

A Week in the Horn

3rd June 2016

Contents:

- **The celebration of Ethiopia’s National Day, May 28, Ginbot 20**
- **UK’s Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in Ethiopia**
- **State Minister, Ambassador Taye, holds Political Consultation meetings in Portugal...**
- **...and in the Czech Republic**
- **Agreement to review the number of South Sudan states**
- **President Erdoğan on Turkey’s role in Africa before visiting Uganda, Kenya and Somalia**
- **Extra World Bank funding for refugee projects in Ethiopia, Uganda and Djibouti**
- **Unconvincing denials by Nevsun on the use of ‘forced labor’ in its Eritrean mine**

News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors on Tuesday (May 31) approved \$175 million in financing to help mitigate the impact of forced displacement on refugee-hosting communities in the Horn of Africa. World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) “should bring more stability to the region and offer more economic opportunities for people living in these areas.” The low to no-interest funding is for \$100 million (Ethiopia), \$50 million (Uganda) and \$20 million (Djibouti) as well as a \$5 million grant to IGAD. (See article)

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is making an official visit to Uganda, Kenya, and Somalia this week between May 31 and June 1. (See article)

The International Court of Justice in The Hague said on Thursday last week (May 26) that it would hold hearings in September into the maritime border dispute between Somalia and Kenya. Somalia wants the maritime border to continue along the line of the land border, to the southeast; Kenya wants the sea border to go in a straight line east, giving it more sea territory.

Ethiopia

President Dr Mulatu Teshome on Tuesday (May 31) received a UN delegation headed by Stephen Cutts, UN Assistant Secretary-General for the Office of Central Support Services in the Department of Management. **The UN is planning to build its third largest office, after New York and Geneva, in Addis Ababa**, and the planned construction will include an exhibition center and museum as well as other facilities.

Ethiopian National Day, May 28, 2016, (Ginbot 20, 2008), the Silver Jubilee of the overthrow of the oppressive military dictatorship of the Derg, was celebrated across the country, as well as in

Addis Ababa where it was marked at the Addis Ababa stadium. Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn said Ginbot 20 was about much more than a simple change of government. It was the start of 'the New History of Ethiopia' in terms of political, economic, social and cultural change and the dawn of a new era of peace, democracy and development. (See article)

The UK Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom, Philip Hammond, arrived in Addis Ababa on June 1 for an official visit to Ethiopia. He held meetings with Prime Minister Hailemariam and Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom. (See article)

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom met with a High-Level EU Delegation on Tuesday (May 31) to discuss the issue of migration. The talks covered the proposed signing of a strategic cooperation agreement on migration, partnerships in migration and the strengthening of further cooperation between Ethiopia and the European Union.

Egypt's Foreign Affairs Minister, Sameh Shoukry, said on Tuesday (May 31) that Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam had become a reality and that it is "pointless to bury our heads in the sand by not acknowledging a tangible physical reality." He said there had been a "transformation," in Ethiopia's approach since the signing of the Malabo agreement in June 2014. Egypt, he said, was discussing with its Ethiopian and Sudanese partners to reach an agreement on how to deal with any risk of harm to Egypt.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie held the first round of bilateral consultations with Portugal's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mrs Teresa Ribeiro, in Lisbon on Monday (May 30). The two sides exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest and agreed to bolster the relationship, which dates back 500 years (See article)

Ambassador Taye led the Ethiopian delegation to the 5th Political Consultation between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Czech Republic in Prague on Thursday this week (June 2). Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, Martin Tilapa led the Czech Republic delegation to the Consultation which focused on bilateral, regional and global issues. (See article)

The Ethio-Sudan Joint Technical Economic Committee met in Port-Sudan at the beginning of the week. They agreed to improve customs procedures, underlined the importance of free and preferential trade and of establishing a joint force to combat smuggling. They also discussed improved banking to facilitate movement of capital and of banking transfers and allow for setting up each other's banks in Khartoum and Addis Ababa. The meeting was followed by a meeting of the Joint Higher Committee under the chairmanship of Sudan's Vice-President and Ethiopia's Dr Debretsion Gebremichael, Deputy Prime minister for Finance and Economic Cluster and Minister of Communication and Information Technology, to approve the committee's recommendations.

The Export and Import Bank of China has promised a loan of \$1 billion for the construction of an industrial park in Adama, Ethiopia's Oromia Regional State. Arkebe Equbay, Special Advisor

to the Prime Minister, says China's Hunan Provincial Government and Ethiopia have agreed to develop an industrial park to host manufacturers that will produce heavy-duty earth-moving machinery. The park will be built by CGC Overseas Construction.

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism has generated over US\$2.6 billion during the past nine months, and achieved 88% of its targets. The Ministry's nine-month performance report, presented to the House of People's Representatives, said this meant over 700,000 foreign tourists had visited the country's various tourist destinations in this period.

Fiji has opened its new mission in Addis Ababa and a high-level opening ceremony was held in the presence of Ethiopian Government Officials, members of the Diplomatic Corps and invited guests. Fiji's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, said Fiji was honored and grateful to the Government of Ethiopia for its support in the setting up of Fiji's diplomatic representation in Ethiopia and allowing it to effectively service and forge partnerships in the region.

Mr Fekade Tadesse, the Honorary Consul General of the Government of Sri Lanka to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia since 2010, passed away on Sunday (May 29). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to express its condolences on the death of Mr Fekade and wishes to express its sincere sympathy to his family and friends.

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority said on Tuesday this week (May 31) it would start issuing television licenses for private broadcasters at the end of the current Ethiopian year in September. The Authority has so far issued licenses for over 10 federal and regional FM stations and provided permits for **30 community radio stations** in Ethiopia.

Eritrea

Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, speaking at a ministerial level conference on "Sustainability of Migratory Phenomenon: towards a new model of dialogue" in Rome, said illegal migration had become a politically motivated agenda serving as part and parcel of a larger campaign to vilify, isolate and destabilize Eritrea and tarnish the nation's image. "Sensationally manipulated statistics and the perceived number of Eritrean migrants frequently quoted by the UNHCR" were a tool of political disinformation about Eritrea.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called on the UN Human Rights Council to stop the UN Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights' Abuse in Eritrea, releasing its report before Eritrea has been given "a meaningful opportunity to study and respond to the allegations." Its statement accuses the Commission of lacking "the rudiments of fairness, impartiality, professionalism and integrity. Its methodology has been flawed, its sources suspect and one sided, its "evidence" flimsy."

