

A Week in the Horn

8th June 2012

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No progress in the Sudan-South Sudan talks

Sudan and South Sudan broke off their security talks on Thursday this week [7th June] after failing to agree on the question of a demilitarized zone along the border or reach any understanding on security issues. The talks had opened on Monday, co-chaired by Sudan's Defence Minister, General Abdelrahim Mohamed Hussein, and his South Sudan counterpart, John Kong to discuss establishment of a joint border verification and monitoring mechanism and a border demilitarized zone. On Wednesday, South Sudan proposed setting up an extensive demilitarized zone. South Sudan's Foreign Minister Nhial Deng said the proposal called for both sides to withdraw all forces 10 kilometres from the border on both sides. This would enhance the possibility of avoiding any prospect of conflict. A Sudanese delegation spokesperson, Omer Dahab, dismissed the idea, noting that the proposed zone would include the Heglig oil field, which Sudan had recovered after South Sudanese forces had temporarily occupied the area in April. He said that this would constitute, "legally speaking, a threat to use force and it is not helping us to reach this negotiated settlement to which we aspire." Sudan's delegation declined a South Sudanese proposal on lifting the state of emergency on the border and restoring diplomatic representation. It said these issues were not related to the issue of security. The South Sudanese delegation acknowledged that there were difficulties facing the negotiation process but said it believed the Sudanese government was serious about trying to find a final settlement of the outstanding issues with South Sudan.

During the week, both sides continued to make allegations against each other. South Sudan's chief negotiator, Pagan Amum, accused Sudan of keeping some national intelligence and security forces in Abyei's oil fields and continued to accuse Khartoum of launching repeated air strikes on its territory, an accusation Sudan regularly denies. South Sudan also criticised Sudan for insisting on discussions on security before other issues, in defiance of the U.N. peace plan. Sudan officials denied making preconditions. Sudan accused South Sudan elements of trying to cause chaos in Abyei after the Sudan troops withdrew. A major point of contention between Sudan and South Sudan remains Khartoum's accusations that Juba is supporting the SPLM-N,

and Juba's charges that Khartoum is supporting insurgents south of the border. Both deny the other's claims. On Wednesday, the Governor of South Sudan's Western Bahr El Ghazal state claimed that Sudan was carrying out air and ground attacks in an attempt to derail the international efforts to find a peaceful settlement to the differences between the two countries. Brigadier General, Rizik Hassan Zachariah accused the Sudan government of continuing to illegally occupy some areas of South Sudan. He denied the presence of any elements of rebels from Darfur, South Kordofan or Blue Nile in his area. It was Khartoum and not Juba that used proxies to fight its wars, Zachariah said. It is not clear when the security talks will resume though despite the lack of progress both sides have renewed pledges to end hostilities.

The AU High-level Implementation Panel has now officially invited Sudan and South Sudan to convene a meeting of the Abyei Committee later this month to focus on the security of the Abyei Administration and formation of the Area Council, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the Abyei police force as well as other issues relating to the humanitarian situation, the return of IDPs and demarcation of the border in Abyei. The two parties have been given a three-month deadline by the United Nations Security Council and the African Union to conclude negotiations over citizenship, oil exports, demarcation of borders and the status of the Abyei region.

Meanwhile, an SPLM-N delegation also arrived in Addis Ababa last weekend. There was speculation that it might have come to talk to the Khartoum negotiating team, but SPML-N Secretary-General, Yasir Arman, firmly dismissed the possibility, insisting that the delegation, headed by SPLM-N Chairman, Malik Aggar, had come to discuss the humanitarian situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile provinces with officials from the United Nations, African Union and the Arab League, who earlier proposed a plan to secure aid delivery to rebel-controlled areas. The SPLM-N has accused the government in Khartoum of preventing foreign aid groups from delivering humanitarian aid to South Kordofan and Blue Nile where hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes since fighting broke out again last year. Sudan claims it has the humanitarian situation in these areas under control.

