

# A Week in the Horn

## 6<sup>th</sup> January 2017

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### News in Brief

#### **Africa and the African Union**

AU Commission Chairperson, Dr Dlamini Zuma, in her last New Year message said the 27<sup>th</sup> AU Assembly in Rwanda, was "the best we have held". She emphasized the launch of the African Passport, decisions on Financing the AU the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and the appointment of Judges for the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. She said Africa and the world could not stand by and witness the suffering in South Sudan. And emphasized that the AU remained committed to the Agenda 2063 flagship project "Silencing the Guns by 2020." (See article)

On his first day as Secretary-General of the United Nations, on January 1, 2017, the new UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, pledged to make 2017 a year for peace and called on all countries to put peace first. (See article)

The Chinese government has announced (December 30) that it will ban processing and sale of ivory for commercial purposes trade by the end of 2017, "to better protect elephants and better tackle the illegal trade." The first workshops and retailers would be closed by the end of March. Conservationists, who estimate that more than 20,000 elephants were killed for their ivory last year, have welcomed the move. The World Wildlife Fund believes there are now only 415,000 elephants left in Africa.

#### **Ethiopia**

President Mulatu Teshome visited Repi landfill-to-energy project, Africa's first waste-to-energy project on Thursday (January 5), during which he underscored that Repi project is a manifestation of Ethiopia's commitment to the development of eco-friendly power projects.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn held discussions with Dr Joseph Shevel, President of Galilee International Management Institute, Israel's leading public training institution on Wednesday (January 4). The Premier said Ethiopia was keen to cooperate with Israeli higher learning institutions in the areas of experience sharing and training.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn left for Ghana on Friday (January 6) to attend the inauguration of President Nana Akufo-Addo.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu met with French Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Frédéric Bontems on Tuesday (January 3). The Minister described France as a dependable friend of Ethiopia and emphasized that Ethiopia and France will further enhance the already excellent cooperation. The French Ambassador underlined that Ethiopia's role in promoting regional peace and stability is irreplaceable, adding that it's important to have Ethiopia on board on various international issues.

Ethiopia, on January 1, officially started its work as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2017-2018, along with Bolivia, Italy, Kazakhstan and Sweden. The other non-permanent members of the Council for the next year are: Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay. "This reflects Ethiopia's status as an emerging peace and security power in Africa", as the largest contributor to peacekeeping in Africa; host of the African Union and in the forefront of efforts for regional peace and security in Somalia, South Sudan and elsewhere. (See article)

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Aklilu Hailemichael met with the Public Wing of Business Diplomacy, which comprises the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sector Association members, companies, exporters, tour operators and marketing and promotion firms on Wednesday (January 4). The meeting focused on how to further move forward with the promotion of local exporters and thereby explore market opportunities for Ethiopian commodities abroad.

## **Djibouti**

Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of State for Investment, Jawad Anani, on a visit to Djibouti this week, handed President Guelleh a letter from King Abdullah II inviting the President to attend the Arab Summit in Jordan in March this year. President Guelleh said he would attend. The President said Djibouti was keen on developing economic cooperation with Jordan and called on Jordanian businessmen to invest in Djibouti. Mr Anani visited the new port of Djibouti, to be opened soon, and visited the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway.

## **Eritrea**

In a New Year message to the people of Eritrea, President Isaias underlined the steadfastness and commitment that they continued to display in their "arduous journey of nation-building and development" and said this was a testimony to the future.

In a New Year message to some Heads of State and Government, the President also drew attention to what he called the "continued injustices meted to Eritrea" by the UN, describing these as indefensible acts, which threatened regional peace and security. (See article)

Reports indicate that Eritrea is involved in a substantial military expansion program with the enlargement of the training program at the Gedhem Training Base, and at the new military and naval facilities at Assab. (See article)

## **Somalia**

President Mahmoud officially opened the first session of the Senate on Thursday (January 5) in the provisional Senate building; the Turkish Ambassador in Mogadishu attended the occasion and congratulated the newly elected senators.

The dates for the election of the new parliament's Speaker and Deputy Speakers have now been confirmed as Wednesday (January 11) and Thursday (January 12). Candidates put their names forward this week. (See article)

The new Federal Parliament, inaugurated on Tuesday last week, held its first session on Saturday (December 30) rejecting the budget for the country in 2017 and called for further budget revisions, and for salaries for the new senators to be included. MPs also noted salaries had not been paid for troops and civil servants over the previous 7 months. MPs said government spending was inconsistent with the income generated and demanded further review.

President Nkurunziza of Burundi has threatened to pull out the almost 5,500 Burundi troops in AMISOM. Speaking on Friday last week (December 30), he said the EU allowances for the troops had not been paid for 11 months. Three battalions of Burundi troops are scheduled to rotate this month.