The Canadian company, Nevsun Resources, has produced a video defending itself against the widespread allegations that it knowingly allowed "forced conscript labor" to be used in the construction of its Bisha mine in Eritrea (See article)

The UNHCR says it is greatly concerned about recent expulsions of Eritreans from Sudan to Eritrea. 313 Eritreans arrested on May 6 were forcibly returned to Eritrea on May 22. There had been a previous expulsion of 129 Eritreans a few days earlier. The UNHCR said the forcible return of refugees, [who] need international protection, to their country of origin could amount to *refoulement*. It urged the Sudanese government to refrain from forcible returns of Eritreans to their country of origin.

Kenya

President Kenyatta held talks on Tuesday (May 31) with the visiting South Korean President Park Geun-hye, who was in Kenya for a three-day State visit. Kenya and South Korea enjoy business ties and cooperation in education, information and communication technology, water and sanitization. President Park said she believed cooperation would continue to develop. Her visit will further mutual and bilateral engagement between Kenya and the Republic of Korea.

Kenyans on Wednesday (June 1) celebrated the 53rd Madaraka Day to commemorate the day Kenya attained internal self-rule. President Kenyatta led festivities at the Afraha Stadium in Nakuru, the first time the event has been held outside Nairobi. He told Kenyans to be wary of leaders who want to violate the Constitution and stressed the need to be “a nation that respects and follows the rule of law.”

Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Amina Mohamed, who met with Somali Foreign Affairs Minister Abdisalam Omer and representatives of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees on Tuesday (May 31), said repatriation of Somali refugees would be carried out humanely. Kenya says Dadaab will close in November. The Jubaland Interim Administration is reported to have promised 10,000 hectares to resettle returning refugees from Dadaab and the Kenyan government has begun to mobilize money and tents.

Somalia

President Mohamud opened a meeting of the National Consultative Forum on Sunday (May 29) in Mogadishu. The Presidents of the Jubaland, South West, Puntland and Galmudug administrations attended, as well as Prime Minister Sharmarke. Among the topics for discussion were implementation of the proposed electoral model, promulgated by Presidential decree on Sunday (May 22) after delays in Parliament, security, the role of traditional elders, technical preparations and poll venues as well as representation of Benadir/Mogadishu in the Upper House of the Federal Parliament. The President said earlier that it was “unsustainable for a city of three million not to be represented in the Upper House” of Parliament. They agreed to hold their next session in Baidoa on June 25.

President Mohamud said on Monday (May 30) that the trade and consumption of *miraa* (khat) from Kenya had a devastating impact on society. He said: “We have had a series of discussions and consultations and agreed to end the trade”. Somalia, which takes 90% of the *miraa* produced in Kenya, has already imposed a 100 per cent tax on it.

UK Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond visited Mogadishu on Thursday (June 2). He held discussions with President Mohamud on security and political developments, and announced

plans to send 70 British troops to Somalia to enhance security forces ahead of the August elections.

Somalia's Finance Minister Mohamed Aden Ibrahim on Sunday (May 29) launched the \$30 million Somali Core Economic Institutions and Opportunities Project (SCORE), which aims to create thousands of jobs in the hope of reducing poverty and economic grievances among Somali youth.

Ambassador Francisco Madeira, the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and head of AMISOM, opened a new military training facility for the Somali National Army at the Jazeera Training Centre in Mogadishu on Tuesday (May 31). It will be used to train soldiers in urban warfare.

Ambassador Madeira condemned the terrorist attack on the Ambassador Hotel in Mogadishu which ended on Thursday (June 2) after ten hours. Security officials said twenty-four people died including the four terrorists, among [those who died were] two members of parliament with sixty others injured.

Somali officials say the organizer of the killing of 148 people, mostly students, at Garissa University College in Kenya in April last year, was killed earlier this week. Mohamed Mohamud 'Dulyadeyn' was head of Al-Shabaab's "Amniyat" assassination and security unit. Missiles from a helicopter hit the car in which he and two others were travelling; members of the Somali 'Danab' commando unit subsequently recovered the bodies.

The United Nations Security Council approved a two-month extension of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on Saturday (May 28). This will allow the Security Council further time to consider its recently-concluded visit to Mogadishu and Nairobi.

The International Monetary Fund said on Friday last week (May 27) it would provide a staff-monitored oversight program for Somalia to help restore macroeconomic stability, rebuild institutions and improve governance and economic statistics. It will also aim to try and keep the government's budget balanced. The IMF carried out its first annual review of Somalia in more than 26 years last year.

An agreement signed by the governments of Turkey and Somalia on May 26 provides for a \$2 million monthly grant, up to \$24 million, to assist in budget financing and institutional capacity building. The grant will be supervised in accordance with the financial rules, administrative regulations and practices of Somalia.

The deputy Mayor of Mogadishu, Mohamed Ahmed Dirie, announced at a press conference on Sunday that security agencies in the city had been put on high alert over possible attacks by al-Shabaab militants during the holy month of Ramadan. He said: "It's our responsibility to take necessary measures to prevent al-Shabaab from carrying out their heinous acts in the capital during this holy month."

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir, First Vice-President, Riek Machar, and Vice-President, James Wani, met on Tuesday (May 31) at the Presidential palace in Juba. It was their first meeting since the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity on 29 April. They agreed to set up a committee to review the number of states in South Sudan (See article)

The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday (May 31) voted to renew sanctions for a year on a number of individuals accused of obstructing peace in South Sudan. The Council's resolution, which welcomed the recent formation of a unity government, said much was yet to be done to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

Sudan

The joint mediation for Darfur peace and a delegation from Sudan's Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minawi (SLM-MM), ended two days of talks in Doha on Wednesday (June 1). Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud, described the talks as "intensive, positive and transparent". The delegation confirmed the two movements would continue to work through the Doha process.

