

A Week in the Horn

15th August 2014

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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

An Extra-ordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government will be held in Addis Ababa in Sunday (August 17) to discuss South Sudan and the progress of the IGAD-mediated peace process.

An Extraordinary IGAD Council of Ministers meeting, chaired by the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, was held in Nairobi on Wednesday (August 13). After a briefing by Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chair of the IGAD Special Envoys, on the progress of the IGAD-mediated South Sudan peace talks, Ministers agreed that "tough action" should be taken against any party that hindered the peace talks.

The East and Central Africa Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) says some 20 million people are facing acute food insecurity in Somalia, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Central Africa Republic, Sudan, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Tanzania, with the countries of particular concern being South Sudan, Central African Republic, Congo Democratic Republic and Somalia.

Ethiopia

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom, on Tuesday (August 12) opened the second round of the meeting of Ethiopian Ambassadors, Consuls-General and Directors-General in Addis Ababa., and briefed participants on the recent Ethio-US Investment Fora in the UN, the US-Africa Summit and the 2006 performance of the Ministry. (See article)

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, received the copy of the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Ethiopia, Ambassador Tkachenko Vsevolod Igorevich on Tuesday (August 12).

State Minister Dewano Kedir held discussions with a US DOW company delegation on Monday (August 11) on investment opportunities in Ethiopia. The delegation, which included over 40 senior figures, is in Ethiopia to lay the foundation for business- to-government and business-to-business partnerships and to open an office in Ethiopia. The State Minister also held talks with a New Zealand Company, Dairy and Beef Solutions, on Tuesday (August 12) about investment in Ethiopia.

The Minister of Health announced on Thursday (August 14) that no case of Ebola has been found in Ethiopia. The Minister said all necessary control mechanisms were in place at all entry points to the country.

A business networking and awareness creation session was held on Wednesday (August 12) at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Addis Ababa between representatives of the US Chemical Company, DOW and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ethiopian Investment Commission, and representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations and the Agricultural Investment Land Administration Agency.

Ethiopian Airlines announced on Friday (August 8) that the Ethiopian Aviation Academy, the largest aviation academy in Africa, has joined IATA's global training partner network as an IATA Authorized Training Center after evaluation by the IATA Training and Development Institute and the IATA Regional Office.

Djibouti

The Ministry of Defence in Wednesday (August 13) called for the release of a Djiboutian military officer captured by the Eritrean army on July 25. The Ministry said the officer had been accompanying a Qatari military delegation visiting the demilitarized zone. Qatar has been mediating between Djibouti and Eritrea since 2010, following Eritrea's attack on Djibouti in 2008.

The Ministry of Health announced on Sunday (August 11) that it was taking precautions to prevent the spread of the Ebola virus in the country, implementing controls at all points of entry. The Ministry said no cases of Ebola have been found in Djibouti and the steps were strictly precautionary.

Eritrea

The International Crisis Group has released a new report on Eritrea: "Eritrea: Ending the Exodus?" It calls on the Eritrean government to work toward gradual demobilization, restructure the country's economy to enhance job prospects and implement the long-delayed 1997 constitution. (See article)

An Eritrean opposition group, Red Sea Afar Democratic Organization (RSADO) on Tuesday (August 12) said it would step up military attacks to topple the Eritrean regime. At a three day conference this week, the 500 delegates discussed a framework of government to guarantee democracy, self-governance and equal rights of the different nations and ethnic groups in Eritrea.

Kenya

The resignation of Major-General Michael Gichangi, the head of the Kenyan intelligence service, was announced on Thursday (August 14) by a spokesperson for President Kenyatta.

The World Health Organization said Kenya was a major transport hub in the region receiving 76 flights a week and classified it as a high risk area for the Ebola outbreak on Wednesday (August 13).

Somalia

Members of the UN Security Council visited Mogadishu on Wednesday (August 13) to review progress made by the Federal Government and demonstrate continued support for the efforts to achieve sustainable peace. The Council said it expects the Federal Government of Somalia will urgently establish a national independent electoral commission, lead a process to revise the constitution and hold a referendum on it by the end of 2015, and hold elections in 2016.

Somalia's Minister of Information said last weekend that a senior Al-Shabaab commander, Hassan Hanafi Haji, arrested in Kenya last week, was to be extradited to Mogadishu. Arrested in Nairobi's Eastleigh district, Mr Hanafi was wanted in Mogadishu for alleged involvement in the killing of a number of Somali journalists and other citizens.

Danish Commerce Minister, Mogens Jensen, visited Mogadishu on Tuesday (August 12) this week for talks with President Mohamud and Government ministers on development and reconstruction. Denmark, which is planning a conference on Somalia in November, has agreed to provide 19 million kroner (US\$3.4 million) to aid the government and assist AMISOM, in addition to pledges of 200 million kroner of aid a year from 2015-2017.

The Deputy Head of AMISOM, Lydia Wanyoto Mutende, told journalists yesterday in Mogadishu that AMISOM would soon be welcoming its new Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Maman Sidikou.

The Chief of the Somali National Army, General Dahir Adan Elmi, echoing the remarks of President Mohamud last week in Washington, said at the weekend that a new offensive against Al-Shabaab would be launched soon to drive Al-Shabaab out of their remaining areas of control within the next few months.

Somaliland's Foreign Minister said that Ethiopia had reopened its border with Somaliland after new security measures, including finger-printing, had been put in place.

The chairman of Somaliland's ruling Kulmiye Party, Muse Bihi Abdi, has confirmed that Somaliland's parliamentary and presidential elections will be held next year as previously planned. He said the three national parties had agreed on a number of points including voter registration and election finances necessary for successful elections. The date is expected to be June 15, 2015.