The Presidents of Puntland and Galmudug states on Sunday (January 1) once again renewed their commitment to build peace and confidence in Galkayo following another round of clashes last week. They agreed on a withdrawal of forces from Galkayo and redeployment to their original bases; the removal of all roadblocks and opening of roads to allow free movement of people and goods; and implementation of joint training of police from both sides to strengthen security. They also agreed to meet in Galkayo later this month.

At least nine people were killed and 16 others wounded when two suicide vehicle bombs detonated near Mogadishu international airport on Monday (January 2). One car bomber drove into a checkpoint outside AMISOM headquarters; the other blast took place at the Peace Hotel near the airport. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.

The United Nations has confirmed that Somalia's Ahmed Warsame will become UNHCR's director for global emergencies, staff security, safety and supply services, from next month. Mr Warsame has been a representative of the UNHCR in South Sudan for the last three years and has worked in Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda and Pakistan as well as directing UNHCR operations in Dadaab, in Kenya.

### **South Sudan**

As part of the follow-up to President Kiir's call for national dialogue, the government is sending a mobilization team, tasked with spreading the 'national dialogue' message to rebels. The Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Festus Mogae, has strongly welcomed the national dialogue initiative and says the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission will support the National Dialogue in any way it can.

### **Sudan**

President Omer al-Bashir, on the occasion of Sudan's 61<sup>st</sup> Independence Day, on Saturday (December 31), declared another month extension of the unilateral cessation of hostilities in the Two Areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan and in Darfur. He declared a four-month cessation of hostilities last June; and extended this for two more months in October. The President said it was still open for the opposition to sign the National Document, and a higher committee to draft the permanent constitution would be formed shortly. The constitution will be approved by an elected parliament.

The UN Secretary-General Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom, met with President Al-Bashir on Wednesday (January 4). He told reporters later that he discussed the role Sudan could play as a member of IGAD to achieve peace and stability in South Sudan. He said their meeting reviewed relations between Khartoum and Juba and stressed the "international community seeks to restore normal relations between Khartoum and Juba and create opportunities to achieve development and stability in South Sudan. Presidential aide, Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid, said on Wednesday (January 4) that the government, in informal meetings held earlier, had reached an agreement with Darfur rebels on the major issues and "we hope to settle the issue completely in the coming rounds of talks". He said Khartoum had agreed to all proposals contained in the Roadmap Agreement and the government had made some further proposals to the rebels and was awaiting a response.

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### **Ethiopia starts its term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council**

Ethiopia began its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council this week on Sunday (January 1), recommitting itself once again to the noblest aspirations of the human community – the safeguarding of international peace and security. The United Nations General Assembly elected five non-permanent members to the Security Council in June at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Ethiopia was elected by 185 votes out of 190 members of the General Assembly. The election provided Ethiopia, Bolivia, Sweden and Kazakhstan, with Italy and the Netherlands splitting the fifth seat, with a two-year mandate for membership of the Security Council. Ethiopia now joins Egypt and Senegal on the Security Council as representatives for Africa. They both have one more year to serve.

The letter and spirit of the UN Charter have always inspired Ethiopia, a UN founder member as well as a member of the previous League of Nations. Equally, fully aware of current trends, Ethiopia remains committed to sharing African thoughts, values and ideas, mediated through regional conditions. It is also very conscious of the changing circumstances and interests within this important organ of the United Nations, which is dedicated to preserving peace through cooperation and coordination, despite the myriad of challenges facing the humanity in this 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Election to the Security Council offered clear recognition of Ethiopia's increasing reputation for helping to maintain international peace and security. Ethiopia's participation and experience in peacekeeping in Africa also was a significant element in its successful bid. It currently provides a total of 8,321 personnel, both men and women, in UN peacekeeping duties. It also provides peacekeepers for AU Missions and is currently the largest provider of peacekeeping forces in the world. Dr Cilliers from the South African Institute for Security Studies noted that Ethiopia was an important player in terms of peace and security on the African continent, adding, "It has been, for a number of years, the largest troops contributor to peacekeeping in Africa. It hosts the African Union, and in the Horn of Africa, it is extremely significant in Somalia, in Sudan and elsewhere. So I think that this reflects, in a sense, Ethiopia's status as an emerging peace and security power in Africa." Ethiopia has certainly been a strong force in mediating in the South Sudan political crisis and in neighbouring Somalia. It has been in the forefront of IGAD's activities for regional peace and security. Indeed, overall, Ethiopia has been a major pillar in the continent's peace and security architecture.

