

A Week in the Horn

17th October 2014

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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

A ten-day training course in conflict prevention for senior military officers from nine East African countries started on Monday (October 13) at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The training is organized by the Ethiopian International Peacekeeping Training Center (EIPKTC), funded and assisted by the Japanese government. The course is being attended by high ranking army officials from Burundi, Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda.

Ethiopia

The session of the House of Peoples' Representatives on Thursday (October 17) endorsed the President's speech of October 6, after long deliberations during which Prime Minister Hailemariam answered questions on a range of topics from MPs. (See article)

President Dr Mulatu Teshome held talks on Friday last week (October 10) with a 16 member delegation of the House of Israel International Ministry, a US organization to improve the lives of Ethiopian Jews in Ethiopia.

Ethiopians across the nation celebrated the 7th Ethiopian National Flag Day, on Monday (October 13) to remember and renew the commitment of the people and the country to peace, unity in diversity and development. (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn met with the new Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General to South Sudan and head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Ms. Ellen Margrethe Loej, on Monday (October 13) to discuss South Sudan and the peace process. (See article)

State Minister, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, met Ambassador Keith M. Harper, US Representative to the UN Human Rights Council on Friday (October 10) and briefed him on the progress of human rights and Ethiopia's path to democratization.

Dr Kesetebirhan Admasu, Ethiopia's Minister of Health, announced on Sunday (October 12) that Ethiopia had established a modern laboratory centre to step up the national Ebola prevention efforts. The laboratory began operations on Monday. Additional scanning devices have also been deployed at Bole International Airport.

Water resource ministers from Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia, along with members of the Tripartite Technical Panel, met in Cairo on Thursday (October 16) to agree on a consultancy firm of experts who will produce two new studies on the impact of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the downstream riparian states.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dewano Kedir, met a delegation from Afritrack (E.A) limited company on Wednesday October 15, 2014. The State Minister welcomed the delegation and briefed it about the business and investment opportunities available in Ethiopia.

Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, held talks (October 14) with Rybakov Valentin, Deputy Foreign Minister of Belarus. Discussions focused on expediting high-level visits, cementing all-round cooperation as well as devising ways to advancing long-term partnership at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels.

Ethiopia has picked BNP Paribas, Deutsche Bank and JP Morgan to arrange for the issue of a debut US dollar-denominated Eurobond. This is expected to take place before the end of the year. Ethiopia is rated B1 by Moody's and B by both Standard & Poor's and Fitch Ratings.

The annual dinner of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Ethiopia was hosted by Ambassador Berhanu Kebede and Chair, Laurence Robertson MP on Tuesday (October 14) at the Ethiopian Embassy in London. The occasion was attended by Members of Parliament and Peers of all parties as well as members of the business community, and representatives of civil society and friends of Ethiopia.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh on Monday (October 13) received the credentials of the new Ambassador of the United States to Djibouti, Tom Kelly. Ambassador Kelly said the US was grateful to Djibouti for hosting its troops and their cooperation in security had made impressive progress in the fight against piracy. He noted "our common goal is to rid the region of the evils of terrorism."

Minister of Health, Kassim Issak Osman, briefed the cabinet on increased anti-Ebola measures on Sunday (October 12th). He said screening measures were in place for land, sea and air-transit points of entry. He said no cases of Ebola had yet been recorded in Djibouti.

Eritrea

A new report by the International Food Policy Research Institute and Concern Worldwide issued in advance of World Food Day (October 16) says that 16 countries have alarming levels of hunger. Its Global Hunger Index is topped by Burundi, followed by Eritrea, East Timor and the Comoros. The report says over 800 million people in the world are chronically undernourished and another 2 billion suffer from "hidden hunger", stunting physical and intellectual growth.

Kenya

Professor Ali Mazrui, renowned Kenyan academic and one of Africa's leading intellectuals, has died in the US after being ill for several months. President Uhuru Kenyatta said Africa had lost one of its greatest scholars, a "towering" academic whose "intellectual contributions played a major role in shaping African scholarship".

A report by the Institute of Security Studies released on Wednesday (October 15) in Nairobi claims that certain tactics used in the war against terrorism in Kenya are undermining efforts to stop people joining criminal groups like Al-Shabaab. It calls on security agencies to review counter-terrorism measures that might increase the problem of youth radicalization in the country.

The Kenyan Tourist Board says international tourist arrivals to Kenya fell by 13.6% in the first half of this year. This follows a number of terrorist attacks blamed on Somali Islamist insurgents. The Tourist Board said arrivals totaled 428,585 in the six months to June compared to 495,978 visitors over the corresponding period last year. The figures were 24% lower than the same period for 2012.

