dawa. The opening ceremony was held on Monday (29th October) and the Conference was opened by Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was the first time that the conference had been held in any Ethiopian town outside Addis Ababa, and appropriately enough the theme of the Conference was "Movements in Ethiopia/Ethiopia in Movement".

Ambassador Berhane welcomed participants to Dire Dawa and expressed his pleasure that Ethiopia's second largest city had been chosen as host of the Conference. He noted that the government over the last decade had built numerous higher educational institutions and he hoped that this gathering of eminent scholars in a regional city would stimulate interest in Ethiopian Studies in the more than 20 public universities and the many private institutions of higher learning in the country. Ambassador Berhane welcomed the number and spread of topics and the number of presenters which he said suggested scholarly interest in Ethiopia is alive and well and demonstrated that Ethiopian Studies had grown into a discipline properly inclusive and representative of its subject of study. Equally, the presence of so many Ethiopian scholars reflected how far this field of study had come since the first International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, held in Rome in 1959, when there had been only one Ethiopian participant.

Ambassador Berhane welcomed the growth of Ethiopian studies because he believed Ethiopians could only engage wisely and usefully with the outside world "if we have a sense of who we are and where we come from [with] an extensive understanding of our history, values and the diverse constituent components of a modern-day Ethiopian identity." He hoped that the higher number of Ethiopians undertaking research with a direct bearing on Ethiopia would spur greater domestic interest in Ethiopian history, cultures, religions, linguistics, arts, and all the other disciplines represented at the Conference. He welcomed the presence of many friends of Ethiopia and hoped their work would help to dispel some of the negative images of Ethiopia which still persist in the minds of some abroad. He said they could make invaluable contributions in rehabilitating Ethiopia's image, conveying the country's uniqueness and its

distinctive qualities. He questioned the claim that Ethiopia's unique attributes stemmed from its long periods of isolation as Edward Gibbon had suggested or the late Professor Huntington of the Clash of Civilizations fame that Ethiopia was a "lone country", one with little in common with its neighbours.

Ambassador Berhane did not feel Ethiopia's uniqueness derived from its isolation. He said Ethiopia was profoundly and intrinsically African, with its cultures and identity, as with its neighbours, shaped by interactions with countries near and far. Borrowing and molding of cultural practices of other peoples to fit Ethiopia and integrate them with existing traditions, were more likely the basis of Ethiopia's distinctiveness.

Ambassador Berhane noted the organizers had adopted a broad approach to the theme of "Movements in Ethiopia/Ethiopia in Movement," and briefly noted a few points relating to social reform movements which, he pointed out, had been relatively neglected in the literature. Where studied, the emphasis tended to be on adversarial movements rather than consensual ones. The successes of liberation movements enabled the growth of civil society and movements dedicated to social reform, and these too, the Ambassador emphasized, ought to be subjects of research. They had an especially important role to play because government could not fill all the gaps. Such movements could lobby for important legislation, raise awareness, galvanize the public, and ensure that values remained intact. One example was the spearheading of environmental causes by social movements over the last few years. Over the last decade, groups had embraced tree-planting initiatives with particular enthusiasm, and indeed since 2008 Ethiopians were now **planting 1 billion trees a year**. He also noted that the initiatives of these groups had expanded into other areas; in agriculture, helping to establish more modern irrigation techniques; in public health, focusing on improved water supplies in rural areas. The free labour provided by local communities and social groups and associations had provided inestimable worth and accomplished more than federal and regional governments could ever do alone.

Ambassador Berhane concluded by expressing the fervent hope that the research and presentations of the Conference would mix theory with practicality, and so ensure the Conference, and others in the future, would have a direct impact on the political, socio-economic, cultural and artistic environment in Ethiopia.

Among other distinguished guests who spoke at the opening ceremony were Professor Andreas Eshete, Special Advisor on Diaspora Affairs to the Prime Minister and Honorary Chairman of the Conference; Dr. Eloi Ficquet, Co-Chairman of the Ethio-French Organizing Committee of the Conference and former director of the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies; Dr. Ahmed Hassen Omer, Co-Chairman of the Ethio-French Organizing Committee and Director of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies; and the Mayor of Dire Dawa.