South Sudan

The UN Security Council visited Juba and held talks with President Kiir and spoke to Riek Machar by video link. Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, President of the Council for August, made it clear that the Security Council was ready to consider "all appropriate measures" against those who undermine the peace, stability and security of South Sudan.

A US State Department spokeswoman, Marie Harf, said on Wednesday (August 13) that the United States is "considering sanctions options, as appropriate, to target those who are acting to impede the peaceful resolution of the conflict in South Sudan". She added that this applied in particular to people responsible for human rights violations.

South Sudan's former vice-president and leader of the SPLM/A-in-Opposition, Riek Machar, met with Sudan President, Omer Hassan Al-Bashir, in Khartoum on Sunday, and said later that he expected President Al-Bashir to play a major and direct role in resolving the conflict in South Sudan.

Sudan

Sudan's Health Ministry announced on Wednesday (August 13) that 77 people were killed and 227 injured by the heavy rains and floods. The most affected states include Khartoum, Kassala, River Nile, North Darfur and the White Nile. The Ministry of Water Resources, which has been reviewing water levels on the Blue Nile, the main Nile and the Atbara River, said **rain in the Ethiopian highlands meant water levels would continue to rise.**

At a press conference on Monday (August 11), Mohamed IBN Chambas, head of the UN-AU Mission in Darfur who briefed the UN Security Council last week, said fighting between Government forces and armed movements had reduced and humanitarian access had improved. He repeated his call for the non-signatory movements to the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur to take advantage of the proposed national dialogue. (See article)

Delegations from the major Sudan opposition parties, the National Umma Party (NUP) and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), an alliance of several rebel movements, on Friday (August 8) announced in Paris an agreement to unite Sudan's opposition forces and provide a solution for a "democratic transformation in Sudan". Other opposition parties welcomed the agreement.

The annual meeting of Ethiopian Ambassadors discusses fundamentalism and extremism...

The annual conference of ambassadors, directors-general and consuls-general which opened on August 6, last week continued with discussions on extremism and fundamentalism. The session was launched with a presentation by Dr Shiferaw Teklemariam, Minister of Federal Affairs, which covered major issues including the expansion, strategy, causes and aspirations of extremists together with the threat of terrorism and ways to counter it.

Dr Shiferaw reminded his audience that Ethiopia was a country where there had been complete tolerance of different religious practices but previous regimes had worked against this valuable quality in a number of ways from time to time. Some had denied equality of religions and freedom of faith while others had religion as reactionary and anti-developmental. These attitudes had no place in the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia which was promulgated two decades ago. The Constitution fully guarantees freedom of belief, equality of religions and a secular government and has been fully implemented. Despite this essential and drastic change, fundamentalists and extremists still sometimes raise questions that are fully answered by the Constitution.

Dr Shiferaw also spoke on the meaning of extremist fundamentalism with specific reference to the case of Ethiopia. He noted that the Ethiopian Government does not refer to any specific religion when defining a group or an individual as an extremist or a fundamentalist, but rather relates such a definition to cases in which there has been a violation of one or all of four articles of the Constitution. The first is article 11 which proclaims the separation of state and religion and lays down that Ethiopia shall be a secular state with no state religion; article 25 declares the right to equality before the law to all persons notwithstanding differences in religion, race, language, political opinion, sex etc.; article 27 guarantees freedom of religion to all Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples; and article 90(2) which specifies that education shall be free from any influence of politics, religion or culture. It is only violation of these articles which defines terrorism and extremism in Ethiopia. No religion can or should be a basis for seeking a definition for extremism.

Dr Shiferaw pointed out certain strategies that are employed by fundamentalists and extremists. Shaping followers of a given religion in line with their own ideologies was one approach. This included preaching that their own specific religious outlook was the only outlook available and those who do not adhere to it were traitors. This creates illusions among members of a religious community which drives people into accepting fundamentalists' destructive agendas in order to avoid alienation. Fundamentalists and extremists often work to occupy positions of leadership in religious or governmental institutions as well as charity organizations and societies in order to expand their influence. They believe that these positions will present them with golden opportunities to mobilize adequate finance and install their own structures in these institutions. Another common strategy is to use educational institutions to indoctrinate youth and women with their own religious outlook and recruit members. High unemployment rates and poverty among youth and women help fundamentalists persuade people to join their associations. They reach out to the wider society through these associations.

Dr Shiferaw said it was clear that extremist's eagerness to widen their base had nothing to do with real religious aspiration. Rather than religious aspiration it is rather a goal of rent seeking. When the possibilities for rent seeking become steadily limited, rent-seekers will often turn themselves religious and try to use religious channels to pursue the goal of personal enrichment. They also often display an ambition to take up political positions and take power to create their own religious government. They infiltrate religious institutions and politicize religion with chauvinistic or narrow nationalist rhetoric which they believe will turn people against the government and help their own ambitions for political power.

Dr Shiferaw said these extended ambitions of fundamentalists and extremists posed a real threat to the country. They incited conflict which distracted people and the Government from developmental and democratic efforts. It also threatened the successes already achieved in the protection of human and democratic rights. Extremists and fundamentalists have no time for any kind of rights. In general, they also threaten the changing image of the country that has been built up over two decades.

Dr Shiferaw concluded his presentation by indicating the way forward to counter fundamentalism and extremism. This should be composed of continuing developmental and democratization efforts, creating awareness of religious tolerance and ensuring the rule of law. These were the best strategies to counter

fundamentalism and extremism, he said. He also noted the importance of working closely with youth and women, especially those included in religious associations as this is helpful in obscuring the expansion of fundamentalism and extremism.

