

## **A Week in the Horn 6<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

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### **The AU Peace and Security Council endorses increases in AMISOM**

Regional Defence ministers and Chiefs of Staff from the AMISOM troop-contributing countries have been meeting in Addis Ababa on Wednesday this week [4<sup>th</sup> Jan] to plan strategy for operations against Al-Shabaab, and on Thursday, the African Union Peace and Security Council held a meeting to consider their recommendations. These included adoption of the draft Strategic Concept produced last month as the basis for enhancing the strength of AMISOM and consolidating, coordinating and furthering the gains already made. Another recommendation was to secure the support of the UN Security Council to raise AMISOM’s strength to over 17,000 troops to include 5,700 additional troops made up of re-hatted Kenyan forces and Djiboutian troops. This would require force enablers and multipliers with enhanced TFG and allied Somali forces playing an increased role. AMISOM’s increase from the present 9,547 troops to the UN authorised 12,000 would be provided by Burundi and Uganda. The Chiefs of Defence Staff noted that in view of the urgency of the stated intent of Ethiopia to withdraw from the liberated areas of Somalia, it was also critical to fast track the insertion of AMISOM troops into those areas. They also agreed to hold another meeting this month to discuss related issues before the next AU Summit and consider the anticipated outcome of the next UN Security Council meeting on the Strategic Concept.

The following day, the AU Peace and Security Council held its 306<sup>th</sup> meeting, and adopted the recommendations of the Ministers of Defence and Chiefs of Staff. The Council, chaired by the AU’s Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ramtane Lamamra, as expected endorsed the Strategic Concept as a planning tool and the call for increasing the level of UN-supported AMISOM personnel from 12,000 to 17,731, to include Djibouti forces, re-hatted Kenyan troops and an AMISOM police component. It endorsed the deployment of extra Burundi and Uganda troops to reach the current UN-authorized AMISOM strength of 12,000

with the understanding that these additional troops would be used on the basis of needs in the liberated areas. It also backed the insertion of AMISOM troops into areas liberated with the support of Ethiopia because of Ethiopia's stated intent to withdraw, and the extension of AMISOM's area of responsibility by fast-tracking its insertion into all liberated areas. It also called for the provision of the required force enablers and multipliers and other logistical support, and the enhancement of TFG and allied forces.

The Peace and Security Council also urged the UN Security Council to expeditiously consider and authorize support for immediate implementation of the Strategic Concept, and requested the Commission to accelerate preparation and consultations for the necessary planning requirements, including a new AMISOM Concept of Operations. The Council appreciated the continuing support of the European Union in implementing the mandate of AMISOM and requested it to make available the necessary funds for payment of allowances for 17,731 troops. It also appealed to other AU partners to provide financial support for the implementation of the Strategic Concept. The Peace and Security Council welcomed the initiative of the UK to convene a special summit on Somalia in London on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. It also welcomed the progress made in constitution-making in the context of the recent Garowe conference and called on the leadership of the TFIs to urgently resolve the current crisis in the Transitional Federal Parliament. It reiterated the AU's determination to take all necessary action against all spoilers, internal or external and renewed the mandate of AMISOM for another year with effect from 16<sup>th</sup> January. Another session of the Peace and Security Council is scheduled to be held next Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January. After the meeting the AU Peace and Security Commissioner, Ramtane Lamamra, told journalists that he expected the UN Security Council to consider the proposed changes in a special session in the next few days.

