

A Week in the Horn

18th May 2012

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The Security Council meets on Somalia

On Tuesday this week [15th May], the UN Security Council discussed Somalia, being briefed by the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Mahiga and by Somali President Sheikh Sharif. Ambassador Mahiga also presented the Secretary-General's latest four-monthly report on Somalia (S/2012/283). This gives an update on major developments in the political, security, humanitarian, recovery, development and human rights areas from 9th December last year to 15th April this year, and assesses the progress in implementation of the road map to complete the transition which ends on 20th August.

The Secretary-General notes considerable progress in political and security areas with the Transitional Federal Government and allied forces establishing a presence in key strategic towns in southern and central Somalia, and the TFG beginning to outreach to newly recovered areas. Implementation of the road map of September 2011 continued with agreement among stakeholders on modalities for the formation of a Constituent Assembly, the new Federal Parliament, and elections. There was steady progress on delivery of the security benchmarks with establishment of district security committees in Mogadishu, though the National Security and Stabilization Plan was still pending due to the problems in Parliament which had become effectively dysfunctional following the actions of a group of parliamentarians who threatened to conduct their own parallel election for president. Indeed, the Secretary-General suggested, the time had come to look at different ways of establishing an alternative legal basis for ending the transition. Strong measures must target those who obstructed the political process, including possible action by the Security Council.

The Secretary-General called on Somali leaders to unite in ending the transition, noting that the submission of a draft of the interim Constitution to the Constituent Assembly

provided a strong basis on which to move forward, although the nature of federalism and the role of Sharia would likely need further discussion. It was essential, he said, to get the Constituent Assembly's composition and activity right, noting that while the 135 traditional leaders would play a central role in selecting the 825 members, it was also crucial for grass-roots communities and civil society organizations to fully participate in the process.

The Secretary-General welcomed expansion of State authority, as well as the plans to complete the expanded deployment of AMISOM and its increased role in enhancing the effectiveness of Somali forces. He noted the need for a long-term approach to building sustainable and credible local security institutions. He said the relocation of UNPOS to Mogadishu and visits by several senior foreign dignitaries helped to reaffirm international solidarity with the TFG. This had been highlighted by the IGAD summit, in January, and the International Contact Group meeting in Djibouti and the London Conference both in February. These all highlighted the need for action against spoilers of the peace process. In February, the Coordinator of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea provided a midterm briefing to the Security Council Committee concerning Somalia and Eritrea, and Ali Ahmed Nur Jim'ale was added to the list of those subject to the travel ban, assets freeze and targeted arms embargo imposed by SC Resolution 1844 (2008).

On both human rights and the humanitarian situations, the Secretary-General remained deeply concerned. He called on all parties to abide by their obligations and on donors to urgently support the Consolidated Appeal process, currently only 21 per cent funded. The massive scaling-up of humanitarian assistance combined with a good harvest had lifted Somalia out of famine in January but malnutrition and mortality rates remained exceptionally high.

The Secretary-General said stabilization of recovered areas required an integrated national and international effort and he urged international partners to ensure that their assistance is coordinated with the Government's efforts. He encouraged donors to support the unfunded balance of the Mogadishu Stabilization and Recovery Plan, and suggested that the forthcoming "Istanbul II" Conference, (31st May to 1st June) would provide an important opportunity to develop joint approaches to the rehabilitation of roads, energy and water supply, as well as to building community resilience.