In response to questions, Dr Shiferaw said that the forces opposed to Ethiopia's development and peace work hard to create problems, and they use anti-peace elements operating in Ethiopia under guise of religion to further their aims. He also noted that poverty and unemployment were other factors that encouraged extremism. Dr Shiferaw stressed that the threat of fundamentalism and extremism was serious enough to deserve the attention of government and the general population. The ambition of extremists is an obstacle to the country's development and democratization processes, especially when they try to translate this into action and launch terrorist activity. Then it is high time to take action.

In conclusion, Dr Shiferaw urged Ethiopian ambassadors serving abroad to work closely with local organizations to counter these elements in the countries to which they are accredited. Those in neighboring countries need to work particularly hard as extremism is a major threat to the region. It is often difficult to deal with unilaterally. The ambassadors should use any available international or regional framework to condemn fundamentalism and extremism. They should be prepared to make clear the position of the Ethiopian Government in cases where members of the Diaspora align with fundamentalist groups and deceive their host governments and media with fabricated information. They should be prepared to counter any mis-information. They should also be prepared to provide accurate information on a regular basis to NGOs, prominent individuals and media that have leverage on policy making as well as the governments to which they are accredited.

.... and the second round of the Ambassadors meeting opens in Addis Ababa

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom, on Tuesday (August 12) opened the second round of meetings of Ambassadors, Consuls-General and Directors-General in Addis Ababa, briefing participants on three major issues, the recent Ethio-US Investment Fora in Houston and Los Angeles, the US-Africa Summit and the 2006 performance of the Ministry.

Concerning the Ethio-US Investment Fora, Dr Tedros said that these had demonstrated rising interest to invest in Ethiopia. One Forum has been held in Houston and the other in Los Angeles under the themes of "Fostering Private Sector partnership for Economic Development" and "Strategic Partnership for Economic Development." Significant numbers of representatives of US companies had turned up on the occasions, 380 at Houston and another 320 in Los Angeles. Three US multinationals with projects matching Ethiopia's priority areas had indicated that they were prepared to commence projects in wind energy, horticulture, coffee and meat processing in the near future.

Dr Tedros outlined the role Ethiopia had been able to play at the US-Africa Summit, sharing its experiences on climate-smart agricultural initiatives and investment in health. Dr Tedros mentioned that Ethiopia had also benefitted from some of the packages announced at the Summit, including the US\$33 billion commitment aimed at strengthening US-Africa ties, including Power Africa, as well a US\$5 billion World Bank commitment to energy projects in Africa, and the African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership.

Dr Tedros went on to talk about the performance of the Ministry during last year, underlining the improvements taking place in all areas. He said that Ethiopia had been actively engaged in strengthening Strategic Partnerships, notably in neighboring countries. The engagement with neighboring countries was mainly within the framework of IGAD, with special focus on peace and security. Indicators of this could be seen in the accomplishment of reconciliation between Somalia's Jubaland and the Somali Federal Government, concluded with the signing of Addis Ababa Agreement in August last year. Concerning the South Sudan conflict, Dr Tedros said that Ethiopia had tried its best to bring the warring parties together and end the conflict. It would continue to work on this. He noted that Ethiopia had supported Kenya over the issue of the ICC charges against Kenya's President Kenyatta, and had been a member of the committee which had succeeded in enabling the President to follow his case without necessarily going to The Hague. In addition to political relationships, Dr Tedros noted the extensive activities in trade and investment. A Special Status Agreement with Kenya had been signed; investment flows from Sudan increased; and discussions opened with Djibouti on complete economic integration. All this was done under the auspices of a vision of contributing to the proposed mini-economic integration of IGAD member States.

Similarly, during the last budget year (2006), Dr Tedros said that Ethiopia had been working with Nile riparian countries with special focus on the ratification of the Nile Basin cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA). Rwanda had ratified the CFA and Burundi promised to do so soon. In addition, he emphasized, the new Egyptian President was showing promising signals of a desire to resolve controversies among the riparian countries. With regard to relations with West African countries, Dr Tedros pointed out that Ethiopia had been able to sign agreements with Nigeria, Niger, Ghana and Benin. In general, he said, 2006 had been a year in which Ethiopia had successfully chaired a number of international fora, including TICAD, the Africa-Latin America Forum and the Arab-Africa Forum.

On the subject of business diplomacy, Dr Tedros said the Ministry's performance last year had exceeded its targets. This could be illustrated by reference to the fact that many of the leaders who had visited Ethiopia over the last year had brought business delegations with them. Leaders and Ministers from China, Japan, Finland, Israel, and Germany had all been accompanied by substantial business delegations. In addition, a number of international brand names, including General Electric and Unilever promised to invest in Ethiopia. Many more multinationals were eyeing Ethiopia as a destination for investment. It all showed that the Ministry's Business Diplomacy effort was registering considerable success.

The Ministry had also registered significant progress in engaging with the Diaspora, designing programs to 'Know your Country' and setting up internship programs to attract the attention of youngsters in the Diaspora. In dealing with the Diaspora, the Ministry employed a strategy of categorizing members under professional groupings in order to maximize the benefit. The fact that the Ethio-American Doctors Group, a group of health professionals, had now promised to set up an international-standard hospital in Addis Ababa was an indicator of the relevance of this strategy. The Ministry has also been working to provide members of the Ethiopian Diaspora with Yellow Cards.

As a final point, Dr Tedros mentioned that the Ministry had also improved its public diplomacy activities with the commencement of new projects including the 'Our Diplomacy' program aired on ETV. The social media coverage of the Ministry had been extended and the number of people using the social media accounts in addition to the Ministry's Website as a credible source of information was on the rise. The relationship with the media has been strengthened with the Ministry holding a press briefing once every two weeks for local media. Working closely with the media meant the Ministry could reach out to the general population frequently as well as making known its activities in connecting Ethiopia to the rest of the world. Commending the importance of social media, Dr Tedros pointed out that the Ethiopian Missions abroad lagged behind the Ministry itself in their usage.

