

## **A Week in the Horn 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013**

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### **African Peer Review Mechanism Report on Ethiopia launched**

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Report on Ethiopia was launched at the National Palace on Friday (11<sup>th</sup> January) at a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Hailemariam and Minister Newai Gebreab, special economic advisor to the Prime Minister as well as Ambassador Ashraf Rashed, the lead member of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons and Professor Amos Sawyer, a member of the Panel, Assefa Shifa, the Chief Executive Officer of the APRM secretariat and other high-level dignitaries.

Minister Newai, Ethiopia's focal person for the APRM, delivered an opening speech detailing the APRM process that led to the writing of the report. The Country Review was conducted on four thematic issues: Good Governance and Democracy, Economic Governance, Corporate Governance and Socio-economic Development. Minister Newai said the Country Self-Assessment Report (CSAR) had been conducted in an inclusive manner with civic societies, the media, professional associations, political parties, institutions of governance and the public at large, all actively participating. Representation by the ruling party was kept deliberately small to ensure fair representation of all political parties and to produce a representative report.

Awareness creation and sensitization sessions were also conducted to ensure that the report reflected the views of a cross-section of society. To that end, daylong meetings were conducted in some thirty three districts. Minister Newai also noted that the task of writing the report and conducting interviews and surveys was given to an independent technical body well known for successfully accomplishing similar tasks. The findings of this technical institute were later tabled for public consultation and close to 1,500 participants, in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa and in eight of the country's regions participated. According to Minister Newai, the Country Self-Assessment Report and the National Programme of Action were finalized after including comments, suggestions and corrections provided by the public consultation forums. The two documents were validated in 2009 by the Country Review Mission after it had made a visit to Ethiopia to hold discussions with different governance bodies. Subsequently, the Country Review Mission raised a number of queries and Ethiopia submitted responses in January 2012 before the Report was finally released.

Ambassador Ashraf Rashed in his speech praised Ethiopia for being “one of the first countries to join the APRM process, setting up the required organizational, institutional, and national structures, designating a focal point, establishing the National APRM Governing Council and selecting the Technical Research Institutes.” Ambassador Rashed added that the successful completion of the review and “the formal launching [of the Report] was a significant step in the APRM process in Ethiopia.” He expressed his hope that Ethiopia would make the report available in local languages and embark on preparing its Annual Progress. He also took the opportunity to underscore the importance of reflecting on the accomplishments and challenges of APRM upon its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary which will be celebrated at the forthcoming APR Forum on the side-lines of the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> African Heads of State and Government Summit here in Addis Ababa.

Prime Minister Hailemariam said that the APRM, as an offshoot of NEPAD and as an African initiative aimed at ensuring rule of law and governance, had grown tremendously in the ten years since its inception. The number of countries that had voluntarily joined the process had now reached 31, he said, and four others were also involved in joining the Mechanism. He said that as the Report was part and parcel of the APRM process “we welcome it heartily.” He noted that as the APRM was a voluntary process of self-assessment, selecting assessment criteria applicable to all countries, ensuring the independence of the panel assessments and coming up with credible reports were a challenge. The past efforts however, he said, had shown “that the value of the reports has always outweighed the burdens.”

The Prime Minister also referred to the theme of Democracy and Good Governance, stressing “Democracy is a matter of necessity and not a choice, and since the coming into power of the EPRDF Ethiopia has embarked on the road towards a fully-fledged multi-party democracy”. He added “the government will press ahead with the recommendations of the report to effect transition into robust democracy and good governance.” He said Ethiopia highly valued the Report as genuine reference material for designing future plans for the country, to improve governance and to address identified deficiencies in the thematic areas covered by the Report. At the conclusion of the launch ceremony Ambassador Ashraf Rashed presented a copy of APRM Country Review Report No.14 to Prime Minister Hailemariam.

### **Somalia's government recognized by the United States.....**

The President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is on an official visit to the United States this week and his visit has been marked by the decision of the US administration to recognize his government. The visit is his first to the United States since his election as President for Somalia, and he is accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fowzia Yusuf Haji Adan, the Minister of Information and Telecommunications, Abdullahi Ilmoge Hirsi, and other senior officials. A statement from the President's office said his visit was aimed "to boost cooperation on security, humanitarian, and development matters". The visit is seen as an indication of the commitment of the new Somali leadership to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries. Discussions with US officials have covered bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest with particular emphasis on security and development. These are among the most important components in the President's six-pillar policy plan which is aimed to secure and consolidate the security gains made so far, and prevent a possible relapse into conflict. Overcoming the country's various developmental problems is also high on the President's agenda, and as well as meeting senior officials from the US, from USAID and from the World Bank, President Mahmoud also met members of the large Somali Community residing in the US.

On Thursday [17<sup>th</sup>], following the US decision to formally recognise the new government in Mogadishu, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with President Hassan Sheikh Mohammed

at the US State Department. This was their first meeting since he became President though the Secretary of State had a meeting with him during her visit to Africa last year. During the discussion, the President and the Secretary exchanged diplomatic notes attesting to the US's official recognition of the Somali government in Mogadishu for the first time in 20 years.