The conference, which meets on a triennial basis, is the largest and most important gathering of scholars of Ethiopia. Since the first Conference in 1959, it has regularly taken stock of current and ongoing developments in Ethiopia and considered the long-term historical dynamics as well as the social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to the making of Ethiopian identity and diversity. The conference was organized by the Institute of Ethiopian Studies of Addis Ababa University and the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, and the primary sponsor was the French Embassy in Ethiopia. Dr. Eloi Ficquet said the aim of holding the conference in a regional setting was to help account for recent regional developments in the country as well as focus attention on the regional factors that had contributed to the development of the country. He noted that the development that is taking place in Ethiopia

today is not confined to the centre of the country, to Addis Ababa; it is happening in all areas and regions of the country. One example of this, he added, was in the recent proliferation of universities, of which Dire Dawa University was one. Equally, Dire Dawa was a city that could be considered to be at a crossroads of international and regional trade and travel. While promoting itself as ‘the Queen of the Desert’, and emphasizing its ancient cultural and religious traditions, Dire Dawa was a clear example of a city undergoing significant modernization and change. The Honorary Chairman of the Conference, Professor Andreas Eshete also noted that it was very fitting that Dire Dawa should host “this very important Conference” because of its rich culture and because it was a region that was “going through a resilient economic and social renovation.”

The conference lasted all week and closes today (Friday 2nd November). There were some 41 panels with over 300 papers selected for presentation and covering a wide choice of subjects ranging from the most ancient to the most recent times, covering history and archaeology, religion and anthropology, social developments and urban issues, linguistics, music and culture. Next week we will take a look in more detail at some of these and at the keynote speeches.

Ethio-Canada Consultation meeting held in Addis Ababa

The Second Ethio-Canada Consultation meeting was held on Thursday (1st November) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa. The Canadian delegation was led by Patricia Malikhail, Canada’s Director General for African Affairs and David Usher, Ambassador of Canada, and Philip Baker, Regional Director of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Ambassador Taye Astekeselasie, Director-General of the Americas’ Directorate, led an Ethiopian delegation which included representatives of Ethiopian Airlines, the Financial Intelligence Centre, the Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs and of the Federal Small and Micro Enterprises.

Discussions covered a number of issues ranging from development assistance, visa and consular matters, new areas for cooperation involving implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan and other bilateral matters. Multilateral issues included human trafficking, money laundering and possible areas of cooperation in Ethiopia’s peace-keeping efforts. The day-long consultations also covered regional issues with a particular focus on the current situation in Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea, and the status of the Nile Basin Initiative.

Bilateral relations have, of course, evolved from the coming of Jesuits to teach in Ethiopia in the early 1950’s to multifaceted cooperation on many levels, now including Canadian assistance to the Productive Safety Net Program and support to the two chambers of parliament, which were emphasized as notable cooperation ventures. Both sides made it clear they wanted to see trade expanded. Although various trade agreements have been signed in the last five decades, the level of trade has remained largely insignificant. In 2010, Ethiopia’s exports to Canada were no more than US\$15 million of oilseeds, coffee; imports were US\$174 million of machineries and aircrafts and parts. There has been steady increase of Canadian investment in Ethiopia especially relating to mining, but much still needed to be done to move this interest from registration to implementation. Out of 643 registered Canadian investment interests, only 93 are operational. The two sides also discussed ways to promote the role of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Canada to boost trade and investment between the two countries.

Ethiopia noted that supply-side constraints and the competitiveness of product quality were factors hindering trade. Canada noted a lack of awareness about business opportunities in

Ethiopia, the natural gravitation towards traditional investment destinations, and the relatively small scale of the Canadian market. Ethiopia welcomed the forthcoming Least Developing Countries Market Access Initiative which will give access to Canadian markets for 47 Least Developed Countries (LDC's) including, Ethiopia. The Canadian delegation encouraged the idea of trade mission visits arranged through the Trade Facilitation Office of Canada, and of forging ties between Chambers of Commerce. It also raised the possibility of support for medium-sized businesses intending to invest in Ethiopia through Export Development Canada (EDC) and for junior resource extraction companies to assist investment in Ethiopia and other LDC's. The Ethiopian side detailed the opportunities for investment in manufacturing, mining and hydro power as possible areas of interest for Canadian businesses.

