

A Week in the Horn **12th September 2014**

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News in Brief

African Union

The AU Commission on Monday (September 8) strongly rejected the conclusions of a report by Human Rights Watch, ("The Power these Men have over us: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia") claiming that soldiers from AMISOM had sexually abused and exploited vulnerable Somali women and girls. (See article)

The Executive Council of the African Union held an emergency meeting on Monday (September 8) to discuss a continent-wide strategy to deal with the Ebola crisis in West Africa. (See article)

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros, met on Monday (September 8) with Colin Bruce, World Bank Director for Regional Integration, and Ambassador Engineer Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD to discuss the Horn of Africa Initiative to economic, diplomatic and regional integration, and review proposals for collaboration over problems of internally displaced people, cross-border issues, advancing regional connectivity and extractive industries.

Ethiopia

Ethiopians celebrated the country's New Year on Thursday, Meskerem 1, 2007 (September 11, 2014). In a New Year message, President Dr Mulatu Teshome expressed his best wishes to the people of Ethiopia and hoped it will be a year of success for all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. He also gave an amnesty to 995 prison inmates.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn told journalists on Monday (September 8) that internal and external factors were responsible for the failure of the country's exports to reach their expected target last budget year. The Prime Minister also called on all stakeholders to make next year's election fair, free and democratic.

Egypt's Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Dr Hossam El-Moghazy, is expected to visit Ethiopia in mid-September at the head of a delegation of Egyptian experts to discuss the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project. Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, was in Addis Ababa last week, bringing a message from Egyptian President el-Sisi to Prime Minister Hailemariam.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, held discussions with Mr Niall Burgess, Secretary General of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland on Tuesday (September 9) on investment opportunities, Climate Resilient Green Economic Development, agricultural research and aviation training.

State Minister, Ambassador Berhane, and Mrs Natacha Vorholter, Deputy Regional Director of Save the Children International, signed an agreement to open a Save the Children Pan African Office in Addis Ababa on Monday (September 8).

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane, received on Monday (September 8) a copy of the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Togo to Ethiopia, Ambassador Ekpa Nolaki.

Ethiopia, identified as one of four African Countries of Focus, is holding an Ethio-Canada Business and Investment Conference under the auspices of the Canada-Africa Business Summit 2014 taking place in Toronto next week (September 15-18). (See article)

Eritrea

President Isaias Afwerki left for Egypt on Monday (September 8) for a two day working visit. According to the Eritrean news agency his visit was at the invitation of President el-Sisi.

Kenya

Defense lawyers for President Kenyatta have called on the International Criminal Court to drop the case against him after the Prosecution said it does not have enough evidence. Last week, ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda asked for the trial to be postponed indefinitely until the Government carries out the Prosecution's Revised Request for further records in full.

Major General Philip Wachira Kameru, appointed to head the National Intelligence Service last month, was sworn into office on Thursday (September 11) in the presence of President Kenyatta and Deputy President William Rut, a day after the National Assembly approved his appointment.

Somalia

On Friday last week, the US Department of Defense finally confirmed that Ahmed Abdi Godane, the head of Al-Shabaab, had been killed in a US airstrike on Monday last week (September 1). (See article)

The Somalia Government on Sunday (September 7) announced the replacement of the country's National Security Director, Abdullahi Mohamed Ali, and put the Somali National Army on alert for possible retaliation following Al-Shabaab's announcement that Abu Ubeid Ahmed Omar, was its new leader. (See article)

Al-Shabaab carried out two suicide car bomb attacks on Monday (September 8), killing at least 16 civilians when targeting a convoy of AMISOM troops and a Somali government convoy of police and security forces on the road from Mogadishu to Afgoye.

President Mohamud, who completed two years of his four year term of office last week, announced on Thursday that he planned to run in the 2016 Presidential elections.

Somalia's Federal Parliament Speaker, Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawar, announced on Thursday that a reconciliation conference for southwest state communities would open in Baidoa, the capital of Bay region, on Sunday (September 14), with the aim of putting an end to prevailing differences among political and community leaders and reaching a consensus over the formation of Southwest State.

South Sudan

On Monday (September 8), South Sudan President, Salva Kiir, signed a broadcast bill into law under which all broadcasting stations will be required to meet set requirements in order to obtain mandatory accreditation from a government appointed commission. Earlier, the Information Minister warned the media to carry out its work according to the law but not to cross lines.

China has agreed to send some 700 combat troops to participate in the United Nations peace keeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). South Sudan Foreign Affairs Minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, welcomed the decision on Friday last week (September 5).

Sudan

The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, on Friday (September 5) welcomed the signing of an agreement on “the National Dialogue and Constitutional Process between representatives of the Sudan 7+7 Preparatory Committee for the National Dialogue and the Paris Declaration Group, comprising the National Umma Party and the armed movements”. (See article)

Sudan’s National Elections Commission announced on Sunday (September 8) its intention to finalize the delineation of constituencies for the 2015 elections by mid-September. It said that the contested areas of Abyei, on the border with South Sudan, and of Halayeb, on the border with Egypt, would be included.

The death of Al-Shabaab’s leader Ahmed Abdi Godane....

On Monday (September 1) a US Special Forces operation using Hellfire missiles and laser-guided bombs from drones and manned aircraft, killed Ahmed Abdi ‘Godane’, the leader of Al-Shabaab. The strike destroyed two vehicles and killed six people one of whom was Godane. The others have not been identified but Somali sources have suggested that at least two or three other significant Al-Shabaab commanders may have died, including Muhammad Abu Abdullah and Sheikh Muhammad Dulyaden. The attack came at the end of a meeting held in the area of Sablaleh where Al-Shabaab had training facilities for its fighters, some 170 kms south of Mogadishu, and 40 kms from the port of Barawe, one of Al-Shabaab remaining strongholds.