The Istanbul Conference communiqué outlines international aims and concerns

The Istanbul II Conference was held from 31st May to 1st June last week. Its theme was "Preparing Somalia's Future: Goals for 2015," and it was intended to provide a similar multi-dimensional and multi-layered approach to that of the first Istanbul conference in 2010 and the London conference in February this year. It was attended by high level representatives from fifty-seven countries and eleven international and regional organizations, as well as by the TFG leadership, Somalia regional administrations, and representatives from various segments of Somali society, including civil society, youth, women, the business community, elders, religious scholars and the Diaspora. Prior to Istanbul some concerns surfaced with the TFG criticizing some civil society invitees, and others complaining about those left out. Two Somali stakeholders, Puntland and Galmudug boycotted the meeting but overall reactions in Somalia identified the message of the conference as one of optimism, noting that the conference had taken note of the real needs of Somalia, addressing the critical issues of political development, the need to focus on rebuilding the Somali national security forces and justice system, on economic development and recovery, and local stability. A TFG official noted that "By addressing the economic issues and chronic impoverishment, the Somali people will have new opportunities for jobs - which could be alternatives to the violence - especially for the youth".

The Conference reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia and agreed on the importance of dialogue, reconciliation and political cooperation. It noted the progress in the last year towards achieving stability, security and reconciliation: "this opportunity should not be missed." It reiterated that the transitional period must come to an end in August 2012 in accordance with the Kampala Accord, the Roadmap, the Garowe I and II Principles and the Galkayo Agreement. It re-affirmed the commitment made by

the Signatories to the Roadmap in the Addis Ababa Communiqué, and called for timely implementation of these decisions and delivery of pledged funds. It commended the convening of the Traditional Elders in Mogadishu to select members of the Constituent Assembly and the new Parliament. It welcomed the intention of the Assembly to adopt the provisional constitution. It expressed firm expectation that the selection process of the leaner and more representative Federal Parliament would be completed in a fair and transparent way and the elections for Speaker (and Deputies), and President would be carried out smoothly by 20th August 2012.

Participants reiterated that no internal or external actors or groups would be allowed to disrupt the smooth implementation of the end of the Transition. They agreed to consider appropriate follow-up action against those judged to be blocking progress in the political process. They reiterated that respect for human rights must be at the heart of the peace process and emphasized that the new political dispensation must aim at re-establishing state and local institutions and administrative structures. There was a need to adjust international support to the political structures. They called on the UN to review the shape of its future engagement in Somalia.

The Conference agreed on the need to revitalize funding arrangements and took note of the proposal for the establishment of a new “Rebuilding and Restructuring Fund for the Somali Security Sector” initiated by Turkey. It recognized the need for the international community to support the re-establishment of a professional, inclusive, disciplined and well-equipped security apparatus, and emphasized the urgency to approve and implement the National Security and Stabilization Plan and the need to bring all Somali forces under a unified command. The Conference commended support for AMISOM and called on new donors to provide financial support. It reiterated its commitment to a re-invigorated Joint Security Committee and its technical working groups.

The Conference rejected all forms of terrorism, violations of human rights and violent extremism in Somalia and deplored recent attacks against journalists. It resolved to develop further a programme to support those who renounce violence. It reiterated that the problem of piracy required a comprehensive approach. It stressed that no power vacuum should be allowed to develop in recovered areas, and welcomed the establishment of the National Policy for Reconciliation and Stabilization, noting the need for continued political cooperation. The Stability Fund established at the London Conference would help to stabilize and secure emerging areas of stability.

The Conference recognized the continued humanitarian problems and called for immediate, unhindered access to all those in need. Following the outcomes of the working groups on the first Istanbul Conference on Somalia, participants took note of the discussion of the four Partnership Forums on 31st May, and stressed the urgent need for large-scale multi-year predictable financing. It recognized the importance of harnessing the skills and capacity of the private sector and the Somali diaspora. It agreed that offering conditional investment guarantees would provide a strong incentive for economic development. Participants agreed on the need for capacity building in the public and private sectors. They welcomed the on-going negotiations to establish the proposed Joint Financial Management Board. They welcomed the establishment of a multi-donor Trust Fund for post-Transition financing.