## **The TFG launches the "Operation to Restore Peace and Stability across Somalia"**

There's been a lot of military activity in Somalia over the last week as the TFG announced last Saturday [31<sup>st</sup> Dec] that it had begun its "Operation to Restore Peace and Stability across Somalia" in collaboration with neighbouring countries and support from the international community. Prime Minister, Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed, said "Today, we have initiated the process to liberate the tyranny of Al Qaeda and Al-Shabaab from Somalia," adding that the operation was proceeding according to plan with the recapture of some Al-Shabaab occupied territories and engaging it in Hiiraan and other regions. The Prime Minister said that the government had officially requested support from neighbouring countries and the international community to assist in "this historic operation." He also asked the international community and aid agencies to extend humanitarian assistance to the newly liberated areas as quickly as possible. The Chief of Staff of the Somali Armed Forces, General Abdulkarim Yusuf Adan 'Dhagabadan' said on Monday [2<sup>nd</sup> Jan] that the offensive was multi-faceted and was taking place in Gedo and Lower Juba regions and would then expand into Bay, Bakool and Middle Juba regions. He noted that to the north of Mogadishu, Belet Weyne had already been liberated and this would be followed by the rest of Hiiraan "very soon". He also said that the army had opened a new front in Galgudud in central Somalia: "we are determined to free [the area] from the clutches of the terrorists who have occupied it for far too long." President Sheikh Sharif said on Monday that the

government expected to free the central and southern regions and establish administrations there. He called on the international community to lift the arms embargo to allow the Somali armed forces to be strengthened.

Kenyan and TFG forces have been active in Gedo region with troops advancing from Eel Waq on the border towards Bardere capturing the town of Fafadun, 150 kms from the border. According to the Kenyan military spokesperson, Major Chirchir, a senior Al-Shabaab commander, Sheikh Hassan Hussein, was among those killed. Fafadun is said to be one of the last few Al-Shabaab bases in Gedo region and its capture opens the way to advance on Bardheere another 70 kms from Fafadun. The joint forces are also advancing towards Bardheere from Damasa, north of Eel Waq. Major Chirchir said this meant that TFG and Kenyan forces now controlled 90% of the Gedo region. Kenyan air strikes targeted suspected ammunition dumps, and artillery batteries in Bardheere and El Ade. According to the governor of Gedo region, Hussein Sheikh Abdi, Al-Shabaab now only holds two towns in Gedo region. One is Bardheere, on the road from Garbaharey down the Juba river to Bu'uale, Jilib, and Kismayo. The other is Buur Dhuubo to the east of Garbaharey on the road to Baydhaba (Baidoa) in Bay region. Garbaharey is held by forces of Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a in Gedo region. There have also been reports this week of military movements around Afmadow as TFG and Kenyan forces are gearing up to attack the town, a centre of Al-Shabaab in Lower Juba.

Meanwhile, Ethiopian troops were involved in the capture of Belet Weyne over the weekend, assisting TFG forces and local militias to drive out Al-Shabaab forces from the town. Belet Weyne is no more than 30 kilometres from the Somali-Ethiopian border. Al-Shabaab was driven out after several hours fighting, though there were reports it was trying to reorganize on the road to Bulu Burte, the other main town in Hiiraan region, 80 kilometres to the south. TFG officials claimed that this would be the next target for government forces and that they were already closing in on it. Reports from Belet Weyne quoted the inhabitants as welcoming the presence of the Ethiopian troops as well as government forces as a guarantee that Al-Shabaab would not come back. Al-Shabaab's harsh punishments, including floggings, amputations and executions by stoning, and its strict social regulations, were much resented in the town. An Ethiopian government spokesman emphasized that Ethiopia had been asked to send troops by the TFG and by the African Union: "there are no misunderstandings on the part of the people of Somalia." The Head of the Government Communications Affairs Office, Minister Bereket Simon, said that the IGAD countries had agreed on Ethiopia's move to assist the government of Somalia: "We are in Somalia to assist the TFG. The TFG leads military operations and we assist." Minister Bereket emphasized that Ethiopia had no intention of being involved in any long-term military deployment in Somalia. Somalia's Ambassador to Kenya pointed out that "we have a common enemy in Al-Shabaab and the Somali government is willing and appreciative of help from its neighbouring countries. They will help the Somali government defeat the enemy and the Somali people welcome this."