Dr Tedros concluded by urging the participants to capitalize on their strengths and work aggressively to improve the areas of less satisfactory performance in which he included bond sales, services to investors and social media engagement. The meeting of the Ambassadors, Consuls-General and Directors-General continued during the week with evaluations of the performance of each mission and department.

Sudan's Foreign Minister talks about Sudan and the region and the Nile

Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Karti spoke to Asharq Al-Awsat last week about foreign policy and the government's efforts to cope with regional instability in the Horn of Africa and more widely, including the violence and chaos in neighboring Libya as well as the possibility of renewed violence in South Sudan.

Mr Karti also noted that Sudan and Qatar enjoyed a longstanding relationship reflected in Qatar's political support at the UN Security Council. He said Qatar had invested in many large-scale projects in agriculture, mining and the construction of electricity power lines. He also mentioned the recent visit of the Qatari foreign minister and President Omar Al-Bashir's visit to the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad.

On Libya, Mr Karti said the situation in Libya is difficult to judge and there were parties who want to make Libya a base for anti-Sudan movements. He said he did not expect General Khalifa Haftar to pursue the call for the Sudan opposition Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) to fight alongside him in Libya. In any case, he added, the Sudan would expect General Haftar to focus on internal Libyan issues and leave Sudan, the JEM, and other rebel groups alone. Sudan would not interfere in Libya in return. Mr Karti said the Sudan hoped to find a way to a peaceful solution in Libya.

The Foreign Minister mentioned the recent meeting between Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and President Al-Bashir. He said the discussions included the construction of roads between the two countries, ways to improve economic and Arab and African issues. On the Nile basin, Mr Karti said, they had agreed that the interests of all the basin states should be considered, to ensure all states benefit from the Nile waters. He said it was the first time he had seen a new Egyptian stance on the Renaissance Dam, and heard a senior Egyptian official say they were interested in the concerns of others. Of course the interests of the Egyptian people come first, but the issue is different after the meeting with the Ethiopian prime minister when it seemed the subject of the Renaissance Dam was on the way to being resolved after Egypt agreed to return to the trilateral approach to resolve the issue. That, he said, was a move worthy of respect.

Mr Karti, in reply to a question of allegations that there was a relationship between Khartoum and South Sudan opposition leader Riek Machar, said firmly "There is no relationship whatsoever between the Sudanese government and Riek Machar", adding that Khartoum was not hostile towards Machar, but the Government of South Sudan is. He said that the two sides would reach agreement soon and why should the Sudan be hostile to anyone, whether President Salva Kiir or Machar. They are, he said, both part of the reality of South Sudan and we don't discriminate between them. The main issue for the Sudan, he said, was the adherence of South Sudan in implementing the eight agreements between the Sudan and South Sudan.

Asked whether he thought Juba would keep to the agreements, Mr Karti said he thought there were divisions in South Sudan between those who wanted normal relations with Sudan and others who followed old militant views. These latter, he suggested, were supported by organizations, groups and Western politicians who worked on the continuation of the same policy, aimed at tearing Sudan apart. More recently they had started to work on the disruption of agreements signed with the South, especially those which improved relations between the two countries. Mr Karti said he thought President Kiir represented the side which wanted to implement these commitments, but unfortunately there were still obstacles to the implementation of the agreements, and these were intensified by such false reports, published in the Western media, alleging that Sudan was fighting alongside Machar. Mr Karti said firmly that the two sides in the conflict represented a domestic South Sudanese issue. Khartoum recognized the elected government in South Sudan, and it was also involved in initiatives to resolve the issues.

UNAMID's Joint Special Representative briefs the Security Council on Darfur

The United Nations Security Council held a session last week to consider the Secretary-General's Report on UNAMID for the period of April to June 2014 and the renewal of UNAMID's mandate. The Joint Special Representative of the AU and the UN for UNAMID and the Joint Chief Mediator, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, briefed the Council on the latest developments in Darfur and the work of UNAMID on Thursday last week (August 7). He subsequently gave an account of the session to local journalists in Darfur at a press conference on Monday (August 11).

Mr Chambas outlined the general security situation in Darfur and the factors effecting or impeding UNAMID operations. He said he had told the Security Council that fighting between Government forces and armed movements had been reduced considerably in recent months, but that intermittent inter-communal violence and acts of banditry and criminality continued to be a challenge for the civilian population of Darfur, for UNAMID peacekeepers and posed a threat to the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

He highlighted the humanitarian situation in Darfur, where 385,000 people are estimated to have been displaced by conflict since the beginning of 2014 alongside the more than two million long-term internally displaced persons, close to over 30% of the population. He said that eleven years into the conflict the humanitarian situation remained "very dire." Their plight had been compounded by the reduced presence of humanitarian actors and the reduction of humanitarian assistance as a result of capacity gaps, funding shortfalls and a fragile security environment. Nevertheless, as the Secretary-General's report noted, humanitarian access had improved. Mr Chambas said UNAMID continued to extend technical, logistic and programmatic support to the local Government and traditional institutions. This included support for local reconciliation initiatives in the Rezeigat and Nawaiba conflicts in Central Darfur; between the Ma'alia and the Southern Rezeigat in East Darfur; and between the Northern Rezeigat and Beni Hussein in North Darfur. He also said UNAMID support had helped to prevent, mitigate or minimize the numbers of civilian casualties following violent tribal clashes, and emphasized that UNAMID troops and police were becoming more proactive and adopting a more robust posture in protecting civilians.