US Assistant Secretary of State, Ambassador Johnnie Carson, said the US decision to formally recognize the new government underscored the progress toward political stability that Somalia has made over the past year, including "breaking the back" of the al-Shabaab insurgency. He said the US believes that "enormous progress has been made [in Somalia]", noting that the US has been "at the very centre of this in its support for AMISOM". As an example of the progress made, over the last few months, the U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has reported that the number of attacks on aid workers fell from 13 in October to four and five in November and December. Ambassador Carson also underlined that a great deal more still needed to be done in Somalia. US recognition of the Somali government will allow for additional benefits for Somalia and make it possible for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to do things that they would not have been able to do before, paving the way for more US and international economic aid for Somalia.

On Tuesday (15<sup>th</sup> January) President Mahmoud met with members of the U.S. Congress. Representative Mike Michaud said the discussion had emphasized the recent security gains and economic development in Mogadishu, and the Somali President had also asked Congress to push for the United States to re-open its embassy in Mogadishu. Ambassador Carson said the US did not have any immediate plan to do this (US policy on Somalia is currently handled by a special envoy, Ambassador James Swan, based in Nairobi) but he indicated that this could eventually follow recognition of the government. The US never formally cut its diplomatic ties with Somalia, but the country's descent into anarchy was underlined by the 1993 Black Hawk Down incident, when 18 American servicemen were killed after General Aydeed's militia fighters shot two US military helicopters out of the sky. Ambassador Carson said the US was now a long way from where it had been in October 1993.

For the past several months, President Hassan has toured the Horn of Africa region and signed several bilateral agreements as means of ensuring transparency and aiming to encourage and expand cooperation with Somalia's neighbours and with the international community. Since his election, President Mahmoud has made a number of visits to neighbouring countries in the Horn of Africa, including Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, Sudan and to Turkey, signing several bilateral agreements to help build and strengthen bilateral relationships to overcome security and developmental problems. There is a growing consensus by partners of Somalia, including its neighbours, that future international initiatives should specifically aim to assist the Somali Government to deliver effective governance, security, rule of law and basic services.

### **...the UK plans a conference on Somalia; its Africa Director visits Addis Ababa....**

The Office of the United Kingdom's Prime Minister, David Cameron, announced that Britain plans to host another international conference on the future of Somalia on 7<sup>th</sup> May. This will build on the conference on Somalia held in London in February last year where some 50 governments and international organizations, including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and UN Secretary General, Ban ki-Moon, pledged to boost aid for Somalia to help fight Islamist militants and pirates. A follow-up conference, attended by 54 countries, was also held in Istanbul in June. The new conference is intended to help sustain international support for the progress being made by the Somali government. Somalia's Foreign Minister was in London last week, and Mr. Cameron's office said he had spoken with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on Thursday last week [10<sup>th</sup>] and discussed the progress made against Al-Shabaab forces, as well as President Hassan's priorities in restoring stability in Somalia.

Prime Minister Cameron said he would use the UK's Presidency of the G8 this year to reinforce further support for the efforts of the Somali government to build a strong, prosperous and democratic country. The United Kingdom said last week that it would be working closely with both the African Union and Ethiopia during its G8 Presidency this year on a number of areas including Somalia as well as the New Alliance on Food Security and on improving G8-African Union co-ordination on peace and security matters. Prime Minister Cameron has said the UK's Presidency of the G8 will focus on three ways in which the G8 can support the development of open economies, open governments and open societies to unleash the power of the private sector: advancing trade, ensuring tax compliance and promoting greater transparency. He also noted that the UK intended to lead the battle against hunger with a special event on food and nutrition a few days before the main G8 meeting, to follow up on last year's Olympic Hunger Summit in London. He drew attention to the conditions that enable open economies and open societies to drive prosperity and growth, and identified these as the rule of law, the absence of conflict and corruption, and the presence of property rights and strong institutions. He also noted that transparency and accountability were also vital to laying the foundations of long-term growth and prosperity.

As part of the UK's organization for the conference, the Director for Africa in the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr. Nick Kay, has been on a tour of main Somalia stakeholders and partners, to reach out and interact with important stakeholders in the region. He has held meetings with the Presidents of Somalia, Kenya and Uganda as well as Ethiopia's Foreign Minister and the Chairperson of the AU Commission and the UN Special Envoy for Somalia. He met with Dr. Tedros on Wednesday (16<sup>th</sup> January) this week and briefed the Foreign Minister about the preparation and aims of the 7<sup>th</sup> May conference. Mr. Kay said the UK aimed to link the conference to the priorities of the Government of Somalia, and identified four priority areas for consultation: security, justice, public financial management and political stability. He said the aims were to endorse the plans of the Government of Somalia in these areas and coordinate ways to support its strategies and resolve gaps in funding. Dr. Tedros expressed Ethiopia's support for the conference, noting that peace in Somalia means peace for Ethiopia. He said it was important to exploit the current opportunities in Somalia as quickly as possible; adding that ensuring the ownership of the Somalia Government was vital and should be underlined by taking their priorities into consideration. The Minister said the international community should speed up its intervention without delay and support the Government of Somalia in building its own institutions and providing the capacity for the government to provide much needed goods and services for the public. The political process should also be speeded up; Ethiopia, he said, was helping in this regard **by providing the required environment in the areas it had liberated.**