Other items discussed were increasing the frequency of Ethiopian Airlines flights to Toronto, exploring ways of exchanging passenger information, expediting the process of issuing visas and a visa section in Addis Ababa, possible training and provision of railway technology to assist in the GTP. The Canadian delegation expressed the interest of Canadian companies in **the construction of small dams, in airport management and in irrigation**. Canada was ready to engage in training and curriculum preparation for technical schools. Ethiopia noted that market linkage, skills gaps, and loan shortages were factors limiting the growth of small and micro enterprises.

In terms of the development assistance from CIDA, Ethiopia's effective utilization of this support was noted as **an exemplary model**, and it now receives the third largest amount of aid from Canada. Canada's involvement in the Productive Safety Net Programme was hailed as a success. CIDA is currently working on a new country strategy to fine-tune its food security assistance more closely to the objectives of GTP. CIDA now aims to make its intervention in three key areas in an integrated and holistic manner: it will support the PSNP programme to increase food resilience and vulnerability; it will assist in raising agricultural productivity through off-farm income and improving land management in food insecure districts; it will provide assistance to sustain the economic-growth and poverty-reduction flagship programmes of the government. It will also afford assistance to Ethiopia through the G-8 MUSKOKA initiative on food security.

The multilateral discussions covered money laundering, for which Ethiopia has put in place a relevant legal and institutional framework, and human trafficking, for which Ethiopia has now set up various legal instrument to criminalize the practice and a system for legal export of labour. On peacekeeping, the delegation noted Ethiopia's immense role as one of the leading troop-providing counties in Africa and the fourth in the world. Possible areas of cooperation, including training and finance for the Ethiopian Peacekeeping Institute which is under construction, were raised. Canada also expressed its readiness to share experience in people and military cooperation.

On regional issues, the two sides hailed the signing of agreement between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan and underlined the importance of continued support from the international community for negotiation on the remaining border issues and Abyei. They also welcomed the preparation by the two sides to implement the Addis Ababa Agreements. Ethiopia emphasized its stand to encourage negotiations. The Ethiopian delegation provided a briefing on the process now underway to establish local government in the newly liberated areas of Somalia. The need for the continued support of the international community was stressed by both sides. Ethiopia described the signing of the Nile Basin Initiative's Cooperative Framework Agreement by six countries as a major achievement. It underlined the commitment to the **equitable utilization principle** of the Nile waters and

expressed its hopes of reaching a consensus on the CFA among all riparian countries including Egypt. On Eritrea, Ethiopia reiterated its readiness to engage with the Eritrean government provided that it stopped all efforts at destabilization. The Canadian delegation detailed the measures taken over the activities of the Eritrean consulate in Canada over the forcible collection of the 2% tax on Eritreans living in Canada.

Addis Ababa: one of the top ten world cities to visit next year

Addis Ababa, which means “new flower” in Amharic, was established in 1887 by the Emperor Menelik II. This year it is celebrating its one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary as the capital of Ethiopia. The city, with close to four million residents drawn from all of the country’s diverse peoples, is located in the centre of the country. At a height of around 2,400 metres, it is the highest capital city in Africa and is spread out below the slopes of the Entoto Mountains; and indeed is now creeping up the hillsides. With the forecasts for continued economic growth in Ethiopia, the city itself expects to continue to expand. Sustainable economic growth and stability, peace and security are encouraging factors for Addis Ababa and for the country in general. It might also be added that Ethiopia is a country which enjoys thirteen months of sunshine!

Lonely Planet, the global travel and guidebook company, has now named Addis Ababa as one of the top ten cities in the world to visit in 2013. It was the only African city to make the list and was ranked ninth out of a list of the ten best cities of the world. The others were San Francisco (USA), Amsterdam (Holland), Hyderabad (India), Londonderry (Northern Ireland), Beijing (China), Christchurch (New Zealand), Hobart (Tasmania, Australia), Montreal (Canada) and Puerto Iguazu (Argentina).

