

A Week in the Horn 10th February 2012

- **The Government's sixth monthly performance report presented to Parliament**
- **Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorist and media legislation**
- **The UN Security Council considers AMISOM's new strategic concept...**
- **...while the International Contact Group on Somalia meets in Djibouti**
- **...and Kenya says it is making steady military progress**
- **Ethiopia, Djibouti and South Sudan sign a MoU on economic cooperation**

News and Views (Page 8):

- **Famine conditions no longer present in Somalia**
- **Next round of Sudan/South Sudan negotiations opens in Addis Ababa**
- **An Al Qaeda terrorist cell arrested**
- **Somaliland's president visits Addis Ababa**
- **Ethiopia to ratify four UN protocols**

The Government's sixth monthly performance report presented to Parliament

On Wednesday [8th Feb], Prime Minister Meles presented the Government's six month performance report to the House of People's Representatives. He told the House that the Government had made significant improvements towards achieving the major goals of ensuring sustainable and rapid economic growth and controlling inflation. During the last fiscal year, he noted, the country had registered a growth rate of 11.4 %. This was well above the predicted figures of between 6 and 7 per cent which had been estimated by a number of global financial institutions. Breaking down these figures, agriculture had seen 9% growth while the industry and service sectors had registered 15% and 12.5% growth respectively. The Prime Minister told the House that the country's economic growth for this fiscal year is predicted to increase by 11%. The agriculture sector is predicted to grow by 8.5%, while the industry and service sectors are expected to increase by 17.9% and 11.5% respectively. The country's efforts towards rapid and sustainable economic growth were moving at the right pace and the number of investors in different sectors, but particularly in the industry sector, was showing significant signs of increase.

Prime Minister detailed the steps that the Government had been taking to control inflation. These included the purchase and distribution of three commodities - wheat, sugar and oil - that are in high demand by consumers with a view to bringing down prices. The roles of many local producers, wholesalers, consumer associations and distributors have been given due attention and their activities were now being consolidated. Equally, the actions of participating foreign companies in the wholesale trade were now being studied with emphasis on the pros and cons of their operations. Additional measures would be taken as necessary as soon as the study was concluded.

Similarly, with a view to controlling the effects of the money supply on inflation, the Government had minimized the budget deficit and stopped taking loans from the National Bank to cover any deficit. The Prime Minister noted that the country's budget deficit during the reporting period was only 941 million birr. He said these efforts had enabled the Government to bring inflation under control and lower its rate of increase. The level of inflation had been 40.6% in August last year and it had fallen to 32% in January. If the trend continued, as expected, it would fall further to single digit level by the end of July or August. The country's total tax revenue during the reporting period had seen a rise of 41% over the similar period in the preceding fiscal year, and a total of 3.5 billion birr had been collected in the reporting period. It had also obtained US \$1.347 billion from exports during the reporting period, marking a 21% growth over the same period of the previous fiscal year. The overall revenue that the nation had secured during the last six months amounted to 45.2 billion Birr. Excluding loans and grants used for projects already underway, the government had spent 46.1 billion Birr on various activities during the reported period. The Prime Minister stressed that the Government, with a view to discouraging rent seeking and encouraging the government's pro-poor developmental priorities, had undertaken measures and amendments related to land administration. Business process re-engineering was being undertaken in order to make the tax administration more efficient and encourage the activities of investors. With the participation of investors, problematic systems and structures were being identified and, based on these findings, basic system and structural change would be made in the near future.

The Prime Minister also had a lot to say about peace and security, noting that Ethiopia, together with all IGAD member states, was working hard to ensure peace in the region. Following simultaneous requests by both Sudan and South Sudan, the Government, with the United Nations Security Council's approval, responded positively in sending peacekeeping forces to Abyei where it was able to stabilize the situation to the extent that it will no longer be a potential source of conflict. To ensure peace in Somalia and to fight against the terrorist Al-Shabaab insurgency, the Government has made every effort to encourage IGAD member states, the African Union and the United Nations to take a strong unified position towards Somalia. The Government has made every diplomatic effort towards the need to strengthen the human and material resource base of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). This is now bearing fruit. Djibouti, Sierra Leone and Kenya have agreed to send additional troops to join AMISOM. Following the request of the Somali Transitional Federal Government and approval by the African Union and the United Nations, Ethiopia has used its troops to successfully clear the border town of Belet Weyne of Al-Shabaab fighters. The Prime Minister said that Ethiopia, during its term as chairman of IGAD, had been successful in its responsibility to guide and coordinate IGAD member states to act together in supporting Somalia and work in collaboration with other interested parties, particularly the United Nations.