Vice-President, Hassabo Mohammed Abdul-Rahman, co-chairing the closing sessions of the Joint Sudanese-Ethiopian High Economic Committee in Port Sudan with Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister, reaffirmed Sudan's keenness to boost economic relations with Ethiopia. He also announced the opening of Ethiopian Banks in Khartoum and offices for Sudanese banks in Ethiopia to ease flow of money and exchange of trade.

The Minister for Minerals, Ahmed Mohamed Al Sadiq Al Karouri, said the value of the gold produced during the first quarter of the current fiscal year in Sudan reached 903.15 million dollars, with production of over 22 tons.

The celebration of Ethiopia's National Day, May 28, Ginbot 20

May 28, 2016, (Ginbot 20, 2008), Ethiopian National Day, the Silver Jubilee of the overthrow of the oppressive military dictatorship of the Derg, was celebrated across the country, in all Ethiopian embassies abroad as well as in Addis Ababa, where it was marked colorfully at the Addis Ababa stadium in the presence of senior government officials, invited guests and city residents. The event was celebrated under the theme: "Diversity-based democratic unity for our Renaissance."

Ginbot 20 is a momentous day for the peoples of Ethiopia who suffered for so long at the hands of a ruthless dictator and whose lives had been shattered by the misguided Marxist policies of the military regime. Addressing the crowd at the stadium, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn noted that the importance and historic nature of Ginbot 20 was that it liberated Ethiopians from cruel repression and started the country on the right path to return Ethiopia to its former 'pole position'. Under the leadership of the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary

Democratic Front (EPRDF), a lot of changes had been registered during the past 25 years, the Prime Minister said. Ginbot 20 was about much more than a simple change of government. It was about changing history itself! Ginbot 20 was the start of 'the New History of Ethiopia' in terms of political, economic, social and cultural change. Among these changes, the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was the major element in addressing the age-old quest of Ethiopians for peace, democracy and development. **The Constitution consciously sought to respond to the actual realities of the country and its people at the time, to envision their common future and set up a genuine and workable system for its achievement.**

Prime Minister Hailemariam, Chairman of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) party, noted that "when we celebrate the 25th year of the downfall of the military junta, it is in the dawn of a new era of peace, democracy and development." In this current era, **"all nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia are recognized in the constitution equally, without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination.** As a result, the country's political, social and economic environment has changed tremendously". He went on to call on people to "honor those martyrs who lost their lives while fighting to topple the dictatorial Derg regime," adding that today a hard-fought battle was also expected from the current generation to eradicate poverty, currently the main enemy of the peoples of Ethiopia.

The Prime Minister spoke of the strong performance of the Ethiopian economy since the downfall of the military junta, emphasizing that recent "economic development has seen Ethiopia become the fastest growing economy in the world, lifting the shadow of poverty from the lives of many". Ethiopians, he said, were benefiting in all sectors now, owing to the wide range of activities carried out to change the abject poverty which had so seriously tested Ethiopia's survival under the past regime.

May 28, Ginbot 20, said the Prime Minister, had in fact been a turning point for democracy and development in Ethiopia. The victory had brought about a fundamental transformation in the political economy of the country. It had created a situation in which the private entrepreneur could become "the motor of development" with the creation of an exceptional and conducive environment and the drying up of various forms of rent-seeking. This allowed the government to selectively and effectively interfere when market gaps occur and let it play a leadership role in coordination and improving the capacity of development.

The Prime Minister emphasized that democracy and development required a democratic constitution. May 28 laid the foundations for democracy, peace and good governance and allowed Ethiopians to hold their heads high and once again take pride in their identities. As a result, the country's political, social and economic environment had started to show tremendous changes. After 1991, the new government had lost no time in mapping out plans, setting out its priorities, and identifying poverty as the most formidable enemy to be addressed immediately, and reversing the collapse of the economy.

Similarly, the newly formulated Ethiopia's foreign policy redefined poverty, not neighboring countries, as the major threat for the country's survival, emphasizing peaceful co-existence. The

policy was designed in a way t[that would] embrace Ethiopia's neighbors and it has been the major factor behind the country's huge involvement in regional economic integration. This policy has also been the major contributing factor for the country's achievement of most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as its drive to improve cross-border infrastructure such as roads, railways, communication links and power transmission lines.

Remarkable successes have been achieved in encouraging investment, addressing unemployment and housing problems, empowering women, protecting the rights of citizens, and expanding telecom and electricity facilities as well as increasing the productivity of small-scale farmers, The Prime Minister said the government had given high priority to human resource development to sustain the country's double digit economic growth, and he extended special thanks to teachers, mainly responsible for producing trained manpower. He said: "We'll work to improve the livelihoods and salaries of teachers as well as to make them beneficiaries of residential units and transportation services." He also noted the remarkable success obtained in the prevention-based health policy of the country, another development from Ginbot 20. The more than 37,000 health extension workers now deployed in urban and rural areas across the country and health professionals at all levels take the lion's share of the credit for this, he said.

There were still major challenges, the Prime Minister underlined: rent seeking, problems of good governance, extremism, chauvinism and narrow nationalism, continuing unemployment levels and climate change were among the problems that persisted. He said the government was resolute and determined to address these and other challenges, whether internal or external, and make sure they did not hamper the economic growth of the country. The Prime Minister said the celebration of Ginbot 20 "helps to renew our commitment to the renaissance of the country, improve our strength, and look to our weaknesses;" and he concluded by thanking "the Ethiopian people for their active and holistic participation in the development of the country and their contribution to the achievements of the country in the last 25 years."

UK's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in Ethiopia

The Rt Hon Philip Hammond, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, was on an official visit to Ethiopia this week (June 1-2). During his visit he met with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, with whom he discussed a number of bilateral and multilateral issues of common concern, and with Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros held discussions with Mr Hammond at his office on Wednesday (June 1). Their talks covered issues of regional peace and security, and migration and refugees, as well as trade and investment. Dr Tedros said the visit would further enhance bilateral relations between the two countries. He briefed Mr Hammond and his delegation on the peace and security of the region and the challenges and threats it faced from al-Shabaab and now ISIS. He gave details of Ethiopia's contribution to the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Mission's current actions. Dr Tedros also detailed Ethiopia's policies and current practices with regard to migration and what had been achieved in controlling this and in dealing with human trafficking. He also detailed Ethiopia's activities in taking in and protecting refugees from

neighboring countries, noting that Ethiopia currently hosted the largest number of refugees on the continent.

