

A Week in the Horn of Africa

9th November 2012

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The UN Security Council authorizes AMISOM for another four months

On Wednesday (7th November) the United Nations Security Council reauthorized the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) for another four months, until 7th March 2013. It also decided to expand the United Nations support package for the Mission. The Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2073 (2012), authorizing AMISOM to maintain its presence in the areas set out in its strategic concept of January to counter the threat still posed by Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups, in order to establish secure conditions for legitimate governance, reconciliation and the provision of humanitarian assistance in Somalia.

The meeting came a week after the Council had met under "unusual circumstances" in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy when the Council had authorized a short-term, seven day, extension of AMISOM, prior to this week's meeting.

With resolution 2073, the Council also added fifty civilian personnel to the logistical support package for AMISOM, "on an exceptional basis and owing to the unique character of the mission". It underlined the importance of swiftly deploying them into areas recently liberated from Al-Shabaab following a request from the African Union. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide support to a total of 17,731 uniformed personnel until the end of the authorization period, and to provide advice to the African Union on implementation of the Mission's strategic concept. In his most recent report on AMISOM, the Secretary-General had recommended a four-month continuation of the current support package in anticipation of the results of a thorough assessment of the Mission to be conducted by the African Union working together with the United Nations.

After the vote, the Permanent Representative of United Kingdom which sponsored the resolution, commended AMISOM and its troop contributing countries for their role in helping to "free Somalis from the dark shadow of Al-Shabaab," and restoring faith in governmental structures. He said the Security Council must re-examine some of its positions, including those on the arms embargo and the charcoal embargo in Kismayo, in consultation with the Somali Government and other partners, to give the Government the space to make progress on key

priorities. The forthcoming review of AMISOM would allow the Council to set clear divisions of responsibility and adjust support for the Mission.

Some of the other members of the Council while commending AMISOM and its troop contributing countries, regretted that a more sustained extension of the support package had not been included in the text or that the resolution did not include support for a maritime component for AMISOM as requested by the African Union. This they thought was important for countering Al-Shabaab and piracy off the coast. South Africa's Representative, in addition, regretted that the lifting of the arms embargo was not addressed as this affected Somali national security forces.

The representative of Somalia gave the Council details of the country's progress in governance in recent months, including the appointment of an inclusive cabinet which included a woman as Foreign Minister. All this had, he said, been achieved with the unfailing support of AMISOM and the Ethiopian forces, supported by the Security Council and the international community. He welcomed the strengthening of AMISOM and additional support but, he added, he had hoped the authorization and support would have been approved for one year, to better support the Government's efforts.

Security Council members in fact failed to agree on several issues in addition to the issue of support for maritime operations. These included the question of Somalia's request for a partial lifting of the arms embargo in order to obtain arms for its security forces, and whether or not sales of the massive stocks of charcoal stockpiled in Kismayo should now be allowed. The future of this charcoal is now a matter of discussion between political and business leaders in Kismayo and the government in Mogadishu.

Meanwhile, on Sunday (4th November) Somali Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon named his choice of cabinet ministers. These included the appointment of Fowsiyo Sheikh Adan (Dir/Issaq) as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. This is the first time a woman has been appointed foreign affairs minister in Somalia. Another woman, Maryam Qassim (Minority/Barwani) has been appointed as Minister of Social Services Development. The ten member cabinet, which has yet to be approved by the Parliament, is the smallest in Somali history, and President Hassan Sh. Mohamoud said that many clans might not see themselves represented but no one should be offended by this. In fact the four main clan groups each have two representatives as do the small minority clans.

The other appointments are: Abdullahi Abyan Nur (Dir/Bimaal), Minister of Justice, Endowments and Religious Affairs; Abdihakim Haji Mohamud Fiqi (Rahenweyne/ Dabare), Minister of Defence; Abdikarim Hussein Guled (Hawiye/Habr Gidir), Minister of Interior and National Security; Mahamud Hassan Saleebaan (Darod/Majerteen), Minister of Finance and Planning; Abdullahi Ilmooge Hirsi (Darod/Ogaden), Minister of Information and Telecommunication; Abdirasaq Omar Mohamed (Hawiye/Hawadle), Minister of Natural Resources; Muhiyadin Mohamed Kalmoy (Minority/Jareer), Minister of Public Works and Reconstruction; Mohamud Ahmed Hassan (Rahenweyne/Hadame), Ministry of trade and Industry.

Qatar's Prime Minister visits Ethiopia

A high-level delegation led by Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar arrived in Addis Ababa for a two-day visit to Ethiopia on Sunday (4th November). They were greeted upon arrival by Prime Minister Hailemariam and that evening the Prime Minister hosted a dinner at the National Palace in honour of Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim

bin Jabor Al-Thani and the members of the delegation. A number of ministers, senior government officials and Arab ambassadors accredited to Ethiopia attended.