Al-Shabaab's Emir, Sheikh Muktar Abdurahman Abdi Godane 'Abu Zubeyr' has responded to the government offensive, complaining that "an evil treaty" was being assembled against Al-Shabaab. He said the invasion of regions controlled by Al-Shabaab was planned long ago, and "foreigners have trained Somali mercenaries and anti-Islam countries like Djibouti,

Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Ethiopia have invaded our country.” Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, AMISOM and Ahlu Sunna had formed what he called “an aggressive coalition” and this “hostile association” was constantly attacking Al-Shabaab positions in different regions and its perpetrators had a “deep-rooted military agenda against us.” They were not capable of driving Al-Shabaab out of its territories, he said, but they were, however, terrorising the public with their air raids: “all they are capable of generating is terror,” he said.

## **No evidence for balkanization policies in Somalia despite Dr Weinstein’s claims**

Events in Somalia continue to attract a great deal of attention, comment and analysis. This is hardly surprising but it remains of concern that so much of this comment and alleged ‘analysis’ continues to draw on information from partial and frequently inaccurate and misleading sources. It is, after all, naïve to accept reports from civil war conflict situations at face value, and virtually all of the many Somali websites take overtly partisan positions, to the extent that they have been described as “tabloids of tribal malevolence”. Other information often comes from sources which are partial. Use of any of these should be made with extreme care.

Last month, Dr Michael Weinstein, a Professor of Political Science at Purdue University in the United States, published an analysis of Kenyan involvement in Somalia entitled “Kenya’s Premature Invasions of Southern Somalia Stalls Balkanization”, a title which underlines a repeated and persistent thread in the writings of Dr Weinstein who has been a prolific and extensive commentator on events in Somalia for several years, writing a monthly column for a US think tank – the Power and Interest News Report (PINR) in Chicago. Dr Weinstein has not himself been to Somalia but he says he monitors “local, regional and international media, and official documents on a daily basis to get a sense of the concrete flow of events [in Somalia].” He does not, however, indicate how, if at all, he evaluates these sources or the Somali websites he follows, presumably in English, or whether he is troubled by any doubts about their accuracy. In fact, it is clear he considers all of them of equal merit which, given their record, is certainly rash. Dr Weinstein also adds occasional comment from what he calls “closed sources”. These are unidentified but the phrase is clearly intended to suggest diplomatic or intelligence information, presumably from the US State Department.

The core of Dr Weinstein’s analyses of Somalia over the years may be summed up by his persistent criticisms of Washington policy and his insistence that Kenya, Ethiopia and other regional powers wish to “balkanize” Somalia, a claim which not surprisingly is seized upon by Al-Shabaab for propaganda purposes. This latest piece opens with the assertion that in the second half of November “the process of dividing the territories of post-independence Somalia into a set of dependencies on regional powers (Ethiopia and Kenya) entered its first and tentative phase and immediately stalled.” Dr Weinstein suggests that Kenya and Ethiopia were aiming to break Al-Shabaab’s control in southern and central regions. That was hardly a secret though Ethiopia at that point hadn’t in fact intervened inside Somalia again. It was only this last week that Ethiopian troops participated in the TFG’s recapture of Belet Weyne from Al-Shabaab (see above). Dr Weinstein, however, then argued not for the first time, that this “balkanization” policy would be the first step in an alleged process to replace Al-Shabaab (or Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen –H.S.M as he prefers to call it) with

regional authorities dependent upon Kenya or Ethiopia, giving the two countries permanent dominant spheres of influence in Somalia.