There is a growing hope among Somalia's partners that the May conference on Somalia will bring about tangible results and provide for the different international actors to give increased and coordinated support to help urgent delivery on the priorities identified by the Somali government. At the same time there is concern of the need to avoid duplication of initiatives, as has happened in the past. This can take up time and divert attention, threatening to lead to developments and assistance falling short of expectation.

### **....and the AU Peace and Security Council discusses Somalia**

The African Union Peace and Security Council held its 350<sup>th</sup> meeting on Monday (14<sup>th</sup> January) to consider Somalia. The Council took note of the report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the situation in Somalia, and was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security as well as by Professor Ibrahim Gambari, Head of the AU Review Team, on the progress in reviewing AMISOM and its mandate. It also took note of statements made by the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Somalia and the European Union, of the representative

of Somalia, the Commissioner for Political Affairs and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the Commission for Somalia.

The Council welcomed the political and military progress being made and reiterated its support to the Government of Somalia. It commended the Somali forces and AMISOM for their efforts. It reiterated its call to Member States and international partners to provide the necessary support for stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction. It emphasized that this support should be guided by the priority framework elaborated by the Government of Somalia. The Council further stressed that future international initiatives should direct their main efforts to enable the Federal Government of Somalia to deliver on its ultimate objective of ensuring effective governance, security, rule of law and basic services for the Somali people.

The Council also commended the African Union Commission for the steps it had taken to review AMISOM and its mandate. It noted the preliminary findings of the Review Team, and stressed the need for this exercise to lead to the enhancement of AMISOM's effectiveness and to strengthened coordination. The Council therefore underlined the imperative need to address the issue of assured, sustainable and predictable funding for the next phase of the Mission. This, it underlined, must be guaranteed. It stressed the need for convergence of views between the AU and the UN review processes and for coordinated support by the international community. It, therefore, encouraged the Commission to interact closely with the United Nations and provide appropriate input to the UN process on reconstruction and development in Somalia. The Council looked forward to the submission of the report of the Review Team, and in the meantime decided to renew the mandate of AMISOM as of 15<sup>th</sup> January for an additional six months pending the outcomes of consultations between the AU Commission and the United Nations Secretariat on the future of AMISOM. The Council decided to remain actively seized of the situation and to review it regularly, at least once every three months.

### **'Forced labour' in Eritrea's gold mines**

On Tuesday this week [8<sup>th</sup> Jan], The Canadian Press publicized the highly critical human rights report released on the use of forced labour in Eritrea's mining industry and in particular the comments about the Canadian mining company, Nevsun Resources Ltd, which is based in Vancouver, and which runs the Bisha mine in western Eritrea. The Press quoted extensively from the report by Human Rights Watch which claims Nevsun failed to ensure that conscripted or forced labour was not used in the construction of its Bisha mining project in Eritrea: "When Nevsun began building its Bisha mine in Eritrea in 2008, it failed to conduct human rights due diligence activity and had only limited human rights safeguards in place." The Washington Post and other news agencies have now also picked up the story. The Eritrean Ambassador to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Girma Asmerom, has described the report as lies, a distortion of Eritrea's national service conscription programme and said it showed 'deliberate ignorance.'

Last week, before the publication of the report, Nevsun issued a press release commenting on the claims. It said its 60%-owned subsidiary Bisha Mining Share Company (BMSC) company (the Eritrean government owns the other 40%) was committed "to responsible operations and practices at the Bisha Mine, based on international standards of safety, governance and human rights." It claimed the use of conscripted labour at the Bisha site is not allowed, and that the company had practices and procedures "to ensure that all individuals at Bisha are working of their own free will and are not conscripts." It said these procedures included the inspection of national service discharge documentation for all Eritrean workers at Bisha.

Nevsun says that in early 2009 it had become aware of allegations that a particular Eritrean subcontractor, Segen Construction, might be employing conscripts from the country's national service. The company therefore obtained a written guarantee from Segen that it would not use

conscripts at Bisha. According to last week's press release there are currently 140 Segen employees at the mine, and all will leave Bisha by the end of August, 2013. The press release said the Company regretted if certain employees of Segen were conscripts four years ago, but added that Segen is controlled by the Eritrean State and BMSC is required to use Segen for construction work. BMSC is not allowed to do such work itself or to engage any other subcontractor for such work.