On Monday, the delegation held discussions with the Ethiopian Prime Minister, ministers and other high ranking officials at the National Palace. In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim thanked the Ethiopian government for its warm reception of the delegation and affirmed Qatar's readiness to strengthen bilateral ties. Prime Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim said Qatar was interested to work with Ethiopia in agriculture, tourism and in other sectors. He noted that the Emir of Qatar was particularly keen to see Qatar investments in Ethiopia.

Prime Minister Hailemariam praised Qatar's speedy decision to restore relations following talks with the late Prime Minister Meles in February on the sidelines of the London Conference on Somalia. He expressed his strong belief that the meeting and the signing of the agreements will play a pivotal role in solidifying relations. The Prime Minister briefed the Qatari delegation on various issues including the progress of the Growth and Transformation Plan. He pointed out that the investment sectors under consideration by Qatari business were sectors with specific targets under the Plan and emphasized that Qatari investments were vital to the full realization of the Plan. He stressed that Ethiopia aimed to attain middle income status by 2020. He pointed out that the country's development over the previous eight years proved that it was on the right track, but he also underlined the importance of the substantial investment needed to attain middle income status and eradicate poverty. The government was, he pointed out, working with a sense of urgency. He added that Qatar's impressive financial capacity and Ethiopia's substantial human and natural resources could serve as the basis for a win-win partnership. He encouraged Qatari businesses to invest in railway development and hydro power projects and commended a package approach as the best way to finance investment projects.

The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of holding consultations on peace and security matters. He commended Qatar's mediation efforts in the region, mentioning in particular its efforts to bring about peace between Eritrea and Djibouti and the negotiations between Darfur rebel forces and the Government of the Republic of Sudan as notable examples. Qatar's Prime Minister said that Qatar's strong stance in working to maintain peace came from its belief that peace was a necessary element for development around the world. Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim praised the development efforts of Ethiopia as "a model for the region", and he reiterated Qatar's keenness to assist Ethiopia's development through mutually beneficial investments.

Following speeches by the two Prime Ministers, Ethiopia's Minister of Finance, Sofian Ahmed, briefed the delegations on other one-on-one meetings of ministers. He said the discussions on labour, agricultural investment, tourism, mining and avoidance of double taxation were fruitful. The two sides agreed on a draft Labour Agreement, to finalize negotiations as soon as possible and table it for signing shortly. They had also agreed to conclude negotiations on agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection before the end of the year, and to continue consultations between the two Finance Ministers on these issues. The Qatari delegation has expressed interest in increasing the number of flights between Ethiopia and Qatar from 2 to 14 flights a week. Ethiopia agreed that the relevant aviation offices should discuss the matter and reach a conclusion before the first week of the December.

Qatar expressed interest in exploring investments in the mining, agriculture, tourism and real estate sectors. The Ethiopian side pledged to offer investment incentives and afford protection to Qatari investors in accordance with settled standards of international investment law. Both sides agreed to facilitate the import and export of agricultural and industrial products between the two countries.

The Ethiopian side invited Qatar's private sector to engage in agricultural investment in some of Ethiopia's extensive unused arable lands. There were significant opportunities for investment for Qatari funds in sugar, coffee, and horticulture, as well as in meat and livestock exports. The delegation tasked the Ministry of Agriculture with the responsibility of providing all relevant information on the laws and policies of Ethiopia for agricultural investment to Qatar's major agricultural company "Hassad Food" within the next three months.

The Qatar delegation expressed an interest in building a perishable goods hub at Bole Airport and the establishment of modern abattoirs across the country. Members also noted a desire to introduce Qatar's rich experience in Pakistan rice production to Ethiopia, and promised to send a technical team to look into the possibilities shortly. With regard to private sector cooperation, the Qatari Chamber of Commerce produced a draft agreement that was by and large accepted positively by its Ethiopian counterpart. The two chambers agreed to consider the issue further.

Overall, Ethiopia and Qatar signed several agreements to restore cooperation in a number of different areas. One agreement covered the Establishment of a Joint Ministerial Commission, suggested by Qatar after the meeting of the finance ministers. Another was a Memorandum of Understanding between the two Ministries of Foreign Affairs to conduct regular bilateral consultations; and the two sides also signed an Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation. Before departing, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim took the opportunity to invite Prime Minister Hailemariam to visit Qatar in the near future.

Egypt and Sudan's decision to resume participation in ENTRO welcomed

The Eastern Nile Technical Regional Office (ENTRO), one of the three centres of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), has been facing problems after the decision by Egypt and by the Republic of Sudan to suspend their participation in the Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Programme (ENSAP). This followed the signing, on 14th May 2010, of the Cooperative Framework Agreement by five upper riparian countries of the Nile Basin. Since then there have been a series of consultation meetings held among the Eastern Nile countries, that is Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, to discuss renewed participation by Egypt and Sudan in the regular governance activities of ENTRO, and to deliberate on ways and mechanisms to strengthen further cooperation over the implementation of ENTRO programmes and projects. The 20th Nile-Council of Ministers (Nile-COM) meeting held in Kigali in July called upon ENTRO to address these issues and on Egypt and Sudan to resume their cooperation and participation in ENTRO activities and processes, for the mutual interest of the peoples of the region.