In his briefing, Ambassador Mahiga said Somalia's transitional leaders were making significant steps in completing the tasks required to end the political transition by August 2012, but faced with tight deadlines, a lack of resources, so-called political "spoilers" and the need to administer areas recovered from insurgents, they needed greater international support. The lack of funding for implementation of the roadmap in its remaining three months was of serious concern. "The Constituent Assembly is almost grinding to a halt for lack of funding," he said. Allied militias, supported by an expanded AMISOM and Ethiopia, were forcing Al-Shabaab into retreat, but there was an increase in asymmetrical warfare behind AMISOM lines in Mogadishu and new challenges emerging in the relatively stable regional states of Puntland and Somaliland. He underlined that the TFG must be assisted to establish local administrations, consolidate security and provide the rule of law and basic services as part of the peace dividend. AMISOM, he noted, was now on a more secure financial footing, following the

adoption of Security Council Resolution 2036 (2012) and generous contributions from donors. The security sector, he said, now needed greater focus on developing the justice system and resources for the promotion of human rights. There were several conferences on piracy planned, or that had recently taken place, to try to develop a comprehensive strategy to address it at sea and on land, but the fundamental issue remained the establishment of the rule of law in Somalia.

Ambassador Mahiga also stressed that the threat posed to the peace process by spoilers was real. UNPOS, AMISOM and IGAD had issued a warning on 1st May that non-compliance or obstruction of the road map might be followed various measures and restrictions. The effectiveness would be enhanced if they were supported by the Security Council's authority.

President Sheikh Sharif told the Council that implementation of the policies included in the roadmap was a priority; the Constitution, he said, would remain under scrutiny and would be amended until the last moment before ratification. Other steps were national reconciliation and the introduction of good governance, as well as the restoration of security and stability. An inclusive national parliament to take responsibility for the development of legislation was necessary. Another goal was reconciliation between the Somali Government and the northern region of the country. The President said Somalia was "on the threshold of a new phase", and he asked the international community to redouble its efforts to assist the country and provide no opportunity for the return of anarchy and terrorism. Somalia, he said, had a number of expectations from the Council. These included strengthening the work of the Constituent Assembly, encouraging reconciliation, taking a firm stand against those who created obstacles to peace, supporting the building of a Somali army and the training of a police force and intelligence service, and developing a counter-terrorism plan. The Council should, he said, allow the Somali Government to import weapons for its security services and lift the arms embargo. It should invite international bodies and organizations to contribute to Somalia's reconstruction and work to activate its economic institutions and services. It should continue to support AMISOM forces, provide financial support to local administrations in areas liberated from Al-Qaeda and provide current members of parliament their allowances and salaries.

Council members welcomed progress towards completing the political transition, as well as advances made in security, commending AMISOM and concurring with the need for continued support to the mission. Many speakers underlined the primary responsibility of Somali leaders to meet the August deadline: it was a strong political will among the Somali political class that was needed. All Somalis should put their differences aside and focus on the progress of the country. Future support depended on results achieved with one speaker adding "we cannot accept a call for more, when there is no considerable progress." There was a need for measures to deal with those who obstructed progress, but the political process should be as transparent as possible, with the list of selected elders, and the methods of the Assembly, made public. The occurrence of piracy, identified as one of the main destabilizing forces in the region, had not declined. There was general agreement on the need for a comprehensive international counter-piracy strategy including prosecution of pirates.

In a subsequent press statement issued by Council President, Agshin Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan), the Council welcomed the progress so far in implementation of the road

map and reaffirmed its commitment to support the process. Members expressed concern at missed deadlines and the TFIs to redouble their efforts to complete the road map tasks, including the creation of a representative Constituent Assembly, and the adoption of a Constitution underpinned by respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Council stressed the primary responsibility of the Somali parties to reach agreement on broad-based, inclusive and representative post-transitional arrangements, in line with the Djibouti Agreement, the road map and Garowe Principles, and the importance of a transparent and legitimate political process. The Council also strongly supported the joint AU/IGAD/ letter of May and reiterated its readiness to support measures against internal and external 'spoilers'. It encouraged all Somalis to engage constructively in the political process and move towards a more peaceful and stable Somalia.

A meeting of AU Ministers of Justices

A meeting of Ministers of Justice and Attorney Generals of AU Member States on Legal Matters was held in Addis Ababa this week on 14th and 15th May. It was preceded by a meeting of legal experts from 7th to 14th May. The meeting was attended by the Ministers of Justice of Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Libya, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, the Sudan and South Africa as well as by a number of Attorney-Generals and other legal officials.