Dr Weinstein did admit there was little prospect that this would take place, but he didn't acknowledge there was actually no evidence for his suggestion, only journalist claims or allegations by commentators such as himself. In fact, Dr Weinstein did also admit that, by itself, getting rid of H.S.M. "does not necessarily involve balkanization", but is rather a matter of subsequent political structures and groups which might replace Al-Shabaab. Quite so, and this is where his 'analysis' collapses as there is nothing to indicate that either Kenya nor Ethiopia either want, or are in a position, to set up client administrations rather than support local administrations associated with the Somali national administration. His 'analysis' remains totally speculative: "[Any attempt to balkanize Somalia in the short term] would originate with Kenya, Ethiopia and the organization they dominate I.G.A.D. From that starting point in the middle of the presumptive proxy chain, the regional powers would have to work down to secure viable client administrations in the south and centre, and up to get the backing of the international coalition, the "donor" powers working through the UN." It is, in fact, all very hypothetical and offers no more than barely plausible possibilities and indeed, as Dr Weinstein adds, "the regional powers have thus far not succeeded in moving either down or up the chain." In other words, none of this is actually happening, nor have there been any indication of political structures or groups prepared to function in this way.

All of this might be dismissed as no more than vague abstractions by an ill-informed commentator but for the fact that 'balkanization' is an idea that Dr Weinstein has repeatedly claimed to be at the root of Ethiopian and Kenyan policies towards Somalia. This idea, for which one must repeat there simply isn't any evidence, feeds the paranoia of some Somalis and reinforces the claims and propaganda of Al-Shabaab. In his previous article ("Kenya's Political Failure in Southern Somalia" 12.11.2011) Dr. Weinstein makes the same suggestion in a slightly different form: offering the equally unproven hypothesis that "as it looks ever less probable that the U.N.-managed "transition" of Somalia to a permanent constitutional state will succeed, the alternative remains partition, balkanization, cantonization." Back last July, he was raising the issue of "Somalia: The Possibility of Balkanization" and claiming that "the expedient concerns of the West might force balkanization on Somalia, for better or worse." As usual, no evidence was on offer.

In fact, as long ago as 2006/7 Dr Weinstein was claiming on the basis of allegations from Somali media sources that Ethiopia was trying to dismember Somalia. This was one of the propaganda ideas that journalists, and commentators, swallowed wholesale at the time and have frequently repeated despite a complete lack of any evidence to support the claim, and in the face of considerable evidence to the contrary. Any serious study of Ethiopian policy towards Somalia would certainly note that Ethiopia actually wants a stable and quiescent, but not a divided, Somalia, whether it operates under a federal system or some other dispensation. It has made a number of efforts in this direction with the conferences in Addis Ababa in the 1990s, and at Sodere [Ethiopia], and subsequently. It has clearly demonstrated it is quite prepared to co-operate with the Transitional Federal Government whether under President Abdullahi Yusuf or President Sheikh Sharif, and the Djibouti Agreement and other accords. Despite this, the claim of dismemberment is not the only claim going back to 2006 which has been elevated by repetition to the status of alleged fact for some 'analysts'.

Others frequently quoted by commentators include the idea that the Union of Islamic Courts produced six months of peace in Somalia after June 2006 and that the Courts offered a genuine national political formula as an alternative to the clan sectarianism of the warlords or the TFG. Neither claim stands up to any serious examination of events in Somalia and in Mogadishu in 2006 or subsequently, nor does the claim of dismemberment or partition.

Dr Weinstein is not just wrong over Ethiopian or Kenyan policies towards Somalia. His attempts at analyzing Somali politics have consistently been marked by a consistent failure to understand their basis. Most noticeably, he seldom mentions the word clan despite the fact that this is the most fundamental element of all Somali politics. Indeed, in almost all his comments during the last few years, Dr Weinstein has shown no understanding of the divisions within Hawiye politics, the differences, for example, between the Habr Gidir, and in particular the Ayr/Habr Gidir, and the Abgal/Mudalood, which remain central to political divisions in Mogadishu. He consistently neglects the relationship of the Habr Gidir sub-clans, the clan factors in Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (or indeed in Al-Shabaab), just as he largely ignored the clan make-up of the Union of Islamic Courts in 2006, making the fundamentally erroneous assumption that the "the Courts were a genuine attempt at Somali national unification". He has continued to make similar assumptions about Al-Shabaab. He fails to appreciate the political groupings within the Transitional Federal Parliament which he appears to regard as a body operating outside clans and even as a coherent body.