Ethiopia's election to the Security Council for the 2017–2018 term is a success for Ethiopia's foreign policy and diplomacy. It underlines Ethiopia's interest to contribute to and defend the international order, at the heart of which lie the United Nations and the Security Council. Ethiopia's candidacy was based on knowledge and involvement in international peace and security, as well as its strong belief in dialogue and diplomacy, and its respect for international law. Ethiopia's foreign policy is guided by the principles of collective security, equality and mutual understanding, as well as the spirit and philosophy of Pan-Africanism for the advancement of peace. It remains determined to improve international security architecture and advance peace, the goal and guide for any international community of nations.

Ethiopia will exert every possible effort to make a meaningful and constructive contribution to the work of the Council, in close cooperation and collaboration with other members. The United Nations cannot handle today's peace and security challenges alone, Ethiopia will continue to advocate for greater strategic coherence, dialogue and coordination between regional mechanisms, the African Union and the United Nations in addressing the peace and security challenges in Africa.

Ethiopia is also conscious that it represents IGAD and Eastern Africa, as well as Africa as a whole, in the Security Council. Africa provides an important part of the Council's agenda. The UN has its largest peacekeeping operations in Africa and is deeply involved in peace and security on the continent. Ethiopia strongly believes in the importance of UN cooperation with the African Union, especially with the Security Council's interests and involvement in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. It will work to increase cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union particularly in the areas of peace and security.

One of the major issues for the Security Council today is combatting terrorism. Ethiopia believes in the necessity for a strong UN that will act confidently to enable coordinated international action against terrorism and violent extremism. UN bodies must work together, particularly with young people, to prevent the spread of terrorism. It is committed to safeguarding human rights and democracy and to working for the elimination of the causes of violent extremism and terrorism. It also supports increased transparency and dialogue in the operations of the Security Council to help build support and confidence in its operations. Indeed, dialogue and consultation are vital, as are other considerations, for the improvement of the Council's operations, including expansion in the number of permanent members.

Ethiopia believes a strong confident UN is of critical importance to combat terrorism and deal with other major challenges: climate change including the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, peace and security, prevention of conflict, terrorism, migration and gender equality. The various bodies of the UN must work together and give concerted support to measures to deal with these issues at national and regional level.

## Numbers of drought-affected people in Ethiopia fall significantly

2016 saw a considerable number of success stories in political, diplomatic and economic sectors in Ethiopia. The economic growth of the country continued unabated with the opening of the Ethio-Djibouti Electric railway, and the inauguration of the Gilgel Gibe III hydropower project. There was also an increased focus and progress on industrial park development. Ethiopia was elected to a non-permanent seat at the UNSC, and hosted numerous international conferences successfully. It upheld, and expanded, ties with partner countries and organizations at bilateral, regional and global levels.

There were, of course, some serious challenges not least the unrest that followed the popular demands of good-governance and inclusivity in the ongoing national development in some parts of the country. More severe were the effects of the El Niño global climactic change event that affected Ethiopia. Drought resistance and responses have, inevitably, been one of the main focusses of government policies over the past year. The impact of the El Niño wreaked havoc with Ethiopia's main summer rains following a failure of the spring *belg* rains. This led to drought, food insecurity and water shortages in the most affected areas of the country. The El Niño phenomenon was in fact the strongest ever recorded and it affected millions in the drought-hit areas of Ethiopia, as well as millions elsewhere.

The government was quick to organize relief efforts, working hard to provide the necessary resources to mitigate the effects of the drought, and to contain the subsequent and ongoing problems. It has also, of course, been a difficult year for humanitarian aid with a number of major international humanitarian crises in Syria, Yemen and other areas, stretching crisis responses. The government has continued to make every effort to minimize the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, underlining its determination to continue to do everything possible to protect people from the effects of this environment-related crisis. It funded substantial extra food imports, identified severely affected areas and put into operation concerted and continuous efforts to assist people in these areas with both food and water support and other humanitarian assistance.

After more than seven months of efforts by the Federal Government and the Regional State administrations to assist the drought hit areas and mitigate the challenges facing the more than 10 million people in the areas hit by the El Niño drought, the National Disaster Risk Management Commission was able to announce last week that the number of people receiving daily subsistence humanitarian support has declined to 5.6 million.

In a Forum held to discuss and provide updated information on the drought response, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen commended the overall efforts that had been made and which were continuing. He emphasized the importance of the continuing momentum and detailed the need to further scale up the national, sustainable capacity for disaster response and management. He praised the regional states and underlined that the Federal Government would continue to provide necessary support for the three regional states affected by the drought, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Somali and Oromia Regional States. Overall, the drought had not caused long-term harm to the livelihoods of the people, though the three regional states were continuing to distribute emergency food aid in the most affected areas, in addition to animal feed and water.