The Prime Minister also spoke of Eritrea, noting that one of the components of Eritrea's disruptive strategy in the region was the emphasis it placed on recruiting, organizing, training and arming of different forces determined to disrupt peace. Another was the direct and close command and guidance of these forces exercised by Eritrea in its efforts to affect Ethiopia's peace and security. The Government has therefore put in place three elements to deal with this disruptive strategy. In the face of Eritrea's continued efforts at destabilization both in Ethiopia and in other parts of the region, Ethiopia is

continuing its diplomatic efforts to persuade the international community to take more serious actions against the regime in Eritrea. The Ethiopian Parliament has now classified as terrorists all those serving as messengers for Eritrea in committing terrorist activities in Ethiopia. Strong security mechanisms are being put in place to prevent such people entering Ethiopia or ensuring they are captured before they can cause damage.

The Prime Minister said individuals and groups which were involved in terrorist activities but operated under the umbrella of legally recognized parties had been clearly identified. Considerable efforts have been made to produce tangible evidence and bring them before the courts. As a result the possible damage that Eritrea and its surrogates might cause had been minimized, but the recent attack on tourists in the border area of the Afar Regional State underlined the need to continue to take serious precautions and strong measures. The Prime Minister said that in this context the protectionist role played by some opposition parties to provide terrorists with a safe-haven was becoming a grave concern. The Government had recently broken up and arrested an Al Qaeda cell in Ethiopia. This underlined the serious nature of the terrorist threat in the country, and indeed elsewhere in the region.

The Prime Minister also noted that Ethiopia had the legitimate right to defend its sovereignty from any damage by Eritrea, and he emphasized that it was well prepared to respond proportionally to any further attacks by Eritrea. Any action, he said, would be taken carefully and after full consideration as was deemed necessary. The Prime Minister also expressed Ethiopia's willingness to resolve its differences with Eritrea in bilateral round table discussions or in the presence of a third party whenever Eritrea showed willing. In the meantime, the Government would continue to make every effort to maintain peace and development both in Ethiopia and in the region.

Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorist and media legislation

Recent allegations from several United Nations Human Rights Rapporteurs suggest that Ethiopia's anti-terrorist legislation has been used against critical journalists and opposition politicians and as an instrument to curtail the freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association and the independence of the judiciary.

This is not true. It is clear that those making these allegations have not seriously considered the charges brought and the evidence produced in court. They should not have to be reminded that the mere fact that someone is a journalist or claims to represent a political party does not exempt them from responsibility for their actions or from facing court action if they give cause. Ethiopia indeed would certainly agree with Frank La Ray, UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression that "journalists should not face criminal proceedings for carrying out their legitimate work," though it would stress the word legitimate. It would also agree with Ben Emerson, Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, that "anti-terrorism provisions should not be abused", nor should they "go counter to internationally-guaranteed human rights."

They do not. Ethiopia's Anti-terrorist Proclamation was drawn up and is implemented in accordance with international law. Cases brought under this and any other legal instruments are a matter for the police and security forces. They are handled by the

judicial system without any outside interference. The Ethiopian judiciary is a fully independent body and takes its decisions in accordance with the constitution and the law. As the Prime Minister told Parliament on Wednesday [8th] “all trials are transparent, all suspects are allowed access to lawyers”.

The anti-terrorism legislation is designed to protect the safety, security and the fundamental rights and freedoms of Ethiopians. The provisions of the legislation strike a careful balance between the enjoyment of rights by individuals and the considerations of public safety and national security. Its definitions are not over-broad, nor are its provisions vaguely worded. It is based upon and in many of its provisions almost identical to the Patriot Act in the US and parallel anti-terrorist legislation in Australia, the UK and other European countries. The Prime Minister said “we haven’t changed a word, a comma even, as those laws emanate from countries with vast democratic experience.”

Its objective is to pre-empt terrorist activity against innocent civilians, something of which Ethiopia has considerable experience, not least in the Ogaden region of the Somali Regional State where two Swedish journalists were captured when travelling with members of a terrorist organization, the Ogaden National Liberation Front. The ONLF has been declared a terrorist organization because of its terrorist activities, slaughtering hundreds of innocent civilians as well as murdering local officials and police, planting land mines and blowing up buses and other vehicles over a number of years. It might be added that the two Swedish journalists were given every facility to defend themselves in an open trial and were convicted on their own admission of illegal entry into Ethiopia and of travelling with a terrorist organization. They do, of course, have the right of appeal.