Dr Weinstein also demonstrates consistent ignorance over the politics of the wider Horn of Africa. His comments on Eritrean policy suggests he has entirely failed to understand the aims and intentions of the regime in Asmara, its attempted use of the Eritrea-Ethiopia border issue or the vaulting regional ambitions of President Isaias. He has made little or no apparent effort to look at the evidence readily and publicly available for any evaluation of Ethiopia's aims and intentions in Somalia, or in the region. When he does, relying as he does on second-hand comment, often from unreliable and highly partial sources, he frequently gets it wrong. Almost all of Dr Weinstein's ideas and conclusions simply ignore the realities of Somali and regional politics, despite the fact that the current configurations of power and interest exactly demonstrate these realities. In fact, Dr Weinstein tries to analyze regional politics in the abstract from the perspective of a political scientist/theorist in the US who has never been to Somalia or the region. The result is that he misunderstands almost every single aspect of events in Somalia as well as the aims and intentions of Somali political actors, whether they are for or against the TFG, as well as Somalia's neighbours. None of this would matter too much, but Dr Weinstein's example is followed by far too many 'analysts' and commentators who fail to look at the evidence available and allow themselves to be manipulated by others. According to his curriculum vitae, Dr Weinstein's interests have included psychoanalytic theory, existential phenomenology, the sociology of knowledge, structuralism and post structuralism as well as political science. He specializes in various aspects of post-modernist theory and his published works include studies in deconstruction, metatheory and culture critique – a real jack of all trades!

The only valid point made by Dr Weinstein in his latest piece is that if reconciliation and the deployment of AMISOM fail, Somalia might then fragment. This certainly remains a real danger, and it is to be regretted that so much of Dr Weinstein's writing appears dedicated to

encouraging fragmentation, dissolution and dissension in Somalia. He consistently appears to give credence to virtually every negative rumour that emanates from Mogadishu via Nairobi. We would repeat: it is important that commentators and analysts make every effort to evaluate the source of their information and base their analysis on the realities of the situation. The international community must get it right if a solution is to be found for Somalia. Inaccurate and partial comment does not help.

## **The depressing New Year message for Eritreans and the Region**

As we pointed out last week, for the New Year, President Isaias Afewerki gave a lengthy briefing on a wide range of issues to his people. In addition to his marathon lecture on far-flung issues of the world at large, of little or no relevance to Eritreans' central concerns of how their affairs are actually managed by the small cabal of trouble-makers that surround their 'dear leader', he did also find time to talk at length on regional as well as domestic issues. Equally, given that these are the areas of greatest relevance to Eritreans, the amount of time he spent on them was minimal by comparison.

On continental and regional issues, the President's grand narrative about superpower intervention, as might be expected, was given full rein once again. As that is the only prism through which he looks at the world, it provided the main line of reasoning to explain away almost everything from his lack of enthusiasm for the AU and IGAD right up to his explanations for not having the stomach for "the political circus that is election." The OAU and now the AU are not worth consideration because "they have long drifted away from the ideals set forth by the founding fathers of Africa". This is mainly the result of the interference and undue influence of the West. Indeed, according to the President, the AU is no more than a bureaucratic appendage of the US's national security apparatus and a wily instrument in the West's campaign to impoverish Africa.