The choice of Addis Ababa as one of these cities underlines the milestone that Addis Ababa has reached in its urban development in this its one hundred and twenty fifth year. The city has grown and is continuing to grow enormously and one example of its successful expansion is the improved bond between transport organizations and urban planners. Addis Ababa is expanding in all directions, particularly to the east and south. Many nearby village areas are becoming part of the city. New dual carriage ways have been built to connect the more distant areas and a light railway system which will span the city, east to west and north to south, is under construction.

At another level Addis Ababa has global status as the diplomatic capital of Africa. It hosts the headquarters of the African Union and the United Nations’ Economic Commission for Africa, created in 1958 to encourage economic cooperation throughout the continent. Earlier this year the impressive new AU headquarters, donated by the Government of China, was opened. There are more than a hundred embassies in the city from every continent, and the number of international level hotels and conference centres continues to rise. These facilities, continually increasing and improving, make the city a preferred destination for the hosting of international events.

Addis Ababa has another advantage as the home of one of Africa’s best airlines, the comfortable and highly competitive Ethiopian Airlines, whose unequalled record in Africa contributes significantly to attracting tourists to the city. Bole International Airport is now a major continental and international scale transportation hub. The Airline, the first in Africa to fly the latest Boeing 787 Dreamliners, is a multi-award winner for its commitment and contributions

towards the development and growth the aviation industry and its distinguished long-haul operations. One of its most recent distinctions was African Aviation's award of the title of African Airline of the year Award 2011/2012.

The city is the economic, political and cultural centre of Ethiopia, and the hub of Ethiopia's urban economy. It has shown steady growth for more than a decade and this has been derived in large part from the massive infrastructural boom, particularly in construction during the last few years. This will continue to meet the expectations of visitors to see the country's unique heritage of tradition, culture and history. There are currently nine world heritage sites in Ethiopia registered by the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Addis Ababa is the central hub from which to explore these and the country's other attractions.

The stable and fast growth, both of the city and of Ethiopia, the continuing boom in infrastructure, the hospitality of its residents and its helpful weather all contribute to Addis Ababa's image and to its ranking by Lonely Planet. The city has Africa's biggest market, Merkato and as one commentator explained: "trying to convey the feeling of this market in words is like attempting to portray an ocean with a cupful of water." The Merkato is not only Addis Ababa's commercial centre; it is also a major dynamic for the country's development in trade and industry, and provides a fascinating picture of the vast range of goods and artifacts available from and for all parts of the country. Everything can be purchased at need. It also allows for full enjoyment of the Ethiopian tradition of open-air trade exchanges. As it celebrates its one hundred and twenty fifth anniversary, Addis Ababa gives little indication of age, and offers the same generous hospitality available throughout the rest of Ethiopia's Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, as well as wonderful examples of the country's historic and cultural heritage, it is no surprise that it is one of Lonely Planet's top cities of the world to visit next year.

Ethiopia's Academy of Sciences Director attends a Royal Society workshop

On Tuesday this week [30th Oct], the Ethiopian Embassy in London hosted a reception organized by the Royal Society, a Fellowship of the world's most eminent scientists and at over 350, the oldest scientific academy in the world in continuous existence. The reception was for participants at the Royal Society Pfizer African Academies workshop being held in London this week. The Royal Society Pfizer African Academies Programme is an on-going programme which provides training, mentoring and project support to develop and strengthen national science academies in Ghana, Tanzania and now in Ethiopia in partnership with the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC). Since its launch, the Pfizer African Academies programme has focused on establishing relationships, building stronger capacity in areas identified by the academies as priorities, and increasing the relevance of science academies in their national context. Present on the occasion were scientists and distinguished researchers from the African Academies, the Society's partner organizations, and members from various institutions in the UK. The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS) was represented by its Executive Director, Professor Shibru Tedla and by Alemayehu Teferra, Professor of Civil Engineering.

Addressing guests at the reception, Ambassador Berhanu Kebede, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the UK and Scandinavian countries, urged the Royal Society and partners to support the Ethiopian government's efforts to improve the quality and broaden the scope and fields of research in the natural sciences, technology and medicine that underpin the huge task of capacity building in Ethiopia. Ethiopia, he said, had embarked upon an agriculture-led industrialization development policy at the centre of which lies economic transformation and prosperity. This has launched the country on a trajectory of sustainable economic growth and

development. It had drawn up a Five Year Growth and Transformation Plan which called for the increased skill and capacity development needed to foster the institutional capacity to spur technology transfer and innovation. This was why, the Ambassador said, Ethiopia had adopted a strategy to enroll 70% per cent of new entrants to universities in the fields of science and technology. These were crucial for the realization of the national drive to achieve faster economic growth, benefitting the public at all levels.