Mitiku Kassa, Commissioner of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, briefed the Forum. By December last year close to 14 billion Birr had been allocated to avert the effects of the crisis and the Government and the Regional State administrations, together with Ethiopia's partners in the international community, had been ready to meet the needs of the people. Regional governments had also allocated substantial financial resources to help deal with the problem. The Somali Regional State, for example, was undertaking its own relief operations, allocating 300 million birr, and the Oromia Regional State administration had provided 60 million birr of support for those affected.

The Commissioner also detailed the work of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission in working on revision of the country's disaster prevention and preparedness national policy and strategy and on implementation of aid and assistance in the light of the lessons learnt during the recent challenge. He noted that the Commission is also working to create, strengthen and administer stand-by capacities for selected, strategic areas for timely, effective, and appropriate response to deal with fast onset or other disasters of national concern. Another of the tasks of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission is to cooperate with domestic and foreign information sources, to monitor, forecast, and warn against disasters that might affect the country's agricultural sector and endanger the livelihood of the population.

## **AU Commission describes 2016- "a particularly fruitful year"**

In her last New Year message, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission suggested the last year had been particularly fruitful for the African Union Commission as it continued to work for the implementation of the first 10-year plan for Africa's Agenda 2063. She accepted that a lot more work still needed to be done to translate aspirations to make a difference to the lives of Africans, both on the continent and in the Diaspora, but she was pleased to see AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities intensify Agenda 2063 domestication. Dr Zuma noted that the aim of free movement of people around Africa received a significant boost in 2016. She commended Ghana, Namibia, Benin and Togo for the steps they had taken towards joining Rwanda, Mauritius and Seychelles with visa-free-entry for all Africans. She hoped many more countries would follow suit with visa-on-arrival as the AU considered issuing the African Passport.

The Commission Chairperson said the 27<sup>th</sup> AU Summit of Heads of States and Government, hosted by Rwanda, was "the best we have held", adding "we must maintain the focus on issues of common interest, while striving to get better in hosting subsequent Summits and meetings." She said the Kigali Summit was especially successful with the launch of the African Passport, decisions on Financing the AU through a 0.2% import Levy; the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and the appointment of Judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. She also noted that the Kigali Summit had tasked President Kagame of Rwanda with leading reform of the African Union. Dr Zuma said a reformed African Union and a re-structured Commission would better position the African Union to deliver Agenda 2063 in the most efficient and relevant way to meet African aspirations.

Dr Zuma said that the AU Summits in 2016, held under the theme "African Year of Human Rights, with Particular Focus on the Rights of Women", marked important milestones for both Africa and the global women's agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment. The 2017 Summits would be held under the theme of "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investment in Youth." She emphasized that the youth constituted over 70% of the population of Africa and were "a critical part of our most precious resources". She said the AU Commission looked forward to working with Regional Economic Communities, Civil Society, AU Organs, Member States and all partners in furthering the youth agenda. She noted the AU Commission was heading an End Child Marriage Campaign, and the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security had embarked on a Stop Violence against Women in South Sudan Campaign in response to the violent atrocities committed against women and children in South Sudan. In this context, Dr Zuma also underlined that Africa and the world could not stand by and witness the suffering inflicted on the children, women, men and young people of South Sudan. Enough is enough, she said: "Africans deserve better, and we must all work towards better days, and towards peace, stability and development, not only in South Sudan, but also in Burundi, Central African Republic, the Gambia and others. Our people deserve peace and development." She added that governments and leaders were there to protect the vulnerable, to serve the people; not to be the cause of the people's suffering and retrogression. She said: "The AU remains committed to working with our Member States to ensure that lasting peace is restored under the Agenda 2063 flagship project "Silencing the Guns by 2020."

Dr Zuma said successful elections were held in a number of Member States, and she congratulated the peoples and governments for ensuring smooth transitions, and moving a step further towards realizing the spirit and letter of the African Charter on Elections, Governance and Democracy. She urged Member States with electoral disputes to respect the will of the people, abide by their national and international obligations, and use non-violent and legal means in resolving any electoral disputes.

Dr Zuma also pointed out that, at the 28<sup>th</sup> Summit, to be held in Addis Ababa at the end of this month, the Heads of State and Government would elect a new Chairperson for the AU Commission. For the first time, five candidates had participated in a live televised debate, the Mjadala Afrika. It had been organised by the AU Leadership Academy on December 9 and had given the people of Africa an opportunity to hear the plans of candidates for the post of Chairperson. This debate was unprecedented and a milestone in the history of the African Union. Dr Zuma hoped there would be more debates of this nature on other critical issues, including employment, economy, migration and many more. In conclusion, Dr Zuma thanked the staff, management and friends of the AU Commission for their continued support towards realization of a prosperous and peaceful Africa, and wished everyone good health, peace and prosperity in 2017.