With regard to IGAD, President Isaias waxed lyrical about what he said was a missed opportunity and even went as far as claiming that he himself had done everything he could to bring the countries of the region together out of his government's "genuine conviction that the futures of the peoples of the region" belonged together. This he said without the slightest hint of irony. It is not entirely clear if he does sincerely believe that the numerous and serious acts of destabilization that have been authored by his regime should be considered a part of this messianic effort towards unifying the whole region. If President Isaias did mean to unify the region, he must take some credit for success in that literally all members of IGAD are now fully behind the international community's efforts to control the activities of the Eritrean regime and to stop it from further wreaking havoc in the region. IGAD, of course, for the President, is once again no more than a mere instrument of the US and currently has no meaningful role in resolving the many crises in the region. Whatever the organization is currently doing to bring about peace in Somalia is nothing but a concerted campaign being waged "at the behest of western powers" to prolong the misery of the people of Somalia. The secession of South Sudan was the creation of the West, and President Isaias even had *ex post facto* advice for President Al Bashir on how he could have avoided the secession of the South, none of it even remotely sensible or plausible.

In one of his stranger explanations, President Isaias turned to colonial history to explain why he and his government believe Eritrea share a special affinity with the people of Somalia.

Eritreans could be said to have a special affinity with Ethiopia, he suggested, but this is nowhere close to the relationship they had “with the Somalis and Libyans”: the three peoples “were under Italian colonial rule.” This might explain why President Isaias still continues to arm and train Al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia, but it isn’t clear this logic extends to the demise of Colonel Gaddafi and the end of his rule in Libya. These, in fact, are never mentioned in the Eritrean media. Whatever the nuances of such a shoddy analysis, President Isaias has managed to outdo himself in his latest bizarre explanation.

Throughout his perorations on IGAD or the need for regional unity, even if the chance has been squandered, there was not even a single reference to the recently imposed sanctions by the United Nations. It was as if not talking about sanctions would somehow make them go away. On relations with Ethiopia, the only notable thing he said was how he regretted the fall out with Ethiopia during the last decade or so and the opportunity lost to both peoples as a result. Of course, he did not in any way offer to take the blame for this “lost opportunity” nor was he going to make any effort to try to mend fences or normalize relations. In fact, President Isaias resorted to his traditional volte face to make the absurd claim that the ‘hiccup’ with Ethiopia was a “ blessing in disguise” as it enabled the new generation to practice the fortitude, perseverance and self-reliance of the generation that took part in the struggle for independence. This is reminiscent of what he said in 1998 after launching his invasion of Ethiopia to try to seize Badme when he publicly welcomed the war as a means of demonstrating to the youth of Eritrea the realities of the struggle for independence that his generation had gone through. President Isaias sees nothing of the cruel irony in such a claim. Indeed, as one Eritrean commentator once aptly put it, the new generation of Eritreans is unique in the world. What it has inherited from the previous generation of freedom fighters is not freedom but the struggle itself.

The President’s remarks about Eritrea’s domestic issues were, as usual, far removed from reality, though there were some candid admissions. He was all smiles when he reminded his interviewer that he never felt comfortable talking about Eritrea’s rich natural resources while simultaneously boasting “the immense riches that lies beneath Eritrea’s soil.” The question, he said, was not whether Eritrea has resources or even their amount; it was about how to use the resources equitably without affecting the share of the next generation: perniciously optimistic Eritreans, he admonished, must use their resources ‘responsibly’. The bottom line, however, was there is every reason for all Eritreans to rest assured that their quality of life will certainly improve, though he didn’t offer a timetable. In fact, as President Isaias tells it, Eritrea is busy building roads to criss-cross the whole country to link the staggering number of new infrastructural projects. The quality of life for the people of Eritrea has improved to the point where the country has achieved food self-sufficiency and even food security, “unlike other African countries which are poster-children of hunger.” Not surprisingly, his interviewer did not ask why then were Eritreans stampeding to leave the country in droves. He did, however, put the question in a different way eliciting a rare admission on the part of the President. Asked what advice he would give to Eritrean youths who had fled their country, President Isaias promised that “nothing will happen to them” and said they were more than welcome to come back home. This time, there was no mention of CIA responsibility for their flight. At the same time, his promise sounds rather like the classic case of the cat reassuring the mouse that it has no ill-intentions towards it.