Following the call of the Nile-COM meeting, the Eastern Nile Council of Ministers (ENCOM), currently chaired by Ethiopia, invited the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Sudan as well as the Republic of South Sudan to an ENTRO meeting to discuss these issues and come up with a solution. The meeting took place in Addis Ababa on Monday and Tuesday this week (5th to 6th November) with the ENSAP countries attending. The Eastern Nile Council of Ministers (ENCOM) meeting was preceded by an ENSAP Team meeting the previous day.

At the end of the EN-COM discussions, Egypt and the Republic of the Sudan agreed to resume full participation in the activities and processes of ENTRO. This means ENTRO will once again be able to run its regular operations smoothly and efficiently. The three Eastern Nile countries also agreed to establish a future permanent cooperative mechanism in the Eastern Nile Sub-basin. This will come into existence when ENTRO as a transitional arrangement within the NBI comes to an end; it will allow for continuity and continuation of all the gains that have been made on the ground in Eastern Nile Sub-basin and for continuing cooperation. The ministers also agreed to

launch the necessary studies and consultations between the three countries to design the envisaged future Permanent Cooperative Mechanism.

The EN-COM also agreed to consider membership of the Republic of South Sudan in ENSAP/ENTRO; the Republic of South Sudan, which attended the consultation meeting of the EN-COM as an observer, is already a member of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI). This very successful EN-COM consultation meeting had important and positive results that will enable the Eastern Nile Sub-basin countries to further cement their general cooperation. It will enable ENTRO to run its operations smoothly and efficiently in future and encourage the possibility of bringing pending grant agreements with partners to a successful conclusion.

US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs in Addis Ababa

Ambassador Wendy R. Sherman, US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, paid a day-long visit to Ethiopia on Wednesday 7th November, as part of a visit to various African countries including Uganda, Somalia and Kenya over the previous few days. During her stay in Addis Ababa, Ambassador Sherman met and held discussions with Prime Minister Hailemariam, Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ato Bereket Simon, Minister of Government Communications Affairs.

Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed the American delegation led by Ambassador Wendy Sherman, and congratulated her on the successful US presidential election. Ambassador Sherman, who said it was the first time she had been abroad on Election Day, took the opportunity to express her deepest condolences on the untimely death of the late Prime Minister Meles. She said the US considered Ethiopia to have a mature democracy and a long history of statehood and the country's smooth transition of power had been no surprise. She noted that Ethio-US relations were close and getting deeper in all facets of their bilateral relationship.

Prime Minister Hailemariam thanked Ambassador Sherman for her remarks and for the response of the people and government of the United States to the death of the late Prime Minister and for the thoughtful speech delivered by Ambassador Rice at the funeral ceremony. The democratic system and constitutional setup now in place had produced a peaceful, legal and stable transition. He pointed out that Ethiopia's democracy was only twenty years old but in that period it had had four very different elections. Democracy and democratic thinking had to be embedded in a culture. He stressed that **opposition parties should sign the Code of Conduct for Political Parties, as an indication that they had renounced violence. They should give in to the peaceful democratic culture.** This culture was a process and it was one on the right track. Ethiopia, he said, could not function without democracy as it was a multi-ethnic, multi-religious society with a huge proportion of young people whose needs and aspirations were of critical importance. The Prime Minister said many foreign observers often missed the fact that the country was now successfully addressing two major issues. One was the past of ethnic oppression when peoples' rights as a group were not respected, resulting in inequality and injustice. The second was the question of freedom of religion and the necessity of having a secular government. The Prime Minister noted that despite the positive steps taken by the government to address the grievances of the past, there were still extremists from ethnic groups who had fled the country and opted for a violent solution. This, however, had no place in the current Ethiopian reality. Any deficiencies that needed to be addressed could be discussed within the country's constitutional framework. The government was prepared for a peaceful dialogue; it would like all to put down their arms and talk.

Ambassador Sherman said that she was impressed by the inclusive nature of democracy in Ethiopia. She thought Ethiopia had done an incredible job in improving its economy and she appreciated the growth of Ethio-US commercial ties, mentioning the upcoming US-Ethiopia

Agribusiness meeting organized by the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) in Addis Ababa and a recent GE US\$100 million deal for railway signalling equipment.

On bilateral matters the discussion focused on the strengthening of cooperation in the areas of peace and security, democracy and good governance and the promotion of economic growth and development. Regional discussions covered developments in Somalia, progress on Sudan and South Sudan negotiations and Eritrea. Prime Minister Hailemariam said there seemed to be real hope for Somalia now. The approach now being taken to solve the Somali problem, through a Somali-led process supported by IGAD and neighbouring countries and then by Africa and the rest of the world, was working. On Sudan and South Sudan, Prime Minister Hailemariam said the agreement on oil was going smoothly, and the border trade and security arrangements could also be said to be moving in the right direction. The toughest issue still on the table was Abyei and the Prime Minister said the international community must encourage the two sides to find a lasting solution. On Eritrea, the Prime Minister noted that the regime in Asmara was arming all its civilians, and that recently there had been a high number of refugees crossing the border, most of them soldiers. He said that Eritrea was currently attempting to reach out to the international community in a bid to get support to lift the sanctions on Eritrea, but this was only to try to find a solution to the problems of the regime and did not indicate any change in its behaviour.

