

A WEEK IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

18th September 2015

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, on Thursday (September 17) reiterated the AU’s strong condemnation of the unjustifiable abduction and the continued detention of the leaders of the Transition in Burkina Faso. It was “an act of terrorism in all respects”. Dr Dlamini-Zuma welcomed the unanimous condemnation by the international community of these acts, which, she said, constituted a serious threat to peace, stability and security in Burkina Faso, the region and the rest of Africa.

IGAD launched preparations for an IGAD Regional Climate Change Strategy for the next five years (2016-2020) at a Consultative Meeting held at the IGAD Secretariat in Djibouti on Monday (September 14). The IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Center (ICPAC) is taking the lead in preparation of the IRCCS which is expected to be finalized in January 2016.

Ethiopia

President Dr Mulatu Teshome on Friday (September 11) urged all Ethiopians to exert more efforts in order to make a success of the Second Growth and Transformation Plan and achieve its aims. He said the success of the Government’s foreign policy had helped Ethiopia become an island of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

On the occasion of the New Year, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn participated in a radio phone-in on Radio Fana. He called on people to report mal-administrative and rent-seeking activities within government and to contribute to the effort to create better governance at all levels. He underlined the need to provide adequate responses to public criticism, and urged the new generation of party leaders to give priority to the needs of the public.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, on Tuesday (September 15) met with the Special Envoy of New Zealand, Sir Jim Mclay. Discussions covered regional security issues in South Sudan and Somalia.

The newly appointed Egyptian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Aboubakr Hefny, presented copies of his credentials to State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos on Thursday (September 16).

The leader of the opposition Tigray People's Democratic Movement (Demhit) and some eight hundred fighters, fought their way out of Eritrea on Friday last week (September 11), and are now in Ethiopia. (See article)

This week, the UK's Overseas Development Institute released a report detailing the cross-cutting factors that have led to Ethiopia's progress. It emphasized the country's multi-dimensional policy approach aiming for equitable poverty reduction across the country and identified important lessons that could be taken up by other African countries.

A workshop organized by the U.S. Commercial Service in Ethiopia in collaboration with Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce took place on Monday (September 14) in Addis Ababa with representatives from ten U.S. firms meeting with representatives and officials from over 70 Ethiopian businesses and public sector entities to discuss exports, partnerships, and investment.

Ambassador Negash Kebret Batora, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Switzerland, presented his letters of credence to Dr Heinz Fischer, President of the Republic of Austria, on Monday September 14, in Vienna.

Ethiopian Airlines has announced that it has received a "Certificate of Global Growth Company of 2015" from the World Economic Forum. The Global Growth Companies Community currently consists of 400 companies around the World.

AORA Solar, an Israeli/Spanish company developing solar-biogas technology, signed Memoranda of Understanding with Addis Ababa Science and Technology University and with the Adama Science and Technology University on Thursday (September 17), "[to] promote academic cooperation for the development and advancements of renewable energy technology to support the implementation of Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy".

Eritrea

Eritrean armed opposition groups and thousands of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia celebrated the 54th anniversary of the start of Eritrea's independence struggle on Sunday (September 13) and called for an armed struggle against Eritrea's repressive government. Ethiopia currently hosts an estimated 200,000 Eritrean refugees.

Fourteen years ago, on September 18, 2001, President Isaias arrested eleven of Eritrea's leading ministers and political figures. The group, known as the G-15, have remained in solitary confinement without charge or trial ever since. (See article)

Kenya

Thousands of Kenyans attended the inauguration of a monument on Saturday (September 12) that pays tribute to the victims of torture and ill-treatment during the Mau-Mau emergency period of British rule in the 1950s before independence. It was built as part of an agreement between the British government and Mau-Mau veterans worth nearly \$31 million.

Somalia

The United Nations envoy to Somalia, Nicholas Kay, on Monday (September 14) urged “all stake-holders to move forward quickly to find a solution to the current crisis, and urged dialogue over calls for impeachment of Somalia’s President.

Ahmed Mohamed Islam ‘Madobe’ was inaugurated as President of Jubaland on Saturday (September 12) in Kismayo. (See article)

The Federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development launched the National Gender Policy formulation process on 15 September 2015 in Mogadishu. The launch was attended by representatives of Somali Authorities - Federal and Regional Interim Administrations, civil society leaders, legislators, representatives of AMISOM and of the UN in Somalia.

Oceans Beyond Piracy and the Taipei Representative Office in Brussels signed a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a new maritime communications network along the Somali coast. The aim is to “increase Somali ownership of their maritime domain and avoid dangerous misunderstandings between local traffic and international partners at sea.”