In another first for an Eritrean journalist interviewing him, President Isaias was asked when, and if, any elections were scheduled. This was an interesting question partly because some gullible Eritreans in the Diaspora, Meskerem.net is one example, were apparently hoping the President would deal a mortal blow to his 'enemies', including Ethiopia, by announcing the exact date when the Eritrean Constitution would come into effect. The President's response was quite simple: he hated the very idea of holding elections just to please the west, and there will be no elections in Eritrea in the foreseeable future. On previous occasions he has made it clear he doesn't 'expect' elections in his lifetime and/or for thirty or forty years. How the regime in Asmara intends to distribute "Eritrea's immense wealth equitably among citizens of present and future generations" without putting in place the sort of responsible government that only elections can guarantee is not entirely clear. Whatever optimism the people of Eritrea might have had in advance of President Isaias's New Year's remarks was rapidly dissipated by the reality. There could hardly have been a more depressing message than the one he delivered, as usual at inordinate length.

## **News and Views**

### **Somalia appeals over US bank's wire transfer closure**

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia has appealed to the US Government over the decision by a U.S. Bank to close down its money transfer services to Somalia from the US. Sunrise Community Banks, a group of businesses providing money transfers between Minnesota, the home of the largest Somali community in the US, and Somalia, ended the service on 30<sup>th</sup> December over fear that it risked violating U.S. regulatory and anti-terrorism finance laws. The move sparked appeals by the Somali Diaspora in Minnesota, the Somali government, U.S. lawmakers and relief groups and efforts to find an alternative to a service through which U.S.-based Somalis send about \$100 million a year back home. The Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu estimates some \$2 billion - a third of the country's Gross Domestic Product - is channeled to Somalia through "hawala" or small money transfer businesses of this kind. The Somali Prime Minister, Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali said his government is working to make sure the link between American banks and the Somalia "hawala" system continues. He said the monies sent from abroad are the main lifeline for the lives of thousands of Somalis, adding that his Government has sent a memo to the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and other authorities to ask them to call off the decision because it will bring economic crisis to many Somalis. He warned that without remittances Somalia's unstable economy would face collapse. The Somali Mission to the United Nations has appealed to the Sunrise CEO to extend the deadline. Oxfam warned it was the "worst time for the service to stop", particularly with a famine still declared in some parts of Somalia. The effects of that would have been far worse had it not been for remittances sent to families and local charities. Critics pointed out that the Sunrise shutdown would force Somali Americans to use less secure and less well documented routes which are not as transparent and traceable. They said the closure was especially worrying because it might have a "snowball effect" on institutions in other countries. They warned that the move would also give Al-Shabaab and other radical groups the opportunity to use this action as "a recruiting tool and for propaganda". Sunrise has said it recognizes the potential impact of ending the wire transfer services, and that it remains in constant

communication with congressional leaders and government officials to look for a solution. It said the challenge of providing aid and services to Somalia was not new, and noted that the U.S. government had found ways to remove legal obstacles temporarily for aid groups to provide assistance to famine victims. It expressed the hope that the US government would be willing to consider “a similar solution in this instance”.

### **U.S. is considering the closing of Al-Shabaab’s Twitter account**

The United States government has recently announced that it is becoming increasingly concerned about the Twitter account used by Al-Shabaab, and officials have said they are worried that Al-Shabaab might be using Twitter to reach potential recruits in the West. A State Department spokesman said the government was “looking closely” at Al-Shabaab’s use of Twitter and possible measures to take in response. The US government has been analyzing the line between free speech and support for terrorism and exploring legal options to shut down Al-Shabaab’s new Twitter account. In the last few weeks, Al-Shabaab has been using its Twitter account to fire off messages about battles with Kenyan forces and responding to the use of Twitter by Kenya’s military spokesman, Major Chirchir. The messages have been largely in English and clearly intended for an outside audience. American officials say they may have the legal authority to demand that Twitter close Al-Shabaab’s account which had more than four thousand followers at the beginning of last week. In the past, federal law enforcement agencies have been able to take action against individuals using “web hosting and related services” for illegal purposes. US Government officials have said that the potential for American militants to travel to Somalia to train with Al-Shabaab and then return home to carry out terrorist activities is one of the major threats now facing the United States. Already, several Americans have killed themselves as suicide bombers in Somalia working for Al-Shabaab and claimed dozens of victims in the process. Extending its propaganda war onto Twitter shows an intent by Al-Shabaab, currently weakened by a number of military defeats and setbacks, to try to use sophisticated media elements as a tool to create confusion and to maximize its appeal to possible foreign sympathizers. Equally, however, the swapping of insults on Twitter offers little reliable information about the actual situation on the ground, and most of the content should be dismissed as inaccurate or exaggerated.