## **...New UN Secretary-General calls for 2017 to be "A Year of Peace"**

On his first day as Secretary-General of the United Nations, on January 1, António Guterres, pledged to make 2017 a year for peace. In an appeal for peace in the world, he said: "On this New Year's Day, I ask all of you to join me in making one shared New Year's resolution: Let us resolve to put peace first." He said one question weighed particularly heavily on his heart. "That is: how can we help the millions of people caught up in conflict, suffering massively in wars with no end in sight?" Urging all citizens, governments and leaders to strive to overcome differences, he said "Peace must be our goal and our guide," adding "I appeal to you all to join me in committing to peace, today and every day. Let us make 2017 a year for peace." Mr Guterres, formally appointed Secretary-General by the UN General Assembly on October 13 last year, will now serve as Secretary-General for a five-year period to 31 December 2021. He was previously Prime Minister of Portugal (1995 to 2002) and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (2005 to 2015).

## **JMEC welcomes the national dialogue initiative in South Sudan**

The Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Festus Mogae, has strongly welcomed the national dialogue initiative in South Sudan and says the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission will support the National Dialogue in any way it can. In mid-December, addressing the newly established Transitional National Legislative Assembly, President Salva Kiir called for a national dialogue to end the three-year-long civil war in South Sudan. The President said a national dialogue required the participation of all South Sudanese people in order to fully restore peace and tranquility in the war-torn country. The concept of national dialogue is becoming an increasingly popular method of conflict resolution and political transformation. During the last few years, national dialogues have been proposed or carried out in a diverse group of countries and circumstances, including most recently Sudan. In broadening any debate about a country's trajectory outside the usual group of elite decision makers, national dialogues offer the potential for meaningful discussions about underlying drivers of conflict and ways to address these issues holistically. President Kiir told South Sudan lawmakers: "National dialogue in my view is both a forum and process through which the people of South Sudan can gather to redefine the basis of their unity as it relates to nationhood, and their sense of belonging." He went on to say that in the light of national endeavors: "I am calling upon all of you to forgive one another, enter dialogue with one another in your personal capacities, and embrace yourself," adding "I am asking you, the people of South Sudan to forgive me for any wrong I might have committed." The President also underlined that he was initiating the process of national dialogue "as a measure to consolidate peace in our country and to bring our people together. " Dialogue, the President underlined has been "a hallmark of our liberation struggle, we always used dialogue as a mechanism to manage our differences and recommit ourselves to our unity of purpose and resolve to set our people free." He therefore urged the armed opposition and militias to cease all hostilities and join in the dialogue, promising punitive measures against opposition and various militias fighting his government if they failed to join the process. He also warned that: "My government will take serious measures against those found to be broadcasting ethnic hatred and refused to renounce violence and join peaceful dialogue."

The President said a national committee of eminent personalities and persons of consequence would be set up to steer the process. This committee would work with independent experts from Juba-based think tanks such as the Ebony Center, the Sudd Institute and the Centre for Peace and Development and these three institutions would also provide secretariat work for the committee.

According to President Kiir, the process will have a bottom-top approach with the first phase being "grass-roots consultations" to map out the grievances specific to each community and region. The second phase would involve the calling of regional peace conferences and the final phase would lead to convergence of all parties in Juba for a National Conference. He said: "The National Conference would tackle all the remaining issues that were not addressed in the sub-national processes, and which had a direct bearing on national cohesion."

First Vice-President Gai, on a visit to Equatoria Region, also underlined the importance of peace and reconciliation. In a statement broadcast on state-owned television, he said: "When two people do not talk to each other, God does not touch their files until they reconcile, though one must be on the right, they will not receive God's blessing if they do not compromise." He went on: "This year, how do we want it to be? We want it to be the year of peace, reconciliation, forgiveness and unity." He added: "If you have a problem within the family, reconcile, tell the person who offended you that I have forgiven you. If you have grievances you want to be addressed by the government, come out and tell the president and I am sure he will listen to you and the

problem will be solved. This is what we should do and this is what the New Year should be. We need to forgive and reconcile". The problems were underlined only a few hours after the First Vice-President's heavily guarded visit to Yei where he spent two nights, when a bus was ambushed on the Juba-Nimule road.

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Festus Mogae, has commended President Salva Kiir for unveiling his national dialogue initiative. Mr Mogae said the dialogue was needed in South Sudan, and he congratulated President Kiir for reaching out to South Sudanese communities. He said: "I am delighted to hear President Kiir reaching out to his people with such strong and heartfelt words and launching this much-needed National Dialogue initiative," adding: "the President has seized a critical opportunity for national reconciliation, appealed for a spirit of forgiveness and togetherness and set in motion a genuine campaign to address the concerns and grievances of the South Sudanese people. I applaud his leadership and I give my assurance that JMEC will support the National Dialogue in any way we can."