Kenya's Attorney-General Githu Muigai is leading a team of legal experts to the International Court of Justice in The Hague for consultations over the suit filed by Somalia over the maritime boundaries of Kenya and

Somalia in the Indian Ocean. Talks between President Kenyatta and President Mohamud in New York last month failed to resolve the issue.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, heading a delegation that included the ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Oil and Minerals as well as other officials, arrived in Paris on Tuesday for a three day official visit to France. He met with President Hollande at the Elysee Palace on Wednesday.

Nicholas Kay, UN Special Envoy to Somalia alongside with the new Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, Dr Maman S. Sidikou gave a briefing to the UNSC on Wednesday (October 15). (See article)

The Chinese Embassy in Somalia was officially re-opened on Sunday (October 12) by the Chinese ambassador to Somalia, Ambassador Wei Hong Tian, and other diplomats. The ceremony was attended by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and United Nations Special Envoy to Somalia, Ambassador Nicholas Kay.

The Federal Government and the Puntland State Administration reached a 12 point agreement over their political differences after three days of talks between Prime Minister Abdiweli and Puntland State President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas in Garowe, the Puntland capital, (October 12-14) (See article)

A consultation conference designed to reform the judicial system opened this week in Mogadishu. The opening session was attended by the Minister of Justice and the Constitution, Farah Sheikh Abdikadir, the Chair of the Parliamentary Constitutional Affairs Committee, Maryam Ariif Qasim, Attorney General, Dr Ahmed Ali Dahir, and religious leaders, regional states representatives and members of civil society.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Maman S. Sidikou, strongly condemned the vehicle-borne suicide attack on Sunday (October 12) at a Mogadishu coffee shop by Al-Shabaab, killing innocent civilians and wounding many others.

The latest UN Monitoring Group Report on Somalia and Eritrea (published October 15) says key financiers of Islamist militants in Somalia are operating with impunity in Gulf States. It claims traders in the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are fueling the illegal trade in Somali charcoal banned by the Security Council in 2012. The report also says weapons flows have also continued impeding efforts by AMISOM and the Somali National Army.

President Ahmed Mahmud Silanyo headed the delegation attending the Somaliland Investment Forum in London on Tuesday (October 14). He was accompanied by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and International Investment, Energy and Minerals and of the Presidency. The aim of the conference was to promote and facilitate business and investment opportunities between Somaliland and the UK.

Sudan

Sudanese President Omer Hassan al-Bashir is paying a two-day visit to Cairo for talks with President Abdel Fattah al-Sissi on Friday and Saturday (October 17-18) at the invitation of the Egyptian President.

Sudan is hosting a regional meeting on human trafficking this week. The meeting organized by the International Organization on Migration, is funded by the EU.

An EU delegation, headed by Ambassador Alexander Rondos, EU Special Representative to the Horn of Africa has been in Khartoum this week to discuss Sudan-EU bilateral relations. The delegation called on Sudan to step up the national dialogue and reconciliation processes, strengthen the protection of human rights, and to achieve stability to build peace in the Horn of Africa.

The UN/AU Joint Mission to Darfur (UNAMID) has confirmed that three UNAMID military personnel from a patrol of Ethiopian peacekeepers were killed by unidentified armed men in Korma, North Darfur on Thursday (October 16). Acting Joint Special Representative Abidoun Bashua strongly condemned the crime and extended the Mission's and his own condolences to their families and colleagues, and to the government and people of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia.

Celebrating Ethiopia's 7th National Flag Day

The idea of celebrating the National Flag Day was initiated in 2008 following the successful celebration of the Ethiopian millennium in 2007. Since then, the celebration has been held with ever increasing participation of the general public underlining the unifying sense of nationhood. The National Flag Day has been celebrated in schools, universities, government offices, in Ethiopian missions abroad, in military barracks, in the camps of Ethiopian peace keepers abroad and everywhere with the spirit that testifies to the long-held reverence and deep sense of attachment of Ethiopians to their national tricolor. Indeed, the celebration of National Flag Day has become a rousing epitome of the notion of “unity in diversity”, the major organizing principle of governance introduced by the promulgation of the 1995 Constitution. Since its inception, the celebration of National Flag Day has served as a platform to reinforce the centrality of the ethos embodied in the flag as Ethiopians continue on the path of building a nation on the basis of equality, mutual respect and the free will of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia.

The Proclamation 654/2009, which gave legal force to the celebration of National Flag Day states that the national flag is a symbol of the sovereignty of the republic and expression of the democratic unity of the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. The proclamation defines the tricolor and its emblem as an embodiment of the foundational values of the new state that sprang from the will of its constituent units. This is reflected in the definitional values of the emblem. The blue background of the emblem symbolizes peace while the equally drawn yellow straight lines represent the equality of the nations and nationalities, peoples and religions of Ethiopia. The yellow star made of equal and straight lines that lies at the heart of the emblem is representative of the democratic unity of Ethiopian Nations and Nationalities and Peoples. The yellow rays represent the bright future of the new Ethiopia.