Ambassador Sherman also held talks with Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, on bilateral issues and ways to strengthen bilateral ties in areas of mutual interest. They exchanged views on various political issues including religious extremism and covered regional matters with an emphasis on Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea. Ambassador Berhane also briefed the Under Secretary on the progress and performance of the five-year Growth and Transformation Plan.

During her earlier visit to Mogadishu, Ambassador Sherman had welcomed the appointment of the new Somali cabinet by Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon, and said the United States was pleased to see that the new cabinet included two women. This was a positive reflection of the important role women played in all aspects of Somali life, she said. Ambassador Sherman stressed her conviction that Somalia was now a place of hope, not of despair. She affirmed the centrality of the Somali government and people in guiding international support to the country and urged the Somali leadership to continue to consolidate gains by helping local governance structures emerge from community dialogue and reconciliation. She also encouraged Somalia's civil society and business community to engage with emerging governmental institutions. She praised the "extraordinary" work of Somalia's new parliament to rebuild the country under difficult circumstances. During her visit to Mogadishu she met with President Hassan Sheikh Mahamud, the Speaker of the Federal Parliament, Mohammed Osman Jawari, with the AMISOM Force Commander, Lieutenant-General Andrew Gutti, and leaders of Somalia's civil society and business community.

The African Union's High-Level Retreat in Cairo

The Commission of the African Union convened its annual High-Level Retreat of Mediators and other Peacemakers in Cairo on Monday and Tuesday this week (5th and 6th November) under the theme: "Transforming the African Peace and Security Landscape in the Next Decade: Appraisal and Opportunities". The objective of the retreat was an exchange of views on current developments and emerging challenges, threats to peace and security on the continent, and the fostering of coordination and harmonization of initiatives for promoting lasting peace on the continent. The idea of the Retreat was launched in September 2010, as part of the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, and it is the largest gathering of Mediators and other Peacemakers working on African issues. It brought together the Chairperson of the Commission, the AU

Commissioners for Peace and Security, and for Political Affairs, Senior Officials and Mediators from the Regional Economic Communities, the European Union, the League of Arab States, 'La Francophonie', and the United Nations as well as special guests from member states and bilateral partners, and academics, experts and civil society representatives.

The Chairperson of the Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, said in her keynote address that the Retreat coincided with the 10th anniversary of the African Union and it offered an opportunity to collectively review the AU's "achievements in the area of peace and security during this period, and to reflect upon the lessons and challenges." In this regard, she said, the work of the OAU and the ten years of the AU had demonstrated the collective concerns of the continent for peace and stability by addressing seemingly intractable conflicts on the African continent. She noted that the OAU/AU had taken action, including "mediating among conflicting parties, deploying peacekeeping missions and other related tasks, even before establishing the peace and security architecture." In fact, the African Union, in the past decade, has evolved a framework for lasting and sustainable peace and prosperity for the continent. As a result, the AU Peace and Security Council is increasingly working more effectively and has become an indispensable link to the UN Security Council.

With reference to the current security situation of the continent, Dr Dlamini Zuma said that the Retreat was taking place against the background of a mixed peace and security landscape in Africa and the world. "We have made progress," she said, "as demonstrated by recent developments in Somalia and between Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the continued consolidation of peace in countries that have emerged from conflict". However, she went on "at the same time, we are faced with worrying negative developments in Mali and the Sahel, eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea Bissau, Darfur, and other areas." She underlined the need to address conflicts expeditiously because, she pointed out, conflicts delay development. It was also important to implement an inclusive developmental agenda, because the absence of development could lead to conflict.

The Founders of the Union had fulfilled their mission to rid Africa of colonialism and apartheid, so the mission of this generation, Dr Dlamini Zuma said, was to ensure the building of an integrated, peaceful and prosperous Africa driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena. The key to this mission was the development of the continent allowing it "to use its natural resources for the benefits of our people and countries; to invest in education, health, science and innovation; to diversify economies and industrialize; to strengthen intra-Africa trade and economic integration; to build continental, regional and country infrastructures and to expand agricultural production and food security." In conclusion, the Chairperson called for the United Nations to enhance its engagement in supporting Africa's continental efforts for collective peace and security to enable it to contribute significantly to the provision of speedy and lasting solutions and help address the underlying causes of conflicts.

The two day conference focused on such areas as conflict, terrorism, mediation, and the role of civil society in promoting peace and security, and among the main areas discussed were the situations in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Great Lakes region, Somalia, Guinea Bissau and Western Sahara, as well as the relations between the Republic of the Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan, the efforts to eliminate the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the overall fight against terrorism.