The agenda for the meeting included consideration of the Draft Protocol on Amendments to the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government requested the African Union Commission to examine the implications of the African Court being empowered to try international crimes such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity as a complement to national jurisdiction and to fight the problem of impunity at a regional level. This arose from the attempt to find a solution to the problems confronting Africa and the African Union and to provide a counter-balance to the "double standard" approach taken by the International Criminal Court (ICC).

During the meeting, many delegations emphasized the important role the African Court needed to play in international criminal justice. Delegates also agreed on the need for the AU Peace and Security Council to intervene and defer investigations on prosecutions in the interest of peace and security where appropriate. The Ministers adopted the Draft Protocol on the amendment, which, if it comes into force will extend the jurisdiction of the African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights by giving it the mandate to look into serious international crimes including genocide, crimes against humanity, the crime of aggression, corruption and unconstitutional changes of government.

Another item of discussion was consideration of a draft Protocol to the Constitutive Act of the African Union relating to the Pan-African Parliament. This relates to the Assembly's efforts to define the powers and functions of the Pan-African Parliament. The Ministers approved the draft prepared with slight amendments. In the draft, the Pan-African Parliament is made responsible for the preparation of legislation when the AU Assembly determines to vest such powers to the Parliament.

The Ministers also discussed Draft Model National Legislation on Universal Jurisdiction. This is aimed to encourage member states to incorporate universal jurisdiction in their respective domestic laws. The progress report of the Commission on the implementation of Assembly Decisions on Universal Jurisdiction and the progress made in the discussions with the European Union and the negotiations at the level of the United Nations as well as the implementation of the Assembly Decisions on the International Criminal Court were also considered. The legal experts of AU member states were earlier given the task of finding solutions to stop the abuse of the principle of universal jurisdiction by some European countries. These included legal proceedings instituted and warrants of arrest issued against officials of some African countries, including Heads of State, in violation of the immunity of state officials under international law.

The meeting ended with the adoption of the Draft Protocols on the Amendments to the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human and Peoples' Rights Court and on the Pan-African Parliament as well as the Draft Model Legislation and the recommendations on the implementation of Assembly Decisions on Universal Jurisdiction and ICC. The documents will be submitted to the next meeting of the policy organs of the African Union, in July this year.

The World Economic Forum for Africa 2012: valuable and important.....

The highly successful World Economic Forum for Africa 2012 ended last Friday after two days of intensive, exhausting but by all accounts, exhilarating meetings, panels and discussions among hundreds of leading businessmen, academics, civil society leaders and participants from over seventy countries, including seven Heads of State. The theme of the Forum "Shaping Africa's transformation" and the subject was exhaustively covered in the panel discussions and all the subsidiary meetings and talks. The challenges that might beset the positive trajectory of Africa's economy were identified and ways to tackle the problems discussed. The focus of the Forum in fact centred not just on how to maintain rapid economic growth in most African countries but also dwelt on the ways to transform the structure of economies to bring about sustainable economic growth parallel to the leaps and bounds witnessed over the past three decades in East Asia.

There were twenty-three panels at the Forum keeping participants busy. The discussion under the theme "Rethinking South-South Relations" on the second day centred on how to increase Africa's partnership with the growing economies of the South. More specifically, it focused on the prospects and challenges that Africa may face to provide labour intensive manufacturing industries to create employment opportunities. The discussants noted that with low-wage employment diminishing in countries like China, relocation of labour -intensive manufacturing to Africa was a likely scenario. If Africa receives most of such relocating manufacturing industries this will create jobs for the youth who make up the majority of the population. However, the panellists cautioned that though Africa might have a comparative advantage in its abundant low-wage labour, there were still questions of the absence of skilled manpower, continued competition from neighbouring South East Asia's growing economies, and a lack of infrastructure, all of which would pose challenges to attracting manufacturing investment on the envisaged scale. One strong recommendation from most of the

discussants was to urge African nations to invest more in vocational training and in infrastructure, and encourage strong public-private cooperation to create innovative centres and manufacturers to train their staff.