The press law, as any careful reading of it demonstrates, is enacted in line with the clear objective of promoting, respecting and protecting the rights and freedoms of expression enshrined in detail in the Constitution. It lays out the conditions under which journalists operate and the responsibilities expected from the media. Despite the allegations, there is no lack of newspapers who find it possible to operate under these circumstances. As the briefest look at the press in Ethiopia demonstrates there are a considerable number of independent current affairs newspapers operating in both English and Amharic. It is simply untrue, and indeed libelous, to claim as the Committee to Protect Journalists does that there is only one surviving independent paper. At the same time, journalists, like politicians and all political groups operating in the country, are expected to ensure their activities fall within the limits of the Constitution and the law. Neither journalists nor politicians are above the law, either in Ethiopia or elsewhere.

The Ethiopian government fully respects the rights of freedom of speech, of expression and of association for all citizens as laid down in the Constitution. Any attempt to politicize issues beyond their legal boundaries is totally unacceptable to the judiciary and to the Government which respects the legal and human rights of all individuals. Indeed, the Government is committed to respect the fundamental rights of individuals and their right to a fair trial, and all legislation is applied in accordance with international human rights obligations.

The UN Security Council considers AMISOM's new strategic concept...

On Monday this week [6th Feb], the UN Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Susana Malcorra, briefed the Security Council informally on aspects of the Secretary-General's Special Report on Somalia (31st January). Council members had expected more details on aspects of the new strategic concept for AMISOM and on the financial implications of increased UN support for the AU Mission. They were also interested in how a larger AMISOM will fit into the overall political strategy for Somalia and help to achieve the key political objectives. The UK is now expected to circulate a draft resolution to respond to the AU's requests for Security Council action to support AMISOM. The UK would like this to be adopted ahead of the London Conference on Somalia, scheduled for 23rd February.

In his report, the Secretary-General notes that the international community is pursuing the political strategy of supporting the TFG in completing the tasks needed to end the transition, notably the finalization of the constitution, to assist it to broaden the base of the peace process and to support the development of basic State governance, especially in the security sector. He pointed out that the process had made considerable progress in recent weeks with the Garowe Principles, and that security gains continued to be made against Al-Shabaab. With the support of member states, troops were being paid and supported as were 5,700 police, though equipment, supplies and accommodation for both were lacking. Mechanisms for civilian oversight of defence and security were "rudimentary" but the Joint Security Committee would continue to play a major role in this regard. The TFG had developed a detailed policy for outreach measures in recently captured areas including promoting social reconciliations, setting up local political administrations, restoring law and order and justice, containing heavy weapons followed by disarmament and demobilization, and the provision of basic services.

The Secretary-General pointed out that AU and UN planners had jointly developed a strategic concept for future AMISOM operations aimed "at joining all on-going separate military operations in Somalia into a coordinated and coherent effort against Al-Shabaab." This was finalized during a joint technical assessment mission in December, which examined various options and concluded the most realistic and cost-effective option would entail raising the troop level to 17,731 uniformed personnel and providing enablers and force multipliers. It would also involve requesting Ethiopia to continue to provide support to TFG/AMISOM operations in Bay, Bakool and Hiiraan regions, and the provision of operational logistical support for TFG forces. The AU Peace and Security Council endorsed the strategic concept on 5th January as well as the deployment of additional forces by Burundi and Uganda to reach the currently authorized strength of 12,000 for AMISOM.

Subsequently, on 17th January, the Ministers of Defence and Chiefs of Staff of AMISOM troop-countries agreed to establish a Strategic Coordination Mechanism to provide strategic guidance and directives, decided on the necessary chain of command and the process of appointing staff officers, and accepted the need for stronger coordination and liaison between AMISOM and TFG at all levels. The ministers reconfigured the operational sectors and their strengths, and the joint AU-UN planning team subsequently reconvened to work on a new concept for AMISOM to work out further details of command and control, troop dispositions and support, a mission plan, force requirements and other details.

The Secretary-General pointed out that all this had resource implications and increased support costs arising from the greater area of operations, from climatic conditions, lack of security, weak infrastructure, mobility requirements, and, in the short term, lack of a proximate seaport. He therefore suggested the existing UN logistical support package should be expanded to provide AMISOM with the support to operate effectively in the four sectors of Banadir, Middle and Lower Shebelle regions; Middle and Lower Juba regions; Gedo, Bay and Bakool regions; and Galgudud, Mudug and part of Hiiraan regions. The Secretary-General noted that the capacity of an expanded AMISOM would be largely determined by the extent to which it was appropriately resourced and supplied with enablers and force multipliers. "Support for the full force requirements outlined in the strategic concept will allow the Mission to simultaneously dominate multiple parts of the area of operations, to significantly degrade the military capacity of Al-Shabaab and to support the Transitional Federal government in projecting its authority."