The 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies

As we noted last week, the 18th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies took place at Dire Dawa University. Hundreds of scholars from Ethiopia and around the world participated in the five day conference, the largest and most important triennial meeting of Ethiopianists, held

alternately in Ethiopia and in another country with significant Ethiopian scholarly interest. As we noted last week the Conference was opened by Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was the first time that the conference had been held in an Ethiopian town outside Addis Ababa, and it was appropriate that the overall theme of the Conference was therefore “Movements in Ethiopia/Ethiopia in Movement”.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Berhane expressed the fervent hope that the research and presentations of the Conference would mix theory with practicality, and so ensure the Conference, and others in the future, would have a direct impact on the political, socio-economic, cultural and artistic environment in Ethiopia. In fact, as usual, the Conference with its 41 panels and over three hundred papers selected for presentation did exactly that. Indeed, as always it took stock of current and on-going developments in Ethiopia, considering long-term historical dynamics as well as the social, economic and cultural factors that contribute to the making of current Ethiopian identity and diversity. The conference was notable for the breadth of its discussions and the openness with which all and every topic received serious consideration, with nothing ruled out.

One group of panels and papers covered paleographic research, archaeology and pre-history. The details of recent archaeological discoveries included evidence that livestock herding appeared in the Horn of Africa a millennium earlier than previously thought. The latest results of the on-going excavations at Yeha, and details of the pre-Axumite polity of Di'amat (D'm't) were presented, and there was reassessment of the physical and linguistic contacts between South Arabia and the Tigrean highlands in the first millennium BC. Other papers covered the relationship of Christians, Muslims, Jews and Pagans in the medieval period, and a panel on Manuscript studies produced fourteen papers.

A second group of history panels included a specific panel to consider the 16th century, identifying it as either a century of disasters or a period of transition. In either case, the major question was how the Medieval Empire of the early 16th century was transformed into the Gondar Empire of the 17th century. Relations between the Ottoman World and Ethiopia were considered as was the related topic of Egypt's relations with Ethiopia, including consideration of Ethiopians studying in Cairo or serving in Egyptian armies in the 10th-12th centuries. A paper presented the travel writings of Heruy Walda Selassie early in the last century when he visited Egypt as well as the Holy Land, Europe and Japan. A panel looked at Slavery in the Horn of Africa and another at Popular Movements in Ethiopia: From Messianic to Revolutionary movements. Among other areas, this covered the civil wars of the 17th century, the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s and its legacy, the programme of the National Democratic revolution of April 1976, and rural protests in NE Shoa and S. Wollo among Muslim Oromo and Argobba communities prior to 1974.

There was a specific panel on the history of cartography of Ethiopia showing some fascinating historical examples of early maps. Eleven papers were produced for the panel on moving boundaries which considered the dynamics of the frontiers with Eritrea and Somalia, including the issue of Ethiopia's access to the sea as well as relations with Somalia.

A third set of panels considered religious issues, including scholarly trends in Islam in Ethiopia ('Ulamas on the move'); Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, the place of the Beta Israel and the issues of conversion and proselytization, and gender and religion. There were details of the careers of several important Sheikhs, including Sheikh Junaid Bulbula of Bale, Sheikh Muhammed Jaju, and Sheikh Jemil Al Din Muhammad Al-Anni of Raya. Movements of transformation and change in the contemporary Tewahdo Church were also considered.

Anthropology panels covered cultural anthropology, stressing the changes in relationships between different nationalities and groups; community activities involving climate change, adaptation, land use and other activities; women on the move and cultural changes in southern Ethiopia; oral traditions; Diaspora communities including groups of other peoples inside Ethiopia and Ethiopians abroad; food and society; the effect and role of wadis and rivers in various areas of the country, including the Nile and the dynamics of regional political centres. One panel was devoted to the idea of attempting to rethink the ethnography and anthropology of Ethiopia and encourage links with wider social science developments in Europe and the US.

The fifth series of panels covered cities, the rebuilding of urban areas, consideration of waste disposal; the perspectives of young people; land tenure and development in northern Ethiopia; rural communities; labour relations; and on gender equality which covered the reality of the progress in the emancipation of women and the issue of the equality of women. A panel on Food security: Change and Continuity, included papers on teff and its history and on the politics of historic feasts. Another panel looked at centre-peripheral relations and dealt with issues of agri-business development, dry ports and the perceptions of political space in terms of the centre and the periphery, as well as the relationship of the central government to the Ogaden as seen in two biographies of Ras Mekonnen.

Another set of panels considered various aspects of linguistics and language and also socio-linguistics; and the final group covered artistic and literary movements, the presentation of Ethiopia's heritage and music and included a paper on the Arfan Qallo Oromo literature and musical movement which started in the 1950s in Dire Dawa.

One particularly interesting panel was Ethiopian Federalism: Twenty Years After. It included a number of interesting papers on the impact of the democratic developmental state on federal development; the 'experiment in accommodating diversity'; the constitutional accommodation of ethnic pluralism; local identity, negotiation and national structure; and 'Centralized Decentralization, the Balance between Woreda (district) and Kilil (regional state) in the Federal Developmental State'.

