

A WEEK IN THE HORN OF AFRICA
10th August 2012

- **Mogadishu: one year after Al-Shabaab was driven out**
- **Progress on the Sudan/South Sudan talks but the deadline is moved**
- **Deputy PM Hailemariam holds discussions with Xinhua officials**
- **Recent religious violence in Addis Ababa mosques: who is behind it? ...(35)**
- **Olympic Games successes**

News and Views (page 9)

- **Ethiopian Airlines to receive its first 'Dreamliner' next week**
- **Customs and Revenues Authority collects 70 Billion birr in revenue**
- **A Kenyan court gives Somali pirates twenty years in jail**

Mogadishu: one year after Al-Shabaab was driven out

Monday this week (6th August) marked the first anniversary of the expulsion of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu by the forces of AMISOM and the Somali National Army of the TFG, and the date that Al-Shabaab retreated from the last of its fixed positions in the city. Al-Shabaab claimed unconvincingly that it was making a tactical withdrawal, but, if nothing else, the event marked the beginning of what has become a successful year-long campaign by AMISOM, the Somali National Army and TFG allied militias, with help from Kenyan forces before they were re-hatted as AMISOM and Ethiopian troops. Al-Shabaab has been driven out of almost all its towns and bases. The last major Al-Shabaab stronghold in Kismayo is now the target of an advance by the Kenyan troops of AMISOM and Somali National Army units and allied militias. Other Al-Shabaab bases in the ports of Merca and Brava along the coast south of Mogadishu can also be expected to fall soon; and allied forces are moving north of Balad into Middle Shebelle and clearing the Shebelle River valley.

Indeed, this week, Somalia's Defence Minister, Hussein Arab Isse, said that Somali National Government Forces and AMISOM troops are heading towards Merca, along the coast south of Mogadishu, in Lower Shebelle, and towards Jowhar to the north east, in Middle Shebelle region, up the Shebelle River towards Belet Weyne. Merca and Jowhar are respectively the capital of their regions and are both still held by Al-Shabaab. AMISOM forces have also been building up towards Kismayo with Kenyan forces less than 60 kilometres from the city limits. Kenyan military commanders have said they intend to take the city before the end of the transition period on 20th August. Al-Shabaab itself continues to say that it will defend Kismayo, unlike almost all its other bases most of which have been largely abandoned in the face of advancing government and other forces. Al-Shabaab has recently announced that no goods or food are allowed out of Kismayo for delivery to areas no longer under its control in Gedo, Middle or Lower Juba regions. The Al-Shabaab governor of Kismayo, said the intention was "to starve to death" the allied forces and TFG. In fact, of course, the greatest effect will be on the people living in towns in these areas and on the businessmen and traders of Kismayo.

The anniversary of the expulsion of Al-Shabaab from Mogadishu was marked in the city by a large-scale demonstration with thousands of the inhabitants, joining artists and musicians, waving the Somali flag and carrying placards with slogans showing their dislike of Al-Shabaab. The demonstrators ended up at the Benadir Stadium where they were addressed by President Sheikh Sharif and other officials. The President said the day deserved to be remembered by all Somalis, as it was the day when the extremist group was defeated. He said the day was now a symbol of peace and tranquility for the entire country. It was a day which allowed international aid agencies to return to the city and once again provide emergency aid to displaced people.

The effect of the removal of Al-Shabaab a year ago was almost immediate. It rapidly inspired a flow of massive investment from diaspora communities, and it was not long before Mogadishu could genuinely claim to have lost its description as the “world’s most dangerous city.” Within a matter of months, street lights were put up along city roads, and traffic policemen were back on the streets after a twenty year absence. As one observer put it: “the thump of shell-fire and the crackle of small-arms have been replaced by the noise of the drills and hammers of construction workers”. Scaffolding now covers new buildings and shows where many others are being repaired. Businessmen and traders are now prepared to put glass back in their shop-front windows; and street lights brighten the evening along roads now repaired after being the front line of fighting a year ago. Teams play football in the stadium and volleyball on the beaches of the Lido. Restaurants are multiplying. The city is showing an economic rejuvenation with business and commerce, banking and even some tourism making a comeback.