Mr Hammond emphasized the bilateral relations between the two countries could be strengthened. He stressed the momentum of the achievements of AMISOM should continue, adding that joint plans and operations in Somalia should move forward as quickly as possible. On trade and investment, Mr Hammond said the partnership between the two countries should further be explored. He noted that Ethiopia offered huge potential for trade and investment in terms of its labor costs, market proximity to Europe and the Middle East, and transport access to raw materials. Mr Hammond said investments coming to Ethiopia should prioritize job creation. Acknowledging that the investment and trade partnership was increasing, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros emphasized that the trade volume and investment flow could and should be further expanded given the potential.

The two ministers have met on different previous occasions. The first was in New York, on the side-lines of the 70th Regular Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 70) in September last year. The second was in London during the Ethiopia-UK Trade and Investment Forum in October 2015 when Foreign Minister Dr Tedros and Mr Hammond agreed to upgrade the level of political consultation between the two countries to ministerial level. They also agreed that the content of the consultation should be expanded and reflect the existing wide range of bilateral relations, in addition to political and human right issues. The United Kingdom is among the most dependable partners of Ethiopia in its fight against poverty and for economic development. Ethiopia today is the second largest recipient of the UK's development support, with the UK providing more than £300 million a year in aid to Ethiopia. Investment and the flow of foreign direct investment from the UK are growing, albeit from a low base. A considerable number of UK businesses now operate in Ethiopia, including well-known companies such as Tesco, Unilever, Duet, Glaxo SmithKline and Diageo. The two countries have also been working closely on regional peace and security affairs.

During his talks with the Prime Minister and with Dr Tedros, Mr Hammond also raised the case of Andargachew Tsige, the detained former Secretary-General of the Eritrean-based anti-Ethiopian terrorist group, who holds a British passport. Mr Hammond reiterated the importance of legal access to prisoners and said on his Twitter page that he had secured this for Andargachew. He himself visited Andargachew and said he was in good health and had access to his family.

State Minister, Ambassador Taye, holds Political Consultation meetings in Portugal...

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie held the first round of bilateral consultations with Portugal's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Mrs Teresa Ribeiro, in Lisbon on Monday (May 30). The two sides exchanged views on bilateral, regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Mrs Ribeiro and Ambassador Taye agreed on the need to bolster the existing longstanding and historic relations between Portugal and Ethiopia dating back over five hundred years to the

arrival of the first Ethiopian envoy sent to Lisbon in 1514. They noted with satisfaction the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the relationship with a series of events organized jointly with the Embassy of Portugal in Addis Ababa. The two ministers discussed possibilities of continuing to celebrate this milestone through the renovation of tourist sites in Ethiopia and the expansion of the Portuguese language program at Addis Ababa University. Both sides agreed on the importance of expediting the implementation of the bilateral Cultural and Tourism Agreement.

On trade and investment, they stressed the need to work more in priority areas in which Portuguese companies have expertise including renewable energy, water management, ICT and agro- processing. They agreed to organize a business mission to Ethiopia in which these sectors would be represented and to work on agreements on avoidance of double taxation, investment promotion and Air Service relations in order to boost business relations.

Ambassador Taye also briefed Mrs Ribeiro on the current situation in the Horn of Africa, and their discussions covered issues of migration and climate change. The Portuguese Minister reiterated Portugal's support for Ethiopia's bid for non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council.

During his visit to Portugal, Ambassador Taye also met with the Executive Director of the Portuguese Trade and Investment Agency, AICEP, to discuss ways of strengthening bilateral business relations. He proposed these should begin with the exploration of areas like footwear, textiles and pharmaceutical products in which Portugal has considerable expertise. He called on the Trade and Investment Agency to encourage Portuguese companies to invest in Ethiopia. The two sides agreed to organize a Business Promotion Forum in Portugal to inform Portuguese companies about the potential and opportunities in Ethiopia. The State Minister took the opportunity while in Lisbon to meet and hold one-to-one discussions with a number of Portuguese companies who demonstrated an interest in investing in Ethiopia in the fields of renewable energy, infrastructure and research.

...and in the Czech Republic

The 5th Political Consultation between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Czech Republic was held in Prague on Thursday this week (June 2). The Ethiopian delegation was led by the State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie and the Czech Republic delegation by the Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic, Martin Tilapa. The Consultation focused on bilateral, regional and global issues.

During the consultation, Ambassador Taye recalled the historic relationship between Ethiopia and the then Czechoslovakian State which, he said, in many aspects had pioneered industrial development in Ethiopia. It had laid a very strong foundation and its legacy still resonated today. Ambassador Taye said those gestures had oriented the style of relationship between Ethiopia and the Czech Republic today. He said that Ethiopia and the Czech Republic were now heading on the right track in strengthening their relationship. He hoped the conduct of the Political Consultation would give the leaders of the two nations the impetus to design a road map for

further development. The two ministers, in regard to this, agreed that the exchange of high-level visits would be instrumental for further engagement.

Ambassador Taye also encouraged Czech businesses to engage in Ethiopia, and suggested suitable areas could include agro-processing, leather, pharmaceuticals and glass-making as well as energy. These were all areas in which, he said, Czech companies had a strong industrial base and excelled. They would therefore be competitive. He said organizing business trips and business fora would help Czech companies to enter the Ethiopian market without difficulty.

The Deputy Minister of the Czech Republic, Martin Tilapa noted that the Political Consultation would provide the opportunity to enhance the relationship between the two countries. It was his strong conviction, the Minister said, that the more business flowed to Ethiopia, the more the relationship would strengthen. Minister Tilapa said that the Czech Republic was known for its success in providing top quality solutions when doing business. It was keen to transfer expertise and technology to Ethiopia and assist in building up its competitiveness. The Minister said the Czech Republic was already working in the water, agriculture, health and education sectors in Ethiopia and it always ensured that its development assistance would directly benefit Ethiopia's citizens.