The Pentagon finally confirmed on Friday (September 5) that the strike had killed Godane, one of Washington’s eight “world’s most wanted” terror leaders. Rear Admiral John Kirby, the Pentagon’s press secretary, said in a statement that “Removing Godane from the battlefield is a major symbolic and operational loss to Al Shabaab.” It was not the first time that the US has managed to remove an Al-Shabaab leader: Godane’s predecessor, Adan Hashi Ayro was killed by a US missile in May 2008, three months after the U.S. State Department declared Al-Shabaab a terrorist organization. A statement from the White House confirming the death of Godane described Al-Shabaab as the “largest al-Qaeda affiliate in Africa” and noted that his death reflected years of painstaking work “by our intelligence, military and law enforcement professionals.” The statement noted that Godane had publicly claimed responsibility for the Nairobi Westgate shopping centre attack last September, and that under his leadership, Al-Shabaab had claimed responsibility for many bombings, including various types of suicide attacks, in Mogadishu and in central and northern Somalia, typically targeting officials and perceived allies of the Somali government as well as the former transitional federal government of Somalia. It noted that he had also continued to oversee plots targeting Westerners, including US persons, in East Africa. The White House said the US would continue to use all the tools at its disposal, “financial, diplomatic, intelligence and military”, to address the threat of Al-Shabaab and support the Somali government’s efforts to “build a secure and stable future for the Somali people”.

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud issued a statement welcoming the death of Ahmed Abdi Godane and thanking “the US government and individuals in the Somali security forces who helped the operation.” The statement said “After cooperation between the Somali and the American government during this week, the American forces targeted a convoy transporting the Al-Shabaab terrorist group leader and some of his co-workers,” adding that “We are confirming that no one in that convoy survived the attack.” President Mohamud said “The government and the people of Somalia greatly value the support of our international allies whether it be direct intervention such as on this occasion or longer term capacity building through the training and equipping our reconstituting Somali security forces.” Offering an amnesty to Al-Shabaab members, he said: “While an extreme hardcore may fight over the leadership of al-Shabaab, this is a chance for the majority of members of Al-Shabaab to change course and reject Godane’s decision to make them the pawns of an international terror campaign.” He said the government recognized that many Al-Shabaab

members had no choice in that decision and it was also aware that many joined Al-Shabaab for money and to support their families or were tricked. He therefore offered a 45-day amnesty for Al-Shabaab members who rejected violence and renounced their links to Al-Shabaab and al Qaeda. The President added that those who chose to remain in Al-Shabaab would know what would happen to them. Al-Shabaab, he said, was collapsing. He added that “our own troops, assisted by the AMISOM forces as part of Operation Indian Ocean, are clearing the remaining pockets of Al-Shabaab out of the countryside and allowing the population to see good governance in action. Security is improving in Mogadishu and in other cities: education, health care, justice, thriving businesses, construction but most of all freedom. We are offering life, not death.”

Godane’s record as leader of Al-Shabaab was, in fact, surprisingly poor and he presided over major splits in the organization, notably in June 2013, when he ordered the execution of a number of senior Al-Shabaab commanders who disagreed with him. Those killed included Ibrahim al-Afghani and Abul Hamid Hashi Olhayi; others fled to escape assassination, among them Muktar Robow and Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys. Over a dozen senior commanders were arrested and a purge of other elements carried out, including Godane’s own security element, the Amniyaad, a force built up as his personal intelligence, security and commando force. Sheikh Aweys ended up in government hands, and Muktar Robow apparently withdrew from active participation in Al-Shabaab activities during the past year. This was particularly significant as he controlled the largest number of experienced fighters in Al-Shabaab, drawn from the Rahenweyne clan in Bay and Bakool regions. The whole episode meant that Al-Shabaab lost a significant number of its more experienced battlefield commanders just as AMISOM and the SNA reached a point at which they were able to go on the offensive on a substantial scale.

The purge was Godane’s response to accusations that Al-Shabaab’s series of defeats after 2010 (in the Ramadan offensive in Mogadishu in 2010, its enforced retreat from the city in 2011, and the loss of Kismayo to the Kenyans in September 2012) were caused by his dictatorial leadership. According to Ibrahim al-Afghani, a co-founder of Al-Shabaab, Godane indulged in tyrannical actions, demanded blind obedience and failed to consult with other leaders. Indeed, he disbanded the shura, the council of commanders, in 2011. His refusal to allow humanitarian relief during the famine of 2011 also seriously damaged Al-Shabaab’s credibility. His coup in June 2013, in fact, realigned Al-Shabaab with the most extreme elements and with the terrorist tactics which had already begun to alienate most of Al-Shabaab’s more moderate sympathizers, the vast majority of its support, who were becoming tired of Al-Shabaab’s abuses and excesses.

Following the killings, Al-Shabaab’s activities became more and more confined to terrorist activity, the other main strand of Godane’s strategy. This was, in part, used as a method of control as well as a means to demonstrate that Al-Shabaab could continue to operate effectively through terrorist and suicide attacks on Government and AMISOM in Somalia, despite its battlefield defeats. The tactic was also employed externally, in 2010 in Kampala when over 70 died in two bombings, and in Kenya, most violently at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi a year ago when 67 people were killed. Kenya has also suffered, directly and through associates, from over a hundred attacks in which some 400 people have died. These provided the publicity to persuade both its supporters and its enemies, and the international media, that Al-Shabaab remains a significant danger, as well as building a screen to conceal its battlefield losses. It also allowed Godane to claim that any withdrawals from territory were no more than strategic, and ignore the fact that Al-Shabaab has been on the defensive for the last year, with most the organization’s estimated 5,000 or so fighters avoiding direct combat with SNA or AMISOM forces.