In conclusion, the Conference commended the UN, the African Union, the IGAD, the EAC, the EU, the OIC and League of Arab States, and other bilateral partners for their efforts to stabilize Somalia. It welcomed the relocation of UNPOS and encouraged other organizations and countries to increase their presence in Somalia.

Meanwhile, certain specific tasks agreed to by the signatories at the Consultative Meeting of the Somali Signatories for The Process for Ending the Transition on 23rd May are already falling

behind schedule. One of these was the setting up of the Arbitration Board of the Traditional Leaders. The Arbitration Board of 25 traditional elders is seen as a necessary mechanism to address disputes over who has the genuine right to represent some of the Somali clans in the selection of National Constituent Assembly members. The Board should have been set up 26th May. No official announcement of its membership has yet been made. Another benchmark that has yet to be completed is the appointment of members for the Technical Selection Committee (TSC). This is to be made up of 27 Somali members, two from UNPOS and 7 international community observers. The TSC is tasked with assisting “Traditional Leaders to ensure that the nominees of the National Constituent Assembly and the National Federal Parliament comply with the criteria set out in Garowe II”. The Somali signatories have yet to appoint their 27 members.

Concern has also been expressed over a World Bank report last week. This suggested the need for an investigation of Somalia’s government institutions following claims that the TFG could not account for most of the revenues and donations it had received in 2009 and 2010. The report said the auditors found that the TFG had collected “ at least US\$94 million in revenues” in 2009 but had “reported only US\$11 million”; and another “US\$70 million in 2010” but “reported just US\$22 million”. It said “not all revenues and donated funds were deposited in the central bank,” and it was not clear where they went. The former chief of Somalia’s public finance unit, Abdirizak Fartaag, had earlier published a report referring to strong evidence of mismanagement and misappropriation of funds. President Sheikh Sharif said his government welcomed the report but he also urged the international community to check whether donations had actually been given to the government. He noted that some donations had not been given directly. It was he said easy to make allegations but they should be clear and tangible. He added that the government also wanted to know where the money had gone.

Ethio-Djibouti Joint Border Commission meeting

The 18th Ethio-Djibouti Joint Border Administrators and Commissioners’ Committee meeting was held this week on 5th and 6th June in Dire Dawa. Ethiopia’s delegation was led by Ato Mulugeta Mekonnen, Director of Immigration and Nationality Affairs; Djibouti’s delegation was headed by Mr Dini Mohammed Bourhan, Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Djibouti. Ato Adam Farah, Deputy Mayor of the City of Dire Dawa, and guest of honour welcomed the Djiboutian delegation and wished them a pleasant stay in their “second home”, Dire Dawa. He underlined the close cooperation existing between the two countries in general and between the Border Commissioners and Administrators on both sides of the border. He also highlighted the shared interests of the two countries in regional peace and security and levels of consultation and cooperation that existed between them. Both delegations expressed their satisfaction over the level of relations existing between Ethiopia and Djibouti and hoped they would continue to operate in a spirit of brotherhood and mutual understanding.

The meeting discussed the activities of the Joint Border Sub-committees, the movement of peoples and goods, cross-border trade, and illegal migration as well as other issues. They noted that the Border Sub-committees met regularly to discuss problems and work out solutions to allow a free movement of people and goods along the border, as well as to contribute to continued social and cultural interactions between the two peoples. Pastoralist movements on both sides of the border were being carried out in a cordial and cooperative spirit. Both sides agreed to maintain the existing cooperation and reaffirmed their commitments to support and encourage the activities of the Border Sub-committees. As regards cross-border trade, the two sides agreed on the need to sign the draft Cross-Border Trade Protocol as soon as possible and expressed their commitment to finalize the draft so that it could be signed at the next meeting of the Border Commission. It was agreed this would be held in Ali Sabieh, in Djibouti.