Mr Tilapa noted that his country was now preparing the details of its next development cooperation program for the period after 2017 and said that Ethiopia would be one of the top priorities of the program. Indeed, he said, the development assistance program would be aligned with Ethiopia's own second Growth and Transformation Plan, and the Czech Republic wanted its engagement to focus on the priority areas identified by Ethiopia. The two Ministers agreed that finalizing agreements which are in the process of being organized, upgrading some frameworks to a higher level and ratifying signed agreements would encourage and assist businesses to invest in Ethiopia.

The Political Consultation also focused on peace and security issues in the Horn of Africa region, the Middle East, the EU as well as more widely, and at the top of the agenda were terrorism and migration. On terrorism the two ministers agreed this had become a transnational problem challenging international peace and security and should be tackled in a concerted way. With regard to migration, Ambassador Taye noted that this was an area in which Ethiopia was active. It was hosting large number of refugees from neighboring countries, especially from Eritrea as well as South Sudan and Somalia, and now had the largest number of refugees in Africa. Minister Tilapa commended Ethiopia's refugee policy and its contributions to helping the problem of migration. He also promised to support Ethiopia's bid to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-19, noting that Ethiopia and the Czech Republic had a culture of supporting each other.

During his visit to the Czech Republic, Ambassador Taye met the Deputy Minister of Defense, Tomas Kuchta and exchanged views on the security challenges facing Ethiopia as well as international security threats in the region of the Horn of Africa. Mr Kuchta said the Czech Republic considered Ethiopia as a strategic partner in the region and was keen to develop its relations further especially in service training. Ambassador Taye also met Karel Schwarzenberg,

Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Czech Parliament and Vaclav Zemek and Robin Bohnisch, members of the Czech-Ethiopian Parliamentary Group. Ambassador Taye took the opportunity to urge the committee members to build on the historic relationship between Ethiopia and the Czech Republic and strengthen the links between the two countries.

Agreement to review the number of South Sudan states

South Sudan's presidency has agreed to review the controversial issue of the creation of the 28 states unilaterally announced by President Kiir last year. The agreement came during a joint meeting of President Salva Kiir, First Vice President, Riek Machar and Vice President, James Wani, at the presidential palace on Wednesday (June 1). It was the first time since the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity, on April 29, that the three leaders had met to review the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. The discussion considered the progress made and the problems remaining, including the deteriorating economic situation in the country.

In a joint press conference after the meeting, First Vice President Riek Machar and Vice President James Wani, said a committee of 15 members would be set up, drawn from all the parties to the August 2015 peace agreement as well as international partners to come up with recommendations on new states. The First Vice-President said: "We discussed the issue of the 28 states. We decided to tackle this through a committee. That committee will be composed of 15 members...So that they can work on the number of states, review them and they come up with recommendation on the number of the states and this will be within 30 days. Within 30 days this work will be done." He also said the 15 members of the committee would include 10 from the parties in the peace deal and 5 others from international partners. He added that they would ask South Africa and Tanzania to provide two members as well. South Africa's ANC and Tanzania's CCM have been involved in the efforts to reunite the SPLM factions. The Transitional Government of National Unity includes representatives of Salva Kiir's SPLM, First Vice-President, Riek Machar, SPLM-in-Opposition; Deng Alor Kuol, acting chairperson on behalf of Pagan Amum, former SPLM Secretary General, of the Former Political Detainees; and Lam Akol, Chairman of the Democratic Change (DC) party, representing other Political Parties, the four groups which are party to the Agreement.

Vice President James Wani confirmed the outcome of the joint meeting at the presidency: "what the First Vice President has just articulated is absolutely in place. These are the issues we agreed on." Vice President Wani added that he wanted to underline "the fact that the meeting of today by the three of us, has been one of the most successful meetings." He confirmed that the inclusive committee to be formed would not only review the number of states but it would also recommend their new boundaries, and within 30 days. There was no mention of when the committee would be able to start work. Earlier, in a resolution in January, a Heads of State and Government Summit of IGAD, which brokered the peace agreement, had called on the parties to form a boundary commission to work on the number of new states within 30 days, or revert to the current 10 states in case of no agreement.

First Vice-President Machar told the press that the Wednesday meeting had also considered two other issues: the need to release prisoners of war on both sides, and a budget for the cantonment of forces. The presidency, he said, had agreed to provide a budget for cantoning the forces in the country. First Vice-President Machar said there were a number of other issues that would be tackled during the Council of Ministers' meeting on Friday.

Earlier in the week, the UN Security Council met on Tuesday (May 31) to renew sanctions against South Sudan peace spoilers. The Security Council, unanimously adopting resolution 2290 expressing its deep concern at the failure of South Sudan's leaders to end hostilities and fully implement the agreement on resolving conflict in South Sudan, renewed sanctions against a number of designated individuals, including a travel ban and asset freeze on those blocking peace, security and stability. The Security Council also extended until 1 July 2017 the mandate of the Panel of Experts overseeing the sanctions, asking it to report, within 120 days, on security threats and arms transfers into South Sudan since the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity.

The Security Council also condemned the continued and flagrant violations of the ceasefire provisions of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. It demanded that South Sudan's leaders fully and immediately comply with the permanent ceasefire, in accordance with their obligations under the Agreement, and that the government allow full, safe and unhindered access to help ensure timely delivery of humanitarian assistance to all those in need. Reiterating that there was no military solution to the conflict, the Council expressed its intention to monitor and review the situation in South Sudan at 90-day intervals, or more frequently if needed, affirming its readiness to strengthen, modify, suspend or lift the sanctions in light of developments.

President Erdoğan on Turkey's role in Africa before visiting Uganda, Kenya and Somalia

President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey has been on a visit to Uganda, Kenya and Somalia this week. Before leaving for East Africa, he detailed how he saw Turkey's role as a "Friend, Compatriot and Partner" of Africa in an opinion piece he wrote for Al Jazeera.

President Erdoğan said that his visit, at the head of a delegation of political and business leaders, was intended "to promote closer cooperation with our regional allies, develop solutions to shared challenges and explore mutually beneficial opportunities." He said many people associated Africa with extreme poverty, violent conflict and a general state of hopelessness. The people of Turkey, he said, had a different view.