The progress in Mogadishu and outside it hasn’t of course prevented Al-Shabaab infiltrators carrying out a number of suicide bombings and assassinations including the death of nearly a hundred civilians on October 4th, most young students waiting for exam results. A suicide bomber attempted to kill the Prime Minister at the National Theatre in April, and at the end of May Al-Shabaab attempted to ambush President Sheikh Sharif while en route to Afgoye which had been liberated a day earlier. Another failure came on August 1st when two suicide bombers trying to blow up the National Constituent Assembly were shot and killed. Journalists have remained a particular target of Al-Shabaab both inside Mogadishu and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the Minister of Interior and National Security, Abdisamad Mo’alin Mohamud, felt able to say last week that Mogadishu was under full control. “Somali security forces are at this time more vigilant than in the past. They have secured the capital and stopped many deadly attacks against government institutions and army bases”, he said. TFG sources believe Al-Shabaab is running out of money, recruits and technical experts.

AMISOM and the TFG are also building up security more generally in advance of the last stages of the transition. AMISOM announced this week it will be deploying an air defence unit to support ground forces in Mogadishu as part of the security measures for the election. A Ugandan air force unit with both transport and combat helicopters was deployed to Mogadishu last weekend. A spokesman said the helicopters could provide air cover for combat troops, escort convoys, conduct rescue missions and airdrop material for the troops.

This week, a Formed Police Unit, from Uganda, was also deployed as part of the police component of AMISOM; a Nigerian unit is expected later in the year. Somali Police Commissioner, General Sharif Shekuna Maye told the unit that the main expectation of Somalis was that they should “help bring back law and order in the country”, and “secure every corner where remnants of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group might be hiding.” The AMISOM Police Commissioner, Dr. Charles Makono, said “The major task of the Formed Police Unit will be to assist the Somali Police Force in consolidating the security of Mogadishu. This will be done through public order patrols in coordination with the Somali Police Force.” This is the first time a Formed Police Unit has been deployed by the African Union.

In addition to the significant military gains, there have also been positive political developments, underlined last week by the approval of the draft constitution by the National Constituent Assembly, and the progress towards the choosing of the new Parliament. As soon as the Technical Selection Committee has finished vetting the names of the proposed 275 members of parliament to ensure the rules for selection were followed by the Traditional Elders, the elections of the Speaker and his two deputies can take place. This will be followed by the election for president, due on August 20th, for which there are some 17 candidates, among them President Sheikh Sharif himself, Speaker Sharif Hassan, Prime Minister Dr. Abdiweli, and former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed ‘Farmajo’ who returned to Mogadishu earlier in the week.

Progress on the Sudan/South Sudan talks but the deadline is moved

Although no Sudan/South Sudan Presidential meeting took place as had been hoped, by the end of last week significant progress had been made in the negotiations mediated by the African Union's High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in Addis Ababa. In the talks in the 'economic cluster', an agreement was reached last Friday (3rd August) on oil transit fees, and former South African President Thabo Mbeki, head of the AUHIP was able to announce the parties had agreed on all of the financial arrangements regarding oil and "What remains is to discuss the steps as to when the oil companies should be asked to prepare for the resumption of production and export." According to the AUHIP the two parties have agreed on fees of around US\$11 and US\$9 for transport, processing and transit of oil along the two pipelines, and the two governments have also agreed to establish a Joint Committee to finalize any other oil issues. These include the need to drain water from the pipelines and the arrangements for the return of skilled manpower as well as other details.