### **The National Mining Corporation announces massive gold strikes**

The Ethiopian National Mining Corporation (NMiC) has announced a major discovery of the country’s largest-ever gold reserves in Oromia and Tigray regional states where it has been prospecting under concessions from the Ministry of Mines. Ato Meleku Beza, head of the NMiC, one of the companies in the MIDROC Group, announced last week that the estimated reserves found at Dawa Okote, in the Dembi area of Oromia Regional State, amounted to 550,000 kilograms of gold, which at current prices would be worth over 4 billion US dollars, and the mine would have a life of 20 years. The potential reserves at Werri, in Tigray Regional State, are estimated to be able to provide some 18,000 kilograms of gold worth about 792 million US dollars. The Werri area also contains substantial estimated resources of silver (1.9 million kilograms), lead (50.4 million kilograms) and zinc (42.4 million kilograms). The expected life of the mine would be nine years. The National Mining Corporation said it was expecting to produce some 6,000kg of gold from both areas within a

year of the start of production, which it anticipates will be in three years' time. Preliminary assessments conducted by a South African-based consulting firm indicated that National Mining Corporation will need to make total investments of about 320 million dollars. Environmental impact assessments will be carried out in both areas before any mining starts. Once production starts in both areas, the NMIC will become the country's largest gold producer.

## **2011 was a challenging year for conflict management says the AU**

El Ghassim Wane, the Director of Peace and Security at the African Union Commission classifies 2011 as a challenging year for conflict management, but despite this he emphasizes that the AU made significant progress in managing some of the continent's worst conflicts over the last year. It provides a sound platform for developments in the coming year. Mr Wane says the AU succeeded in enhancing operations in Somalia, and in helping the Sudanese to organize a successful self-determination referendum in South Sudan and in the subsequent recognition of the state of South Sudan. Mr Wane credits the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the forces of the Federal Transitional Government for what he calls the recent "unprecedented progress" including the "forced withdrawal of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu". Certainly, some challenges remain to be overcome there and the conflict has yet to be fully resolved. The authority of the Transitional Federal Government needs to be extended, and it is very necessary to see that the transitional period comes to end in August 2012, and that the steps agreed upon among Somali stakeholders are properly implemented. Mr Wane says the AU was also largely successful in dealing with the conflicts in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt: "Tunisia is successfully implementing a transition process, Egypt and the conflict in Libya have come to an end, and Egypt and Libya have now embarked on a new transition". Mr Wane says the African Union is appealing to all Congolese to overcome the challenges facing their country. The AU believes that everyone needs to respect the institutions provided for by the constitution of Congo. If there are complaints, they should be challenged through existing mechanisms and processes, but there is also a need for the Congolese to work together to overcome the challenges facing their country. On Sudan, Mr Wane acknowledges that a number of contentious issues remain between Sudan and South Sudan: "There is a lot to be done to sort out the post-secession issues and ensure that the two countries adhere to, and implement, their decision of two viable states living side-by-side and cooperating on issues of common concern." He notes, however, that the AU High Level Implementation Panel headed by former South African President Thabo Mbeki will be continuing to work with both countries in 2012 to deal with the unresolved issues.

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