A document prepared by the House of Representatives for the celebration of National Flag Day notes that these values, namely peace, democratic unity, and equality, are the central ethos of the new Ethiopia. In fact, the national flag represents the coming into force of the new republic that ushered in a new foundation of unity based on mutual consent and equality to replace the old order that sustained unity through subjugation and brutality. The document also noted, however, that despite the brutality of the old order, Ethiopians also developed a strong sense of reverence to their national flag as they successfully defended the nation against foreign aggression in the past.

The new ethos also demonstrates the hard won values of the struggles of the Ethiopian people in the traditional tricolor, which represents fertility, labor and development in the green of hope, the yellow for justice and equality in and the red for the sacrifice and heroism of Ethiopians for peace and justice. In other words, the new ethos conceptualizes the culmination of the internal struggle for equality and democracy, providing a new layer of history over the deep and long traditional ethos embodied in the green, red and yellow flag.

A statement issued by the Government Communications Affairs Office underlined this, pointing out that “a national flag is an insignia that represents the common desire and interest of a given populace of a nation and their commitment to stand by their national interest. A flag is considered as a sacred embodiment of a given nation’s values and a reflection of its freedom and sovereignty.” The statement went on to add that “In view of the important significance of the flag, giving due respect to a national flag is quintessentially an act of love and respect to one’s nation and its people which in turn makes the celebration of the flag day all the more important.” Highlighting the success of the renaissance journey that the nation has embarked on, the statement noted that “in accordance with the constitution that was promulgated through the free volition of the peoples of Ethiopia, our national flag is a symbol of our desire for togetherness and unity and a covenant that proclaims our resolve to build one political and economic community.” Taking stock of the ethos of the flag, the Government statement affirmed the national flag’s indispensable role in the nation’s struggle to reduce poverty and ensure Ethiopia’s renaissance.

In a spirit that reflects the shining achievements made in nation-building over the past two decades, the 7th National Flag Day was celebrated colorfully across the nation with a range of events. This year’s celebration was held under the theme “Ethiopia is a nation that continues to gain victory over poverty and continues to lift high its national pride and its national flag.” The celebration in Addis Ababa stadium was attended by President Dr Mulatu Teshome, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Abadula Gameda, Ministers, high ranking military officers, members of the diplomatic corps and thousands of residents of the metropolis. Units

of the Federal Police and of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) paraded and the National Flag was hoisted by the President while the national anthem was played.

In his address, President Dr Mulatu Teshome noted that this year's event was unique as it was being celebrated during the period that marked the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan and preparation for the second term of the national plan. He said the Growth and Transformation Plan had been showing remarkable progress in meeting development targets, and this would enable it to lay a solid foundation for the second phase of the national plan that will start in 2016. He said "as we honor and respect our forefathers who were martyred to safeguard the sovereignty of our nation, it is incumbent on the present generation to change the dark image of our country, tainted by poverty and backwardness, through economic development and ensuring prosperity." He urged Ethiopians at home and abroad to further intensify their fight against poverty and protect the nation from those 'anti-peace elements' working to obstruct the country's renaissance. He also thanked the Ethiopian peacekeepers who were effectively carrying out their duties to restore peace and stability in the countries of Africa which were plagued with conflict.

The Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, Abadula Gameda, echoed the statement of the President. He said "the present generation is expected to write a new history by strengthening our ongoing development activities." He went on to say that "with the rise of our nation, our flag is being flown high elsewhere in the international arena" The Mayor of Addis Ababa, Deriba Kuma, told the audience that "The national flag is not just a symbol; it is rather a sign of solidarity and unity among the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia." He noted that, as Ethiopia continued to register rapid growth, its role and place among the international community was also rising as was evident in the increasing partnerships it was forging among the nations of the world. Ethiopian missions around the world also marked the National Flag Day along with Ethiopians and foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin.

This year's National Flag Day was also marked by a demonstration by residents of Addis Ababa in front of the US Embassy. The demonstrators carried placards demanding justice against the fifteen or so individuals who desecrated the national flag of Ethiopia when they tried to raid the Ethiopian Embassy in Washington and committed the dishonor of vandalizing the national flag. The demonstrators, who submitted a letter to the representative of the US mission, requested that the perpetrators of this infamous act be brought to justice. The demonstration at the US Embassy, held as it was on National Flag Day, is a significant confirmation of the resolve of Ethiopians to safeguard their national flag and the values that it represents. Any attempt to thwart the aspirations of the Ethiopian people can only be futile. The celebration of the Flag Day and the demonstration held in front of the US embassy are testimonies to this assertion. The National Flag is the expression of the new ethos of democratic unity, equality and deepening of constitutionalism. Any act of vandalism against the flag is a demonstration of disrespect to the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia and an affront to the sovereignty of Ethiopia.