There was agreement on the damage that illegal trade was causing to the economies of both countries. The delegates emphasized the need for a joint effort to resolve the problem. They discussed the specific mechanisms of control that should be established by the competent bodies to reduce the negative effect of illicit trade. They agreed on the need for an effective cross-border transport network between the two countries as a basis for enhancing their relationship. The Ethiopian side explained its five year road development plan, incorporated in the Growth and Transformation Plan, which gives details of the intended rail and road links between Ethiopia and Djibouti.

There was concern over the increasing phenomenon of human trafficking and the two sides discussed ways on how to address the problem. The Ethiopian side detailed the measures being taken by the Ethiopian government, including the establishment of a national committee, drawn from eleven ministerial offices and all nine regional states and the two city administrations. This has set up structures down to district level. Awareness training programmes are being given to a total of 195 registered agencies. Some traffickers have already been brought to justice and sentenced. The need for continued coordination between the two sides was underlined. Overall, both sides thoroughly evaluated the issue of security cooperation along the borders and welcomed the success of the existing close cooperation while underlining the need to further strengthen collaboration.

Eritrean Youth Conference in Washington DC

A two-day Eritrean Youths' Conference was held in Washington last week. The theme: "Eritrean Solutions to Eritrean Problems" attracted over 500 Eritreans from all parts of the US. They also held a public rally outside the Eritrean Embassy in Washington DC and had open and lively debates on what they described as "the pertinent issues that are a cause for concern to us and our people". In a message they addressed back to the ruling PFDJ in Asmara, the participants expressed their outrage at the plight of the Eritrean people under the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) unlawful and democratic rule, emphasizing that enough was indeed enough and that they were not going to sit aside and watch as the PFDJ destroyed the country.

In their concluding remarks, the conference noted that the situation of the Eritrean people "has reached an all-time low" with every aspect of Eritrean life being "marred by PFDJ's ugly influence" and that this was endangering the Eritrean people's very existence. They said people could not work to earn a living, that Eritrean parents were denied rights to the comfort of their children, and even religious leaders were denied the right to pray and worship the God of their ancestors. Eritrea's culture of peaceful and cooperative coexistence "is being trampled all over" and "people can't even express their views freely". Eritrean youths were "bearing the burden of the PFDJ's misguided policies, living under slave-like conditions where they are forced into a life of poverty and loss of opportunities including opportunities to family life". They noted the fact that those that are driven into exile are faced with hurdles that are unimaginably difficult from the hands of criminal gangs who are known for their kidnapping of people, their rape and torture, and for the charging of ransoms up to \$20,000 to \$30,000.

The conference expressed grave concern about the plight of "women whose modern day slavery is even worse than their male peers" as they often face "a life of sex slavery where they are abused by the rank and file of high ranking army officers". Another major concern was the situation of prisoners of conscience including journalists, religious leaders, and political leaders "who [had] called for reform and many more who are languishing in barbaric prisons with their fate and condition unknown even to their family members".

Participants recognized that the "lack of a coherent strategy" was a stumbling block to progress in the struggle against tyranny in Eritrea. Taking into consideration the immediate need to

install a democratic and just system in Eritrea, they agreed to coordinate their efforts in spirit and in action "targeting the PFDJ as the sole adversary against the Eritrean people". They agreed to be action-oriented, result-driven and united in their efforts. They agreed on the need to enhance the momentum of the global fight against "the dictator" and escalate it with immediate effect. They pledged to work "conscientiously and with relentless effort, to realize the salvation of the Eritrean people".