The President said Africa had three core advantages. It had a young and vibrant population at a time when Europe and other parts of the world were "rapidly ageing." The world could cooperate with local and national governments to create avenues for young people to make a positive impact; African women also had the potential to become more active players in economic and social life. Africa was also a continent with vast natural resources as well as large oil reserves and plenty of fertile land and regular rainfall. It could become an economic powerhouse if

the world focused on helping the African people to help themselves. Thirdly, the people of Africa had an entrepreneurial spirit that could potentially turn the continent around, and help to build a safer future for the next generation.

President Erdoğan said since 2002, the government of Turkey had been working hard to help African nations to discover their potential and take steps in the right direction. In an effort to reinvigorate its long-neglected ties with in 2005 it had also launched an initiative to cooperate more closely with our friends and allies in Africa. It had held two Turkey-Africa partnership summits in Istanbul, Turkey and Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. These reiterated Turkey's commitment to a long-term partnership. At the same time, Turkish officials and non-governmental organizations had been working with local communities to address pressing problems. Turkey's development-centred humanitarian aid model had helped millions of people, including thousands in drought-affected Somalia, to get back on their feet. He said since 2011 Somalia had been one of the top three recipients of Turkey's development aid and this had been marked by the completion of the Turkish-Somalian Education and Research Hospital, East Africa's largest medical facility, last year. He said that this week he would inaugurate the new Turkish embassy in Mogadishu, Turkey's largest diplomatic mission, as a sign of Turkey's continued commitment to the future of Somalia.

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency, TIKA, remains active across Africa to help implement humanitarian and development projects to provide better healthcare, promote agriculture, protect the environment and facilitate commerce. More than 4,500 African students continue their education in Turkey's universities on government and NGO scholarships.

The President said Turkey's bilateral relations with African nations had been improving. A record number of official visits by Turkish and African leaders had helped build stronger ties, promote partnerships of equals and serve the interests of both parties. Since he became president in August 2014, he had visited nine African countries and hosted a large number of African leaders on bilateral visits and during international summits. Cooperation was not, of course, limited to official visits. Turkish Airlines had taken the bold decision to enter the African market and had now expanded its network to 48 destinations in 32 countries. Since 2000, Turkey's trade with Sub-Saharan Africa had grown eightfold to reach \$6billion. Turkey now has 34 embassies across the continent.

President Erdoğan said Turkey looked forward to working more closely with its African friends and allies in a range of areas, including raising awareness of humanitarian problems and human suffering. The people of Turkey and Africa were united in their experiences with terrorism. Turkey, as a country facing crucial challenges including terrorism, regional instability and the refugee crisis, could relate to the predicament in which partners such as Uganda and Kenya find themselves. He said “we pledge to work with our African allies and friends more closely on counterterrorism”. The President also emphasized that Turkey would take the necessary steps to promote entrepreneurialism, which, he said, had a positive influence on the Turkish economy over the past decade. It hoped to share its entrepreneurial experiences with the people of Africa. The growing cooperation between Turkey and Africa, he emphasized, showed that a lot could be accomplished by “engaging with partners genuinely, and finding solutions that serve the interests

of both sides. It also sends a strong message about Africa's true potential to the world.” He concluded: Today and forever, Turkey will be a friend, a compatriot and a partner of Africa.”

Extra World Bank funding for refugee projects in Ethiopia, Uganda and Djibouti

The World Bank’s Board of Executive Directors on Tuesday (May 31) approved \$175 million in financing to help mitigate the impact of forced displacement on refugee-hosting communities in the Horn of Africa. The low to no-interest funding is for \$100 million (to Ethiopia), \$50 million (Uganda) and \$20 million (Djibouti) as well as a \$5 million grant to IGAD. World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim said the **Development Response to the Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP)** “should bring more stability to the region and offer more economic opportunities for people living in these areas.” The Project will also help improve access to basic social services, expand economic opportunities, and enhance environmental management for communities hosting refugees in target areas in these three countries. The World Bank said this is the first phase of an expanded program to include other countries affected by forced displacement.

The Horn currently hosts an estimated 9.5 million displaced persons, including more than 6.5 million internally displaced persons and about 3 million refugees. The majority are women and children, with many female-headed households. The presence of refugees strains already weak public services and economic opportunities, jeopardizing the resilience of host communities. Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice President for Africa, said “Forced displacement is one of the most daunting challenges of our time, and Africa hosts around a quarter of the world’s displaced.” This burden, he pointed out, “falls largely on host countries. With this support, we are looking beyond humanitarian assistance to long-term development solutions. It will help host communities become more resilient, facilitate the social and economic integration of refugees and internally displaced people, and stimulate local development. The project is a win for all.”

The World Bank said Djibouti had been spared the instability affecting many of its neighbors, but it faced significant challenges including high levels of poverty and unemployment as well as cross-border threats. Refugees from war and conflict in neighboring countries were arriving in large numbers. The project would help address vulnerabilities such as poverty and unemployment, deficits in human development and social service delivery, and limited access to basic infrastructure, while helping build resilience. Hafez Ghanem, World Bank Vice President for Middle East and North Africa, said Djibouti, despite the challenges “continues to provide refuge for people fleeing conflict in neighboring countries. Our program will help strengthen economic and social conditions in areas welcoming refugees, to assist both host communities and refugees themselves.”

The Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project supports the **World Bank Regional Horn of Africa Initiative** by developing interventions that help refugee-hosting areas. It focuses on building resilience, addressing negative environmental and economic impacts, and investing in infrastructure to improve economic opportunities for refugees and host communities. The project also supports close collaboration with the UNHCR in seeking durable solutions to the refugee crisis. Ethiopia hosts Africa’s largest refugee population, and Uganda the third-

largest. The refugees are settled close to international borders in communities facing extreme poverty. The project aims to improve these communities' access to basic social services and economic infrastructure, and will help promote economic self-reliance and social development for refugees. It will make innovative use of government financing systems, structures, and institutions to deliver a development response to forced displacement.