...and the future of Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab announced the appointment of Ahmed Omar Abu-Ubeid (Ahmed Dirie) as the successor to Godane on Saturday (September 6). Ahmed Omar is in his early 40s. He was born in Ethiopia’s Somali Regional State and is from the Dir, and his mother is from the same Isaaq sub-clan as Godane, and indeed was closely related to Godane’s mother. He himself was a close associate of Godane, identified by hardliners in the organization as the right choice to succeed Godane and apparently enjoying the endorsement of Godane as a possible successor. As a trusted lieutenant, he was involved in the removal of those who fell out with Godane, in 2012/2013, including the US born Omar Hammami ‘Al-Amriki’, one of the more prominent foreigners fighting for Al-Shabaab and in the arrests and killings of possible rivals last year. He also appears to have supported Godane in his efforts to make Al-Shabaab a regional guerrilla threat. However, though he had a close relationship to Godane and has something of a reputation inside Al-

Shabaab as an efficient operator, he has neither Godane's stature as a militant nor the strong clan support of some of his potential rivals.

Godane's intolerance for dissent and his removal of all rivals and internal opposition meant he had been the main decision-maker in Al-Shabaab for some years. His death could certainly result in a shift in tactics or strategic focus, but this would depend upon who is able to consolidate control over the organization. In fact, there is no evidence that Al-Shabaab commanders might intend to change their approach. The people in charge appear to be those handpicked by Godane for their loyalty to him personally and presumably largely share his aspirations, including his interest in the link to al Qaeda, his insistence on a draconian style of control and his deliberate policy of killing civilians despite the effect this has had in alienating many former sympathizers. The Al-Shabaab statement on Ahmed Omar's appointment said "Avenging the death of our scholars and leaders is a binding obligation on our shoulders that we will never relinquish nor forget no matter how long it takes," adding that "By the permission of Allah, you will surely taste the bitter consequences of your actions". Significantly, it also renewed Al-Shabaab's pledge of allegiance to Al-Qaeda. Godane's death will undoubtedly have an impact on the morale of the fighters on the ground but it is not the end of Al-Shabaab either in the short or medium term. Al-Shabaab will continue as real danger to the region, posing an ongoing terrorist threat. It will continue to have the capacity to carry out suicide attacks both inside Somalia and in neighboring countries. It also has affiliated networks of supporters in Kenya and Tanzania. In the immediate future Ahmed Omar is certainly likely to want to stamp his authority on the organization, to show that Al-Shabaab is still relevant, and that could most obviously be through a large spectacular attack, or attacks, both in Somalia and in the neighboring countries. Al-Shabaab has already threatened the US with retaliation, and it has, of course, recruited from the US in the past.

Al-Shabaab will retain a role in Somali politics, even if this has already been degraded in the last year or so. As it loses more and more territory and its popularity continues to dwindle, it is likely to be forced into further terrorist action. Other clan-based local and regional groups are already becoming more relevant in the political debates over the future government, federalism, state formation and the decentralization/centralization debate. As Al-Shabaab's territorial control weakens, local clan militias will be able to re-establish control of their own territories again. This threatens the resumption of some long-term clan disputes, interrupted when Al-Shabaab established itself as a controlling authority in some areas. Equally, it allows the Somali national Army (SNA) and AMISOM to shift their role from the purely military towards greater emphasis on the building of effective governance structures, helping the Federal Government deliver services, the most urgent current necessity. As the Government widens its control, it is now beginning to provide governmental structures for the liberated areas. These will be critical in establishing support for the administration in the future.

The scene on the ground, of course, is changing and the SNA is now significantly better equipped and trained and AMISOM has been increased in size (even though it has yet to receive the 'force enablers' it needs). For the immediate future, the SNA and AMISOM will continue their advances in Operation Indian Ocean, expanding their efforts to drive Al-Shabaab out of smaller towns and villages inland where it is still present, and isolate it from the ports along the coast from which it has derived much of its income. The advance is also aimed at capturing any remaining ports as well. Al-Shabaab's major source of income was the charcoal trade from Kismayo prior to 2012. Worth millions of dollars, this helped keep it organized, and provide the resources to buy support and enforce control. More recently, it has been moving into the ivory poaching trade from Kenya, though a larger slice of its income still comes from sugar smuggled into Kenya.

Following battlefield defeats and "tactical withdrawals", Al-Shabaab has been concentrating on straightforward criminal activities, including protection rackets, "taxes" on local businesses and NGOs operating in the area, and extortion as well as illegal trade in charcoal, sugar and ivory. It also uses supporters abroad to raise funds especially through the Gulf, both from al-Qaeda-affiliated groups and from Somali sympathizers within the Diaspora. The Eritrean government has supported Al-Shabaab and other extremist organizations linked to it. This was one of the major reasons for the imposition of UN Sanctions in 2009, and in 2012 the U.S. also sanctioned some Eritrean military officers who had worked closely with Al-Shabaab.

While sanctions may have limited direct support from Eritrea, Al-Shabaab still has significant resources. There is every reason to believe it will continue to direct its focus towards the more violent, terrorist end of the spectrum, becoming more dangerous, both internally and externally, if less politically relevant, in

Somalia. It is not surprising that General Khalif Ahmed Ereg, Somalia's National Security Minister, thought it necessary to warn last week that the Somalia government had credible intelligence that Al-Shabaab was already planning further terrorist attacks: "Security agencies have obtained information indicating that Al-Shabaab is now planning to carry out desperate attacks against medical facilities, education centers and other government facilities," he said, adding that the security forces were ready to counter attacks.

It is worth underlining that it is hardly possible to engage with the sort of violent extremist represented by Al-Shabaab leadership. It can only be eliminated. For this, the international community needs to remain properly involved. Al-Shabaab's earlier development originally occurred because its activities were ignored by the international community, allowing it the space to become established on the ground in Somalia. It is important not to make the same mistake again.