The South Sudan's leading negotiator, Pagan Amum, said this week that South Sudan expected to begin production again "immediately in September, especially for the Upper Nile oil, of Dar Blend," adding: "It will not just be an automatic thing; it will take time to open one well after the other." Production will start from 150,000 barrels per day (bpd) and within three or four months should rise to 180,000 or 190,000 bpd. Pagan Amum said it should then get back to the previous levels or possibly even higher within a year. The agreement on oil transit fees was welcomed by President Obama, who said the leaders of both countries deserved congratulations for reaching an agreement and finding compromise; and by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who said it was in the interest of the two countries that were "intractably linked" to resume oil exportation as it is vital for their economies, as well as by UK Secretary of State, William Hague and the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Lady Ashton.

With reference to other elements of the economic cluster, the Government of South Sudan committed itself to provide US\$3 billion to help fill the budget gap in Sudan left by the independence of South Sudan as that removed 75% of Sudan's oil revenue. The two sides also agreed to launch a joint international campaign for the lifting of sanctions against Sudan. In this connection the Government of Sudan has also agreed to cover a third of the budget deficit through various austerity measures.

Another area that required considerable discussion was the political and security cluster. To help the discussion in these areas, the AUHIP has presented documents that differentiate the areas of agreement and non-agreement which helped the parties to agree on such issues as cessation of hostilities, withdrawal of armies along common borders, to stop harbouring or support of rebel forces in the territories of the other party. South Sudan last week raised the case of a claimed aerial bombardment in South Sudan at the beginning of the week and UNAMISS investigated the matter. This was the only complaint presented by South Sudan under the issue of cessation of hostilities.

Borders have been harder. The Government of South Sudan has accepted the Administrative and Security map put forward by the AUHIP in November last year providing a center line for the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ). The Government of Sudan remains concerned about various aspects of this although the AUHIP has made it clear that this will not prejudice any final boundary demarcation, and it is not intended to demarcate the common border. Once the SDBZ is established the Joint Borders Monitoring Mechanism and Verification (JBMMV) team will monitor it in collaboration with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). UNISFA is asking for equal numbers of monitors from both sides. The parties have agreed to establish an ad hoc committee and agreed to develop terms of reference in this matter. The border issues of South Kordofan and Blue Nile States could not be finalized at this time because of the ongoing fighting between the SPLM-N and the Sudan Government. The AUHIP has failed to get the two sides to reach

an agreement. The Government of South Sudan also raised the issue of Heglig making it clear it wants this to go to international arbitration.

Both sides have, however, agreed to the suggestion of having a group of experts to give a non-binding opinion on border issues. AUHIP has provided three experts through the African Union Border Programme (AUBP): Judge Abdul Korma from Sierra Leone, Bryson Morebodi from Botswana, and Professor Maurice Kamto from Cameroon will be meeting in Addis Ababa. Mr. Mbeki noted that “The parties understand very well that it would be important that by the time oil starts flowing again, the necessary security arrangements should be in place.” The AUHIP said the two Presidents at their next summit, which would be held in September, would determine the way forward with regard to the status of Abyei, as well as the question of demarcation of agreed sections of the border which would allow the systems and mechanisms agreed in March to be activated, including the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM).

On Abyei, there are four outstanding matters, the establishment of the Abyei legislative council and the Abyei administration, the issue of the Sudan Diffra oil police, and the final status of Abyei region. According to the June agreement on the establishment of Abyei’s Legislative body, Sudan will nominate three people to be approved by South Sudan. Among these is the Speaker of the Council who will be from Sudan while the Government of South Sudan is to nominate the Chief Administrator and his Deputy. Neither has yet approved the other’s nominees. In the matter of the police, the Government of Sudan has kept 169 police at Diffra to protect oil infrastructures despite the June agreement. The two sides have now agreed that the issues of Abyei security will be handled at the next presidential summit at which Mr. Mbeki says the two leaders will sign a document relating to demarcation of agreed sections of the border allowing the systems and mechanisms agreed in March to be activated. The talks have now been adjourned until the end of Ramadan and will be resumed after Eid, in the last week of the month.