Significantly, the report says that Segen refused to allow Nevsun to interview employees to verify that they were working voluntarily, and also refused to allow Nevsun to visit the site where its workers were housed. And when Nevsun attempted to expand the mine without re-engaging Segen, the Eritrean government objected. Segen workers are still on site at Bisha. In these circumstances, it is perhaps pertinent to note that one of Nevsun's greatest assets is its low operating costs, and equally relevant to ask why these are so low.

Over the past three or four years there have been any number of accounts of the way in which the Eritrean companies sub-contracted by BMSC have 'recruited' their employees. In fact, of course, many of the construction companies are owned and run by military units and they directly employ national service conscripts. In addition to Segen another company employed at Bisha was Mereb, the company of the 74<sup>th</sup> artillery brigade. According to former conscripts, Mereb only employs national service conscripts and its workers only get the national service allowance of 500 nakfa a month, equivalent to US\$12. Until recently the national service 'wage' was even less, only 400 nakfa a month. Mereb did some of the chemical and electricity work for Bisha. According to some of its workers who managed to escape, Mereb also included one or two armed military units in its camp to deal with 'security' both for its own 'workers' and for those employed by Segen.

The most surprising thing is that it has taken so long for conditions at Bisha to become the subject of such publicity and reach the headlines of the international press. The Eritrean Human Rights League and Elisa Chyrum have strongly criticized conditions at Bisha in the past; Eritrean websites like Asmarino.com have run long articles providing excruciating detail of the appalling conditions under which the construction workers at Bisha lived and worked following the escape of a number of workers into Ethiopia and Sudan.

One report on conditions at Bisha a couple of years ago says that "In the caste system that has emerged in the Bisha-Nevsun project, national service army conscripts find themselves at the bottom: as slave labourers, they are paid only 400 Nakfa (\$9) per month. All of the slave labourers work for the subcontracted companies, all of which are owned by the regime. The story of how this is done provides a good synopsis of how the [ruling] Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice tries to outsmart foreign companies [such Nevsun and Senet] in its crude ways." Senet is a South African company contracted for operations at Bisha by Nevsun. The report quotes a former worker for Segen, Abadi Ghebremeskel, who spells out the processes involved. "Battalions of conscripted soldiers from national service are brought to the workplace clandestinely. The reason is obvious: both Senet and Nevsum would be hard pressed to explain to the world why they let their subcontracted companies use slave labour; and for that matter, so extensively. As one of the Senet managers once told the workers, their company will find it hard to get contracts anywhere else if doesn't do its job according to internal guidelines. And the strictest of those guidelines is: never to use slave labour." The PFDJ is well aware that Nevsun and Senet would be uncomfortable if they knew what is going on, so it "tries to spare them from the knowledge of it", but Abadi goes on "it is hard to believe that these companies don't know what is going on; by now, they must be resigned to it. So far as the dirty secret remains inconspicuous, they are willing to turn a blind eye to what is going on right under their nose....Nevsum is aware. Nevsum officials know it is forced labour. They don't mind because they see the benefits they can get."

The highly respected Eritrean academic, Dr. Gaim Kebreab, wrote an article “ Forced labour in Eritrea” in the Journal of Modern African Studies (47, 1. 2009) over four years ago. His conclusions were that the Eritrean government “uses forced labour as a means of political education and mobilisation, and for purposes of economic and infrastructural development, as well as for instilling work-ethic and discipline under a rigorously enforced punishment regime.” He also noted the use of forced labour by the ruling party’s firms and high-ranking officers of the armed forces, contrary to the spirit and letter of international conventions, and that the [government] hires out conscripts to the private sector contrary to the conventions to which it is a party. In fact, since then the private sector has essentially disappeared in Eritrea.

It is hardly surprising that former Eritrean Attorney-General, Adhanon Gebremariam, has specifically called this process “slave labour” and defined it as defying “all standard international laws”. The services exacted from the conscripts, he said, have only been used for the benefit of the government, the ruling party and senior military officers, not for the benefit of the people. He has described the system: “the most productive section of the workforce in the country is tied to the army and is forcibly engaged in road construction or toiling in farms belonging to army officers and the ruling party, while the rest of the population are dependent upon international hand-outs. When such hand-outs [do] not arrive in time, the people [are] left with no alternative but to flee to neighbouring countries.”

Eritrea is, of course, per capita, the most militarized nation on earth, with several hundred thousand national conscripts under military discipline as well as its 200,000 regular troops. Officially all those between the ages of 18 and 40 are required to do open-ended national service, though the age limits have fluctuated, at times expanding to between 15 and 55. Women are not now supposed to be conscripted after 27. In theory, the service is supposed to last for no more than 18 months. In fact, few have been demobilized since Eritrea invaded Ethiopia in May 1998 when all earlier conscripts were called back into the armed forces. Despite its defeat in June 2000 and the Algiers Agreement of December 2000, Eritrea has never demobilized more than minimal numbers, usually only those suffering from wounds or injured in accidents. It has continued to call up all those reaching the relevant age on a regular basis, keeping the largest army and reserve forces in sub-Saharan Africa. After their military training the conscripts remain under military discipline and are available as a cheap labour force, saving significant amounts of money. They are paid no more than 500 Nakfa a month. According to officials, the money so saved is largely spent on the mechanisms of control, the structure of national service and conscription, the Special Court and other military courts, on numerous prisons and what are effectively concentration camps scattered all over the country.