Sudan's National Dialogue Agreement provides the basis for a negotiated settlement

The signing of an agreement "between representatives of the Sudan G7+7 Preparatory Committee for the National Dialogue and the Paris Declaration Group, comprising the National Umma Party and the armed movements" in Addis Ababa on Thursday last week (September 4), sent a positive signal of progress in Sudan's National Dialogue. The aim is to create key enabling factors for a meaningful national dialogue and constitutional process to end the conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile as well as lay a solid foundation for a stable, democratic and united Sudan. This initiative is indeed a step forward towards a negotiated political settlement and [offers] ways to look for comprehensive and durable solutions to address the nation's problems. It underlines the point that a peaceful negotiated option is the only viable way to address the underlying causes of conflicts, meet the aspirations of the people and build a sustainable peace.

The eight point "Agreement on National Dialogue and Constitutional Process" was signed by representatives of Sudan's National Dialogue Subcommittee for External Liaison, Ahmed Saad Omer and Ghazi Salah al Din al-Attabani, for the Committee of 7+7 and Sadiq al-Mahdi, leader of the National Umma Party, as well as Malik Agar, Chairman of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) from the opposition side, following mediation efforts led by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). The signing ceremony brought together two representatives of national dialogue committees and SRF delegates as well as Thabo Mbeki, the Head of AUHIP. The declaration of principles emphasizes that a "comprehensive political settlement" is the ideal option to resolve the problem, and underlines that "stopping war, reaching cessation of hostilities and addressing the humanitarian situation shall be an absolute priority in confidence building measures." The agreement also underscores that "ensuring the freedoms and basic human rights, the release of political detainees and sentenced detainees are top priorities for confidence building and for the creation of a conducive environment." The declaration of principles also stresses the need for engagement in discussions on a framework agreement before commencing the national dialogue process. The agreement also says that the process shall be inclusive and all signatories shall be involved in the process, and that the "necessary guarantees shall be put on place for the conduct and the implementation of the dialogue and the constitutional process."

The signing of the agreement comes at a critical moment in which dialogue has become a necessity to resolve the impasse, put a stop to armed clashes and tackle potential challenges to the process. By bringing Government and armed and unarmed opposition forces together with a focus on confidence building measures for a new approach towards peace and the national dialogue and constitutional process, this offers ways to devise a blueprint for comprehensive solutions to offset the economic, social, security, political and humanitarian challenges facing the country. It also offers a way to identify mechanisms on how to change the lives and livelihoods of the people. If carried out effectively, the negotiated political settlement will open ways for all stakeholders to assess previous setbacks, draw on past lessons and see how to respond to new challenges. Seizing this opportunity will also provide a collective demonstration of practical efforts on ways to respond to the developmental goals which can provide for the demands and aspirations of the people of Sudan.

The current moves and the apparent appearance of a collective desire for a meaningful national dialogue and constitutional process have been welcomed by the international community. The United Nations and the African Union have both described it as significant development in the search for lasting peace in Sudan. United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, speaking on Friday (September 5) praised "the

initiative of holding a comprehensive national dialogue” aiming to attain durable peace as well as the progress being made by all stakeholders to prepare for the process. He stressed the need to create key enabling factors before the launching of the internal political process, and urged all stakeholders, “particularly the government, to ensure the creation of a conducive environment for an inclusive, transparent and credible dialogue, as envisaged in the agreement signed” on September 4. He noted that the conditions included “a cessation of hostilities, guarantees of political freedoms, including the freedom of speech and assembly, the release of political detainees and other confidence-building measures.” The Secretary-General appreciated the “tireless efforts” of “the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, headed by President Thabo Mbeki, in assisting the Sudanese stakeholders in finding a peaceful solution as the only viable option to remedy the ongoing conflicts and redress the fault lines in Sudan.” He promised that the UN would continue to support this initiative to address the underlying causes of the crises in Sudan and help the Sudanese embark on a new chapter to reach an inclusive and peaceful Sudan.

Dr Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, also welcomed the agreement reached “between the G7+7 High Committee of the National Dialogue and the Paris Declaration Group on their participation in the National Dialogue and Constitutional Process in Sudan” after holding consultations facilitated by AUHIP over the last month. She indicated that the constructive engagement of Sudanese stakeholders, on issues including the “the peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile; arrangement for cessation of hostilities; addressing the humanitarian situation; the protection of rights and freedoms; release of political detainees; and inclusivity in the National Dialogue,” would help shape the future of Sudan. She underlined the need to build on this new progress with the aim of making the National Dialogue a success. Dr Dlamini-Zuma commended the representatives of the G7+7 for their proactive engagement in open discussions with the Paris Declaration Group. She also appreciated the good will and “positive response of the leadership of the Paris Declaration Group, which includes the National Umma Party, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Army-AW (SLA-AW), the Sudan Liberation Army – Minni Minawi (SLA-MM) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N)” to engage in the meeting. She praised former President Thabo Mbeki and General Abdusalami Abubakar of AUHIP as well as their team of experts for their sustained effort in pursuit of sustainable peace, a just solution, and security, reconciliation and democracy in the Sudan.

Following the signing of the agreement, Mr Mbeki, Head of AUHIP, on Tuesday (September 9) met with the Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al Mahmoud in Doha to brief him on the agreement and the all-party gathering he was going to propose to President Al-Bashir. They discussed the ongoing efforts of AUHIP to involve the Darfur armed groups which have failed to sign the Doha Document for Peace in the National Dialogue. The Darfur Joint mediator, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, also attended the meeting.