Meanwhile on Friday last week (3rd August), the African Union’s Peace and Security Council met to review progress a day after the deadline set by the UN Security Council, August 2nd, had fallen due. The Council noted with regret that the Parties had not been able to finalize agreements by the deadline as stipulated in UN Security Council resolution 2046 (2012), however it welcomed a number of developments.

These included the cessation of fighting along the common border and the significant reduction of tension between the two countries; the deployment by Sudan and South Sudan of the members of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) to its temporary headquarters in Assosa, Ethiopia; agreement on the terms of reference and membership of the Ad Hoc Committee tasked to receive and investigate allegations and counter allegations of the Parties regarding violations, as outlined in the February 10th Memorandum of Understanding on Non-aggression and Cooperation; the acceptance by the Government of the Republic of South Sudan of the Administrative and Security map submitted by the AUHIP in November 2011, which provides the centerline for the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ); the withdrawal by South Sudan and Sudan of their forces from Abyei, on 10th and 29th May respectively, while noting that a company of Sudan’s “oil police” remained in Diffra, and the reaffirmation by both Parties of their commitment to the Abyei Protocol of the January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), including its provisions for a referendum to determine the final status of Abyei; the agreement by the Parties to establish a Panel of Experts to provide an authoritative, nonbinding opinion on the status of disputed areas; the agreement reached with the Government of Sudan, on August 3rd, on the modalities for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to affected civilian populations in areas controlled by the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement North (SPLM -N) in the Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan states, consistent with internationally accepted principles of delivery by competent and impartial agencies; and the conclusion by the Parties of the agreement regarding oil and related matters between the Parties.

The AU Peace and Security Council also reaffirmed support for the AUHIP, and encouraged it to continue and intensify its facilitation role to bridge the differences between the Parties. In conclusion it agreed that negotiations on all outstanding matters should be concluded by 22nd September. However, Susan Rice, the US Permanent Representative to the UN said after a Security Council meeting on Thursday that the Security Council will not fix a new deadline though it is meeting on Sudan and South Sudan every two weeks. At the same time she stressed that a comprehensive agreement on all outstanding issues including border demarcation and Abyei were “binding obligations” under Resolution 2046.

Deputy PM Hailemariam holds discussions with Xinhua officials

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam Desalegn held discussions with a delegation from the Xinhua News Agency of China, led by Mr. He Peng, the Agency’s Editor-in-Chief on Wednesday 8th August. The Deputy Prime Minister made it clear that Ethiopia appreciated the deepening of bilateral ties between Ethiopia and China and he emphasized that the win-win relationship mutually benefitted the peoples of both countries. With reference to China’s relations with Africa, The Deputy Prime Minister praised China’s principled position towards Africa’s development efforts. He stressed that China’s decision to double its development aid to the continent in support of road, transport, and telecom projects was an important step that proved China was an important development ally of Africa. Ato Hailemariam welcomed Xinhua’s growing role in reflecting a true image of Ethiopia in particular and Africa in general. He told the delegation that Ethiopian media institutions’ were very keen to work closely with and learn from Xinhua, is world-acclaimed news agency. He expressed his hope that Xinhua would continue to contribute its share in promoting a true image of Ethiopia to the Chinese people and to the world at large.

Mr. He Peng underlined the links between Ethiopia and China which he said shared a lot in common. He stressed China’s commitment to further bolster its cooperation with Ethiopia and with Africa, and further reiterated China’s readiness to double its support to Africa’s development endeavours. Speaking about bilateral relations, Mr. He Peng said trade between the two countries was gathering momentum by the day and he expressed his hope for even stronger ties. He praised the “the impressive double-digit growth” as a testimony to the relentless efforts of the people and Government of Ethiopia in their fight against poverty. He said that Xinhua’s office in Addis Ababa would certainly report the impressive economic success stories of Ethiopia to the World. Mr. He Peng and his delegation thanked the Deputy Prime Minister extended their gratitude to the Ethiopian Government and people for the warm and cordial welcome they had received.