Originally started in 1994, national service was extended indefinitely in 2002 with the organization of the Warsai-Yikealo Development Campaign under which all conscripts do their 18 months service and remain as national service conscripts in the reserve army which involves working for state or party companies for the same minimal wage of 500 Nakfa. The launch of the Warsai-Yikealo Development Campaign was accompanied by a crackdown on private business, and the Red Sea Company and another forty or so PFDJ companies were given monopolies covering much of the economy.

In an article on asmarino.com in February 2010, “Western Mining Companies: Throwing a Lifeline to a Brutal Regime in Eritrea”, Yosief Ghebrehwet listed a number of companies that are being attracted by the mineral possibilities in Eritrea. They include: Canada’s Nevsun Resources Ltd. and Sunridge Gold; Britain’s Andiamo Exploration and London Africa; Australia’s South Boulder, Sub Sahara Resources, Chalice Gold Mines Ltd. and Gippsland Ltd. Other Western companies involved less directly include AMEC of Canada doing engineering studies as well as

Capital Drilling and Geo Drilling of Australia and Boart Longey of Canada doing drilling work. It is now pertinent to ask whether they are aware of the employment practices to be found in Eritrea.

### **A US Congressional delegation meets the Prime Minister**

Last week a US delegation headed by Senator James Inhofe and Senator John Boozman, and including Congressman Steve Pearce, Congressman Vern Buchanan and Congressman Erik Paulsen visited Ethiopia. On Thursday (10<sup>th</sup> January) they met Prime Minister Hailemariam, Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Astkeselassie, Director General of the Americas in the Foreign Ministry and other officials. Also present was Ambassador Donald Booth, US Ambassador to Ethiopia.

Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed the delegation, expressing the view that the excellent relations between Ethiopia and the US should be further extended. He noted that the two sides have established three joint working groups. These are the Political Working Group to discuss democracy, good governance and human rights issues; the Economic Working Group dealing with trade and development issues; and the Defence and Security Working Group which concentrates on bilateral and regional security issues. The Prime Minister mentioned that the Defence and Security Working Group had just been to Washington to have its regular consultation with its US counterparts. The Prime Minister underlined that Ethiopia would like to continue the smooth and excellent relations it has with the US. He affirmed that the presence of such a congressional delegation in Addis Ababa would further this.

Senator Inhofe thanked Prime Minister Hailemariam for his welcome and said the members of the delegation were exactly the right people to help to develop the relationship of the two countries further. He recalled that he had had an excellent relationship with the late Prime Minister Meles with whom he had over a dozen meetings in Addis Ababa over a number of years. He said he hoped to establish a similar relationship with Prime Minister Hailemariam. Congressman Buchanan thanked Prime Minister Hailemariam for seeing the group and noted that he had been in business for thirty years and was a member of the Ways and Means Committee of Congress. He stressed the possible trade opportunities and said he would like to see more business between the two countries. He said he would like to invite the Prime Minister to Washington to explore opportunities in trade.

The Prime Minister noted that Ethiopia aspired to break out of the aid cycle and establish stronger trade links with the United States. He mentioned that Ethiopia would be hosting the 12<sup>th</sup> AGOA Forum in June and he expected to see a lot of American companies present. He added that with the aid of Ambassador Booth Ethiopia was making an on-going effort to bring US businesses already in South Africa to invest and do business in Ethiopia. Trade and investment were, he said, crucial for Ethiopia's development. Congressman Pearce, who has a background in oil and gas, underscored the importance of energy for a growing economy. The Prime Minister said there were a couple of US companies already in Ethiopia interested in exploring potential oil fields and Ethiopia would like to see more.

Congressman Paulsen, from Minnesota, who is on the committee that approved AGOA, said his district was known for companies which operate public-private partnerships in agriculture. The Prime Minister responded that Ethiopia was one of the four countries in sub-Saharan Africa picked to implement the **New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition**. It was expected that this would bring in greater investment in agriculture. He said Ethiopia had huge potential for both horticulture and large-scale agriculture, and noted that the government has designated areas for agricultural investment, aiming to realize this potential. He said that there was more than enough land for such developments, and encouraged the Congressmen to invite people to invest.



Senator Boozman, who noted he had been to Ethiopia six or seven times, stressed the US was really appreciative of Ethiopia's help in the fight against terrorism. He hoped this partnership would continue in the future. The Prime Minister stated firmly that Ethiopia's major preoccupation was maintenance of peace and security. He underlined that terrorism was a global issue that needed global intervention, but it was particularly a threat in the Horn of Africa. There were recent activities by extremist groups and by Al-Shabaab that aimed to destabilize the entire region all the way from Tanzania to Kenya and Ethiopia and beyond. He said peace and security is important for trade and investment to flourish and without them it would be impossible to win the war against poverty. Concluding the discussions, Senator Inhofe emphasized that he would continue supporting Ethiopia in its endeavours to fight terrorism and to get rid of the predicament of poverty.