On Wednesday, Mr Mbeki met with President Omer al-Bashir to discuss the way forward and the organization and composition of an all-party conference on the National Dialogue he has suggested should be held next month to reach a framework agreement for the internal political process. The meeting should include the members of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front and the opposition forces of the National Consensus Front, including the National Umma Party. After the meeting, Mr Mbeki said President al-Bashir had welcomed the September 4 agreement between the 7+7 Preparatory Committee for National Dialogue and the Paris Declaration Group, and AUHIP’s efforts for a successful dialogue in Sudan. He had agreed on “the need to create the right climate” for conducting the National Dialogue by allowing freedom of expression, assembly and information as well as releasing political prisoners and detainees. He also agreed to release jailed opposition leader, Ibrahim al-Sheikh, arrested last June. Mr Mbeki said the President had agreed that AUHIP should continue its efforts to engage both the 7+7 and the Paris Group on the way forward. Mr Mbeki also noted he would be briefing the African Union Peace and Security Council today, (September 12) and then the United Nations Security Council on these developments.

There are still issues that have to be resolved before any all-party conference can take place. The Sudanese Revolutionary Front demands that a comprehensive cessation of hostilities and humanitarian agreement be reached before the dialogue process starts. It also wants to finalize an agreement on security arrangements and the administration and political situation in conflict areas. Other opposition groups also want to be involved throughout the entire process. The Government has said any ceasefire agreement must be negotiated in the context of security arrangements. Mr Mbeki said this week that Sudanese government

delegations will hold parallel meetings with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM) on 12 October and another one with Darfur rebel groups on 15 October to discuss a cessation of hostilities agreement. Signing of a truce would pave the way for the rebels' participation in the National Dialogue.

No one doubts it is long overdue for all the Sudanese parties to accept the reality of the situation and devise innovative approaches to make real advances in the National Dialogue and the Constitutional Process. All agree it is time the conflicts came to an end and for all parties, including the Government, to turn their attention to dealing with their common enemy: poverty. All stakeholders should commit urgently to a real cessation of hostilities, ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to all conflict affected areas and end their conflicts. In addition to accelerating the confidence building measures enshrined in the signed agreement, discussions on the National Dialogue should seek common ground while shelving differences and expand their converging interests to improve the wellbeing of the people. Peaceful resolution of the ongoing conflicts is a necessity to unleash the country's underlying and enormous strength for peace, stability and prosperity. What is now sorely needed from the Sudan's international partners, from the AU, the UN, IGAD and the international community as a whole, is the fullest support for an "Agreement on National Dialogue and Constitutional Process" as the most practical and comprehensive solution for Sudan's problems. All Sudanese stakeholders should be strongly encouraged to engage in this initiative, engage in dialogue and cooperation to bridge their differences and provide for the real possibility for a peaceful and inclusive Sudan.

The AU Commission rejects conclusions of a report of sexual abuses by AMISOM

The AU Commission has rejected outright the claims by Human Rights Watch (HRW) that soldiers from AMISOM have sexually abused and exploited vulnerable Somali women and girls on their bases in Mogadishu. HRW released a report entitled "The Power these Men have over us: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by African Union Forces in Somalia" on Monday (September 8). The report claims AU soldiers have used a range of tactics, including humanitarian aid, to coerce women and girls into sexual activity and also raped or otherwise sexually assaulted women seeking medical assistance or water at AMISOM bases. The report says the AU and AMISOM should foster an organizational culture of "zero tolerance" of unlawful activities on their bases, Human Rights Watch said. They should establish or strengthen instruments and bodies that have responsibility for addressing these abuses, such as conduct and discipline units, and an independent investigative body at the AU level, and troop-contributing countries, the African Union, and donors to AMISOM should urgently address these abuses and strengthen procedures for justice.

The report says countries providing troops to AMISOM are primarily responsible for the conduct of their forces in Somalia and have exclusive jurisdiction over their personnel for any criminal offenses. It accepts that they have, to varying degrees, established procedures to deal with misconduct, but argues that they have not provided the necessary resources to investigate allegations or made the investigation and prosecution of sexual exploitation and abuse a priority. It also agrees that AMISOM's leadership has taken some measures to address sexual and gender-based violence, including drafting a policy on prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and doing outreach. However, Human Rights Watch argues more should be done to ensure that these efforts provide justice for victims.

Somalia's Prime Minister responded to the report saying the Government would lead a rigorous and prompt investigation into the allegations with all stakeholders and necessary action will be taken as required. Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed reiterated the Government's commitment to an objective, fair and just process in dealing with the allegations. The African Union Commission also said any allegations in the report would be thoroughly investigated, and appropriate measures will be taken if they are found to be true. It said they would be investigated through the relevant mechanisms that have been developed by the AU to prevent and respond to issues of misconduct and abuse in peace support operations, in accordance with the AU's zero-tolerance policies.

The AU Commission, in a press statement issued on Monday [Sep 8], also strongly rejected "the conclusions contained in the Report of Human Rights Watch on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by AMISOM." It said the allegations did not define the character, organizational culture and management of AMISOM, currently one of the largest peace support operations in the world. It said the portrayal of the Mission and the general conclusions drawn from the allegations against it, as reflected in the title of the report, were a misrepresentation of the sacrifices, achievements and genuine commitment of AMISOM and

the troop and police contributing countries in support of the people and the Federal Government of Somalia in their quest for sustainable peace, security, stability and reconciliation.

The Commission went on to say that it noted “with deep concern” the imbalance, inaccuracies and partial view contained in the report. It highlighted a number of points. First was that the report used a small number of cases to arrive at generalized conclusions. It said the report claimed that it had documented 21 alleged cases of sexual exploitation and rape and further that a single soldier carried out most of these acts. The generalization contained in the report does not therefore reflect the highest professional standards with which the overwhelming majority of AMISOM uniformed personnel have continued to discharge their responsibilities. The report makes sweeping general assertions about AMISOM culpability yet admits that the research did not exhaustively interrogate the scale and prevalence of these allegations.