The grant to IGAD will establish a regional secretariat for **Forced Displacement and Mixed Migration** to support a holistic regional response, to influence interventions in both refugee-hosting and refugee-producing countries. It will support policy dialogue with member states and academic and research institutions on solutions to displacement. It will also help build up the capacities of both countries and institutions and forge partnerships between humanitarian and development actors. It will also strengthen IGAD's own capacity.

Unconvincing denials by Nevsun on the use of 'forced labor' in its Eritrean mine

The Canadian company, Nevsun Resources, has produced a video defending itself against the widespread allegations that it knowingly allowed "forced conscript labor" to be used in the construction of its Bisha mine in Eritrea. This is currently the subject of a court case in Vancouver, in which three Eritreans from the Diaspora are suing Nevsun, alleging the company was complicit in the use of 'forced labor' by Eritrean local contractors. The plaintiffs, who are filing the action on behalf of all Eritrean nationals "whose rights were violated by being forced to work in the mine since 2008", said they were forced to work on the construction of the mine against their will and subjected to "long hours, intense heat and threats of torture." They claim Nevsun "aided, abetted, contributed to and became an accomplice to the use of forced labor, crimes against humanity and other human rights abuses at the Bisha mine." The plaintiffs say that to build the mine, Nevsun engaged three government companies called Segen, Mereb and 74, all run by the Eritrean armed forces, which provided the 'forced labor' in the shape of national service conscripts. They point out that by 2008 the Eritrean regime's use of forced labor and its massive violations of human rights were credibly established.

The company has denied the allegations and said it "will vigorously defend itself against this claim." Nevsun's Chief Executive Officer, Cliff Davis, said Nevsun was "committed to ensuring that the Bisha Mine is managed in a safe and responsible manner." After earlier claims of 'forced labor' at Bisha, Nevsun hired a public relations company and three years ago started publishing annual self-assessment reports. It highlighted its commitment to "corporate social responsibility" in its 2013 CSR Report. It also hired an international lawyer to conduct an independent investigation into claims of the use of 'slave labor'. His report concluded these were unfounded but critics noted the lawyer had failed to interview any of the alleged victims of the labor conditions at the mine and he had made only two brief visits to Eritrea.

Whatever the decision of the court, it will not put an end to the allegations against Nevsun, nor will this latest video from Nevsun (<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=On6YCLUxK7U>). It's a very professional piece of work, making repeated references to Nevsun's commitments to Corporate Social Responsibility, to complete transparency, to "progressive rehabilitation projects, regular community contacts, and whistleblower's protection" as well as to economic

and social development and the suggestion that funds from Nevsun go to alleviate poverty in Eritrea. It refers to the two Human Rights Impact Assessments that Nevsun has carried out, and the video underlines that it is officially illegal to use national service conscripts in the mining sector. It says all Nevsun's workers are screened to ensure compliance with the law, and that local contractors are similarly prohibited from using national service workers.

It all sounds quite impressive until one realizes that none of this actually provides any denial of the detailed evidence given by dozens of former workers of their 'forced labor' as national service conscripts. Nor does it deny that Nevsun was obliged to use government companies well-known for the use of conscript labor in construction of the Bisha mine and subsequently, not that Nevsun admits to having no control over the way in which the government of Eritrea interprets its own laws.

In fact, from the beginning of construction at Nevsun's Bisha mine in Eritrea in 2008, Eritrean human rights groups and international advocacy organizations have produced detailed evidence of the use of 'forced labor' by the local sub-contracted construction companies involved. Segen Construction, a military owned construction company, was the major sub-contractor for construction at Bisha and more recently has also been involved in substantial road improvements and maintenance for the mine traffic transporting copper for export through the port of Massawa. It has been the subject of a number of reports on its use of national service conscripts as 'forced labor' and not just at Bisha. Earlier reports noted that Segen in 1997-8 built fifty-eight villas in Asmara, all subsequently allocated to generals, high-ranking security and party officials, and selected ambassadors; another fifty additional houses, "built by the same firm in the same area, using conscripts' unpaid labor", were given to high-ranking members of the armed forces. Another company used by Nevsun at Bisha was Mereb, the company of the 76th artillery brigade, which carried out some of the chemical and electrical work. According to former workers, they were housed four kilometers from the mine out of sight of Nevsun management; armed units were posted there to deal with security for its own workers and for Segen.

According to former workers at the Bisha project, for example, there have been several levels of workers at the project. A number of South African and Zimbabwean workers are employed at international rates, provided with their own compound, all necessary safety equipment and properly insured. Some Eritrean workers have also been hired directly as skilled operators and paid salaries of 3,000 Nakfa a month or more (around \$80). The majority of the work-force, however, has been and is provided through the government sub-contracting companies. These employ some semi-skilled workers who get around 1,500 Nakfa (about \$40) a month out of which they have to give a third for food while working a 16-hour day. Equally, ex-workers say, most of their workers are national service conscripts, who get the national service pay of 500 Nakfa a month (about \$12), from which they also have to contribute for food. These are drawn either from national service brigades stationed around Bisha for security purposes or from other conscript units. Ex-workers claim they were given work uniforms and driven onto the work site together with the civilian workers to avoid drawing attention to the difference. Originally, however, it appears there was no effort made to conceal conscript involvement. One former official remembers: *"There were as many as 500-600 conscripts working in the first round of construction at Bisha; and the heavy machinery operators wore military uniforms in the*

beginning." These conscripts lived in a separate camp. One former conscript told the UN Monitoring Group: *"We were under the control of our direct commanding officers."*

A former Segen worker, Abadi Ghebremeskel, spelt out how the process worked. *"Battalions of conscripted soldiers from the national service are brought to the workplace clandestinely. The reason is obvious: both Senet and Nevsun would be hard pressed to explain to the world why they let their subcontracted companies use slave labor; and for that matter, so extensively."* Senet is a South African company employed by Nevsun as the overall general contractor for the mine. Abadi said the Government was well aware that Nevsun and Senet would be uncomfortable if they were made to know what is going on, so it *"tries to spare them from the knowledge of it"*, adding that *"it is hard to believe that these companies don't know what is going on; by now, they must be resigned to it. So far as the dirty secret remains inconspicuous, they are willing to [turn] a blind eye to what is going on right below their nose...Nevsun is aware. Nevsun officials know it is forced labor. They don't mind because they see the benefits they can get."*

Professor Gaim Kibreab, writing in the *Journal of Modern African Studies* in 2009 detailed the service demanded from conscripts and concluded that *"the exaction of work or service from draftees of military service for public works constitutes compulsory or forced labor."* A former Eritrean Attorney-General, Adhanom Gebremariam, was constrained to call the process *"slave labor"*, defying *"all standard international laws"*. He said the services exacted from conscripts was only been used for the benefit of the government, the ruling party and senior military officers, not for the benefit of the people.