Speaking on the occasion, Professor Martyn Poliakoff of the Royal Society noted that the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences was the youngest member of the programme, but he stressed that the Ethiopian government had set an extraordinary example in support of science. He said that it would not be possible in the UK to have 70% of students doing science and technology. This is, he said, “an extremely bold experiment.” He went on to emphasize the need for African countries to have their own scientists to drive their country forward. These, he said, would be the ones to lead government efforts when it came to dealing with the problems of expanding population and increased standard of living expectations. The Royal Society, said Professor Poliakoff, is determined to bring together the African Academies and create a community of scientists across the whole continent. “My dream is that I will go to a conference in a few years time and there will be African scientists there and nobody will think this is unusual,” Professor Poliakoff said.

The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences was officially launched by President Girma Woldegiorgis in April 2010, and it is actively engaged in implementing its first five-year strategic plan for the period 2011 to 2015. This concentrates on increasing and strengthening the visibility and relevance of the Academy, the promotion of science, technology and innovation in the country and on building consensus on critical national issues. The Executive Director, Professor Shibiru Tedla, said the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences is currently focusing on advising the government on issues pertaining to the quality and relevance of the sciences, in particular on issues related to science education in Ethiopia. The Academy is an autonomous, non-profit, non-governmental organization founded by a group of prominent scientists, aiming to advance the development of all the sciences, including the natural sciences, mathematics, the health sciences, agricultural sciences, engineering, social sciences and humanities, fine arts and letters, through organizing conferences and workshops on significant national issues, awarding prizes in recognition of excellence and publishing reports in its own journal. The Academy will be hosting the Ninth Annual Meeting of African Science Academies under the theme, ‘Biodiversity and Biotechnology for National Development’ next year.

Eritrea and Iran’s Press TV reporting

It is a very obvious fact that the regime in Eritrea is exceptionally isolated. Few nations accept the illusion that Eritrea normally acts as a constructive member of the international community. This is not isolation imposed by others. It stems from the activities of Eritrea’s leaders who appear to have worked hard to alienate themselves from the rest of the world, and even more particularly from their neighbours, against whom they have waged all kinds of destructive campaigns. Indeed, Eritrea’s leaders for a long time appear to have held the view that an isolated Eritrea is best placed to meet the aspirations of its people.

This contrived siege mentality that Eritrea’s leaders have imposed on their own people pays little in the way of dividends. This is hardly a surprise. It would be difficult enough for any small and impoverished nation to develop without some meaningful and constructive engagement with the rest of the world. More surprising, perhaps, is that Eritrea’s leaders, hard pressed to explain why their once dearly guarded and self-imposed isolation is having unintended

consequences, have decided to blame almost all the rest of the world for the failure to produce some kind of economic miracle. The list of enemies responsible for this is long and is indeed defined by exclusions rather than inclusions: among those included are the US, the CIA, the West, special interest groups, the media – and Ethiopia is supposedly the executor of their alleged schemes.

However, someone has now come forward from the media to rescue Eritrea – Iran's Press TV. Press TV was ostensibly launched to counter the lopsided and often decidedly inaccurate coverage by the western media and offer "genuinely accurate coverage of news." It is excellent to offer really accurate news coverage – but Press TV's approach is somewhat unsettling. It appears to operate on the basis that anything that disagrees with the world view of any "rogue nation" must be right and it is immediately hailed as suppressed truth. Press TV recent documentary on Eritrea was aptly entitled "The most isolated state", but it was hardly impressive. Indeed, it must largely be seen as futile as it did not address the very international community it accused of 'isolating Eritrea', but the people of Eritrea who know rather better about their own country and its problems than the producers of this documentary, sitting as they do at the receiving end of the regime's repressive activities.