Mr. He Peng, who was in Ethiopia at the invitation of Minister Bereket Simon, Head of the Government Communications Affairs (GCAO) also met with President Girma Woldegiorgis who told him that Ethiopia was willing to deepen its friendly relations with China. The President said that China had offered important support to Ethiopia in the fields of social and economic development and poverty eradication, and Ethiopia was willing to further develop its friendly relations and deepen the cooperation between the two nations. The President expressed his gratitude for China's help in Ethiopia's social and economic development. It was thanks to China's positive support, that Ethiopia had witnessed a fast growing pace of economy, especially in its infrastructure in recent years. The president hoped that the media could play a bigger role in boosting mutual understanding between the two peoples. Mr. He Ping told the President that Ethiopia was a country with not only a long history but a glorious tradition of fighting for national independence. It was the common wish of the two peoples to develop Sino-Ethiopian friendship. He was impressed by the fast growing pace of the Ethiopian economy in recent years against the backdrop of a global economic depression. He emphasized that the Xinhua News Agency would keep on reporting the progress Ethiopia was making in its social and economic development with authenticity, objectivity and

comprehensiveness. It would seek to play a positive role in promoting the friendship of the two peoples.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (ECCSA) and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of a Joint Business Council in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (7th August). The memorandum was signed by the Vice-President of ECCSA, Junyedi Besha, and the Vice-Chairman of CCPIT, Dong Songgen, after talks on business and investment between members of the Chamber of Commerce and the China Council. The Ethiopian Chamber stressed the importance of cooperation between the institutions of Ethiopia and China to further strengthen trade exchanges between the two countries; the Chinese delegation expressed its interest in a number of different investment sectors in Ethiopia. The total trade exchange between Ethiopia and China had reached US\$1.7 billion at the end of last year.

Recent religious violence in Addis Ababa mosques: who is behind it?

The Federal Police Commission announced two weeks ago that it had foiled a series of illegal activities which posed a threat to the peace and national security of the country. Over the last few weeks, a small group of extreme Muslim radicals, claiming to represent the entire Ethiopian Muslim community, have been trying to incite violence in some mosques in Addis Ababa, carrying out illegal demonstrations, holding people hostage, destroying public property and sparking clashes with police around the great Anwar mosque in Addis Ababa, turning peaceful Friday prayers into scenes of violence.

The Federal Police Commission said the police had arrested a number of individuals who had been intending to carry out acts of terrorism both in Addis Ababa and in some regional areas. They were operating under the guise of religion, and indeed preliminary questioning of those detained indicated their actions were political rather than religiously motivated. Some of those detained had links with externally funded organizations. In a press briefing, the Federal Police Commissioner-General, Workneh Gebeyehu, explained that the police operation had been designed to isolate the extremists from the Muslim community and “they had been detained after police secured arrest warrants from the courts.” Those detained were masked assailants who had been trying to prevent people leave the mosque after the noon prayers. They were throwing stones, damaging property and trying to incite violence. They were arrested as they themselves left the compound of the mosque. The police did not enter the mosque nor did they fire tear gas. Specific care was taken to avoid casualties. The Commissioner-General noted that some of those involved had earlier been urging others to follow in their footsteps, adding that the on-going police investigation already “shows the whole movement is associated with extremism.”

The Deputy Police Commissioner of Addis Ababa subsequently provided additional details: the group involved had been organizing “unpermitted meetings in mosques [and] engaged in inciting youth to violence. They had been agitating the youth saying they should not surrender to fear and that the youth should be ready to spill their blood till their demands are met”. The police and elders had pleaded with the group to listen, but the group refused and then called a demonstration, without permission, at the Anwar mosque with the intention of disrupting the AU Summit. At this time they had violently driven off the security guards and other members of the Mosque, and occupied the Mosque for two days, breaking into the Mosque’s audio equipment room and using the equipment to try and incite further violence.