The Commission points out it would have been extremely helpful for HRW to present, even if in confidence, important facts and evidence to the senior leadership of the AU Commission and indeed to AMISOM. They would then have been in a position to conduct an in-depth investigation into the matter. This request was, in fact, made by AMISOM in a letter to HRW on 3 June, and there was an opportunity to fulfil this request during a meeting between the AU Commission and HRW on 5 September 2014. The Commission says HRW’s failure to engage constructively with AMISOM and the AU Commission regarding the disclosure of evidence of wrongdoing, despite the AU’s willingness to do so, undermines the spirit of cooperation that could ensure the prevention and response to such allegations, in an effective manner.

The Commission’s third point is that the report lacks coherence in its account of the AU’s efforts to prevent and respond to SEA allegations in the Mission area. On one hand, the report argues that AMISOM leadership overlooks allegations of sexual misconduct. On the other hand, it makes mention of ongoing efforts to tackle allegations.

The Commission also notes the factual inaccuracies in this report such as the claim that all AMISOM staff, including locally recruited Somalis, are immune from prosecution for criminal acts committed in their official capacity and that, as such, no action is taken against alleged perpetrators of rape and sexual assaults. It takes “strong exception to the insinuation that persons allegedly involved in sexual assault and rape are afforded official protection for such crimes.” The report ignores the tools and mechanisms, such as the Status of Mission Agreement signed between the AU Commission and the Somali Government and the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and Troop Contributing Countries with provisions relating to transgressions. The Commission draws attention to the report from the Independent Panel of Experts on Somalia, appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, which provides different conclusions and also takes note that “Regular training of AMISOM forces on humanitarian and human rights laws had yielded positive results, including in regard to the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence.”

The AU Commission also takes the opportunity to detail the internal mechanisms that have been set up to prevent and discipline personnel that may have committed sexual exploitation and abuse in AMISOM and other AU peace operations. These preventive measures include pre-deployment training for all AMISOM uniformed personnel as well as robust training packages covering gender-based violence, obligations with regard to International Humanitarian Law, International Human Rights Law and International Refugee Law. There is training on the use of firearms in relation to women, children and other vulnerable groups, conducted in conjunction with the United Nations. Other measures include the Force Commander’s Directive on Conduct of Military Actions; in-Mission refresher training; the establishment of Gender Focal Points in the various contingents; development of a conduct and discipline capacity in the Peace Support Operations Division of the Peace and Security Department of the Commission; and the strengthening of AMISOM Human Rights, Protection and Gender Unit. It also notes these mechanisms are being further enhanced to ensure greater effectiveness and accountability. In this respect, the Commission said it would, however, give some of the report’s recommendations, including the setting up of in-country divisional Courts Martial in Somalia, “due consideration”.

The AU Commission’s press release concluded by reiterating its appreciation of all the Troop Contributing Countries, as well as of AMISOM civilian personnel and leadership, “for their huge sacrifices and unwavering commitment to support the Federal Government of Somalia and other Somali stakeholders, in their efforts to bring about lasting peace, security, stability and reconciliation in Somalia.”

The Canada-Africa Business Summit and the Ethio-Canada Business Conference

The Canada-Africa Business Summit 2014 is being held next week (September 15-18) in Toronto. It will be discussing the need to invest in the infrastructure, transport and telecommunications sectors of Africa. The Summit aims to identify Africa's investment opportunities, to discuss ways to close the financing gap, improve the efficiency of resource use through management of risk, and find options for governments and the private sector to collaborate in legal, financial, operational, technical, institutional and human developments.

Canada has significant expertise in renewable energy, a major, environmentally sound, vector for national development and job and income generation. The Summit will consider ways Canada can assist in port and railway development, in aviation and in transport generally as well as in information technology, to improve trade promotion. The Summit will also discuss public-private partnerships, transparency, resource development, education and employment and agricultural development, to help find effective ways for Africa's resources to be translated into significant economic and social development.

In conjunction with the Summit, Ethiopia, identified as one of four African Countries of Focus, is holding an Ethio-Canada Business and Investment Conference under the auspices of the Summit. Jointly organized by Canada's CC Africa and Ethiopia's Wafa Marketing and Promotion on the Ethiopian side, it is bringing together participants from business and investment companies and institutions in Canada.

Ethiopia and Canada have long-standing relations. Ethiopia officially established diplomatic relations in 1965 and both sides are planning to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary in October next year. During this time they have built a strong development partnership, visible in the Women Entrepreneurship Development Program; the Investment Climate Improvement Project; the Micro and Small Business Growth Program. Canada also offers Least Developing Countries Market Access to companies involved in imports and exports. Ethiopia is a country focus for Canada's international development assistance, and Canada is the third largest bilateral country donor to Ethiopia with a focus on food security, agricultural growth and sustainable economic growth. Canada also emphasizes the importance of advancing democracy and human rights to ensure that Ethiopia's development is all inclusive and sustainable. They share common goals in promoting peace and security in East Africa and Canada has made it clear it values Ethiopia's contribution in trying to bring stability to Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan.

To deepen and enhance relations, Ethiopia reopened its Embassy in Toronto in 2013, appointing Ambassador Birtukan Ayano as Ambassador to Canada. Trade flows between Ethiopia and Canada are modest and are subject to significant changes due to one-time orders of high-value products like aircraft. Equally, there is potential for growth in the short-to-medium term. In 2013, the two-way trade amounted to \$39.2 million, with Ethiopia importing \$21.3 million from Canada and exporting goods to the value of \$17.8 million. Ethiopia's exports of textiles and clothing have tariff-free access to the Canadian market. According to Ethiopia's Ministry of Mines, 13 Canadian companies with a registered capital of \$6.5 million have signed contracts for the exploration of potash and precious and base metals. In January 2010, the two countries concluded an Air Services Agreement and Ethiopian Airlines flights to Toronto began in July 2012.