### **Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros meets the Ethiopian community in London**

Dr. Tedros, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, has called on the Ethiopian Diaspora to stand together to promote the national interests of Ethiopia, irrespective of their political persuasions. Dr. Tedros, who was on a visit to London last week at the invitation of the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, William Hague, also held a meeting with members of the Ethiopian community in London on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> January. While celebrating the diversity that glorifies Ethiopia as a melting pot of cultures and history of nations and nationalities, Dr. Tedros underlined the need for resilience and for a sense of unity to safeguard and promote Ethiopia's national interests, and allow a prosperous and viable Ethiopia to be bequeathed for posterity. Dr. Tedros said he appreciated that there could be differences of opinions but he underlined the importance and value of discussion, of dialogue, to overcome them and achieve the country's development objectives to boost collective and equitable gains at all levels.

Addressing the gathering of members of the Diaspora, he said Ethiopia was on the right track to achieve the aims of the five-year Growth and Transformation Plan with a great sense of commitment and public ownership. He urged intensified engagement on the part of Diaspora Ethiopians to join in the implementation of the major projects. These include the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, railway networks and sugar factories, all of which are now gaining momentum. The Minister also noted that the government was focused on delivering on its promises on good governance, the building of democratic institutions and the expansion of education and health facilities as well as the infrastructural development, crucial for the emerging economy to thrive.

Ambassador Berhanu Kebede, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the UK and the Scandinavian countries, also called on those present to remain engaged in every effort to support Ethiopia's bid for prosperity, to help changes for the betterment of living conditions for Ethiopians in all walks of life.

Following the Minister's remarks, members of various development and professional associations, and community and religious leaders expressed satisfaction with the Government's performance in pursuit of its development objectives. They pledged more support to help see these schemes through and to be actively involved in such areas as trade, investment and tourism as well as in knowledge and technology transfer.

One participant, a representative of the Ethiopian Somali Diaspora, Mr. Nuur Hussein said that he particularly appreciated the government's performance in effecting a peaceful and democratic transition following the death of the late Prime Minister. Expressing his satisfaction at the variety of the nations and nationalities represented at the meeting, he called on his compatriots to remain properly involved in the on-going development plans.

In the open discussion that followed, members of the Diaspora raised a number of questions relating to such issues as housing, Eritrea, peace and security in the sub-region, food security, human trafficking, and investment privileges for members of the Diaspora who return to Ethiopia. The Minister provided explanations and replies. Answering a query on Eritrea, he reiterated Ethiopia's unwavering determination for peace. He noted the Eritrean regime's continued refusal to hold any dialogue, and the continuation of its disruptive role in the region and its sponsorship of rebel groups and terrorists.

Ethiopia, he emphasized, is committed to peace and stability as well as to strengthening regional economic cooperation. It is working in tandem with members of IGAD, the African Union and the international community at large. Indeed, recognizing the structural link between peace and development, and the crucial importance of peace for development, Ethiopia, alongside partners, is working together with the governments of Somalia, South Sudan and the Republic of Sudan, for the furtherance of peace in the region.

### **Ghost-writing for the Guardian?**

The UK Guardian newspaper published an article last Friday (11<sup>th</sup> January) entitled "*UK tenders to train paramilitaries accused of abuses*". The story related to a decision by the UK's Department of International Development to provide training for the special police in the Somali Regional State of Ethiopia, in order to improve the professionalism and accountability of the force and increase security in the region. DfID is going to fund a £13-15 million programme for this training.

This would appear to be an unexceptionable, indeed a welcome, decision. The special police in the region, the 'liyu police', have been set up as part of federal and regional government efforts to protect civilians in the Somali Regional State from the activities of the organization which calls itself the Ogaden National Liberation Front which has been responsible for a terrorist campaign for several years, carrying out a series of criminal acts, killing innocent civilians and destroying property. The most obvious of these was the April 2007 attack on a Chinese oil exploration camp in which 65 Ethiopians, mostly workers from the Somali Regional State but including women and children, and 9 Chinese technicians, were deliberately slaughtered, most in their beds or having breakfast.

Following a largely successful campaign by the federal forces in 2007, the liyu police were set up to help continue to defend the local community and territory from any further criminal activities by the terrorists of the Eritrean-supported ONLF. They are drawn from the local community in the region, and this is why the vast majority of the region is now peaceful and beginning to thrive with a growing number of economic, infrastructural, educational and health developments. At the same time, they have faced a difficult job in a region bordering Somalia, where until recently Al-Shabaab terrorists and other international extremist groups were freely active.

Their success, however, has led to a series of claims by the ONLF and its supporters, including international advocacy organizations, that the security forces in the region have been responsible for a series of human rights abuses and violations. This Guardian article indeed is another of a series of blinkered wholesale adoptions of often rehashed allegations and attempts to paint the situation in the Somali Regional State in a totally negative light, despite the very obvious progress made in security and development.