Discussions throughout the Conference were lively and interesting, and mostly, if not always, based on sound empirical and actual fact-based study. As always, the conference provided a most valuable meeting of minds and of exchanges of value among participating scholars of all areas of expertise. It also offered a highly stimulating environment to younger scholars and those just beginning a scholastic career in Ethiopian studies, as well as affording a significant number of suggestions for development in various areas. The Conference, in fact, continued to keep its reputation as a practical as well as a theoretical occasion.

It has been agreed that the next, the nineteenth, International Conference of Ethiopian Studies will be held in Warsaw, Poland, in 2014/15, and Makelle University has offered to hold the twentieth conference in 2018.

A Comment on Amnesty International and Muslim 'protests'

Last weekend (3rd November), Amnesty International issued another of its 'demands' for what it called an "Independent Investigation Into Rights Violations by the Ethiopian Government", claiming that the Ethiopian authorities were committing human rights violations in response to an on-going Muslim protest movement in the country, and that the Government continued to target a "peaceful Muslim protest movement". Amnesty allegations included: large numbers of protestors arrested, many of whom remained in detention; numerous reports of police using excessive force against peaceful demonstrators; key figures charged with terrorism; most targeted solely because of participation in a peaceful protest movement.

The problem with these sorts of claims is twofold. It is hardly surprising that these allegations have been made – as Amnesty International itself makes clear the sources for all these comments are the protestors themselves. At the outset Amnesty International does use, quite correctly, the word ‘allegation’, but then all-too-rapidly, often within a few lines, the claims and allegations have suddenly become firm, definitive “widespread violations”: “The response of the Ethiopian government to the protest movement has involved widespread violations of human rights. There has been almost no effort on the part of the authorities to engage with the protestors on their grievances or to put in place mechanisms for dialogue”.

The last point, as anyone who has been following the problem knows, is absolutely untrue. The government, while making it very clear, as the Constitution insists, that it has no place in internal religious issues, has made a number of efforts to encourage engagement with the protestors and has, for example, also done all it can to support the matter of elections for the Islamic Council.

It is true that some members of a ‘protestors committee’ have been arrested following violent protests, but it is completely misleading to suggest that this ‘committee’ had been “chosen to represent the Muslim community’s grievances to the government”. This ‘committee’ was not chosen nor elected by anyone. It was made up of some of the same small group of protestors who have been orchestrating and organizing the protests, and whose main activity appears to have been to make contact with Amnesty International and other organizations. It was, in sum, a small, self-appointed committee of protestors **whose support in the community at large, as the recent election clearly demonstrated, was minimal**. This indeed would appear to be why it turned to international advocacy organizations with a reputation for responding to the smallest incidents without bothering to question the political affiliations of the source, to check the origin of the allegations or to investigate their accuracy.

In this case, Amnesty International’s approach has been on the usual circular basis so often employed by advocacy organizations and by those with a political agenda. An allegation is made; the advocacy organization accepts the allegation simply because it is made by an anti-government group which, by definition, is considered, without investigation, to be reputable; the government responds; the government’s refutation is unacceptable, simply because it comes from the government which by definition cannot be trusted.....

In fact, these claims and allegations nearly always come from elements which are politically involved and have an agenda – in this case a political agenda wrapped up in a religious blanket. The fact of the matter, as the Muslim Community as a whole knows and accepts, is that the Government has made no effort to interfere in the matter of doctrine. It has done nothing to encourage, support, impose or advocate the teachings of the Al Ahbash sect of Islam on the Muslim community. Nor has it made any effort to interfere in the elections for the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs apart from a number of efforts to encourage the Council to hold the elections which have certainly been long-overdue. That has been its only involvement. The choice of candidates for the election took place at public meetings of the local Muslim communities as did the actual election where all stages of the vote and counting were held in public. Government involvement of any kind was not possible. Equally, of course, it is true that this sort of public voting did militate against the possibility that a small number of dissidents could influence the voting, and indeed that is largely what happened.

The elections were held in eligible Muslim communities across the country with members first casting votes to choose their representatives in their respective communities. A week before the vote, there were local community meetings in which participants nominated and openly voted for observers for the election and for committees for the election procedures. This laid the foundation for the open, credible and democratic election which followed. The local

communities, under the supervision of chosen election observers and executive election committees, put forward a total of 25 candidates in their respective localities. Those suggested were people believed to have the necessary knowledge and ethical qualities to represent the community's religious views. Proposers of candidates were chosen at random from among the crowd by hand-raising and had to offer detailed accounts of the religious and ethical qualities of their proposed candidates. All of the proposed candidates were subject to scrutiny by the crowd, and any of those opposed by people present at the meeting were omitted from the list of candidates. The meetings produced names of 20 candidates from each locality, out of the 25 originally proposed, to run for election.