### **Somalia's electoral process continues despite concerns over re-run seats**

The House of the People's Leadership Election Committee has officially released the poll dates for the election of the new parliament's Speaker and Deputy Speakers. Abdirahman Duale, Chairman of the House Leadership Election Commission announced on Monday (January 2) that the registration of candidates for the position of Speaker for the House of the People and for the two Deputy Speakers would take place this week between Tuesday (January 3) and Thursday (January 5). The election of the Speaker would take place on Wednesday next week (January 11) and the elections of the Deputy Speakers would take place a day later on Thursday (January 12). Seven candidates are contesting the posts of Speaker and Deputy Speaker among them the former Speaker of the Federal Parliament, Mohamed Osman 'Jawari' who announced on Wednesday this week that he would be a candidate for re-election as Speaker for the newly inaugurated 10<sup>th</sup> Federal Parliament. The date for the Presidential election by both Houses of Parliament has still to be finalized though it appears January 22 is now a probable date. Over twenty candidates are standing as candidates to become president.

One reason for the delay in firming up a date is the continuing controversy over last week's decision to re-contest five seats after the results were nullified by Somalia's Independent Electoral Dispute Resolution Mechanism (IEDRM). Somalia's international partners have also made it clear they believe the National Leadership Forum should consider re-running rather more of the seats. Over the weekend, more than sixty of the newly elected members of the House of the People submitted a motion in Parliament demanding that the decision to re-contest five seats should be rescinded. The motion supported by 67 MPs was handed over to a technical committee to review. One of the supporters of the motion said, the elections in the five parliamentary seats, which IEDRM said should be re-contested, were held freely and fairly, and "therefore we want the parliament to debate on it."

Last week, the National Leadership Forum rejected the IEDRM's call for eleven seats to be re-contested and limited the number to be re-run to five. The five seats are in Jubaland, Galmudug, Hir-Shabelle, Puntland and Southwest states. Among the seats to be re-contested is the seat in Jowhar in Hir-Shabelle where two candidates were disqualified for their role in the violence that occurred inside and outside the polling center in Jowhar last month in which a number of people, including Electoral College delegates, were injured. However, the National leadership Forum has allowed both to participate in the re-run election.

There are still some other elements of the elections to the Senate, the Upper House and to the Lower House, the House of the People that have yet to be completed. When finished, 275 members of the House of the People will have been elected from South West, Puntland, Galmudug, Hir-Shabelle, and Jubaland States and from the Somaliland community and from the Benadir region. 54 members of the Upper House will also have been elected from these same areas, with another 18 due to be chosen after the current electoral process is finalized.

In fact, despite all the problems, Somalia has, overall, managed to achieve the long-awaited establishment of a federal state system with the formation of the new regional government of Hir-Shabelle, the final Federal Member State to be created and the election of delegates to the Federal Parliament. This concluded the federal state process, allowing for the next stage of the Parliamentary elections. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud told Uganda's Chief of Defence Forces General Edward Wamala on a visit to Mogadishu on Tuesday this week that the country's on-going electoral process as a major milestone for Somalia, "It is a journey that is on-going. In 2020, the plan is to have one-person one-vote election and the elections will happen in constituencies and in districts far way."

Certainly, there have been delays. Originally, Members of Parliament were to be directly elected no later than August 2016, and the President was due to be chosen by both Houses of Parliament the following month. It now appears the Presidential election will be rescheduled for late January. Equally, the disputes over parliamentary results and attempts at annulments by the IEDRM have caused some tension between the Federal Government and the National Leadership Forum and the state-level electoral bodies. There have been a substantial number of accusations of voter fraud, intimidation, and selective result annulments. This has been met with some strong criticisms from the international community. A statement from the US State Department this week said the US was gravely concerned "over alleged reports of intimidation and malpractice" in the electoral process thus far. The statement stressed that the Somali Parliament must prioritize timelines for the election of Speakers "to ensure credibility and momentum in Somalia's state building agenda." It also called on the National Leadership Forum to respect the efforts of the electoral bodies to uphold transparent and integral practices as the remaining seats in Parliament were filled and to ensure that seats reserved for women were actually filled by women representatives.

In addition, the whole process has also been affected by the security situation, which continues to be characterized by conflict and instability despite the best efforts of AMISOM and the Somali Armed Forces. Al-Shabaab remains the primary security concern despite the considerable victories that have been achieved and the substantial degradation of al-Shabaab's operational capacity. A combination of AMISOM, Somali Armed Forces and US counterterrorism support operations has certainly reduced the capacity and influence of al-Shabaab. Equally, al-Shabaab does still retain the ability to carry out terrorist activities as it showed on Monday (January 2) with at least nine people killed and others wounded by two suicide vehicle bombs detonated near Mogadishu international airport. One car bomber drove into a checkpoint outside AMISOM headquarters. AMISOM troops stopped the car and seconds later the bomb exploded. The second bomb was at the Peace Hotel near the airport and caused substantial damage to the building. Of greater concern, however, is the importance of continuing to create legitimate and functional governing institutions at local level, a critical necessity to lay the groundwork for the restoration of popularly supported, functioning, government institutions across the country.