Prime Minister Hailemariam answers questions from MPs on President's speech

The House of People's Representative held its second ordinary session on Thursday this week to discuss President Dr Mulatu Teshome's speech at the opening of the joint session of the House of Peoples' Representatives and the House of Federation on October 6 last week. The House approved the motion in favor of the President's speech with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn giving explanations and presenting the Government's stand on a range of economic, political and social questions raised by MPs.

The Prime Minister said that the economy grew 10.3% last Ethiopian fiscal year and it is estimated to grow 11.4% this year. He said agriculture had led the growth last year followed by the service sector, and he noted that the continuous robust growth of the agricultural sector, which amounted to 300 million quintals a year, **had made the country food self-sufficient**. Equally, there still remained much to do in addressing problems related to securing a balanced diet at household level. The manufacturing sector had grown by 18% but this had still left much to do to meet the targets set by Growth and Transformation Plan. Capacity, he said, remained the major bottleneck but overall the 10.3% growth achieved so far had been remarkable and it was above the African average. Recently, the IMF, using different parameters, had for the first time in decades, also confirmed an 8.5% growth. The Prime Minister indicated that shortcomings in capacity would be improved through time by learning on the job.

The Prime Minister highlighted the progress of the major projects being undertaken, taking the country's railway projects as a case in point. He said some 1,500 kms of railway out of a total planned 2,095 kms were

currently under construction. The 800 km Ethio-Djibouti line was more than 50% complete and by next year it would be fully operational; and the design of the 700 km Mekele-Awash line had been concluded, contractors had been selected and construction would begin soon. He indicated that as the investment needed for the rail sector was beyond the country's own means, it had been planned from the outset to involve foreign resources. These two projects involved aid from China and Turkey respectively. The Prime Minister noted that, following the global economic downturn, some of the funds promised for various projects had not been released on time to commence certain projects. This was not unexpected and had been allowed for in the Growth and Transformation Plan. Equally, he said, the Government was making every effort to finish all the mega projects on time. He said those who criticized any delays should understand the magnitude and investment needed for these projects. Concerning the sugar factories, he indicated that there had been some delays. But, he said, seven of them would be completed this year and start exporting sugar.

The Prime Minister noted a variety of problems ranging from energy fluctuations to logistics and customs that had affected the growth of the manufacturing sector, and pointed out that the weakness of private sector participation had aggravated the situation. The private sector had refrained from involvement in manufacturing because there were alternatives where they could make fast money, he said. He indicated that the Government would work to close these alternatives to encourage long term investment in the manufacturing sector. He said the Government was aware of the complicated problems an un-industrialized nation could face, and it would be renewing its efforts this fiscal year to increase the transition to an industry-based economy. The Prime Minister noted that the broad-based growth necessary needed huge investment and the Government was therefore working to increase the country's level of internal savings, focusing on the large population of farmers and urban dwellers. He said a lot had been achieved in this regard, bringing saving institutions and microfinance facilities closer to the population. Technological saving mechanisms like mobile banking were also starting to play a role in increasing savings. He said the GERD bond and the housing projects could also play a vital role in increasing internal savings. In addition, he said, the country would make every effort to keep its low level of debt; agreements had been reached with international organizations in this regard.

With regard to the upcoming election, the Prime Minister said preparations were well underway to make it fair, free and democratic. He said the EPRDF, as the ruling party, would continue to encourage awareness of the policies and strategies of the country. He noted the Government had encouraged a national consensus on several issues in its recent discussions with the university population, and had been able to achieve full understanding and support for the Growth and Transformation Plan. He insisted on the importance of the differences and discussions of ideas between political parties to promote democracy and to make alternatives available for the electorate.

The Prime Minister confirmed the Government's commitment to the peace and stability of the country and he warned those involved in any form of terrorist action or who preached ethnic and religious extremism that the Government would not tolerate this in any way. He pointed out that the Government was well informed about any such activity. Anyone who participated in or supported a terrorist group, or who initiated violence, created conflict between nations, nationalities and religious groups would be held accountable whether he was in the government, in political parties or in any profession. He reiterated that there would be no safe haven for those who encouraged conflict and tried to destabilize the country's long standing culture of tolerance.

The country's foreign relations were, he said, focused on minimizing its internal vulnerability, a vulnerability that had been largely caused by poverty. The diplomatic activities were therefore centred on economic diplomacy in which intensifying trade and investment was the focus of diplomatic efforts. Ethiopia, he said, would pursue its international responsibility of making the world a better place for all its inhabitants.

The Prime Minister said that almost all of the millions of Diaspora Ethiopians supported the nation's economic policies, participating in different investment areas and in knowledge transfer. There were, however, regrettably still a few people like those responsible for the recent incident in Washington where some "mercenaries" who took orders from Asmara and some terrorist groups had tried to pull down the Ethiopian flag at the Embassy. These were people who were determined not to change even when the opportunity was available. The Prime Minister also mentioned that the Government was working to stop human trafficking. Studies had been carried out to ensure that citizens went abroad with necessary skills and training and bilateral agreements were being made with some countries to ensure people were properly treated.