On 7th October, the Muslim communities gathered in their respective localities to cast their votes in public meetings by an open show of hands. Almost all members of the Muslim community participated with an average 90% turnout and nearly 100% in rural areas. The winners of the vote were announced immediately in the presence of the voters. The Supreme Council on Islamic Affairs, which reported that any assistance for the electoral process had been neutral, open and fair, said a total of over 7.5 million people cast their votes during the election, a significant percentage of the registered eligible voters.

Those elected went forward to the regional assemblies which in turn elected representatives for the Islamic Affairs Supreme Council whose names were announced in Addis Ababa on Monday this week (5th November). Sheikh Kiyar Mohammed Aman was elected President of the eleven-person Supreme Council, and Sheikh Kedir Mohammed and Mohamed Ali were elected as Vice President and Secretary of the Council respectively. Eight others were elected as members of the Council. Observers identified the newly elected leadership as mature and experienced scholars and religious figures, well versed in religious education, practice and theory. These were all factors taken into account by the voters.

Indeed, there was general agreement in the Muslim community that the process had been carried out beyond expectations, and there was general satisfaction at the very open, fair and democratic procedures. Community elders across the country noted that their members had been satisfied with the process; election participants from different areas reported it was an open, fair and democratic election. There was general agreement that the various Muslim communities had freely voted for the leaders of their own choice and been able to include those they wanted or exclude any candidates they believed were religiously unwelcome for their community or themselves. There was general appreciation that the government had discharged its constitutional obligations with its cooperation in providing easily accessible venues for voting. These had allowed more people than before to participate and had been suitable for the collection of data. There was general agreement that the whole process ought to put an end to any allegations that the government had been trying to impose the views of the Al-Ahbash Sufi sect on the Muslim community.

Certainly, the authorities have made it clear that they do have a role in keeping law and order. The Prime Minister emphasized in Parliament last month that the government would respond whenever 'extremist groups' were plotting unrest. It did this, for example, when 17 people, with "a record of organizing violence in pursuit of an extremist agenda under the pretext of religion" were arrested and charged with criminal activity. Eight were subsequently released on bail; nine were still under investigation at the beginning of November. Subsequently, the police charged two local NGOs and detained 29 people on a number of charges relating to the "planning, preparation, conspiracy, incitement and attempt of terrorist acts". Their cases are now before the court.

As noted, Amnesty International's response to the elections and the efforts to keep law and order, has been to claim that the Ethiopian government had been involved in "widespread

violations of human rights,” and to claim there had been almost no effort on the part of the authorities to engage with the protestors on their grievances or to put in place mechanisms for dialogue. As already mentioned this is simply untrue, and it is equally fallacious to suggest that “the majority, if not all of those arrested, have been detained for exercising their right to peaceful protest.” One or two of the protests were extremely violent (with police killed) and those detained have either been charged and taken to court or released. It is possible that there have been delays in gathering evidence in some cases, always difficult when violent demonstrations have taken place, and perhaps the only valid point made by Amnesty International is that the system of justice is not always as swift as it should be.

Amnesty International then goes on to ‘demand’ that “all detainees who remain in detention without charge must be brought swiftly before a judicial authority [and] “where credible evidence of a criminal offence exists people must be charged promptly, or should be immediately and unconditionally released.” As it happens they are, their rights in detention are upheld and they do get full access to legal representatives, to medical care if required and to family. It might also be noted that police actions and any use of force are always investigated and if admissible and credible evidence of criminal action is proven, those responsible are prosecuted. It has to be admitted that the government does not always bother to keep Amnesty International informed; it does not regard Amnesty International as a sufficiently independent body or one whose use of evidence or credibility is above question. Nor, of course, does it accept that Amnesty International has any proper standing in these matters, sufficient to make such demands on the government or the justice system of the country. Amnesty International has long since thrown away any pretence at balance or impartiality with reference to Ethiopia. Government accounts of incidents are routinely and automatically dismissed, while those of opposition elements are always accepted completely with no attempt to look at the political affiliation of sources or of the possible reasons for the allegations made.

The way Amnesty International comments on events at Gerba last month, making it clear it disbelieved the government account and believed the protestors claims, underlines the point. It states firmly that “Police officers fired on civilians, killing at least three people and injuring others”, while the government “claimed that protestors had attacked a police station armed with machetes and hand guns to try to secure the release of another protestor who had been arrested earlier in the day. The government also stated that a police officer was killed in the alleged attack. However, the protestors report that they had peacefully demanded and secured the release of the arrested person during the morning of 21st October and the protest had subsequently dispersed.” It then quoted unnamed sources as saying that “later in the day federal police, called in as reinforcements, arrived at the mosque in Gerba town and opened fire, targeting people coming out of the mosque as well as others in the vicinity. One man told Amnesty International that he had seen a police officer killed in the ensuing violence [but] other witnesses said they could not confirm any police deaths. An unknown number of arrests are reported to have taken place during the incident on 21st October and more arrests reportedly occurred in the aftermath of the incident, including the arrests of people who spoke to the media about events.”