Meanwhile, Somalia's humanitarian partners are seeking \$864 million to reach 3.9 million people with urgent life-saving assistance by the end of this year. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said on Monday this week when releasing its Humanitarian Response Plan for Somalia for 2017. In its most recent report, it said that the plan had been developed in consideration of, and in complementarity, with ongoing and planned development programming, that is the framework of a three-year humanitarian strategy for Somalia for 2016-2018. The response plan for 2017, UNOCHA said, aims to save lives, ensure the protection of the most vulnerable, strengthen resilience, support the provision of basic services and enable durable solutions. A UN-backed assessment issued earlier this year calculated that five million Somalis, more than 40 percent of the country's population, were unable to obtain sufficient food, among them over 300,000 children under five who were acutely malnourished, and over 50,000 children who were severely malnourished.

### **President Isaias attacks UN Security Council for "continued injustices" .....**

President Isaias broadcast a New Year message to the people of Eritrea "both inside the country and abroad, to the members of the Eritrean Defense Force as well as to friends and well-wishers of Eritrea." In a message broadcast on TV and Radio he said the Eritrean people had secured and preserved their independence and territorial integrity through solid determination, unity and sacrifice. He underlined the steadfastness and commitment that they continued to display "in the arduous journey of nation-building and development", describing this as an eloquent testimony to the country's future. He did not appear to offer much in the way of any relaxation of current policies.

The President also sent a New Year message to several Heads of State and Government on the occasion though the names of the countries were not released. The President said he wanted once again to draw attention to the "continued injustices meted to Eritrea" by the UN. These, he underlined, "indefensible acts not only contravene fundamental tenets of international law and morality but are also fraught with perilous threats to regional peace and security." He went on to claim that "sovereign Eritrean territories still remain under occupation", 14 years after the adoption of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission ruling on the border delimitation and demarcation. As usual, he failed to mention that as Ethiopia has accepted the delimitation over a decade ago, the failure to demarcate is the full responsibility of Eritrea with its continued refusal to discuss demarcation.

President Isaias, as usual, went on to claim the Eritrean people were the subject of a series of unjust actions and wrongs from the United Nations and the international community in the past and that they therefore "deserve redress and reparations", and not continued and unjustified punishment, despite the country's continued efforts to destabilize the region which had led to UN sanctions. The President referred to the "illegal and unfair sanctions against Eritrea... unjustifiable sanctions [that] were passed deceitfully on fabricated charges which had no basis on law or facts." The President claimed the main purpose of the sanctions was to deflect international attention from the occupation of sovereign Eritrean territories and thereby prevent Eritrea from advocating its legitimate rights.

As might be expected, he made no reference to the detailed evidence provided by the UN Monitoring Group of the continued activities of Eritrea in connection with regional destabilization or the still unresolved problems over Djibouti prisoners of war. As Ethiopia has repeatedly maintained, the critical issue over UN sanctions should be whether or not Eritrea is prepared to demonstrate any intention of changing policies towards the region and dropping its insistence on aggression as the major element in foreign policy. So far, there has been no evidence for this.

The Ministry of Information supplemented the President's New Year messages with a press release a day earlier, accusing the London-based Saudi Arabian newspaper, *Alsharq Al-Awsat* of publishing a number of distorted "news stories" on Eritrea. It says the paper "gullibly parrots mendacious pronouncements of the [Ethiopian government] that Ethiopia "has long accepted the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission ruling on Badme".

In fact, as Ethiopia has repeatedly said, and as the EEBC accepted, Ethiopia has made it very clear that it fully accepts the delimitation of the Boundary Commission, and only needs dialogue to finalize demarcation on the ground and discuss normalization of relations. This has repeatedly been rejected by the President Isaias, all of whose reported utterances over the last eighteen years (since Eritrea invaded Ethiopian territory in May 1998) make it clear he is simply not interested in holding any form of discussion or dialogue. He apparently remains committed to aggression as a central element of foreign policy, a factor that has meant Eritrea, in its 23 years of existence, has been involved in conflict with Sudan, Djibouti (twice), and Yemen and in a full-scale war with Ethiopia, with which President Isaias still maintains he is at war despite the Algiers Peace Agreement of 2000.