Despite the constant detailed reports on the use of 'forced labor' it was not until January 2013 that international human rights' organizations picked up the story when Human Rights Watch issued a highly critical report on the use of forced labor in Eritrea's mining industry, criticizing Nevsun in particular. The report claimed Nevsun had failed to ensure that conscripted or forced labor was not used in the construction of its Bisha mining project in Eritrea: *"When Nevsun began building its Bisha mine in Eritrea in 2008, it failed to conduct human rights due diligence activity and had only limited human rights safeguards in place."* The HRW report - "Hear No Evil: Forced Labor and Corporate Responsibility in Eritrea's Mining Sector" - describes how mining companies working in Eritrea risked involvement with the government's widespread exploitation of forced national service conscript labor. It documented how Nevsun initially failed to take those risks seriously, and then struggled to address allegations of abuse connected to its operations. Although the company subsequently improved its policies, HRW said it still seemed unable to investigate allegations of forced labor concerning Segen, the state-owned contractor it used and still uses, or accept that forced labor was used in the mine's construction. The report said Nevsun acknowledged to Human Rights Watch that it had initially failed to carry out any kind of due diligence activity around the human rights risks involved with the project. Nevsun said that at the government's urging, it had employed a state-owned contractor called Segen Construction Company to build some of the infrastructure around the mine site. Nevsun, in fact, *"employed a contractor with a long track record of alleged reliance on forced labor, without adequate safeguards in place,"* said HRW. Worse *"it continued to operate and to employ this*

contractor even though it is not allowed to monitor its labor practices." Nevsun cannot, therefore, be certain that forced labor was not being used. Indeed it admitted as much.

A year later, in 2014 it released its own 'independent 70-page human rights audit' emphasizing that "national service workers are not permitted at the Bisha Mine" and that screening ensures subcontractors were not using conscripts. At a minimum, it is clear from the numerous testimonies of former workers that the screening process simply doesn't work very well; equally, it is difficult to see how Nevsun and Senet could have remained so unaware of the situation for so long. Nevsun's commissioned Human Rights Impact Assessment report, from LKL International Consulting Inc. in April 2014, outlined the policies developed to provide a framework for corporate social responsibility at the Bisha Mine. The research involved two brief visits to Eritrea and the Bisha Mine and the report is careful to note *"the assessment's findings are limited to what was possible to be researched and observed during this time-frame. In some instances, it was not possible to gather conclusive information about past practices at the mine."* There is no indication that the assessment was able to investigate any of the specific allegations of former workers over housing and other living conditions. Indeed, the report admits: *"The approach taken to these limitations is not to try and confirm or deny past allegations, but rather to focus on reinforcing the grievance mechanisms and stakeholder engagement processes related to the Bisha Mine"*. It also stressed that: *"Any discussion of human rights at the Bisha Mine must take into account the national context of Eritrea, which presents human rights challenges in terms of national security, international relations and development."* This is a view with which the Government of Eritrea would find itself in full agreement. Equally, it is a view with which anyone interested in human rights in Eritrea would strongly disagree.

A Nevsun spokesman has even claimed the *"The Eritrean government has taken proactive steps to make sure their mining environment is conducive to international business; [and] the government indicated right from the get-go that national service was never to be used in the mining sector."* He did, however, admit that: *"Eritrea has rules on supply chain and localization efforts and we have to adhere to the government's wishes."* One of these has been the insistence that Nevsun must employ Segen originally and that it must continue to employ the company despite all the evidence against its employment practices.

Nevsun says that Segen promised not to use forced labor at Bisha, but Segen has refused Nevsun's requests to interview Segen employees to verify this. Segen has also refused to allow Nevsun to visit the site where its workers are housed to assess conditions. In 2012, Nevsun attempted to expand the mine without re-engaging Segen. The Eritrean government objected, and Nevsun had to re-engage Segen. Segen workers are still on site at Bisha. Equally, on the basis of the Bisha evidence, it appears the greatest risk of abuse will occur during the construction phase of these projects. It might be noted that the open-pit mine at Bisha has involved a lot of soil-moving, terracing and walling, all of which has been done by Segen and military construction companies which use national service conscripts. Nevsun is now planning to develop other deposits near the Bisha site as well as switch over from copper exploitation over to zinc development. This could involve more construction or infrastructure work. Under these circumstances it seems Nevsun plans to go on using Segen for the required large scale works irrespective of the allegations of 'forced labor'. Given the low rates of pay given to national

service conscripts, it is, perhaps, pertinent to note that one of Nevsun's greatest assets is its low operating costs, some of the lowest in comparable operations anywhere in the world

Eritrea is, of course, per capita, the most militarized nation on earth, with several hundred thousand national conscripts under military discipline as well as its 200,000 regular troops. Officially all those between the ages of 18 and 40 are required to do open-ended national service, though the age limits have fluctuated, at times expanding to between 15 and 55. Women are not now supposed to be conscripted after 27. In theory, the service is supposed to last for no more than 18 months, and two years ago in an effort to woo European Union funding, government officials were promising that national service would revert to this time scale. Nothing has happened. Similarly, little or no progress has been made on demobilization, and few have been demobilized since Eritrea invaded Ethiopia in May 1998 when all earlier conscripts were called back into the armed forces. Since then, Eritrea has continued to call up all those reaching the relevant age on a regular basis, keeping the largest army and reserve forces in sub-Saharan Africa. After their military training the conscripts remain under military discipline and are available as a compulsory, indeed 'forced labor' force, available to work for government, military or party companies "for development" at minimal wages.