Another panel that received wide interest was “Grow Africa: Transforming African Agriculture”, a matter of considerable interest to all stakeholders. Transforming Africa’s agriculture is high on the agenda because of the huge potential. Africa has 60% of the world’s available new agricultural land and the world generally is experiencing astronomic rises in global food prices .The panel discussion centred on what factors might play out to ensure real agricultural productivity and how to provide for a real agricultural transformation. Prime Minister Meles said the key to unlocking Africa’s agricultural potential was the transformation of the small-scale farming sector whose efficacy had been shown this year in Ethiopia by the best ever production figures. He also pointed out that Ethiopia benefitted from the involvement of the private sector as a second leg of policy. He lauded Ethiopia’s labour-intensive farms, including cut-flower developments, as encouraging ventures. President Kikwete of Tanzania underlined the role of the state in helping with irrigation, making inputs available and clearing the way for efficient markets as crucial factors, adding that agricultural research and investment in agro-processing were equally important.

“Accelerating Africa’s infrastructure” was a subject which generated heated debate on the issue of private-public infrastructure. Prime Minister Meles was quite clear: “Without the private sector, there is no development. Our policy is to have fast and equitable growth, but you cannot have that without a clear division of labour in partnership with the public and the private sectors.” Stressing the shared responsibilities of the sectors he added: “The [premise] that the public sector is inefficient and the private sector is efficient is a [destructive] myth.” Donald Kaberuka, the President of the African Development Bank underlined the point when he said that the explosion of telephony across Africa was driven by the private sector, but there was certainly a role for the public sector to ensure a level playing field. Overall, the panel discussants agreed on the need to increase the role of the private sector, where the profit motive seemed to have restricted its role to lucrative areas like cellular phones, without losing sight of the need for participation of the public sector.

An area which received extensive media coverage was discussion on Africa’s leadership. Since much of the growth in Africa is also driven, at least in part, by relative stability, the role of leadership cannot be overstated. Devising policies that suit Africa’s economic efforts, ensuring stable macroeconomic stability and turning the economic growth into shared opportunities, are challenges that need to be tackled to realize Africa’s transformation. Prime Minister Meles was clear: “Africa needs leadership with clear plans and priorities to overcome structural problems focusing exclusively on [inclusive] economic growth.” President Jonathan of Nigeria preferred to stress the importance of tackling the problem of leaders putting their own interests above those of the state. It took a heated debate before the panel discussants agreed that honesty, vision, clear priorities, responsibility, accountability and perseverance were the characteristics needed for leadership in Africa today and required to lead Africa’s transformation from growth into the shared opportunities that will be available in the next 20 years.

....the challenges of hosting the Forum

Hosting a World Economic Forum for Africa is an exhausting but exhilarating and valuable experience according to Professor Mekonnen Haddis of the National Organizing Committee, Special Advisor to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam. With 850 participants drawn from over 70 countries, including seven Heads of State, more than 532 CEOs, members of academia and civil society there's a lot to be done. Organizing began a year before, with the formation of an ad-hoc national committee with 9 sub-committees as soon as the WEF chose in May 2011 to make Ethiopia a host nation for May this year. All the details including the selection of halls and meeting places as well as the details of the cultural show and other events were approved by WEF officials. The national committee handled registration of participants and media accreditation in collaboration with the office of the WEF in Geneva. Preparations included designing the logo used, the production of booklets and the production of a video documentary. These, like the live streaming during the conference, were done by Ethiopian companies and to a standard that met all the WEF criteria. Professor Mekonnen said that the organization of the Forum offered clear proof that young Ethiopians were fully capable of delivering as required. "The forum was held as scheduled without any problem to speak of."