Following these incidents some highly exaggerated reports were published, suggesting some of the reporting might have political motives. Irrespective of what actually happened or the reality of the arguments, opposition organizations abroad immediately laid claim to a long narrative of “Muslim

persecution in Ethiopia”, interpreting these minor incidents in terms of an imaginary picture of Ethiopia engulfed in growing conflict with extremism on the one hand and a violent outbreak of Muslim activism against state-led persecution and a fight for freedom of religion on the other. Both interpretations are a complete misreading of what happened. The former is trying to raise the spectre of a mythical future of religious strife; the latter ignores the fact that the problem was caused by a small group of urban-centred radicals deliberately causing trouble as they proved by taking other Muslims hostage in Mosques, trying to force them to be complicit in their clashes with the police and so claim ‘persecution’. Both totally ignore the fact that freedom of religion is constitutionally guaranteed and religious activity by anyone is freely allowed unless it breaks the law.

Indeed, it is quite clear from the actual facts that most of the media ‘reports’ are little more than clumsy attempts to make political propaganda. And what we are concerned with here is putting these issues in a proper and accurate context, starting with a brief overview of the current exercise of freedom of religion in Ethiopia as well as various excesses in the past by extreme elements, leading up to the recent outrages.

The current constitution of Ethiopia turned a new page in providing constitutional guarantees for equality of religion and the principle of secularism. In adopting the latter, the constitution closed off the legal avenues for those who looked for a state religion and any sympathizers of a theocratic state. At the same time, it encouraged enthusiastic worshippers to proselytize their faith, allowing for the expansion of churches, mosques, and the introduction of new foreign based sects and denominations. Ethiopian Muslims, long under legal and non-legal restrictions, were one of the groups which benefitted largely.

One major hallmark of the post-1991 era has been the complete absence of any form of regulation of religion, whether of religious policy or rules for religious activity. In other words the practice of secularism during the last two decades has been a watershed in Ethiopia’s history. This absolute liberty in the exercise of religion, however, hasn’t worked entirely properly in practice. Under a claim of freely exercising religion some extreme radicals have burnt shrines and denounced the practices of Islam in Ethiopia. With the help of foreign finance, they have even tried to destroy the significant levels of tolerance that have existed among Christians and Muslims in Ethiopia for millennia. These excesses have meant that the government has applied legal and administrative measures but in a sober and careful manner, in conformity with the principles of tolerance, non-interference in religious affairs and secularism.

The recent riots have been an extension of the attempts of some individuals to present themselves as the only representatives of the Muslim community and claim they, and their supporters, project the real understanding of Islam. The latest clashes were led by a self-appointed committee that claimed to be elected by the entire community of Muslims, to speak on behalf of the community about grievances against the Islamic Affairs Council, the Mejlis. In spite of questions about the representational nature of the committee, government officials accepted to mediate between the committee and the Mejlis to try to help resolve the problems between the two sides. The main issue that surfaced in the discussion was the election for new members of the Mejlis and allegations of the “forced imposition of a certain sect on the Muslim community” through the Mejlis.

It might be noted that the committee has shifted its position significantly. It originally welcomed the government’s position in support of peace and security, and indeed requested its assistance. However, when its own demands were not accepted, it quickly accused the government of breaching the constitution with its moderation. In the talks the government made it clear time and again that the election of the Mejlis was not its business and it was only present to moderate the standoff between the two parties. The government repeatedly made it very clear that the constitution will not

allow it to favour any one sect over the other. Any allegation to the contrary is quite simply untrue and, indeed, complete rubbish. The irony, of course, is that the extremist group, which does not respect the right of others to follow their faith of choice, has made this mantra its battle cry, taking hostages to make them complicit in its own activities and destroy holy shrines, deliberately violating the rights of others. The result has been the necessity for government action, as part of its positive duty to ensure the freedom of religion for all. This is something that is deliberately, and conveniently, ignored by most critics.