The Secretary-General stressed that the situation in Somalia was at a tipping point and the prospects for positive change appeared greater than at any time than for many years. He was encouraged by the commitment shown by the international community, the developments in the security situation and the commitment shown by Somali leaders in the Garowe Principles to a clear process and timeline for the conclusion of the transition. It "represents a moment of historic opportunity that we cannot let go by." He therefore recommended that the Security Council accept the AU's request and increase the strength of AMISOM and authorized an appropriately extended package of logistical support.

..while the International Contact Group on Somalia meets in Djibouti

The International Contact Group (ICG) met in Djibouti on Sunday and Monday this week [5th and 6th Feb] and it, too, endorsed increasing the capacity of AMISOM which, it said, would lead to further security improvements and enable the TFG to extend its authority. This would require adequate, sustainable and predictable funding and an expanded logistical support package, and the meeting called for uncaveated contributions to the AMISOM Trust Fund. The ICG underlined that the transition must end on 20th August, and called for a new draft constitution by mid-April. The new constitution would pave the way for a new, smaller and more representative Parliament and for elections for the positions of Speaker, deputy speakers and the President. Somali Prime Minister, Abdiweli Muhammad Ali, told the meeting that his administration was determined to implement the roadmap and that the constitution would be the subject of the next meeting in Garowe later this month. The President of Puntland, Abdirahman Sheikh Muhammed Farole, also addressed the meeting.

The ICG underlined the need to broaden consultations with civil society and other interested parties. It praised the recent military successes by AMISOM, the TFG and their partners against Al-Shabaab and noted the importance of establishing functional local administration in recovered areas. The ICG welcomed the planned London conference on 23rd February as an opportunity to focus additional attention at the highest level on stabilizing Somalia. It gave support to the "bold relocation" of the UN Political Office for Somalia to Mogadishu, and strongly condemned the violence and

attacks against journalists and media organizations in Somalia. It urged the Somali authorities “to end impunity, investigate and prosecute those responsible.” Its comments were welcomed by the National Union of Somali Journalists. A spokesperson for the TFG said after the meeting that the ICG had also agreed that if no solution was found to the conflict in Parliament over the Speaker then sanctions would be considered against those seen as responsible for the confusion.

Meanwhile, the EU’s new Special Representative to the Horn of Africa, Alexander Rondos, paid his first visit to Somalia this week. He also made it clear that there could be no extension of the transition and stressed that the EU expected action. The transition “has to keep up the momentum”. He described his meetings with President Sheikh Sharif and Prime Minister Abdiweli as very good but emphasized that further funding for Somalia would be difficult for EU member states unless there was demonstrable progress towards peace, security and civil order. The EU is the country’s biggest donor.

...and Kenya says it is making steady military progress

An Al-Shabaab convoy was hit by Kenyan helicopter gunships on Friday last week [3rd Feb] at Dalayat, not far from the recently captured town of Badhadhe in Lower Juba. Military Spokesman, Major Chirchir, estimated that more than 100 Al-Shabaab fighters had been killed in the attack and nine technicals and nine lorries destroyed. It appeared Al-Shabaab had been concentrating its forces for an attack on Badhadhe. Following this, Al-Shabaab has apparently abandoned a number of bases including Kudhaa Island, a major training area for newly recruited militia and foreign fighters. Kudhaa was the target of a successful drone attack a few weeks ago. Major Chirchir said that as Al-Shabaab retreats, the Kenyan/TFG forces were now “eyeing Kismayo”.

In the face of its defeats, Al-Shabaab, with no capacity to recapture the towns it has lost, is now turning more to increased guerrilla tactics and suicide bombings again. Al-Shabaab leader, Ahmed Godane, recently told a gathering of Al-Shabaab militia that direct clashes did not help any longer, and ordered them to organize themselves in smaller groups and prepare for hit and run raids and suicide attacks. One attempt on an Ethiopian military base at Belet Weyne last month failed, and another was foiled when the local population gave warning. However, at least 15 people died in an attack on the Hotel Muna in Mogadishu on Wednesday [8th]. The hotel had been targeted before in August 2010 when over thirty people died in a suicide bombing including six MPs.