State Minister Ambassador Berhane's discussions with the press

The State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, met foreign journalists, publishers and editors of local newspapers for an informal working dinner this week. The discussions, focusing largely on issues of local and regional security are intended to be one of a series of meetings to foster a close working relationship between members of the press and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Among the topical issues raised by the media was the current relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea which Ambassador Berhane said has no significant change worth mentioning since the border war (1998-2000). Ethiopia remained firm on its position to negotiate with Eritrea at any place and at any time. It was consistent in its position of pursuing peaceful solutions to problems. He said Ethiopia's call for negotiations continued to fall on deaf ears with a regime busy picking wars with its neighbours. He did, however, caution that Ethiopia would take all legitimate measures to defend its rights. "If the Eritrean regime tries to create problems our preference is to refer the matter to the UN Security Council as we have been doing. Nevertheless, Ethiopia will not sit with arms folded if its sovereign territory is attacked. We will take proportional measures as we have legitimate right to do".

Another question concerned Turkey's initiatives in Somalia and how this differed from the efforts of IGAD and Ethiopia's on-going efforts to stabilize Somalia. Ambassador Berhane said Turkey's initiatives essentially were similar to IGAD's peace plan as shown in the Somali Roadmap. There was a unanimous consensus on what should be done to bring lasting peace to Somalia. Istanbul didn't produce any differences between East African countries and the International Community, not even over the issue of training Somali security forces. IGAD thinks that, as the security situation improves, training should be given within Somalia. Previously this was hardly possible. "Even if the training is given outside Somalia, this is not something IGAD would condemn. It's not a point of difference". He reiterated that Ethiopia would pull its forces out as soon as AMISOM troops take over the peacekeeping activities of the areas liberated from Al-Shabaab by Ethiopian forces, firmly pointing out that Ethiopia's entry into Somalia had no other objective than restoring peace and stability in Somalia.

"Ethiopia had no plan and will not have any plan to settle troops permanently in Somalia. Let there be no mistake on that. Ethiopia, however, will respond to any future call from AMISOM, the AU and Somali government whenever its support is sought as it did in the past".

Ambassador Berhane reflected at length on the Horn of Africa as a problematic and crisis-prone region. At the same time it was also a region of opportunities. These are evident in the growing relationship between IGAD member states. Infrastructural development was a key factor to regional integration as demonstrated by the positive effects of cross border developments including Ethiopia's efforts to sell power to Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya. It will improve as connections grow throughout the region. "We can already drive safely from Addis Ababa to Khartoum. We are planning to build rail links with Kenya and Djibouti". As for threats, these remain, he said. The major ones are the crises in Somalia and Sudan, the problem posed by Eritrea, and the fact that the region is the second biggest hub of terrorists next to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Ethiopia, he added, is committed to resist these evils. The belief that its security is intertwined with the region as a whole is the core of Ethiopia's foreign policy.

Incompetent comments on Ethiopia's Somalia policy

Dr Michael Weinstein of Purdue University in the US is a prolific commentator on Somali affairs, normally basing his comments almost exclusively on published documents and on the output of a variety of Somali and other websites. Some of these websites are, of course, excellent. Others, most certainly, are not and they offer highly partisan, often inaccurate, sometimes invented, information and comment. We have had reasons on previous occasions to note Dr Weinstein's lack of discrimination in his evaluation of these sources and his total failure to differentiate between those that are worth reading and those that are not. Dr Weinstein has never, we believe, been to Somalia or indeed to the Horn of Africa and this shows. It has not, however, prevented him from commenting extensively and frequently on the region and making detailed, if often nonsensical pronouncements on political affairs in Somalia and the region.

Most of the time this probably doesn't matter too much as it is hard to believe that his opinions are treated with anything other than disdain by those with some knowledge of the region. However, when Dr Weinstein writes a column, as he did on 1st June, entitled "Ethiopia's Analysis of Country's Political Situation - 'A Web of Obstruction'" it does require the necessity of a response.

Dr Weinstein writes "On 11th May, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a position paper, "Ethiopia's policy towards Somalia," which defines where Addis Ababa stands in the current conflicts in the territories of post-independence Somalia." He then goes on to try to analyse the Ethiopian Government's specific policies today in the light of this document.