The sort of blanket condemnation of the federal and regional government efforts to protect civilians of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State from the atrocities committed by ONLF terrorists is neither accurate nor fair. DFID indeed recognises this and this is why it is prepared to fund

police training. There isn't a police force in the world which does not require regular training sessions so it may live up to its responsibilities in its interaction with the people it serves.

The Guardian report cites the concern of Amnesty International at "any engagement" with the liyu police because, it claims, the force has been less than professional in its activities. Would Amnesty therefore prefer that no training was given? DFID can be proud that it is assisting with such activity and other development support in key areas such as health, education and provision of clean water in the region.

Ethiopia has long been the victim of carefully orchestrated media attacks, and groups like the so-called ONLF have certainly shown a considerable capacity to provide the international media and advocacy organizations with carefully concocted stories aimed at pandering to prejudice. The fact that they do not stand up to any serious scrutiny is often ignored, though the efforts to continue to portray the image of Ethiopia as human rights advocates' nightmare is finally beginning to wear away. The Development Assistance Group's recent independent study provided concrete refutation of allegations that the government had been using food assistance for political purposes. Investigations by the government and by independent bodies have noted the numerous errors made in the armchair allegations of these advocacy organizations. They are always based on anonymous external sources, telephone interviews with people outside the country, and use 'evidence' that no serious researchers would accept. Investigations have shown that people reported to have been mistreated, disappeared and tortured are alive and well, and that villages reported burnt are intact, that incidents claimed to have taken place, often never occurred.

The Guardian is falling into the same trap of taking the claims of these ivory tower analysts as serious, even sacrosanct. This is coupled with the refusal to take notice of the terror attacks of the so-called ONLF and other groups. This article once again tries to demonize the police force, calling it a "paramilitary security force", or claiming that to call it a special force or the liyu police is an attempt to conceal that it is composed of "security operatives or paramilitaries that functions beyond its mandate." David Mepham, Human Rights Watch's UK director, even wrote a letter to claim that "to our knowledge, the liyu police are a paramilitary group without a clear legal status".

That merely indicates ignorance. The special police are a police force and are not combatants. Under the Ethiopian constitution, the authority to establish defence forces to guard the country from external and internal threats that affect the peace and stability of the nation is given to the federal government. As in any federal setting, the regions are not allowed to form their own military forces. They can, however, set up a police force to keep the peace for residents in cities and rural localities. The case is no different in the Somali Regional State. There is no law that prohibits regional states from establishing an additional police force, or that prevents the police from carrying weapons at need. In a conflict area, such as part of the Somali Regional State has been in recent years, the police do need arms, and they have had an important responsibility for weeding out suspects and ONLF activists trying to hide among the population. They do not, however, form a conventional military force or indulge in combat. The Guardian and HRW appear to be deliberately trying to denigrate the special police and identify them as lawless military bandits.

The most obvious contradiction in this whole story from the Guardian and HRW is, as DfID says, the purpose of the training will be done "with the goal of improving security, professionalism and accountability of the force". In these circumstances what possible objections can one have against this training? As Lynne Featherstone, UK's International Development Minister, said in a letter to the paper, training the police in order to equip them with the requisite knowledge that qualifies them as professionals with a view of ensuring transparency is something that human

rights advocates have consistently called for. If one believes the police have shown some human rights failures, then training can only improve the situation. Why condemn it?

Security sector reform, in the parlance of security specialists, is commonplace in Africa as a means to encourage the role and activity of security forces, to bring them in line with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance. The components of the DFID security and justice programme is no different, though this element of it is tied here specifically to the liyu police rather than also encompassing the judiciary, the prosecutor's office or prison administration.

The other burden of the Guardian's complaint, that these training funds could be used to increase human rights abuse, is also addressed by Lynne Featherstone who points out that "not a penny of British money will go to the liyu force" itself as the training will be given by outside NGOs and private companies and they will be the sole recipients of the funding. In other words the possibility of financial misuse of such kind is nil.

In sum, the Guardian's story is an old story, seemingly ghost-written once again, but repackaged in a new wrapper. It still contains less than an ounce of truth or accuracy.