Ethiopia, Djibouti and South Sudan sign a MoU on economic cooperation

Last week, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and the Republic of South Sudan signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding to boost economic cooperation and strengthen their coordination. One element of this was the installation of the Fibre Optic link from Djibouti to Addis Ababa on 2nd February. The aim of the MOU, signed by Finance Minister, Sufian Ahmed, by Djibouti’s Finance Minister, Elias Dawaleh Moussa, and by South Sudan’s Minister of Petroleum and Mines, Stephen Dhieu Dau, is to develop and expand a framework of cooperation and partnership among the three countries. The major principles of the deal are aimed at boosting mutual benefits and mutual understanding. It is also designed to provide encouragement to generate further signed general agreements on other issues to consolidate the existing relationship. The main

purpose of this general framework is to strengthen the tripartite linkage between Djibouti, Ethiopia and South Sudan economically and socially. It is also intended to encourage the promotion of integration among IGAD member states.

Ethiopia and the Republic of South Sudan have themselves also signed an MOU to foster their economic relations in the areas of trade and technical cooperation. They have further agreed to cooperate in developing infrastructural and road links as well as power and telecommunication connections, and cooperate technically in these areas. Similarly, Ethiopia and Djibouti have already to cooperate on two railway projects, one a line linking the port of Tadjourah in Djibouti with the capital of Tigray Regional State, Mekelle, and secondly the line linking Addis Ababa via Dire Dawa to Dewele.

In addition, the three countries further expressed their commitment to foster the already installed power and road connections between Ethiopia and Djibouti. They also agreed to enhance the development of infrastructure for the integration of the region at large, to tap effectively into economic opportunities. **This tripartite memorandum for the development of infrastructure in these three countries will now be considered as a model for regional integration among IGAD states.** It will further boost existing economic and social relations in the region, and can be seen as a valuable expansion of the integration process and south-south economic cooperation within IGAD.

News and Views

Famine conditions no longer present in Somalia

Last weekend [4th to 5th Feb], the UN Coordinator for Somalia, Mark Bowden, was able to announce that famine conditions no longer applied in Somalia. The combination of the massive increase in humanitarian assistance and an exceptional harvest had significantly improved the situation. At the same time “the gains are fragile and will be reversed without continued support”, he added. There are an estimated 1.7 million people in southern Somalia still in crisis and in need of food, clean water, shelter and other assistance in order to survive. Mr Bowden noted that mortality rates in southern Somalia were among the highest in the world because of malnutrition and outbreaks of disease. The exceptional harvest resulted in lower food prices and increased its availability to people in the drought affected areas, but access to people in need still remains a major challenge. Two regions remain of particular concern. In Lower Juba and Bakool, high numbers of acutely malnourished children continue to be reported and access to treatment services remains severely restricted in the former area largely because of the attitude of Al-Shabaab. Mr Bowden said that aid agencies relied substantially on the humanity of the parties to allow access. “All actors have a responsibility to respect international humanitarian law and grant unconditional access to vulnerable people.” While the situation has currently improved, it is expected to deteriorate again in May during the next dry season. There was a need to use this period to focus on life-saving assistance, to build up ability to cope with future drought and reduce dependence on aid. “Recovery is only possible after August if the rains are good and other external factors, such as conflict, do not hamper the progress made so far.”

Next round of Sudan/South Sudan negotiations opens in Addis Ababa

Sudan and South Sudan resumed negotiations today on a host of post-secession issues following recent acrimony caused by the repeated failures to resolve or indeed make any progress over their oil dispute. Several rounds of talks have failed to resolve the dispute over the fees required to transport South Sudan's oil through Sudan and the result has been that Khartoum has seized southern oil, claiming Juba failed to pay any fees since July last year, while South Sudan has accused Khartoum of stealing its oil and suspended production. During the AU Summit, the African Union High Level Implementation Panel, chaired by former President Mbeki, put forward compromise proposals but these were not accepted and the two sides remain far apart over transit fees for oil with Sudan demanding up to \$36 a barrel and South Sudan saying it will only pay a fee consistent with international norms and offering less than a dollar a barrel. The AUHIP is continuing to try its best to bridge the gap. Other central issues for discussion include the situation of northerners and southerners in each other's countries and the issue of the contested region of Abyei as well as border demarcation. South Sudan's Pagan Amum has already warned that South Sudan would not cede "a single inch" of its territories to Sudan. Despite the almost vicious war of words that has broken out, both sides must be fully aware of the need to continue negotiations both on oil and on other issues. These issues indeed require engagement not "belligerency or chest-thumping". AUHIP has said this round of talks should last between 10th and 15th February.