In April this year, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2148 (2014) which provided the opportunity to rethink and re-evaluate the structure of UNAMID through a comprehensive review of its civilian, military and police components to maximize operational capability and achieve cost efficiency. The Council defined the Mission's three strategic priorities: protection of civilians; facilitation of the delivery of humanitarian assistance; and mediation between the Government of Sudan and non-signatory armed movements on the basis of the DDPD while taking into account ongoing democratic transformation at the national level, and support for the mediation of communities in conflict. Mr Chambas said he was now looking forward to the renewal of the Mission's mandate, so that a more efficient and agile UNAMID would be more effective.

Mr Chambas gave an account of "some progress" in the implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and said the members of the Security Council were supportive of UNAMID's continued efforts to assist the parties in its implementation of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. The Council welcomed the decreased clashes and hoped this marked a commitment by all parties to a de-escalation of the conflict. They also noted with concern the upsurge of inter-communal conflict and urged UNAMID to continue with its increasingly robust protection of civilian strategy.

Mr Chambas also summarized his recent mediation efforts. He said he had intensified coordination with President Mbeki, head of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and Haile Menkerios, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General to Sudan and South Sudan as called for by both the AU and the UN. He said they had agreed to explore the possibility of organizing a preparatory meeting to involve the representatives of the armed movements and the Government of the Sudan. This would be expected to explore ways of addressing the humanitarian and security situation in Darfur, deliberate on how the parties can bridge their differences, and make progress towards a comprehensive settlement of the Darfur conflict.

Mr Chambas said the greatest challenge remained how to impress upon all the parties involved in the Darfur conflict that a military solution and the status quo was unsustainable. He said he believed there was a broad and general consensus that the call for national dialogue by President Omar Al-Bashir was in line with the search for a "holistic approach to the challenges of peace, governance and democracy in Sudan." It was also, he added, an historic opportunity to resolve the Darfur crisis. He therefore called again on the non-signatory movements to take advantage of the proposed national dialogue. It was, he said, an initiative that deserved the support and engagement by all Sudanese and the international community and he urged the Council to play a more proactive role in supporting it. He said "The Sudanese parties should be assisted to create the much needed enabling environment for a genuine and inclusive dialogue and to recognize that the process could be a unique opportunity for sustainable resolution of all the conflicts afflicting the Sudan." Mr Chambas said he would urge the Sudanese Government to engage directly with the armed movements to agree to security arrangements to ensure their participation. The process, he said, should be utilized by all participants, Government and opposition alike, as an opportunity to raise any concerns, make proposals and discuss initiatives which would be used to determine the future of a stable and democratic Sudan.

The International Crisis Group's suggestions for ending the exodus from Eritrea

Last week, the International Crisis Group (ICG) produced a briefing on Eritrea, entitled "Eritrea: Ending the Exodus?" aiming to look at ways to bring an end to the flood of refugees that have been pouring out of Eritrea for several years, and now leaving at the rate of over 4,000 a month. The ICG provides details of the way "an ever-growing number of young people have fled over the last decade, frustrated by open-ended national service", and refers this large-scale emigration as the "clearest sign of extreme domestic discontent with Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki's government". Indeed, one recent report on Eritrea, said people fled because they had "to contend with a regime in which political space is non-existent, economic prospects are virtually nil and a program of indefinite national conscription [that] is effectively a form of indentured servitude, often lasting eight years or more." The UN, in January this year, estimated that there were 308,000 Eritreans outside of Eritrea, nearly 5% of the country's total population. This is certainly a very considerable underestimate.

The ICG says the growing numbers of refugees and their demographic profile, including the rising numbers of minors, has not resulted in any reforms in Eritrea nor did it produce any viable movement to create an alternative government either in or outside Eritrea. Indeed, the ICG notes, correctly, that the Government's

responses were originally limited to trying to stop the exodus through violence. Subsequently, it also appeared to accept that educated and urbanized troublemaking youth who rejected the state's demands for sacrifice and left were better outside the country. Former Information Minister, Ali Abdu Ahmed, who defected last year, quotes President Isaias saying "Let them escape, the dirty skins can get lost!"

Subsequently, however, this was modified to provide a lucrative business for the state and some individuals, described by the ICG as an apparent shoot-to-kill policy evolving into a chaotic "pay-to-leave" trade in which the threat from the Rashaida ex-paramilitaries, along the Sudan border, "was crucial to generate revenues". Once outside these potential "trouble-makers" could be taxed at the 2% required before the state is prepared to provide any services including passports, visas or entry permits for its Diaspora. The refugees also provided a very necessary source of funding in remittances and further funding could be extracted in the shape of bribes from those who want to leave illegally, to avoid being shot, or from the heavy fines levied on the families of those who left.

The two main routes out of Eritrea into Ethiopia and Sudan go across borders where guards have been authorized to shoot on sight. Those that get to Ethiopia are placed in camps and in many cases are now allowed to work and study there. Sudan, however, is largely seen as a step to getting to Italy via Libya or Israel via Egyptian Sinai. Both routes are extremely dangerous and place migrants at the mercy of human smugglers and traffickers. In the Sinai, refugees have been beaten and tortured to extract ransoms of up to \$40,000. From Libya, the route is across the Mediterranean in small, overloaded boats with the very real risk of drowning. The Lampadusa tragedy in October last year in which several hundred, mostly Eritreans, drowned in sight of land, has been only one of many examples, if the worst.

Recently, the ICG suggests, there has been some realization in official Eritrean circles that the international impact of the exodus and some of the fatalities that have taken place are proving counter-productive. These "side-effects" include a serious loss of support for the regime both at home and in the Diaspora, and a critical response in Europe concerned by the numbers arriving in Italy and then moving elsewhere. There have been growing demands in Europe for something to be done to stop the flood of Eritreans reaching Italy or dying on the way. The ICG claims the Eritrean government has calculated that the international political impact of the exodus now outweighs the benefits and Asmara has begun to try and distance itself from any political or criminal responsibility for the exodus and its accompanying rackets, which refugees claim had official involvement. The Government of Eritrea has condemned smuggling across the Sudan border and arrested a number of army officers involved, including reportedly, Brigadier-General Tekle Manjus, previously in charge of the border areas. Presidential adviser, Yemane Gebre Meskel, also participated in a conference on tackling human trafficking in Khartoum, Sudan, in May, and the President requested a UN investigation into smuggling, though Eritrea has been very critical of the UN Special Rapporteur's reports dealing with the issue.