The major advantages of hosting the World Economic Forum included image building for Ethiopia and business opportunities and above all the chance to use the Forum as a platform to table the most pressing agendas of Africa before the assembled participants. The Forum brought all these leading business figures and others under a single roof, a rare opportunity, indeed the first time in Ethiopia. It gave Ethiopia the opportunity to show off its capabilities as well as the development efforts over the last decade that have catapulted its economy to a place as one of the fastest non-oil economies. It is a far cry from the stereotypical view of Ethiopia and indeed of Africa as conflict-ridden areas with no appeal to the investor. The state dinner party thrown in honour of the participants was a spectacular introduction for Forum participants to the diverse culture of Ethiopia. Professor Mekonnen said the success of the World Economic Forum for Africa 2012 as an unprecedented image-building achievement was summed up by the fact that it had had more than 300,000 media hits from various quarters of the continent. He added that the impeccable security and protocol services which had gone off without a hitch were also a demonstration of Ethiopia's capacity as far as image building was concerned. It had certainly left a lasting impression on Forum organizers and participants of the peace and security of the country and of the civility and friendliness of the public. "The smooth conduct of the Forum was an important success that demonstrated to the world Ethiopia's immense investment potential, its capacity to host such global forums and above all the progress it is making with respect to its economic growth".

Professor Mekonnen also noted that a significant number of leading business figures at the Forum have shown an interest in investing in Ethiopia in the future. They had the opportunity to learn about the country's conducive investment regime as well as the lucrative business possibilities available in agriculture, mining or manufacturing investment. A number of them have decided to send representatives to study the opportunities in detail and conduct preliminary work on possible activity. There is every reason to believe that one result of the Forum will go a long way to increase FDI

flows to Ethiopia and to Africa. It was, however, disappointing that there had not been more participants from the Addis Ababa and Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce despite the efforts of the organizing committee.

The third benefit of the World Economic Forum for Africa 2012 was that Ethiopia, as host nation, and other visiting Heads of State, were able to work with WEF officials and other participants to emphasize the major concerns of Africa. Indeed, the participation of the organizing committee was an important element in the selection of agendas and of panellists and provided the possibility of fine tuning the focus of the Forum and making sure that challenges to Africa's economic development were properly identified as the primary preoccupation of the Forum.

The Ethiopia Investment Summit

The Ethiopia Investment Summit was held in the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa last week, alongside the World Economic Forum. The Summit was organized by Precise Consult International and an Advisory Board of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Access Capital Services S.C, the US Embassy in Ethiopia, South West Energy, the Corporate Council on Africa, Impact Capital, and the Boston Consulting Group. The objectives were to promote Ethiopia as a location for foreign investment, to help investors understand the macro- and micro-economic dynamics driving long term opportunities in Ethiopia and create concrete networking and deal-making opportunities between foreign and Ethiopian business leaders.

The meeting brought together more than 400 CEOs from leading Ethiopian corporations as well as foreign investors to discuss the dynamics driving long term growth in the Ethiopian economy. It also provided an opportunity to interact with senior decision makers in Government. The Prime Minister in his opening speech noted that 'one of the pillars of our Growth and Transformation Plan is massive public investment in infrastructure.' He stated that the government planned to build over two thousand kilometres of new and electrified railways as well as tens of thousands of kilometres of highways, and close to a hundred thousand kilometres of rural roads, and increase the country's electricity generation capacity from 2000MW to over 10,000 MW within the period of the plan which ends in 2015. The Prime Minister also emphasized that agriculture was at the centre of the country's development efforts, adding, "the main thrust of our agricultural development program is to modernize and commercialize small scale agriculture".

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam also stressed that Ethiopia was fully committed to the creation and maintenance of an attractive investment climate. It had put in place the necessary policies and strategies to that end. He also added that the special attention given to the industrial sector would be the basis for national development in generating foreign currency and creating job opportunities.