An Al Qaeda terrorist cell arrested

On Monday[6th Feb], the Joint Anti-Terror Task Force of the National Intelligence and Security Service and the Federal Police announced it had arrested an organized Al Qaeda cell in Ethiopia. The Task Force released few details but it said the eight suspects in the cell were discovered in the process of organizing, providing training and educating recruits with assistance from the East Africa Al Qaeda group. It said the terrorist cell in Ethiopia had "strong links with the Somali terror group, Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda terrorist cells in Kenya, Sudan, Philippines, Saudi Arabia and South Africa". In a video recently released online, Al Qaeda's leader al-Zawahiri, who took over Al Qaeda's leadership after the death of Osama bin Laden in May last year, announced that Al-Shabaab has now formally joined Al Qaeda. The video also includes an audio statement by Al-Shabaab's leader, Abu Zubeyr, in which he pledges allegiance to Zawahiri. The identity of the suspects has not yet been revealed and no other details have been released. The Joint Anti-Terror Task Force of the National Intelligence and Security Service and the Federal Police was set up after the Proclamation on Anti-Terrorism of August 2009 ordered the establishment of a National Anti-Terrorism Coordination Committee comprising the heads of the Ministry of Justice, National Intelligence and Security Service and Federal Police, and directed the Committee to draw up joint counter terrorism plans and set up a joint counter terrorism task force. The Joint Anti-Terror Task force was responsible for preventing the effort by Eritrean-backed terrorists to disrupt the AU Summit in Addis Ababa with a bombing campaign in January last year.

Somaliland's President visits Addis Ababa

Somaliland's President Ahmed Mohammed Silanyo visited Addis Ababa on Tuesday [7th Feb] and met with Prime Minister Meles. The two leaders discussed bilateral and regional issues of mutual concern including regional peace and security, trade and economic affairs, as well as the implementation of signed bilateral agreements. During his discussions with Prime Minister Meles, President Silanyo said that his "self-declared autonomous state" gives high importance to its relations with Ethiopia, and expressed his strong desire to further consolidate these. President Silanyo noted that Somaliland was keen to strengthen further its all-round relations and cooperation with Ethiopia. Somaliland, he said, was very satisfied with its excellent relationship with Ethiopia, and it much appreciated Ethiopia's "significant role" in the East Africa region. Somaliland, of course, unilaterally declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 and it has repeatedly called for the international community to give recognition to its self-declared autonomy. Somaliland has been invited to the London Conference later this month and after discussions among the country's three political parties, it has decided to attend. According to Foreign Minister Muhammad Abdullahi Omar it will help Somaliland to express its intention and demonstrate to the world its independence. Somaliland's Minister of Fisheries and Ports, Abdillahi Jama Geeljire, said it was an opportunity as Somaliland "was invited on equal terms with those nations that will participate". It would allow Somaliland to present its case, and "share with our Somali brothers our experience and how we achieved the peace and security we enjoy today and they are searching for."

Ethiopia to ratify four UN protocols

The House of Peoples' Representatives on Thursday [9th] was presented with four UN approved protocols which need Parliamentary approval before passing onto the statute book. This is expected within three weeks. One is the International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism (ICSFT). 174 countries have currently signed the ICSFT following the UN Security Council's recommendation for countries to join. The UN said the multilateral treaty, which is open to all UN members, is designed to criminalize the activity of those who finance terrorist activities, and to promote police and judicial cooperation to prevent such actions as well as investigate and punish those involved. The House of Representatives in its regular session also sent three other UN protocols, drawn up at Palermo in 2000, to standing committees for consideration. These are the Protocol against Illicit Manufacturing and Trafficking in Firearms, their parts and components and ammunition; the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air; and the Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children. The standing committees are expected to bring the protocols back to the House floor for final endorsement in three weeks' time. The smuggling protocol entered into force in January 2004 and has been signed by over 120 states; the protocol on trafficking entered into force in December 2003 and has been signed by close to 150 countries. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sybella Wilkes, said that despite the Palermo Protocols, last year was the deadliest since 2006 which was when the UNHCR had started to record migration/refugee statistics. During the year the UNHCR estimated people from 15 nations lost their lives or had gone missing in trying to cross the Mediterranean; and at least 1,500 migrants, mainly from Africa, had died trying to reach the shores of Europe.