The problem is that Dr Weinstein has taken this document from one of a number of Somali websites which did indeed publish it on 11th May this year. However, the document itself is an extract taken directly from Ethiopia's Foreign Policy and National Security Strategy, which has been available on Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs website ever since it was written – in 1995.

It is perhaps a testimony to the Ethiopian government's consistency of policy towards Somalia and more generally in the region, that Dr Weinstein can write that "[Ethiopia's] reading of the present political situation in Somalia... is straightforward and realistic. It should serve as a touchstone for any discussion of the political dynamics of Somalia today." However, Dr Weinstein then adds "the most telling feature of the Ethiopian document is its failure to mention anything about the roadmap process, which has been orchestrated by the Western "donor"-powers through the United Nations, and which is supposed to eventuate in a new constitutional government for Somalia by 20th August 2012. That process appears to be at the forefront of every other actor's mind; Ethiopia is alone in passing it by." That is hardly surprising as the document was of course written some sixteen or more years before the roadmap process was even thought of, let alone considered!

In the circumstances there is no need to make any further comment on Dr Weinstein's 'analysis' of the situation in Somalia or of Ethiopian policies. At the same time it is appropriate to make an additional point about much of the political and other comment on the Horn of Africa that emanates from a variety of sources in Europe and America. Dr Weinstein is certainly not alone in basing his comments on inaccurate and partial sources, nor in failing to evaluate his sources. It is all too common for commentators and various advocacy bodies to base their arguments, comments and claims on inaccurate information, on prejudiced and unacknowledged partisan sources. They frequently make arguments on the basis of pre-conceived ideas without bothering to look at or evaluate any available evidence to the contrary. This is a growing problem to which we have drawn attention before, though we have seldom seen such a blatant example.

It does, however, point up the importance of having a responsible press and media. It emphasizes the need to base comment, critical or otherwise, on an accurate factual basis. One can hardly over-estimate the importance of basing discussion on the situation as it is, not, as is so often the case on invented, partial, politicised and unsupported claims and allegations, made in support of a “good story”. It underlines the critical necessity of NGOs and other such organizations, including advocacy organizations, making genuine and serious efforts to investigate the accuracy of claims and the affiliation, and therefore the motives, of those making such claims, and to do this before they publish. The increasing use of ‘sound bites’ has meant the removal of qualifications from comments and indeed to simplify them to the point of Animal Farm’s “four legs good; two legs bad”. This is hardly a basis either for good journalism or for reasonable or accurate comment. Even more to the point, it is highly unsatisfactory as the premise for suggested policy decisions as some advocacy organizations so frequently like to suggest. One would hope some of those who comment so freely and inaccurately on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa might take this example of incompetence, ineptitude and, to be quite frank, stupidity, to heart.

News and Views:

Kenyan forces in Somalia are now part of AMISOM

The Kenyan troops in Somalia officially joined AMISOM on Saturday [2nd June]. Kenya's Minister of State for Defence, Yusuf Haji, signed the agreement at African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Minister said this concluded "the process of establishing a formal, legal framework for the integration of the Kenyan defence forces into AMISOM." The agreement came three days after Kenyan and TFG forces took control of Afmadow, and Mr Haji said that AMISOM forces were now "not very far from Kismayo, but we can't say when we are taking over." He noted that Al-Shabaab had been diminished and their command structure has been destroyed on the ground. The AU Peace and Security Commissioner, Ramtane Lamamra, welcomed the official integration. "We are really opening a new chapter -- a chapter that will take us closer to completing the mission in Somalia," he said. Commissioner Lamamra added that AMISOM still faced a number of logistical challenges. He urged the U.N. to maintain its support for the mission now that AMISOM was expanding and "covering the entire territory." In February, the UN Security Council authorized an increase for AMISOM to 17,700 troops from the previous ceiling of 12,000. This allowed for the Kenyan forces in Somalia to join AMISOM as well as for contingents from Djibouti and Sierra Leone to join the Ugandan and Burundi forces which previously made up AMISOM.