The possible threat from the Ebola virus was also raised. The Prime Minister said Ebola had become a global concern of health as well as an issue of security. He said Ethiopia had set up a national committee comprised of representatives of all relevant sectors to ensure the disease could not spread if it appeared. Intensive awareness training sessions had been conducted for those who would have to respond to the threat first and for public healthcare workers. A procedure had been put in place and medical facilities set up to deal with any Ebola case on arrival. The Prime Minister also said that the Government, as a gesture of solidarity with those countries most seriously hit, would facilitate **a volunteer program to enable Ethiopian health workers and members of the armed forces to assist in countries highly affected by the Ebola virus.**

UN Envoy to Somalia briefs the United Nations Security Council....

Nicholas Kay, UN Special Envoy to Somalia, together with the new Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia, Dr Maman S. Sidikou, gave a briefing to the UNSC on Wednesday (October 15).

Mr Kay noted that when he had previously briefed the Security Council in July, he had concentrated on the threat posed by Al-Shabaab. Since then Al-Shabaab had “suffered significant losses”. He congratulated AMISOM and the National Army on the progress of **Operation Indian Ocean**. UNSOA, he said, had been running an unprecedented operation of support, but he added helicopters and other key assets were still needed. Of course, the military gains also needed to be supported by stabilization and establishment of local administrations. This needed to be intensified and synchronized with the on-going state formation process. He welcomed the recent discussions in London on militia integration and defense sector reform. He also noted that “Somalia’s challenges remain significant” adding that “urgent and coherent action by the Federal Government and international partners is needed in security, development, political and humanitarian fields”. He emphasized the need for unity of purpose among Somali politicians and leaders charged with the transformation of the country. Kay said “with the help of the entire international community, Somalia is living through a moment of unprecedented change and optimism. We need to seize the opportunities. Somalia is a country slowly waking from a terrible nightmare.”

Mr Kay said the political process had also moved forward. He noted that the Security Council’s landmark visit in August had signaled the international community’s commitment and the need for more progress. He stressed that Somalia’s challenges remained urgent in security, development, political and humanitarian areas and these needed a unity of purpose from Somali politicians and leaders. He noted the progress in state formation, the ongoing process of reconciliation and the establishment of interim regional administrations, and encouraged the Federal Government to accelerate the process in the central regions. He reiterated his hope that there would be a new map of a federal Somalia by the end of the year. He said it was important to make faster progress on the National Independent Electoral Commission and the Boundaries and Federation Commission. The Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission should begin its work quickly and the Parliamentary Overview Committee should be established.

Mr Kay welcomed the appointment of the Independent Advisory Panel to the Financial Government Committee and looked forward to greater transparency and better financial management. He said donors also needed to strengthen transparency of aid flows under the New Deal Somali Compact, and noted that the Copenhagen High Level Partnership Forum next month would be a moment to take stock of progress towards the goals of the Compact. He said it was important that sub-federal governments had a role in the conference. Mr Kay said he remained “particularly concerned about the risk of political in-fighting,” pointing out that twice in the last twelve months this has led to bureaucratic paralysis. The president and prime minister had navigated a way out of recent tensions, he said, for which he commended them. Equally, he called on all of Somalia’s political institutions, including the federal parliament, to focus on the urgent business of establishing the institutions and processes that will pave the way to longer term peace, stability and reconciliation.” Somalia’s political institutions, including the Federal Parliament, he said, should focus on establishing the processes that will pave the way to peace and stability. He said this parliamentary session was decisive: if key laws were not passed then the 2016 deadline could not be met. Mr Kay also said human rights remained a priority and he shared the concern of the Independent Expert on Human Rights in Somalia over the recent arrests of journalists and the closure of media outlets. He also expressed his concern over the recent allegations of sexual abuse by AMSIOM troops and welcomed the AU’s commitment to a full investigation.

Another significant concern was the humanitarian situation which had continued to deteriorate. Over 3 million people needed assistance today, including over a million who were unable to feed themselves, an increase of 20% in the last six months. Humanitarian assistance had been stepped up but this was still short

of needs on the ground. By the end of August, twice as many households were being assisted per month with food aid. Over 300 metric tons of supplies for tens of thousands of people had been delivered by air due to the lack of secure access to recovered areas. But this fell short of needs on the ground. Air cargo flights simply cannot deliver the quantities required, he said, and secure road access was essential. More resources must be mobilized urgently or there would be another devastating emergency which would undermine the gains of the last two years. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the Horn of Africa, Philippe Lazzarini, had earlier echoed Mr Kay's comment, warning that 50,000 children in Somalia could die unless they are given immediate assistance. He said "We have more than one million people who are in need of urgent assistance. Among them we have 250,000 children. And among them, we have 50,000 children who are on the doorstep of death, if no assistance is provided now".