It is very clear from this account that Amnesty International has not spoken to any officials in Gerba nor indeed tried to contact any critics of the protestors or even any independent sources, and that it has accepted without any qualification any and all of the protestors’ version of events. This, indeed, is the problem with such claims. **They are often one-sided and largely inaccurate, based on hearsay, political calculation or, all-too-often, downright invention.** It must be emphasized again and again, that such allegations, however they are made and whoever is responsible, must be based on accurate facts and properly sourced. If they are not, government and officials cannot respond and correct problems. The failure to offer this option strongly suggests that this is not what is expected or wanted, and underlines the point that many of the

claims and allegations are the result of political manipulation and have little or nothing to do with any efforts to improve human rights.

News and Views

EU provides \$200 million in aid for Somalia

The European Union has given Somalia 158 million Euros (US\$200 million) to support the new Somali government's efforts to strengthen the judiciary, the Somali police force and the country's education system as well as assisting weak state institutions. The EU's Special Envoy to Somalia, Michele Cervone d'Urso, announced the EU development aid package on Saturday (3rd November). He said the new government of Somalia was "finally rebuilding the systems of a functional state at local, regional and central levels" after 21 years. He expressed the EU's readiness and commitment "to work directly and in partnership with Somalis", and "ask the implementing agencies to work more closely with the government and civil society." Some of the funds will be used to bring home Somali professionals from abroad to help improve educational standards. The new President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, has said his new government has requested that the world increase funds and "change the ways Somalia has been getting funds in the last two decades." He has called for partners to have a direct relationship with Somalia, and to provide more aid which, he said, should be "channeled directly through the new government". Some €50 million of this aid will be given to Puntland to help support its developmental projects and help improve security and the education sector in the next five years. Puntland President, Abdirahman Farole, thanked the EU for the aid and praised the role of the European Union in supporting Somalia as a whole.

A preparatory meeting for Africa-Arab Summit

A preparatory meeting for the third Arab-African Summit was held in Addis Ababa, on Monday this week (5th November). The Summit will be held in Kuwait next year. Representatives of the Arab League, the African Union, and the host country, Kuwait, attended the meeting which discussed technical, logistical and administrative preparation for the Summit. The Addis Ababa meeting was the second preparatory meeting for the Summit, following one held in Cairo in October. It discussed the timing, the theme and other technical aspects of the Summit. The upcoming Summit is expected to boost cooperation between Africa and the Arab world in the areas of trade and investment and economic partnership as well as issues pertaining to peace and security.

Egypt's Coptic Church elects its new Patriarch

The Egyptian Coptic Church on Sunday (4th November) elected Bishop Tawadros, as the 118th Patriarch to lead the Church. Born Wagih Sobhy Bakky Suleiman on 4th November 1952 in the Delta region of Mansoura, the new pope will head the Church under the name Tawadros II. The new pope earned a degree in pharmacy from the University of Alexandria in 1975 and headed a state-run pharmaceutical factory until 1986. He obtained a clerical degree in 1985 and became a monk in 1988 at Saint Bishoy monastery in Wadi Natrun, northeast of Cairo. In 1997 he was consecrated bishop. His name was drawn out of a container, in which the names of three possible candidates had been placed, by a blindfolded boy. Tawadros II will be formally consecrated Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of All Africa in the Holy See of St. Mark the Apostle at a ceremony on 18th November. He succeeds Pope Shenouda III who died in March this year, aged 88.

Kenya development corridor to boost trade with Ethiopia

The construction of a key road linking Kenya to Ethiopia started on Wednesday (7th November) when Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki launched the Turbi-Moyale road project. The construction of the road, which will cost about US\$176 million "will have a big impact on the wider East Africa region in terms of trade and regional integration," President Kibaki said. He pointed out that the road will also enhance trade between Kenya and Ethiopia as well as open up Northern Kenya to more trade and business and contribute to an increase in the volume of Ethiopian goods transiting through the port of Mombasa. President Kibaki added that Kenya expected that "on completion, this road will result in reduction of transport costs, shortening of transit times for imports and exports, and reduction in vehicle operating costs." The Turbi-Moyale road is the final Kenyan section of the Trans-Africa Highway Corridor; and the 122km section is the third phase of the Isiolo-Moyale road corridor being upgraded to bitumen standards by the government with the support of the African Development Bank. The project will incorporate the construction of a One-Stop Border Post at Moyale and a weighbridge, which will further facilitate trade and transport between Kenya and Ethiopia.

Remembrance Day in Addis Ababa

On Sunday this week 11th November in many places throughout the world everybody and everything will fall silent for two minutes on Remembrance Day - at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. This is to remember the moment when the guns fell silent on 11th November on the Western Front at the end of the First World War in 1918. It is a time to remember the 20 million people who were killed in that conflict and the many millions more who have died in other conflicts up to the present day. This Sunday, in Addis Ababa, the Service of Remembrance will be held as usual at the Gulele War Cemetery. It will be attended by veterans of the Ethiopian Patriotic Association and of the Ethiopian forces and by the representatives of many nations from around the world to remember those who died :

"They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them."