The Ethiopia Investment Summit was an occasion to showcase opportunities in the world's "third fastest growing economy". McKinsey Global recently published a groundbreaking publication, "Lions on the Move: the progress and potential of African Economies." Drawing a direct parallel to the economic emergence of the Asian Tiger Economies, the study detailed the impressive figures for the impending rise of the

“African Lion” economies. Ethiopia, it noted, for example, has over four million hectares of fertile, under-utilized and un-utilized agricultural land that it intends to make available to the private sector for investment. A sizable number of companies, both foreign and domestic, have already invested in the horticulture and floriculture industry. There is room for considerably more investment in the sector. Henok Assefa, Managing Partner of Precise Consult International PLC, said: "There is no more impressive an African Lion economy on the move than that of Ethiopia".

The Economist Intelligence Unit depicts the same picture suggesting Ethiopia will remain the fastest growing economy in Africa and third fastest in the world in the period 2011-2015. It has averaged 11% GDP growth over the last eight years. Equally, despite this impressive growth and its unquestionably favourable investment climate, old perceptions about Ethiopia may still persist in the minds of a few potential investors who have not made the effort to come and see the reality for themselves. Gabriel Schulze, CEO of private equity firm Schulze Global Investments (SGI) said there was a major difference between the perception and the reality of the Ethiopian market. He said Ethiopia struggled with this significant gap between perception and reality. The idea behind the Ethiopia Investment Summit 2012 was to provide assistance to help foreign investors understand that Ethiopia really is a newly emerging giant of an African economy. Its national investment policies and strategies open opportunities and create a real enabling environment for all foreign and domestic businesses and investors to come and see the advantages for themselves.

Standardized contract documents shouldn't involve censorship

The confusion over where the line should be drawn between free speech and the right to protection from various offences including incitement to violence, support for genocide or terrorism is widespread. The arguments are often more political than legal and continue to be debated with little agreement. Democratic nations normally prefer to attach liability and accountability to the publication of offensive or violent views or open support for terrorism, genocide or crimes against humanity, rather than resorting to pre-publication censorship.

Similarly, in the Ethiopian Constitution, censorship by the government or by any of its regulatory bodies is clearly specified as unacceptable. There cannot be any government censorship in Ethiopia. At the same time the Constitution also details constraints on expressions of violence or speech that advocate the use of force or violence. The right to protection from such offences, from incitement to violence, genocide or terrorism is clearly established. This is underlined, within the framework of the Constitution, by the recent Anti-Terrorism Proclamation which stipulates that anyone involved in producing, providing, sponsoring, reporting, printing or multiplying and disseminating material that encourages terrorism, genocide and violence must be considered criminals and be held accountable for any material they produce. It specifically includes all those involved in such production, including printers as well as publishers.

Contemporary legislation in many countries, including Ethiopia, identifies crimes such as incitement to violence, state genocide and terrorism as serious offenses and provides for all those involved in any of the related activities, including printing and publishing of such material, as equally accountable under "concurrent liability". In addition, providing

a printing service is interpreted as "subsidiary liability" with the additional possibility that a printer might be held in the absence of a principal defendant. This possibility has led printers in a number of developed countries to produce "standardized practice" or "adhesion" contracts, and the requirement that all newspaper publishers must agree to the terms laid down.

This has not been the practice in Ethiopia in the past and it is this that the Berhanena Selam Printing Enterprise has now been trying to introduce. It has expressed its intention of introducing a document of "adhesion" contract to govern and codify its mechanisms of service delivery to its customers. In practice this means the Printing Enterprise is trying to insist that all newspaper publishers and other customers seeking its services should sign a contractual agreement to ensure that they will keep in check any contents or possible contents that may subsequently become the subject of legal liability under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.

Berhanena Selam, as a profit-making public printing enterprise, argues that its decision to have its customers sign an "adhesion" contract on the basis of "standardized practice everywhere in the world" is aimed at minimizing possible risks of subsequent liabilities that might threaten printing businesses for the publication of illegal content. It argues that such a contract neither contravenes Article 29 of Ethiopia's Constitution or the Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation, nor does it constitute censorship as censorship can only be imposed by a government regulatory body which would be illegal in the case of Ethiopia under the Constitution.