...an agreement signed between the Somali Federal Government and Puntland

Following three days of talks in Garowe, the capital of Puntland State, the Federal Government and the Puntland State Government announced a twelve point agreement on Tuesday (October 14). The agreement was read out by the Federal Government's Minister for Higher Education, Du'alle Adan Mohamed, in the presence of Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed, Puntland President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, the United Nations Special Representative Nicholas Kay, the EU Ambassador Michele Carvone d'Urso, IGAD representative, Mohamed Abdi Afey, Ethiopia's Consul General in Puntland, Asmalash Woldamirat and the negotiating teams.

According to the statement, the recent tripartite agreement by the Galmudug authorities, the local administration of Himan and Heeb and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a on the formation of a Federal State in Central Somalia will not affect the boundaries of Puntland: the Central State will consist of south Mudug and Galgaduud regions. This means the north of Mudug would remain in Puntland. The Federal Government and Puntland will cooperate on the establishment of an inclusive and united National Army. They also agreed to the even distribution of international assistance and future discussions over the provisional constitution by parliamentary committees representing Puntland and the Federal Government. The Federal Government has also recognized Puntland Secondary school certificates.

Before the talks, Federal Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, said they were aimed at resolving the current political differences between the Puntland State Government and the Somali Federal Government, allowing the two sides to resume relations and working together on peace and state-building priorities as well as reviving trust and confidence and reaching common ground on a number of issues including the provisional constitution and the sharing of resources and power. The Prime Minister said the dialogue would be important to bridging the gap between the two sides. He said Puntland had contributed to the political process that ended the transition of the Federal Government on August 2012, and said he was encouraging it to play a leadership role again. He said the talks were "crucial for the cooperation of the two sides to work together for a united, strong and peaceful future."

Ambassador Kay expressed delight with the outcome of the three-day roundtable meeting and urged the two parties to work for the common good. He said "I am happy with the agreement, I remain confident about what has happened and more importantly the good thing is that both sides showed off efforts to reach consensus." He said the state building process appeared to be gaining momentum. IGAD representative to Somalia, Mohammed Abdi Afey called it an 'historic' agreement and said it would put an end to recurrent disputes. Somalia's international partners also welcomed the agreement. A statement by the United Nations, IGAD, Ethiopia, in its capacity as Chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers, and the European Union, said the agreement was an important step forward in the path towards peace- and state-building for all Somalis. "Puntland with its 16 years of experience in state building and governance has much to contribute to building a strong, peaceful, federal, democratic and united Somalia. Many crucial steps must be jointly taken in the coming months, including reviewing and implementing a **Federal Constitution and holding elections in 2016.**" The statement added that "We stand ready to support the implementation of this agreement, including through the New Deal Somali Compact. Somalia's international partners remain committed to supporting the nation's peace and state-building agenda in full respect of the Provisional Federal Constitution".

Regional cooperation is needed to sustain positive achievements against Al-Shabaab

Remarkable progress has been achieved against Al-Shabaab by the Somalia National Army and AMISOM since September in liberating the towns and areas still held by Al-Shabaab. Most recently, the offensive "Operation

Indian Ocean” has shown immediately positive results. The port of Barawe, 220 kilometers south of the capital, Mogadishu, was seized by the Somalia National Army, backed by African Union forces, on October 5 after meeting little resistance from Al-Shabaab. Barawe, a strong hold of Al-Shabaab for several years, had been used as a supply route and was the main source of revenue from illegal charcoal exports. Elsewhere, the Somali National Army and AMISOM forces moved north from Jowhar into Hiiraan region and liberated the town of Jalalaqsi as part of operations aimed at liberating more towns from the militants. Jalalaqsi is an important trading and farming town located along the banks of Shebelle River and the road connecting the towns of Jowhar and Bulo Burdo. It is the second biggest town in Hiiraan region. The joint forces advancing from Jowhar also captured a number of small towns on the way including the important crossroads at Dangaras.

Following these and other positive achievements, Somalia’s State Minister of Defense, Mohamed Ali Haga, expressed his hopes that Al-Shabaab would face defeat within a short time. He said “We believe it will take the remaining months of this year and the first few months of next, maybe the first three to four months of next year, to liberate the rest of the areas.” Al-Shabaab has been in retreat since its fighters were forced to withdraw from the capital, Mogadishu, in August 2011, after a series of military defeats at the hands of AMISOM and the Somali National Army. In fact, since then AMISOM and the Somali National Army have forced the insurgents to relinquish control of about 70 percent of southern and central Somalia. Al-Shabaab was also weakened by the death of its leader, Ahmed Godane. In the last few weeks, the State Minister said, over 300 fighters have accepted a government offer of amnesty in return for laying down their weapons. He said: “their strength is getting weaker and weaker by the day militarily.”