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## NEWS AND VIEWS

### **Journalists briefed on OAU 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations**

The Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dina Mufti, on Wednesday (16<sup>th</sup> January) briefed local and foreign journalists on the preparations for the upcoming AU Summit and the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Golden Jubilee, of the former Organization of the African Unity (OAU) and the current African Union. Ambassador Dina said the celebrations were being organized by a National Committee. Film festivals, musical extravaganzas, sports events, symposiums, seminars, exhibitions and helicopter flights are among the programmes designed to provide a colourful celebration of the Golden Jubilee. Celebrations will start on 27<sup>th</sup> January and continue until 25<sup>th</sup> May. Ambassador Dina said Ethiopia was committed to making the celebrations impressive to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> year of the establishment of an organization which was the defining element of the African Renaissance. He called on media professionals to play their part by providing the necessary coverage of the events. An office is being established in the Ministry to organize regular briefing sessions on the celebrations. Ambassador Dina said the decision to establish the OAU/AU's headquarters in Addis Ababa, and to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee at its birthplace, was a reflection of the constructive role of Ethiopia and of its African brothers in supporting the agenda of African causes during the colonial and post-independence eras and in supporting decolonization and anti-apartheid movements. Ethiopia has made significant contributions to maintaining peace and security in the region, including peacekeeping in the Congo in the 1960s, in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Somalia and in the Abyei region; demonstrated a strong commitment to regional integration; and was a founder and chair of the New Partnership for African Development and had played a major role in the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism. Ethiopia's role in ensuring Africa benefits from G20, G8 and Climate Change summits also underlined its contribution to Africa.

## **Columbia University establishes first Global Centre for Africa**

Columbia University has established a Global Centre for Africa in Nairobi, the first such institution on the continent. At the launching of the facility at Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki welcomed its establishment as a positive contribution to the achievement of Kenya's Vision 2030. He also welcomed the decision by the Columbia Global Centre to establish links with regional organizations such as the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa, ECOWAS and IGAD as well as institutions of higher learning and the private sector. The President of Columbia University, Professor Lee Bollinger noted that the establishment of the centre would go a long way towards creating real linkages between higher learning institutions in the region. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam, who also attended the launch of the project, welcomed its establishment. He noted that the facility will offer practical solutions to challenges at regional and continental level. He expressed the Government of Ethiopia's support of the centre whose new technologies, he said, would help the country realize its sustainable development agenda. The new facility will host the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Centre for East and Southern Africa as a flagship programme and will implement and support the Millennium Villages Project in six countries, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Ethiopia. On the occasion of his visit to Kenya, Prime Minister Hailemariam also held discussions with President Kibaki on bilateral and regional issues.

## **An Ethiopia-Sudan highway link completed**

The Ethiopian Road and Transport Authority announced on Tuesday (15<sup>th</sup> January) that the construction of a highway linking Ethiopia with neighbouring Sudan had been completed and was now open for traffic. The 100km-long road, stretching from Ethiopia's Asosa town to Sudan's Kumruk (Kormuk), will enhance trade relations as well as social ties between the two countries. The project was carried out by a Chinese construction company at a cost of over US\$27 million. This Ethiopia-Sudan highway is the second highway connecting Ethiopia with Sudan. Earlier, Ethiopia built a highway to connect its northern town of Metemma with Port Sudan via Gedaref in eastern Sudan. The construction of this road has played an important role in increasing the interstate trade between the two countries and allows Ethiopia to use Port Sudan.

## **Business Diplomacy training session for the Foreign Ministry**

A half-day training session on business diplomacy took place Tuesday this week (15<sup>th</sup> January) for Ministry of Foreign Affairs staff. The training is part of the Ministry's effort to build up the capacity of diplomatic staff. Jointly organized by the Ministry's Directorate General of Americas Affairs and the Embassy of Canada in Addis Ababa, the session concentrated on Canada's experience in economic diplomacy, covering trade, foreign direct investment (FDI) and technology transfer. The Director General for Americas Affairs, Ambassador Taye, pointed out that business diplomacy was now a virtual necessity for defining Ethiopia's relations with other countries; he underlined the need to develop the merged qualities of a good civil servant and of an effective business person. Ambassador David Usher of Canada said the training would be important in triggering awareness on contemporary economic diplomacy engagements, noting that international trade made up 40% of Canada's annual GDP, and that the Canadian Trade Commissioner Service had over 150 trade locations worldwide to carry out market intelligence, find trade and investment opportunities for Canadian companies and resolve problems. The session for 25 participants from different Directorate Generals in the Ministry was given by Canada's Counsellor and Regional Senior Trade Commissioner from Nairobi and members of the embassy here in Addis Ababa. It covered organizational structures; the importance of clearly defined aims; the need for business planning and for undertaking performance measurement, as well as trade and investment promotion, training and client service packages, and other related

areas. It emphasized the value of providing basic services including preparation for international markets, market potential assessments, well qualified contacts and problem solving services. The value and importance of training packages was also discussed.

### **A proper send-off ceremony for the 'Walyas'**

A joint send-off and fund raising ceremony was held on Sunday (13<sup>th</sup> January) for the Ethiopian national football team at Millennium Hall. Speaking at the ceremony, Prime Minister Hailemariam wished the team every success, and urged the players to exert their utmost towards building up the country's image. He assured the players of the government's readiness to support the team in any way possible. During the ceremony, the Prime Minister handed over the national flag of Ethiopia to Degu Debebe, the captain of the national team. Ethiopia participated in the first Africa Cup of Nations, in 1957, and won the trophy in 1962. The team, nicknamed the 'Walya Antelopes', after an antelope endemic to Ethiopia, qualified this year for the finals of the Africa Cup of Nations for the first time for 31 years. We wish them every success.