Similarly, as soon as its call for elections was agreed, the committee immediately extended its demands, insisting that the elections should be organized in Mosques rather than through kebele offices. The aim, of course, was to try to increase their support and try to take over the Mejlis, as they would expect to be able to organize more support in Mosques. The committee's entire campaign was intended to keep the majority of Muslims out of the process. As the elections had nothing to do with the government, the decision was made by the Ulema council, and this was a tipping point in exposing exactly what the committee and the extremist elements were up to. With their political ambition of derailing the constitution's principles of religious freedom, they called for violent demonstrations and tried to turn peaceful Friday prayers into clashes with the police. Their aims were countered by the way the police dealt with the matter, managing to contain the violence without any fatalities or serious injuries.

It should be repeated that the government has made it very clear that it has no intention of interfering in the affairs of any religious group. It has, however, also underlined the fact that it has the duty to protect the peace and security of the country; and this includes the duty to ensure that all can enjoy their rights without encroachment or attack by others. Any violence in this case has come from those who have been trying to derail the constitutional freedom of religion and Ethiopia's long established tolerance. Any claims to the contrary are simply untrue.

Olympic Games successes

This week has been a good week for Ethiopia's women athletes. At the end of last week, (on Friday 3rd August) Tirunesh Dibaba who took the gold medals for both the women's 10,000 and 5,000 metres in Beijing, the first female athlete to achieve this phenomenal feat, successfully defended her Olympic 10,000 metre title. Taking the lead five hundred metres from the finish, she ran the year's fastest time to win in 30 minutes 20.75 seconds. Despite having spent most of the last two years nursing injuries, she thrilled the spectators with her superb trademark finishing burst which left the others behind. The other members of the Ethiopian team, including Workinesh Kidane who finished fourth, were instrumental in the team tactics which helped Tirunesh take the gold. Today (10th August) Tirunesh will be running in the 5,000 metres along with Meseret Defar and Gelete Burka, and she will be favourite to win the race and repeat in London her double gold medal victory of Beijing.

On Sunday (5th August) Tiki Gelana took the gold medal in the women's marathon in an Olympic record time of two hours, 23 minutes and seven seconds. It was tough race, and not just the running. In London's narrow streets, Tiki Gelana was knocked down by another runner as she reached for a water bottle, a fall which left her right elbow bloodied; she got up and was promptly bumped again. Despite this, the 24-year-old took seven seconds off the previous Olympic record as she sprinted to victory down the finishing stretch of the Mall outside Buckingham Palace, to take the gold medal for Ethiopia for the women's marathon for the first time since Fatuma Roba won in 1996 at Atlanta.

On Monday (6th August), Sofia Assefa won the bronze medal in the women's 3,000 metre steeplechase. It was the first time that Ethiopia has ever won a medal over this distance. Other members of the Ethiopian team finished fifth and sixth, underlining the fact that Ethiopians are now

beginning to show their ability over shorter distances to add to their well-known long distance successes. Abeba Aregawi also competes today in the women's 1,500 metres, after coming first in her heats and semi-finals. Mekonnen Gebremedhin and Mohammed Aman also reached the finals in the men's 1,500 and 800 metres respectively, though neither managed to achieve medals. Tariku Bekele won a bronze medal in the men's 10,000 metres.

Ethiopia won seven medals at the Beijing Olympics in 2008. There are real hopes of increasing the medal count this time round. The tally so far is two gold and two bronze medals, and Ethiopia currently stands 31st in the medal table and 3rd to South Africa and Kenya in Africa. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs extends its congratulations to Tirunesh Dibaba, Tiki Gelana, Sofia Assefa, and Tariku Bekele and those who have been competing and offers its best wishes to all those still to run.