Military achievements against Al-Shabaab cannot, however, be seen as the ultimate solution in fighting terrorism in the Horn of Africa region. Al-Shabaab may be the most prominent terrorist organization in the Horn of Africa, but terrorism in the region is a complex problem that requires a wide spectrum of solutions. Alongside the military campaign against terrorist groups, there is also a pressing need to work with the population at large to create understanding of the goals and motivation of terrorists. Al-Shabaab, as the chief terrorist group in the Horn of Africa, aspires to violently overthrow the central government of Somalia and impose fundamentalist Islamic law, but not just in Somalia. It has designs on other neighboring states as well. Equally important are the activities of Al-Shabaab and its affiliates to sow unrest in neighboring countries. At various times it has tried repeatedly to do this in Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia. Indeed, the Prime Minister of Somalia Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, recently reminded neighboring countries of the need to carry out precautions to prevent Al-Shabaab fighters crossing their borders. The Prime Minister noted that Al-Shabaab fighters were fleeing from the successful ongoing military offensives against them in Somalia and pointed out that there was a danger that they might try to cross into the territory of Somalia’s neighbors.

In Somalia, the shadow of Al-Shabaab continues to loom large, and the group repeatedly demonstrated its ability to melt away and return with damaging guerrilla-style attacks. It is clear that despite its expulsion from Mogadishu, it still has the capacity to carry out attacks as it showed in attacking the presidential compound, assassinating officials and ambushing African Union forces. In other words, although seriously weakened, it still has the ability to continue to threaten Somalia's gradual recovery from two decades of war, and also to promote its "jihad" well beyond Somalia's borders.

It is worth underlining that engaging with the sort of violent extremists represented by Al-Shabaab in Somalia needs several levels of involvement in addition to military activity. It requires the international community to remain properly involved in re-building the country as well as effective efforts by the Federal Government to properly address the basic needs of society. Humanitarian aid should be distributed as quickly and widely as possible to stop residents from fleeing in search of food. As Major Clement Cimana, spokesman for Burundi's AMISOM contingent said to the media recently, "Hungry Somalis may join Al-Shabaab if AMISOM and the government do not urgently help them." He was referring to the effects of the drought and to the challenge of supplying towns with food along ruined and dangerous roads.

In fact, it is not enough just to liberate the towns and cities. These liberated areas also have to be provided with the necessary peace dividends. These include ensuring their stabilization which involves the establishment of interim local administrations and local security institutions as well as the provision of much needed humanitarian assistance and basic services including education, water, sanitation and health and the supply of food where appropriate. This requires concerted efforts by the Federal Government, IGAD and all Somalia’s international partners. Encouraging achievements are being made in this direction, establishing and strengthening regional administrations to help manage the dangers still posed by Al-Shabaab, and to sustain the achievements gained so far. Poverty, disaffection, and hopelessness contribute their share to the support

for terrorism and provide an environment in which terrorists can be recruited and terrorism can thrive. It is of critical importance to focus on strengthening governance and governmental capabilities, building and maintaining infrastructure, and creating jobs.

At the same time the ability of terrorists to organize themselves often lies in a country's effectiveness in keeping or gaining proper control of its borders, coasts, and hinterland, and reducing corruption which can so easily facilitate terrorist operations. Organizational capacity in the Horn of Africa region varies, of course, but it would help the fight against terrorism if all of the countries in the region demonstrated a much greater ability to grapple with these issues both in-country and across regional borders. For its own future, the Horn of Africa must cease to be a region that offers any sanctuary to terrorists. All countries in the region, along with AMISOM and the Somalia Federal Army in Somalia, should be vigilant enough to sustain the military achievements and assist the Federal Government of Somalia in building up its capacities and functions effectively. They should be alert for any cross border movements of terrorists fleeing from Somalia and for any terrorist action in their territories to keep out the danger Al-Shabaab and others pose. Ethiopia has always been prepared to ward off terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab and others, and to work in close cooperation with all other regional and international actors. Counter-terrorism continues to require a united approach across the region.

US Special Envoy to South Sudan and Sudan talks about the way forward

Ambassador Donald Booth, US Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, last week gave a briefing on recent political developments in South Sudan and outlined US policy towards South Sudan. Talking at the Atlantic Council's Africa Center in Washington, Ambassador Booth covered the genesis of South Sudan's ten-month-old conflict, the IGAD-led peace negotiation process, and his view of the way forward.

Ambassador Booth said the genesis of the conflict stemmed from a collective failure of leadership, which had appeared in South Sudan's weak institutions, over-centralization, slow progress in security sector reform, corruption and financial mismanagement, and unresolved war-era tensions between communities. The South had been essentially unified in the arduous civil war and the period of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) leading to independence; but, said Ambassador Booth, when independence was achieved in 2011, that unifying factor faded away. A broad and all-inclusive path should have set the stage for prosperity, harmony and tranquility, but the gap between the expectations of the peace dividend following "liberation" and "a unity of purpose among the South Sudanese" to build a viable nation was, unfortunately, filled with "political ambition and a power struggle."