A report by Secure Fisheries, a program of One Earth Future, warned this week that widespread illegal fishing by foreign trawlers off Somalia's coastline is threatening to push communities back into piracy and maritime crime. It said foreign fishing was taking an estimated 132,000 tons of fish each year compared to Somalia’s catch of 40,000 tons.

South Sudan

United Nations Secretary-General, Ban ki-Moon, urged South Sudanese leaders on Wednesday (September 16) to focus their efforts on implementing the peace deal that they had signed and “uphold the recent commitment they made to end this brutal conflict.”

President Kiir has urged the people of South Sudan to "join hands" in implementing the peace deal to end more than 20 months of conflict. He repeated his concern over the demilitarization of Juba and other issues but was, however, now ready to implement the agreement and called on all “to join hands with me and work together.”

President Museveni of Uganda met with South Sudan rebel leader, Riek Machar, during his visit to Khartoum this week. A spokesperson for Machar said that the issue of “withdrawal of all foreign forces from South Sudan within 45 days from the date of the signing of the peace agreement” was raised and President Museveni gave assurances that he will comply with the agreement and pull out his troops from South Sudan.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir of Sudan and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda have reiterated their support to the peace agreement in South Sudan, and vowed to exert efforts to bring stability to South Sudan. They also agreed to enhance security cooperation and reactivate a joint security committee.

President Yoweri Museveni arrived in Khartoum for a two-day visit to Sudan on Tuesday (September 15). He held talks with President Omer al-Bashir on bilateral relations and South Sudan. During his visit, he went to Sudan’s Military College and the International University of Africa.

1st Vice President Bakri Hassan Saleh said this week that Sudan is preparing to commit a brigade of ground troops to the Saudi-led coalition in support of Yemeni President Abd-Rabbuh Mansour Hadi against the Houthi rebels. Sudan earlier provided planes to the coalition forces.

The TPDM leader and hundreds of opposition fighters return to Ethiopia

The leader of the opposition Tigray People's Democratic Movement (TPDM, Demhit), Mola Asgedom, and nearly eight hundred fighters, previously in Eritrea, fought their way out of Eritrea and into Sudan on Friday last week (September 11) before crossing into Ethiopia. The fighters had gathered at Gulje, a town near the Sudan border, but had to fight their way through three Eritrean brigades in order to cross the border and reach the Sudanese town of Hamdait. After being assisted by the Sudanese Armed Forces, which made certain that Eritrean army units did not pursue the TPDM fighters into the Sudan, they were able to cross into Ethiopia where they now are.

Following the arrival of the TPDM leader and fighters, the Joint Counter-Terrorism Force of Ethiopian Federal Police and National Intelligence and Security Service issued a statement on Sunday explaining that the arrival of the TPDM leader and the fighters was the culmination of a clandestine operation it had conducted with a force that was being supported by the Eritrean Government for subversive ends against Ethiopia's interests. The successful conclusion of the operation, said the statement, came with the flight of the TPDM from Eritrea and the subsequent entry of the force with its arms into Ethiopia on September 12. The statement said covert contacts between the National Intelligence and Security Service and members of the TPDM in Eritrea had been going on for over a year. This had helped the group understand the anti-Ethiopian agenda of the Eritrean Government and forces that were organized under it. The members of the TPDM were also able to see the progress being made in development and the concomitant changes in Ethiopia. They eventually realized that they did not want to be an instrument for the agenda of subversive groups aiming to destabilize Ethiopia's development and democracy. The force, therefore, decided to return home and opened communications with the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS).

The statement said Mola Asgedom, Chairman of the TPDM, had convinced "other patriotic friends" to abandon the Eritrean Government's anti-Ethiopian effort and organize their return to Ethiopia. Originally, Mola Asgedom and the others were eager to return immediately to Ethiopia once they had become convinced about Eritrea's plans, but they agreed to stay to help to secretly thwart Eritrean activities and only leave when the NISS decided the time was ripe. During this period of over a year the members of the TPDM played an important role in informing Ethiopia about Eritrean Government's plans and missions and their information allowed the NISS to take precautionary measures to prevent or deal with infiltration from Eritrea.

The idea of delaying their leaving Eritrea was also part of a project to embarrass Eritrea and Ethiopian opposition groups based there. This involved encouraging the Chairman of Ginbot 7, Berhanu Nega, to come to Asmara to lead "a united army" of Ethiopian opposition groups. Last week these groups declared a united "Salvation Front" to be headed by Berhanu Nega as Chairman and Mola Asgedom as his deputy. The merger, which included the TPDM, was

celebrated with much enthusiasm in Asmara and among Ethiopia Diaspora opposition elements. Immediately afterwards, the TPDM abandoned “the anti-Ethiopia conspiracy”, effectively dissolving the supposed “salvation front.”