The main thrust of the documentary was that despite its isolation, Eritrea is both a political and economic wonder. It is a bastion of justice and of the anti-imperialist struggle. One teenager in the documentary said "Most countries in the world hate Eritrea" because "they are jealous." The narrator repeats the same hyperbolic exaggeration of the Eritrean struggle for independence, claiming that on its own and without support little, weak, Eritrea managed to defeat both the USSR and the USA, neither of which actually had much, if any real interest in Eritrea. Press TV's documentary also served as yet another platform for President Isaias to once again lambast "special interest groups," for sabotaging Eritrea's progress. Eritrea, which according to the documentary has already achieved food security, has, said the President, never been seriously affected by any sanctions. It will continue on the path of "self- sufficiency." Like the other "guerrilla groupies" that used to welcome Eritrea's leaders almost other-worldly claims to miracle-making, Press TV is similarly defending the indefensible.

Press TV cheerfully repeats the claims that Ethiopia, "the US-backed aggressor," is to blame for the campaign to slow down Eritrea's economic progress. It doesn't seem to matter that not many people in Eritrea have actually seen much sign of this growth "miracle". Nor does it seem to worry Press TV that Eritrea today generates more refugees per capita than any other country in the world. This is one of a number of acts that flies in the face of Press TV's rosy picture of Eritrea. It doesn't even mention that Eritrea today ranks among the top three nations in the hunger index.

In fact, overall this documentary does much to lay to rest any illusions that Press TV might be even remotely interested in truth. It does a serious disservice to the very cause it claims to stand for. Indeed, the narrator actually provides little more than a poorly written propaganda piece, which the propaganda department of the Eritrean People's Front for Democracy and Justice would have been happy to have written. Indeed, they might have done just that.

Prime Minister Hailemariam meets COMESA Secretary General

Prime Minister Hailemariam held talks with the Secretary General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Sindiso Ngwenya, at his office on Tuesday (30th October). Sindiso Ngwenya took the opportunity to commend the economic growth Ethiopia has been registering, and stressed that Ethiopia had made significant strides in infrastructure, education and other development sectors over recent years. In particular, he cited railway developments and the Renaissance Dam project as testaments to the country's commitment to economic transformation. The Prime Minister noted that Ethiopia, as one of the founding members of COMESA, remains determined to cooperate with member countries of the bloc in trade, electric power and other sectors.

A memorial service for former Prime Minister Meles in Harlem

Former Prime Minister Meles was remembered at a memorial service in Harlem, New York at the Abyssinian Baptist Church, a historic New York African-American outpost, on Saturday (27th October). Hundreds of friends and colleagues of the late Prime Minister came together for the first service ever to be held on this scale on American soil. UN personnel, past and present, American government officials, leading scholars, and a large group of Ethiopians from across the US attended the service. United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, said at the memorial that he was unable to attend the funeral service in Addis Ababa but had sent his deputy to represent him. Susan Rice, the Permanent Representative of the US to the United Nations, whose friendship with Meles dated back to the mid 1990s, was in Addis Ababa for the funeral and again, she was at the church to deliver another tribute. Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Dr. Tekeda Alemu underscored that many people did not know just how far Ethiopia had changed dramatically in the last twenty years primarily because of Meles. Meles' desire and commitment to tackle poverty inside Ethiopia was also made clear in the testimonies of economists such as Jeffrey Sachs and Akbar Noman from Columbia University.

A three-day international forum on the Green Economy in Addis Ababa

A three-day international forum aimed at exchanging views on how best to achieve Ethiopia's zero carbon emission target by 2025 opened in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (30th October). Speaking at the opening of the workshop, State Minister of Agriculture, Ato Sileshi Getahun, emphasized the government's determination to give special attention to **agro-forestry** as a means to achieving the zero carbon emission target. Director of the Ethiopian Environmental Protection Authority, Dr Tewoldebirhan G/Egziabher, indicated that Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy strategy (CRGE), developed in 2011, is currently being implemented, further highlighting the country's commitment to mitigating the dangers associated with climate change. The Green Economy Strategy has been earmarked for seven sectors that offer the highest greenhouse gas abatement potential: Power Supply; Buildings and Green Cities; Forestry (REDD+); Agricultural/Soil-based Emissions; Livestock; Transport; and Industry. Implementation of the CRGE strategy requires a total investment of \$150 billion over the next twenty years. Participants from a variety of countries attended and presented research papers.