The move by Berhanena Selam has met with opposition by the newspaper publishers in Ethiopia. They are concerned that such a contract might lead to pre-publication censorship. Responsible newspapers, of course, always submit the articles they publish to their own lawyers to check that they do not transgress any legal requirements. In these circumstances, they argue, the addition of an "adhesion" contract appears unnecessary.

It might be noted that the discussion is not helped by the campaign launched by the Committee to Protect Journalists suggesting that this is an attempt to codify pre-publication censorship under a repressive Anti-Terrorism law. That is neither plausible nor possible.

Certainly, the Government cannot legally impose censorship or pre-censorship. Nor will it. Nor can it prohibit any printing enterprise, private or public, from asking customers to sign "adhesion" contracts. The introduction by Berhanena Selam of a standardized contractual agreement is something that it needs to discuss with its customers. Equally, it needs to make sure the terms do not contravene either the Anti-Terrorism law or the Constitution's anti-censorship requirements. A free press is a vital part of the democratic, developmental state to which Ethiopia is committed, but it is, of course, a press which has to be responsible, and the press must, of course, be held to that responsibility.

News and Views:

The EU hits a pirate base in Somalia; pirates threaten to kill hostages

The first attack on a pirate land base by the European Union's anti-piracy force was carried out on Tuesday. The attack destroyed several speedboats as well as fuel and ammunition stores. A pirate leader quoted by a news agency said nine speedboats had been destroyed and a key supply center destroyed. The EU said that surveillance of the area during the action indicated that no Somalis had been injured and no lives had been lost. It was a "focused, precise and proportionate action". The Commander of the EU Naval Force, Admiral Potts, said he believed that action would further increase the pressure on the pirates and disrupt pirates' efforts to get to sea to attack merchant shipping and dhows. He added that local Somali people and fishermen, "many of whom have suffered so much because of piracy in the region," could be reassured that the focus the attack had been confined to known pirate supplies and this would remain the case. No European forces landed on Somali soil during the operation, but the attack was a significant shift in the EU's anti-piracy operations and is intended to deny pirates safety on land. The EU anti-piracy operation involves nine ships and five patrol planes and covers the lower Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean along the East African coasts. Somali pirates responded to the attack by threatening to kill hostages if they are attacked again. According to Somalia Report, a pirate in Haradhere underlined that the pirates had hostages they could use for revenge. "We promise if they attack again, we will not hesitate to kill hostages" Reports indicate that the pirate groups around Haradhere are now moving their supplies away from vulnerable areas near the beach. Somali pirate groups currently hold a total of over 320 hostages from many nationalities, and 21 ships of which eleven are fishing dhows.

The African Union mediator is back in Khartoum

The Head of the African Union High- Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) on Sudan, Thabo Mbeki, arrived back in Khartoum on Thursday to try to push Sudan and South Sudan back into the talks which have been suspended for the last month. The United Nations Security Council deadline for the two countries to resume talks elapsed on Wednesday yesterday with no visible action. Over the next two days Mr. Mbeki will be meeting with Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir, First Vice President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha and other senior officials to discuss the resumption of the talks with South Sudan in Addis Ababa. Sudan had earlier announced its acceptance of the Security Council resolution and expressed readiness to resume the negotiations with South Sudan. It added the proviso that the negotiations should focus on the security issues as the right path towards resolving the other issues between the two countries. South Sudan, for its part, announced its readiness to resume the negotiations with Khartoum on Tuesday. On Sunday, Mr. Mbeki is scheduled to leave for Juba to meet South Sudan's President Salva Kiir and other officials to discuss further details of a resumption of negotiations, including dates and proposed agenda. The resumption of talks is expected to settle a number of critical issues including oil payments, the status of each country's citizens resident in the other state, the status of the contested Abyei region, and the resolution of disputed and "claimed" border areas as well as the demarcation of the frontier.