The fourth Ethio-Canada Bilateral Consultation Forum was held in June this year with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations and assessing ongoing cooperation activities as well as identifying possible new areas of cooperation. The Canadian side noted the effective progress in eradicating extreme poverty, reducing child and maternal mortality, in controlling malaria, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and increasing primary education as well as expanding sustainable environmental protection and making impressive efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals targets by the 2015 deadline. It reiterated its commitment to supporting these areas. Ethiopia, which welcomed Canada's support for its efforts in fighting poverty and meeting the millennium development goals and thanked Canada for aligning its development approach to the country's Growth and Transformation Plan, noted it could benefit particularly from Canadian expertise in education.

An AU Executive Council emergency meeting on the Ebola Virus

The Africa Union Executive Council emergency meeting to consider and consolidate a collective continental response to the deadly Ebola virus was held at Addis Ababa on September 3, 2014. Opening the meeting Dr Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, said there was an urgent need for the AU to craft a united, comprehensive and collective African response and solidarity to tackle Ebola. She said that poor health services, insufficient institutional capacity and poor communication strategies made it difficult to fight Ebola in countries that had just emerged from conflict and were still building their public institutions and service centers. The AU Chairperson pointed out Ebola creates mistrust among families, neighborhoods, communities and between countries. According to the World Health Organization, the death toll from the Ebola epidemic, which has been spreading across West Africa, with Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone the worst hit countries, has reached 2,000 out of nearly 4,000 people who have been infected.

Dr Dlamini-Zuma warned that in the battle to stop the spread of the disease, "We must be careful not to introduce measures that may have more social and economic impact than the disease itself. Some affected countries have imposed quarantines on whole regions while others, so far spared from the deadly virus, have halted flights to affected countries. Border restrictions are hampering trade and as a result in some places food prices are rising." She said it was therefore important that any Ebola protection mechanisms applied by member states should be carried out in a manner that did not fuel isolation or lead to the stigmatization of victims, communities and countries. She noted that women and children were the most vulnerable element of society due to the absence of access to health services and poor protective clothing while still taking care of family members who had been affected by the Ebola Virus. Dr Dlamini-Zuma said the Ebola outbreak highlighted the weakness of African public health systems and people-centered public health institutions. She added that all stakeholders should pay particular attention to the impact of the epidemic on the post-conflict reconstruction and socio-economic development efforts in the affected countries.

Mr Carlos Lopes, UN Undersecretary General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) told the meeting that the economic impact of the Ebola outbreak will be significant. A reduction in GDP could be expected in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone as a result of the drop in mining production and because of the disruption of agricultural production, restrictions on domestic and cross-border trade, travel bans, decrease in investment and the diversion of public funding towards combating Ebola. He stressed that Ebola could only be tackled effectively through massive investment on an urgent basis and a serious investigation of its causes and the ways to defeat it.

The AU Executive Council decided to speed up movement on the operationalization of the AU Centre for Disease Control which aims at finding ways to control communicable diseases, to encourage and increase information sharing, and come up with effective and coordinated efforts to tackle diseases. The meeting was told that the AU Peace and Security Council had decided to authorize the immediate deployment of a first AU-led joint military and civil medical mission against Ebola. This will be made up of medical doctors, nurses, and paramedical personnel and will be deployed from September 10. The meeting stressed the importance of communication strategies both within and without the continent to mobilize the necessary resources and build up the capacity of member states in the field of research on vaccines and drugs against Ebola.

The Executive Council agreed not to suspend flights to and from affected areas, or to close borders, as these measures could have severe negative socio-economic and political effects and could ultimately lead to increased suffering of people in affected areas. Instead of taking these sort of measures, the Executive Council said there should be increased medical screening systems at entry and exit points of countries. The Executive Council also called upon all governments, media, civil societies, artists, cultural workers, political parties, sports persons, faith based organizations and the international community to work hand in hand with the African Union to work to control and limit the effects of the Ebola virus. A number of countries including Nigeria, Botswana, Malawi, Gambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and South Africa have extended support to Ebola affected countries, and WHO has been working to speed up efforts to provide treatments and find vaccines to halt the spread of the Ebola virus.

On Saturday (September 6), the European Union Commission announced a 140 million Euro funding for countries currently affected by the Ebola virus in West Africa. The EU Office in Addis Ababa said that

Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria would receive the funds. 38 million Euros would be specifically to help those governments bolster their health services by reinforcing treatment centers or support for health workers both during and in the recovery phase of the crisis. 100 million Euros will be for budget support operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and another 5 million Euros will be for the provision of mobile laboratories for the detection of the virus. The EU, he said, continued to be committed to a strong and coordinated international response to the crisis, and it would do all it can to help governments in the countries affected.

Ethiopia's efforts to ensure peace and mutual benefits on the Nile and for IGAD

The major objectives of Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy, providing for the building of a democratic system and good governance that guarantees sustainable development and economic prosperity for all, define its national interests and indeed Ethiopia's existence as a nation. They are central concerns of the Foreign Ministry, allied to other areas of specific importance including the building of strategic partnerships and the development of bilateral relationships with neighboring states and within the regional organization, IGAD, and in Africa.

Overall development is, of course, insolubly linked to peace and security. This particularly underlies all Ethiopia's efforts with neighbors, along border areas on issues of peace and infrastructure development, to further enhance economic integration, as well as the efforts to maintain peace and stability under the IGAD framework. It is committed to consolidating peace and stability in Somalia as well as peacefully resolving disputes between the Sudan and South Sudan and making significant contributions to resolving the crisis in South Sudan. Under the country's open door policy, Ethiopia currently hosts over 600,000 refugees, largely from Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea. They receive all necessary support in collaboration with the UNHCR and other stakeholders.