At the same time, however, the Government has continued to claim that the human trafficking is a crime against Eritrea "conceived and orchestrated by the United States with other collaborating states, organizations and agencies". As a result there is widespread skepticism whether this is anything more than cosmetic action to try to satisfy the international community. Much of Eritrea's recent activity on the international stage has clearly been designed to try and persuade members of the international community and the UN Security Council to lift the UN sanctions on Eritrea without making any real changes in policy. The approach to human trafficking suggests the same approach.

This hasn't stopped the flood of those escaping across the borders and the ICG's paper makes a number of recommendations on how this might be achieved. Three of these relate to Eritrea's internal affairs: the Government of Eritrea should activate former plans for gradual demobilization, especially of national service conscripts; it should re-open (actually - open) political space gradually by implementing the long-delayed 1997 constitution; and thirdly it should restructure the economy to enhance job prospects for the youth and following through on offers to the Diaspora to encourage direct investment.

These may all be sensible ideas but they require major changes in Eritrean Government policy and, more important, in the thinking of President Isaias. There has been no indication that this is considered possible or desirable. Neither appears likely. President Isaias did make a reference to implementing a constitution in his last Independence Day speech, but little emphasis can be placed on this in light of his repeated earlier statements on the constitution and his own firm refusal to accept the National Assembly's unprecedented snub to him by its recognition of the draft in 1997. The subsequent arrest of those in government and party

who wanted to implement the constitution in 2001 underlined his distaste for any constitutional government. Many of those detained have apparently since died in solitary confinement. Indeed, President Isaias has suggested in the past that he sees no possibility of any change in government in his lifetime, or as he then added (in the 1990s) for the next thirty or forty years. Similarly, the President has repeatedly made it clear that he believes that conscription is necessary as Eritrea is in a state of war and also for development. The conscripts are routinely used as cheap labor for government and state companies and, as many refugees have repeatedly testified, as virtual “slave labor” for international mining, from Canada and Australia operating in Eritrea as well as government or ruling party companies.

The ICG goes on to make some other suggestions for Eritrea’s neighbors and to IGAD. These include “adopting a comprehensive strategic approach toward Eritrea aimed at relaxing bilateral relations, including a creative, mediated way to resolve the boundary dispute with Ethiopia that removes any external obstacle to demobilization in Eritrea, and consequent normalization of regional relations.

These ideas ignore or pass over a number of critical problems, not least the consistent failure of Eritrea to respond to any number of suggestions by other countries as well as the repeated efforts by Ethiopia to open talks on normalization of relations in order to finally resolve the boundary issue. The ICG suggests that “Asmara bitterly resents the reluctance of the Algiers Agreements’ international guarantors to force Ethiopia’s compliance” in the Boundary Commission’s Decisions but it fails to emphasize that Ethiopia has repeatedly offered talks “anywhere, any place, any time, even in Asmara”. It doesn’t refer to the persistent attempts of Eritrea itself to undermine the Algiers Agreements from the outset in 2000, and its repeated efforts to undermine the UN Mission to Eritrea and Ethiopia with its continuous violations of the Temporary Security Zone. These culminated in the expulsion of UNMEE which was a central element of the peace process and the Algiers Agreements. If anyone has been in violation of the Algiers Agreements it has consistently been Eritrea.

Indeed the ICG call for the broader international community, led by the EU and Italy (currently EU president), and coordinated on the ground by the EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, to “develop a comprehensive and coordinated policy on Eritrea and support regional efforts to improve Eritrea-Ethiopia relations, including resolution of the boundary dispute” simply appears to suggest an approach that totally ignores all Eritrea’s regional activities since 1998 (and indeed long before), all centred on aggression and regional destabilization. More plausible, if highly unlikely to succeed, would be a comprehensive and coordinated approach to persuade Eritrea to change its approach to international relations.

Djibouti, Yemen, Sudan and particularly Ethiopia have all been victims of Eritrea aggression, and Somalia, like Djibouti and Ethiopia has been a victim of its efforts at destabilization. In May 1998 Ethiopia was the victim of Eritrean aggression when Eritrea started a war in which, to its shock, it was defeated. Forced to accept a peace deal in June 2000, President Isaias has since done everything possible to reverse the humiliation of a defeat that he has in fact consistently denied happened, making every effort to destabilize Ethiopia directly and indirectly, as well as carrying out activities in support of terrorism in Ethiopia and elsewhere.

All this has led to condemnation by the AU and IGAD and sanctions from the UN. Eritrea still continues in its efforts to carry out the destabilization of Ethiopia and the region, supporting armed and terrorist movements such as the Ogaden National Liberation Front, the Oromo Liberation Front, and Ginbot 7 all of which are designated as terrorist organizations by Ethiopia’s House of People’s Representatives, and have publicly and repeatedly said they wish to overthrow the Government of Ethiopia by any means possible. Eritrea hosts arms, trains and supports these groups, and others, in cross-border operations and terrorist activity. Equally, it still consistently refuses to talk about normalizing relations, and President Isaias still refuses to acknowledge that his forces invaded Djibouti in 2008, or that he has supported extremist elements in Somalia.