News and Views

Ethiopia starts Sudan power supply test

Ethiopia has started a test run for the supply of electricity to Sudan as a prelude to setting up permanent power exports to its neighbour. The power-supply testing started this week following the completion of the Ethiopia-Sudan Transmission Line which has been constructed at a cost of US\$41 million. The World Bank financed the project with ENEGROINVEST constructing the transmission line and SUNIR International engaged as a substation contractor. The 230 kilovolt transmission line is 296 kilometres-long and links up with Sudan's transmission lines. Initially Sudan will be provided with 100 megawatts of electricity for the test run. The two countries signed a power-supply agreement a few years back. Ethiopia's power utility, EEPCo, says the Ethio-Sudan Transmission Line Project will further develop the East African Power Pool which is aiming to encompass a number of power interconnection projects including Ethiopia-Kenya, Tanzania-Zambia-Kenya-Uganda, and Ethiopia-Sudan-Egypt. Ethiopia is intending to raise its power production capacity to 10,000 MW during the next four years. It has embarked on the construction of the 6,000MW hydro-electric power-generation project on the Abay (the Blue Nile), the biggest in Africa. This is expected to start generating power within the next two years. In addition to power exports to Sudan, Ethiopia has already started supplying power to Djibouti and to border towns in Kenya where it has also signed agreements to provide substantial supplies of power in the near future.

Ethiopian Airlines to receive its first 'Dreamliner' next week

Ethiopian Airlines has announced that it is going to take delivery of its first Boeing 787 Dreamliner on 14th August in Seattle, Washington. The CEO of Ethiopian, Tewolde Gebremariam, said "The fact that we are the first airline outside Japan to receive this ultra-modern aircraft is an affirmation of our continuing pioneering role in African aviation". He added that it was also a testimony of the commitment the airline was showing to ensure that its passengers have the best possible travel experience, together with the best industry products and services. Ethiopian Airlines, the fastest growing airline in Africa, has made it clear it is proud to be the first airline from Africa, Europe, Americas and Middle East to take delivery of the Dreamliner, and to be able to offer its passengers the 'ultimate travel experience' on-board this game-changing aircraft before other carriers. This first Ethiopian Dreamliner will make its historic trip to Africa to arrive at Bole Addis Ababa International Airport on 16th August. With its acquisition of, and firm orders for several new modern aircraft and its fast expanding network, Ethiopian Airlines is well positioned to become the leading aviation group in Africa, as laid out in its Vision 2025 strategic roadmap. It has won numerous international awards including the latest Gold award in the African Airline of the Year 2011/2012 Awards organized by the African Aviation News Portal.

Customs and Revenues Authority collects 70 Billion birr in revenue

The Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority announced this week that it has collected over 70 billion birr during the just-ended fiscal year from federal tax and non-tax revenue sources. In the 2004 fiscal year (2011-2012) the authority collected 36.1 billion birr from domestic tax sources, 34.4 billion birr from import duties and 96.7 million birr from the National Lottery Administration. Sources in the Authority indicated that though the target set by the government had been 70 billion birr, the Authority itself had aimed to collect 76.3 billion. However, problems associated with implementation of the multi-modal transport system had meant it had only achieved 90% of its intended figure. The figure of 70.7 billion birr collected, however, showed a 39% increase over the revenue collected during the previous fiscal year. In addition, 6.5 billion birr revenue was collected by the Customs and Revenue Authority from tax and non-tax sources on behalf of the Addis Ababa City Administration.

A Kenyan court gives Somali pirates twenty years in jail

On Wednesday (8th August), a Kenyan court gave seven Somalis twenty-year jail sentences for piracy. The seven had been captured by Danish naval forces after they attempted to seize a Sri Lankan fishing trawler in the Gulf of Aden. They were handed over to Kenyan authorities in October 2009. In her ruling the Magistrate said that piracy had been on the increase and the sentence should serve as a deterrent: "the acts of piracy have adversely affected the security and the trade not only of our country but the entire region." The first group of pirates to be tried in Kenya were given five year sentences in 2006