The Panel of Experts visit the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam site

The International Panel of Experts for assessment of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project, studying the impact of the construction of the dam and whether there will be any negative impact on downstream countries, has paid a visit to the Dam's construction site. The experts noted that the visit would make their forthcoming work easier. Following a closed door session on Thursday, Egyptian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mohammed Idris, said the experts would be carrying out carry out activities that fulfilled the needs of all three countries based on the realities on the ground. Sudan's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Abdulrahman Seer el Karim noted that he was now able to realize how well the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project was progressing. The Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation, Mihret Debebe, stressed that the project was being executed in such a way that it would minimize any tensions among neighboring countries. "The International Panel of Experts will realize from the study, design and current status of the project that there is nothing hidden from the riparian countries," Mihret said. "They will realize that the reality is far from the rumours that were disseminated about the project. [The project] will have quite a significant role in building mutual trust among the countries." The International Panel of Experts which commenced its activity officially on Tuesday consists of 10 members; six are from Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan while the remaining four are independent international experts. The selection of the international experts was made according to criteria agreed by Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan. Construction of the dam began last year and Ato Alemayehu Tegenu said the establishment of the Panel of Experts was indicative of the commitment of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan to develop the river for the common benefit of their peoples. Cooperation over the Nile is seen as a milestone in managing the river to enable the riparian countries meet their growing energy demand.

UNDP says ending hunger critical to sustain growth in Sub-Saharan Africa

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) launched its "Africa Human Development Report 2012: Towards a Food Secure Future" in Nairobi on Wednesday, calling for new approaches covering multiple sectors - from rural infrastructure to health services, to new forms of social protection and empowering local communities. The report stressed that action on agriculture alone was not enough to eliminate hunger. Overall, it argued that countries needed to implement a more strategic vision of food security. There could be no quick fixes, but it suggested food security could be achieved through "immediate action" in four critical areas: increasing the agricultural productivity of smallholder farmers and increasing investment in infrastructure and inputs; boosting nutrition and expanding access to health services, education and clean water; building resilience by implementing social programs that protect farmers against natural disasters and conflict including crop insurance; improving technology and information and giving women and marginalized groups access to land and technology. One approach to emulate, it suggested, would be the action taken by Ethiopia to improve its agriculture sector, setting up a separate Agricultural Transformation Agency right next to the prime minister's office. The Agency addresses bottlenecks in areas such as soil management, research and extension services and it is modelled on similar initiatives which helped accelerate economic growth in South Korea and Malaysia. The report said that a quarter of Sub-Saharan Africa's 856 million people remained under-nourished and there were more than 15 million people at risk of

malnutrition in the Sahel region alone and a nearly equal number in the Horn of Africa after last year's drought-driven food crisis. UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark said impressive GDP growth rates in Africa "have not translated into the elimination of hunger and malnutrition." Growth divorced from advances in human development did little for people and "without advances in human development, countries cannot meet their full potential." The report is the first in UNDP's Human Development Report series which focuses specifically on Africa.

United Arab Emirates businessmen looking to invest in Ethiopia

United Arab Emirates investors and members of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry have been visiting Ethiopia this week. Their aim is to investigate linking UAE trade activities to Ethiopia and to explore possibilities for investment in various areas including the agriculture, infrastructure and hotel and tourism sectors. The 18 member delegation held discussions with a number of higher officials, including Prime Minister Meles. The delegation also held talks with members of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association on trade. Hamad Buamim, Director General of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said there was no doubt that Ethiopia was suitable for investment. He and other members of the delegation would certainly work to attract other UAE investors to Ethiopia and foster trade relations. Several members of the delegation express interest in investment in agriculture. The UAE imports 80 percent of its agriculture consumption, and domestic investors already engaged in the agriculture sector believe the UAE would provide a good market agriculture products.