Ambassador Booth said the SPLM's roadmap did not embody the "new ideas, a new agenda; new political programs and organizing principles" to bury the previous effects of underdevelopment, injustice and conflict. The promises of "justice, equality, diversity, human rights, and decentralization that catalyzed the struggle" had faded away into the tragic events that followed December 2013. The SPLM had proved unable to discharge its mission in catalyzing a nation-building process out of the mandate of liberation. He was reminded that one government and party official had told him that "shame on us, shame on us; we failed to learn the lessons of those African liberation movements that have gone before us". This failure to move from a liberation movement to genuine nation-building and peace had put the nation on a downhill slope in development, collective healing, education, health, service delivery and infrastructure.

In the face of these challenges in South Sudan, Ambassador Booth reiterated that the US was and would remain committed to helping stakeholders seek a comprehensive, sustained and balanced political settlement of the crisis through political dialogue and negotiation and the creation of a stable, integrated and prosperous South Sudan. He said the US, in association with South Sudanese stakeholders and IGAD and its partners, had supported various activities. These included the forging of regional and international unity behind the IGAD-led process; negotiating a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement; creating a Mechanism to monitor and verify compliance with that agreement; revising the UNMISS mandate to sharpen its focus; negotiating humanitarian access, providing support to the AU Commission of Inquiry, and developing a multi-stakeholder process that could grapple with solutions and shape a political transition.

Ambassador Booth said the solid foundation of the policy approach of the US to the peace talks and to an immediate end to the crisis was the necessity of inclusion, which, he said, must expand to unleash a sustainable peace and lasting solution as well as feature the pluralistic nature and aspiration of the peoples of South Sudan. He said the political history of South Sudan during the CPA period and in the aftermath of independence had

highlighted personalized politics, “authoritarian tendencies, elite decision-making and un-democratic practices.” He stressed that an “elite accommodation among the individuals and factions at the heart of this crisis will not—cannot—deliver a sustainable peace on its own.” He said the stakeholders at the peace negotiations should solve their uphill task by putting national interest first as well as valuing the “views of a diverse polity” as a way out from their fault lines and grievances. Special importance must not only be given “on who occupies the presidential palace, but on what needs to be done to put South Sudan on a path to peace and prosperity.” This, he underlined, must define the transitional agenda to put the nation on the right track.

With regard to the development of a transitional agenda, he highlighted six areas that South Sudanese stakeholders should focus on to “restore broad confidence of the people of South Sudan.” These included: Transitional Security Arrangements; Transitional Governance Arrangements; Public Financial Management; Justice, Reconciliation, and Healing; a Revised and Reinvigorated Permanent Constitution Process; and Roadmap to New Elections. The first of these underlined the need for prompt measures to put a stop to the ongoing conflict. In regard to the second, the Transitional Governance Arrangements, Ambassador Booth said “rumors abound as to whom we support, whom we don’t, and whom we want to lead the forthcoming transition.” In fact, he emphasized, the US had “no personality prescription” and was only committed to putting the foundations of South Sudan’s institutions and the transitional agenda on firm ground. He said the defining of the transitional agenda would help “negotiators as who is chosen to implement it, and in what leadership configuration.” He went on to say that a transitional government must embody the needs of all South Sudan’s communities and political constituencies. To make a transition attractive and effective, he suggested “the responsibilities, powers, and decision-making modalities must be clearly defined - not only for the principals but also for a transitional cabinet and supporting transitional mechanisms.” He promised that the US was ready to support those who put the interests of the people above their political and personal interests and embrace peace.

With respect to Public Financial Management, he stressed that the transitional agenda must subscribe to transparent and accountable management of state finances. On the issue of Justice, Reconciliation, and Healing, he underlined the necessity to ensure accountability and reconciliation in the transitional agenda. On the issue of A Revised and Reinvigorated Permanent Constitution Process, he appealed to all the stakeholders to offer full support to the constitutional process and “revisit the terms of the constitutional process itself” with the aim of advancing the aspirations and interests of South Sudanese communities who had not received attention after liberation. He also made it clear that new elections should be held at the end of the transition. To make elections effective, he recommended the provision of adequate political space and protection, a review of existing legislation, sufficient funding and technical preparation. All were essential to meeting the desired goals.

Regarding the IGAD-led mediation, Ambassador Booth expressed his disappointment at the failure of the parties to comply with their commitments, to engage in a meaningful dialogue, demonstrate visionary leadership or to take hold of the opportunities offered. He added that both sides had sought “to walk-back their commitments, weaken the process, narrow its scope, and exclude others from the negotiating table” and had continued their senseless conflict on the battlefield. He underlined that the US could not stand idly by as the conflicting parties abandoned their people to this deteriorating situation. He said it was high time for the international community similarly to signal that this conflict was “intolerable”. The measures that would be taken by the international community through the UN Security Council would target the spoilers of peace, not the state, he said.