Ethiopia is currently the chair of IGAD, and plays a full part in IGAD's peace-making activities including the current mediation effort in South Sudan. These have helped increase IGAD's international acceptance as have its role in anti-terrorist and anti-piracy activity. It is now seen as the appropriate forum for tackling conflict in the Horn with institutionalized donor support through the international partners' forum. IGAD has done innovative work on peace and security, developing the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) to assess border situations that potentially lead to violence or conflict and prevent escalation. It has launched the IGAD Security Sector Program to follow the Capacity Building Program Against Terrorism (ICPAT) which ended in 2010, covering counter terrorism, maritime security, containment of transnational organized crime and capacity building for security institutions and promote development of regional policy frameworks for cooperation and developing and strengthening state, regional and community based structures for security. The East African Standby Force is due to become operational in December.

IGAD held its second IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) summit earlier this year. It has produced a Sustainable Tourism Master Plan, covering 2013-2023, as part of IGAD's aim "to expand the areas of regional cooperation, increase the members' dependency on one another and promote policies of peace and stability in the region in order to attain food security, sustainable environment management and sustainable development." It is now considering the possibilities of establishing a **Regional Development Bank** to complement resource mobilization, provide less restrictive credit for the private sector and support regional integration efforts. A **Water Dialogue Forum** ("Water for regional cooperation") is to be held in December in Nairobi. The First IGAD International Scientific Conference on Health in Addis Ababa, also in December, will consider state-of-the-art research findings and best practices referring to sexual and reproductive health, HIV, AIDS and harmful traditional practices in particular among pastoralists, refugees and internally displaced people in IGAD member states.

A major impetus for development within IGAD as a region has come from Ethiopia's keen interest for regional economic integration, with its plans for hydro-power for the region and its determination to become a middle income state by 2025 with a carbon free green resilient economy; and from Kenya with the Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopia Transport corridor (LAPSSET), and its Vision 2030. This developmental future also includes Ethiopia and Djibouti's plans for greater economic integration as well as **significant inter-state rail and road links across the region** and other developments. The recent consultative meeting (of Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda) to explore financing options for

LAPSSET, underlined the necessity of a joint approach, with the four leaders stressing “the need for regional peace and security which are necessary to provide the conditions necessary to implement LAPSSET and other projects, which will deliver the full benefit of growth and development for the region.” The leaders emphasized that key drivers of the project included its importance for regional trade facilitation and integration, linking Kenya with Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia. Ethiopia has made the same points with reference to its road and rail projects, including the high-speed rail link to connect Ethiopia with Djibouti now under construction, to provide cross border connections with Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Kenya, as well as the power transmission lines to provide cheap power to the region - Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Sudan are already connected.

Ethiopia, similarly, sees the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile and other hydro power dams as integral elements to provide benefits for the region and more widely for the Nile Basin as well as for Ethiopia. The Nile River, of course, is one of Ethiopia’s main natural resources, and one of the most important. In the past, it has been unable to use this considerable natural resource effectively. Now, following a decade of impressive growth, it is finally in a position to do so. The Nile links ten countries in the Nile Basin, and Ethiopia fully recognizes the vital role that shared interests and development can play to benefit all. Ethiopia is convinced cooperation is the rational and strategic way forward for all the countries of the Nile Basin, as demonstrated by the Cooperative Framework Agreement. As already noted, Ethiopia is fully aware that its future is intertwined with that of her neighbors, and its primary external focus is on those countries that it borders, the Sudan and South Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia, and those to which it is linked by the Nile – Egypt and Sudan. Ethiopia wants to benefit from its own sovereign and shared resources in a responsible and sustainable manner, and the Nile is a resource it is committed to share equitably with our neighbors.

The fundamental principle of Ethiopia’s Nile policy is very clear – total commitment to cooperation in the Nile Basin on the basis of the Nile Basin Initiative and the Cooperative Framework Agreement and providing equitable and reasonable utilization of water resources and sustainable and mutual benefits for all the riparian states. As the late Prime Minister Meles repeatedly emphasized, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a regional development, which will benefit and help transform the entire region through regional infrastructural and economic integration and the promise of shared prosperity for all stakeholders. Ethiopia has consistently made every effort to assuage Egyptian concerns and to reach consensus over a more equitable allocation of the Nile waters. Ethiopia is fully aware that cooperation and collaboration over these offers a win-win scenario for IGAD, for Egypt, for Sudan and for the whole of the Nile Basin and Northeast Africa.

This is why it has welcomed the outcome of the most recent session of the tripartite talks in Khartoum and the visit of Egypt’s Foreign Minister Shoukry to Addis Ababa last week with the references to intensifying the cooperative partnership between Egypt and Ethiopia and turning the Nile into a source of future cooperation. Prime Minister Hailemariam noted that Ethiopia/Egypt relations had shown significant improvement since he met President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in June in Malabo. The two Foreign Ministers agreed that Ethiopia will convene a **Joint Ministerial Commission meeting with Egypt** in November in Addis Ababa, to encourage bilateral cooperation in tourism, agriculture, urban development, health, education, air services and other areas of common interest. They also agreed to organize a business forum to encourage closer business partnerships, and to encourage a high-level political dialogue to institute an innovative cooperative partnership.

Diplomatic activities carried out by Ethiopia over the past four years have successfully promoted peace, security and friendly relations with all neighboring countries, with one exception – Eritrea. Eritrea remains the one neighbor with whom Ethiopia has been unable to improve relations, despite all efforts. Prime Minister Hailemariam has offered to hold talks anywhere and at any time, to open a dialogue to normalize relations. There has been no response. Ethiopia will continue to try, but it has to be said that Eritrea’s continued support for extremist and terrorist organizations, and its repeated efforts to destabilize the region, give little indication of the necessary change of policy without which progress is impossible.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers Best Wishes for the Ethiopian New Year – Meskerem 1, 2007 (September 11)