The ICG argues that the impact of the exodus on final destination countries, especially in a Europe where immigration policies are increasingly under question, demands a more creative approach to the current Eritrean government. A better way of putting it might be that it demands a more acceptable response from the Eritrean Government. Ending the exodus does need greater engagement with Eritrea, potentially ending a decade of isolation. The ICG acknowledges that this isolation has been self-imposed but in adding that this was also externally-generated, it ignores the fact that the external regional responses to Eritrea have always been generated by Eritrea’s own activity. Eritrea walked out of IGAD in 2007 when the other

IGAD states disagreed with its views over Somalia and then promptly supported extremist elements there. Its actions led to the imposition of UN sanctions in 2009. Two years later, these sanctions were strengthened following Eritrea's still unacknowledged attack on Djibouti.

Since then Eritrea has made a number of efforts to persuade UN Security Council members to lift sanctions without in any way showing any specific sign of altering its policy. Similarly, Eritrea has indicated it wants to rejoin IGAD, from which it walked out in 2007 in an apparent fit of pique when the organization approved Ethiopia's suggestions for an IGAD force for Somalia. However, again it has shown no sign of trying to improve its relations with either Ethiopia or Djibouti. Indeed, the continued support for extremism in Somalia, terrorist operations in Ethiopia and the refusal to accept mediation over Djibouti makes it clear there has been no change of policy.

The problem, quite simply, is that there is no actual indication of the one thing that is necessary – a real change of policy by the Government of Eritrea and by the one person responsible for these. The ball certainly is very much in Eritrea's court, and until Eritrea is prepared to change, the ICG should realize that no recommendations and suggestions, however sensible or desirable, can have the desired effect.

President Mohamud of Somalia outlines his country's problems and priorities in Washington

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia participated in a Batkin International Leaders Forum hosted by the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence at the Brookings Institute in Washington on Friday last week (August 8). He joined the forum to discuss the challenges Somalia is facing as it begins to build a functioning state and held a question and answer session alongside Michael O'Hanlon, senior fellow and Director of Research for Foreign Policy at Brookings.

The President briefed the audience on the current developments taking place in Somalia, explaining that the Government, with a clear four-year mandate, aimed to build State institutions on the one hand and to fight and win the war against extremists and terrorists on the other. He announced that preparations were now beginning to hold elections for the first time in 45 years. These would take place in 2016. President Mohamud said that much progress had been made in the fight against Al-Shabaab. Mogadishu was a different place today from even a year or two previously. Roads were repaired; hotels, malls and supermarkets were being constructed; and new businesses springing up. The road rehabilitation program was also being carried out in two regions adjacent to Mogadishu in order to allow agricultural products to easily reach the city's major markets. He noted that the country had started to export livestock from the southern part of the country once again, and within a couple of months, after a hiatus of almost 18 years, there were plans to export bananas once again.

Talking about the activities of Al-Shabaab, the President said Somalia was fighting one of "the most difficult wars" that the world is facing today. Terrorist organizations across the world, he said, may use different names but they are somehow linked. Al-Shabaab was closely attached to Al Qaeda and he noted that "there are clear evidences that **Al-Shabaab has trained members of Boko Haram from Nigeria, in Somalia.**" He said Al-Shabaab was based in Somalia and operated there, but it also used Somalia as a transit zone as it was a state that linked Africa and Asia. The Somali President indicated that Somalia has been a breeding ground for terrorists as there had been a power vacuum there for a long time.

However, during the last two years the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somalia National Army had carried out joint operations against the territories controlled by Al-Shabaab. Last year, Al-Shabaab had controlled some 25 districts, but today they had been deprived of overall control of ten of these after operations earlier this year. They now controlled no more than 15 and he said his goal was take these away by the year's end. He noted, however, that poverty and grievances were the two areas in which Al-Shabaab was still able to benefit from Somalia's situation.

President Mohamud emphasized that security was the top priority of his government, and that it was working hard to improve the capacity of the relevant institutions, building up security institutions and professional security forces with a national character. He explained that the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force and the Somali National Intelligence and Security agents, were the three major components of the security sector. International partners, he said, supported this area and much progress had been achieved. The President said the Government had prepared new legislation to cover operations against terrorism so the war against the terrorists would be provided with a legal foundation. The

Government had indeed now succeeded in mobilizing the whole nation to fight against terrorism and terrorists. According to the President, once relative security had been obtained across the nation, then the Government would be able to focus on development. That, he said, is where international assistance was needed: "Economic endeavors should start and go hand-in-hand with the security progress," he added.

As for the areas that need international support, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud stated that the Government had a long list of needs. In order to change old practices, however, the Government's priorities were a state-building program to include the building of institutions providing them with qualified people, with norms, rules, regulations and procedures. Another priority area was economic recovery. The President noted that since the country had been in a state of emergency for a long time, the focus should be on moving the country from emergency status to one of recovery, and then from recovery to development. He said that the development of human capital was another area being given due attention by his Government.

President Mohamud said that one of the country's major assets today was the Somali Diaspora and he noted that most of the economic activities that were taking place in Mogadishu today were mainly the result of Diaspora activity. They included the introduction of new technologies and the expansion of the hospitality industry. He said members of the Diaspora were now also being employed in various Government Ministries. Equally, he said, to get the maximum benefit out of the enormous Somali Diaspora a great deal of organization and harnessing was needed.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud also spoke of the efforts being made on the political front. He said consultations continued with the leaders of Somaliland which, he said, involved trying to find a model for reintegration. He said reconciliation processes continued with the Puntland administration and with clans in other parts of the country. The aim was to provide formal constitutional reform to improve the balance between a stronger central government and Somalia's traditional clan-based and often nomadic structures.