In this context, it might also be noted that Eritrea rejected the Algiers Agreement with its unprecedented decision to force out the UN Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia (UNMEE), a force in the Temporary Security Zone, which was, among other matters, there to provide security for the demarcation process. From the outset, Eritrean forces repeatedly flouted the TSZ, infiltrating its forces into the zone. It then made every effort to try to make life difficult for UNMEE and eventually forced it to withdraw through its refusal to allow helicopters to evacuate UNMEE personnel for medical treatment or bring in sufficient fuel supplies to carry out UNMEE operations.

The Ministry of Information press statement claims sustainable peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East region cannot be achieved through a security architecture that exalts hegemony and "policing" by selected "anchor states" to carry out the bidding of extraneous forces. Given President Isaias' repeated lectures to neighbouring leaders, and indeed more widely to the world at large, criticism of alleged hegemonic aspirations by other countries has a rather forced ring. Security and cooperation frameworks that promote enduring interests of all the countries and peoples in this sensitive region must indeed be predicated on legality and mutual respect of each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

That is why, Ethiopia, for example, consistently underlines its support for regional development and regional peace and security, as encouraged through IGAD and through the development of regional sustainable power links, as well as regional road and rail links.

In this, its fourth attack on international press comment in 2016, Eritrea's Ministry of Information even had the temerity to suggest that *Alsharq Al-Awsat* can and should provide impartial and nuanced reporting and analysis of news and events in the region instead of propagating false narratives. Coming from a government that is, as one Eritrean opposition website notes, "not fond of the media", and whose own reporting could never be described as impartial let alone accurate, this is a bit much. In 2001 while the world's attention was focused on 9/11, it closed down all Eritrea's free press and newspapers, and arrested their editors and the

reporters. They have never been charged, tried or convicted. Fifteen years later, the whereabouts of those arrested is still unknown. Indeed, it isn't even known if they are alive or dead.

In another display of his own role in foreign policy, President Isaias arrived in Abu Dhabi on Monday (January 2) to meet the United Arab Emirates Crown Prince, Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces. According to UAE news reports, the meeting "focused on ways of co-operating in political, economic and developmental spheres within the framework of the Emirati-Eritrean leaderships' commitment to advance bilateral ties to new heights." They also exchanged views on a variety of regional and international issues of mutual concern. The meeting was held at the Crown Prince's palace and was attended by Emirati officials, including the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, and Chairman of the Board of Zayed Higher Organization for Humanitarian Care and Special Needs, as well as other senior officials. There was no mention of any Eritrean officials attending the discussions or accompanying President Isaias.

### **... while Eritrea continues its questionable policies in the region**

The UN Monitoring Group's Report on Somalia and Eritrea which was released in November last year, disclosed consistent evidence of Eritrean support for armed groups operating in both Ethiopia and Djibouti as well as proof of Eritrean support for the anti-Djiboutian movement. It also noted the new strategic military relationship between Eritrea and Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates that it argued might involve providing military assistance to Eritrea that was banned under the UN arms embargo. We detailed the comments of the Monitoring Group in November 12 this past year: (<http://www.mfa.gov.et/web/guest/-/the-un-monitoring-group-concerned-at-eritrean-arms-embargo-violations>).

Even after the release of the UN Monitoring Group, reliable sources have provided evidence that the Government in Asmara has continued to intensify its destructive activities in destabilizing the region. Eritrean authorities have continued to provide financial and other forms of assistance to terrorist groups. Far from claims that it "reduced" support to al-Shabaab, there have been recent reports that Eritrea is scaling up its relationship with its long-time collaborator once again, becoming involved in maritime shipment of weapons. This, of course, is a violation of the latest UN Security Council arms embargo resolution 2317, adopted on November 10, 2016.

There is also evidence that Eritrea has launched an aggressive military expansion program over the last few weeks. Military intelligence sources indicate that Eritrea had expanded the training program at the Gedhem Training Base, approximately 13 Km south of the port of Massawa. The country's naval forces use the Gedhem Training Base. Other reports show that there are ongoing expansion activities at the new military and naval base at Assab Airport along with recent arrival of more armored fighting vehicles.

As the UN Monitoring Group underlined in November, Eritrea has also continued its consistent support for armed groups operating in Ethiopia. These include the newly "remodeled" Patriotic Ginbot 7, some of whose leaders have withdrawn to the US expressing concern over Eritrean control of the organization, leaving Dr Berhanu Negu as a sole surviving leader, approved by President Isaias. Three weeks after the Monitoring Group Report was released, an Eritrean-backed terrorist attack by Ginbot 7 was foiled in northern Ethiopia. Local men and women along with local security forces in northern Tigray Regional State intercepted a group of 113 attempting to infiltrate into Ethiopia. Fifteen of the group were killed in a shoot-out and 73 captured during the operation. It was a very clear indication that the Government in Asmara was not taking the reports of the UN Monitoring Group Report seriously, and that it was determined to continue its efforts to destabilize Ethiopia and disrupt development inside the country by supporting destructive elements.