US's multi-million dollar bounties on Al-Shabaab leaders

The US has announced bounties of up to US\$7 million for information on the whereabouts of seven key leaders of Somalia's Al-Shabaab. The U.S. government in 2008 added Al-Shabaab to its list of foreign terrorist organizations, imposing financial and other restrictions on the group. Now it appears the US will, for the first time, set a specific price on the heads of Al-Shabaab leaders. The highest amount is the bounty of up to US\$7 million for information on the whereabouts of Ahmed Abdi aw-Mohamed ('Godane'), current leader and overall commander of the organization. Bounties of up to \$5 million are offered for information on Ibrahim Haji Jama ('al-Afghani'), group financier Fuad Mohamed Khalaf, military commander Bashir Mohamed Mahamoud, and Mukhtar Robow. Bounties of up to \$3 million are available for information on the whereabouts of Al-Shabaab's intelligence chief, Zakariya Ismail Ahmed Hersi and Abdullahi Yare, another senior figure. Counter-terrorism analysts said the new bounties will increase pressure on Al-Shabaab as it faces a three-pronged offensive, from the TFG and pro-government forces, and Kenya's AMISOM forces in the south, Ethiopian forces in central Somalia, and from the main AMISOM forces moving out of Mogadishu. It also signalled the determination of the United States to press the fight against terrorism across Africa.

Another presidential candidate announces his candidacy in Somalia

Another contender has declared himself a candidate for August's presidential election in Somalia. This is Dr Abdirahman Abdullahi 'Badiyow', a former military officer, a civil society activist, and a leading member of Al-Islah Al-Islamiyya. Dr Abdirahman Abdullahi, like President Sheikh Sharif, is from the Abgal/Hawiye clan but from the Waesle sub-clan of the Abgal. President Sheikh Sharif is from the Harti sub-clan of the Abgal. In his declaration, Dr Abdurahman Abdullahi said he wanted to rescue Somalia from its "miserable situation". The greatest need at this juncture was to provide a more reliable leadership to allow the country to tackle the challenges in governance, peace-building and the provision of basic services for all. "My vision for Somalia is the restoration of a well governed nation that is cohesive, secure and at peace with itself and with its neighbours."

The Council of Ministers agrees the budget for 2005EC (2013-14)

The Council of Ministers this week agreed to the Federal Government budget for the 2005 Ethiopian fiscal year (2012-2013). At 137.8 billion birr it is 20 billion birr more than last year's Federal Government budget. The budget covers the capital and recurrent expenditure of the Federal Government and also provides the subsidies for the Regional States according to a formula put in place by the House of Federation. 26.8 billion Birr is set aside for the regular budgetary expenditure; and 54.5 billion Birr is allocated for capital expenditure. The subsidy for the Regional States amounts to 36.6 billion Birr and a further 20 billion Birr is earmarked for activities in support of the Millennium Development Goals. The budget now goes to the House of People's Representatives for endorsement. Earlier this week, the Central Statistical Office announced that the inflation rate had fallen for the third successive month, coming down to 25.5 per cent from 29.8 per cent in April. The decrease was largely attributed to a drop in food prices while non-food inflation remained unchanged. Month-on-month prices also fell to 0.9 per cent from 2.1 per cent in April.

Dutch Minister's visit to Puntland

A Dutch delegation led by the International Cooperation and European Affairs Minister, Ben Knapen, visited Garowe, the capital of Puntland, on Wednesday this week [6th June]. The Minister met with Puntland's Vice President, Abdisamad Ali Shire, the Minister of Ports and Counter Piracy, Saeed Mohamed Ragge, and other Puntland officials. The Dutch delegation, which also included Major General Leo Beulen and the director of operations of the Dutch Ministry of Defence, held discussions on the political and security situation in Puntland. Mr Knapen said more needed to be done to combat piracy, and suggested that "prosecution and detention of pirates should be done locally after the rule of law is strengthened". He promised that his government would continue to support international efforts to fight piracy.