The African Economic Outlook Report on Ethiopia

The theme for the 2014 African Economic Outlook (AEO) Report, an annual publication jointly prepared and published by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the OECD Development Center and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), is "Global Value Chains and Africa's Industrialization". The report is the work of an international team of researchers, economists, statisticians and other experts that analyze economic, social and political data, assess the current state of economic and social development in Africa and project an outlook for the coming two years. This year's report, the first to cover 54 African countries, also covers recent developments and prospects, macro-economic policy, economic and political governance, social context and human development and a thematic analysis of countries' participation in global value chains and industrialization in Africa.

The report notes that Ethiopia continued with its strong economic performance of previous years with an estimated 9.7% real GDP growth in 2012/13, the tenth year running of robust growth with the average annual real GDP growth rate for the last decade of 10.9%. The report identified Ethiopia as the twelfth fastest growing economy in the world in the last fiscal year. In terms of the GDP sectoral growth, agriculture, which accounts for 42.7% of GDP, grew by 7.1%; industry, accounting for 12.3% of GDP, rose by 18.5%; and services, with 45% of GDP, increased by 9.9% in 2012/13. The report forecast continued growth, though at a slower pace because of constraints on the private sector. [The Prime Minister recently pointed out that the private sector's claim of constraints was hardly accurate as the Government firmly encouraged the private sector to engage in value added sectors by providing loans and other necessary assistance.]

Agriculture continues to be the back-bone of the Ethiopian economy, contributing about 80% of employment and 70% of export earnings in 2012/13 as well as 42.7% to GDP. In line with the Government's targets, agricultural value-added showed 7.1% growth in 2012/13 with grain production hitting a record level of 25.1 million tonnes. This was achieved through increased access to extension services for small-holder farmers and expansion of cultivated land supplemented by favorable weather conditions. It also benefitted from increased yields per hectare.

The report also identified three main constraints limiting the potential of the agriculture sector. These were problems with marketing institutions, despite the role of the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange in

disseminating price information and infrastructure limitations, the rising price of agricultural inputs and thirdly, soil erosion in the densely populated highlands resulting from over-cultivation. The Government has put in place mechanisms and policies to resolve these and utilize the untapped potential of the sector and increase production and productivity. These include the promotion of modern farming practices, scaling up the practices of model farmers, supporting commercialization of agriculture and the production of high value crops, encouraging micro-irrigation schemes and improving market institutions and infrastructure. All these are, in fact, outlined in the Growth and Transformation Plan.

The report notes that the service sector has been gaining importance with its share of the GDP rising from 38% to 45.2% over the last decade. Quoting the employment-unemployment survey of the Central Statistical Agency in 2012, the report says that about half of the people employed in urban areas are absorbed by the service sector, and it suggests that it grew by 9.9% during 2012/13, driven by expansion in the wholesale and retail trade (34.4%), in transport and communications (17.1%), in hotels and tourism (15.4%), and in other community services.

The Economic Outlook Report also presents the achievements and challenges in the country's macroeconomic policies and their implementation. It notes the Government's efforts to minimize the rate of inflation with "prudent fiscal policy better coordinated with monetary policy to combat inflation, while maintaining momentum of spending in physical and social infrastructure." The fiscal policy achieved improvements related to the mobilization of domestic resources and reduction of recourse to central bank lending, while at the same time increasing pro-poor spending. It showed that the Government's efforts for domestic revenue collection had improved through vigorous tax reform measures, improved tax administration and trade-facilitation efforts. Tax revenue increased by 24.8% in 2012-13, and it also increased as a ratio of GDP, by 0.1 percentage point from 11.6% in 2011/12 to 11.7% in 2012/13. Improved domestic revenue collection enabled the government to finance 81% of its expenditure from domestic sources in 2012/2013. The report underlined that the Government's strong fiscal stance in tax administration and other coordinated policy mechanisms improved the overall fiscal position.

With regard to monetary policy, the foremost challenge in 2012/13 was maintaining macroeconomic stability and in particular dealing with inflation. In the previous year, the main challenge was an unanticipated foreign currency build-up that led to expanded liquidity that, in turn, put considerable pressure on inflation. The report acknowledged the successful achievements of the Government in its monetary policy: "the monetary authorities took strong measures to limit money growth through the use of base money as the operating target. To support a tight monetary policy stance, recourse to the central bank to finance the fiscal deficit was avoided and a cash budget mechanism was introduced...on top of this, the National Bank of Ethiopia used its foreign asset holdings aggressively to sterilize monetary growth. The impact of these efforts has been seen in the reduction of the inflation rate during the year and annual inflation fell to 7.4 % in June 2013 and 7.9 % in November 2013, in contrast to 39.2% in November 2011 and 15.6% in November 2012." [The latest figure for monthly inflation for July 2014, announced this week, was 6.7%].

In the area of economic co-operation, regional integration and trade, the report noted the overall balance of payments of the country improved considerably: "the deficit in 2012/13 was only USD 114 million, compared to USD 972 million in 2011/12, as a result of the surplus in the non-factor services trade, huge private transfers and the surplus in the capital account. Trade in non-factor services registered USD 459 million net receipts in 2012/13, which was a more than five-fold increase over the preceding year. Remittance inflows reached USD 2.5 billion, equal to an increase of 19.8% increase. Capital account flows improved by 52%, to reach USD 3.2 billion (USD 2.0 billion in long-term capital (loan) and USD 1.2 billion in FDI). Official transfers were USD 1.5 billion." The report noted several arrangements during the year in regard to tariff structure advancing cooperation in trade with other regional and global countries, but it said that customs administration and administrative entry barriers appeared to be the major non-tariff barrier to be worked on.

The report said that the latest debt sustainability analyses showed Ethiopia would remain at a low risk of external debt stress and would also remain at low risk of debt stress in 2013/14 and in 2014/15. It presented details of other achievements and developments in the areas of public sector management, natural resource management and environment as well as a thematic analysis of Ethiopia's participation in the global value chains and industrialization in Africa.