At this point, the NISS statement said, the plan ran into a problem. The original intention was that Mola and the 800 fighters of the TPDM should come directly into Ethiopia through Humera, but the secret was leaked to the Eritrean Government. Communications with the Ethiopian government were disrupted and Mola and his group were forced to change their plan and take a different route to leave Eritrea. The Eritrean Government made a desperate attempt to stop the fighters leaving, moving several units from the border area to block the escape, but the TPDM overran these forces around Om Hajer and Suq Alketir and fought its way out to Hamdait in Sudan in two groups. One group of 400 crossed first, followed by Mola and another 300 later. At the same time, another hundred TPDM fighters had opened a third front as a diversionary tactic and subsequently crossed directly to the Ethiopian town of Humera. The number of casualties on either side is unknown. Other elements of the TPDM scattered across Eritrea have also continued to arrive across the border. The statement noted that some elements of TPDM that had been unable to get out of Eritrea are either prisoners, members of artistic troupes or those who were sick.

The statement concluded by indicating that officials of the Tigray and Amhara Regional states, as well as the defense forces, had participated actively in the success of the operation from the outset. It also expressed the greatest appreciation to the Government of Sudan for protecting the combatants from attack by Eritrean soldiers inside Sudan, providing food and shelter as well as medical treatment for the wounded. It also helped them reach Ethiopia by providing transport to the Ethiopian border. It thanked the Sudanese Government on behalf of the Ethiopian people and government “for its historic and unforgettable assistance in bringing the group to Ethiopia without sustaining harm.”

The return of Mola Asgedom and the TPDM fighters, and the details already provided by Mola in statements to the press, makes very clear that the Eritrean Government has been deeply involved in violations of the UN sanctions on Eritrea, imposed for arming rebel groups from neighboring countries. The latest report of the UN Monitoring Group noted that it had obtained “testimonials and evidence that Eritrea continues to support armed opposition groups from neighboring countries, notably the following in Somalia and Ethiopia: The Ogaden National Liberation Front, the Tigray People’s Democratic Movement and Ginbot Sebat (7).” The Monitoring Group’s report pointed out that the Security Council “had specifically prohibited “Eritrea from harboring, financing, facilitating, supporting, organizing, training, or inciting individuals or groups to perpetrate acts of violence or terrorist acts against other States or their citizens in the region.”

In interviews at the beginning of the week, Mola Asgedom made it very clear that the Eritrean Government’s main intention was destabilizing and dismembering Ethiopia and that was why it had been arming and training the TPDM. This was also why it was also trying to arm and train other groups, though its efforts to organize Ethiopian rebels have not been as effective as it might have been as the flight of the TPDM from the latest effort to organize a united front of opposition groups showed.

The flight of the TPDM fighters from Eritrea, including many of the group’s military leadership, is a double blow to President Isaias. It is highly embarrassing because it suggests that Asmara’s much publicized unification of several Ethiopian opposition groups is no more

than a figment of the imagination. It is also a serious embarrassment to the Chairman of Ginbot 7, US Professor Berhanu Nega, who is currently on sabbatical leave from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania. Heading an organization devoted to the violent overthrow of a government closely allied to the United States is a surprising activity for a sabbatical, even for a professor of political science. It certainly shows an unusual interest in the depth of his research.

Dr Berhanu came to Asmara in July to lead the process when what Ginbot 7's ESAT TV station called "the final push to unseat the EPRDF government had been started". This aim was also apparently previewed by Eritrea's Ministry of Information while the negotiations for this united Ethiopian front were in progress. It issued a statement alleging that "War-like rhetoric from Ethiopia's main party in the ruling coalition, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, had increased...The TPLF's sabre-rattling has been a common staple throughout winter. And this has been ratcheted up in the past few weeks." said the statement. This appears to have been intended as an explanation of the expected activity by the united front, underlined by the front's claims that "unification of these major armed opposition forces is going to be a game changer in the ongoing struggle for democracy, unity and equality in Ethiopia."

Professor Berhanu was elected chairman of the unified organization with Mola Asgedom, the chair of the TPDM, as his deputy. With Mola leaving within less than a week, the presence of the TPDM in this new Eritrean-organized [organization] will be minimal. There were in fact reports earlier in the year that a considerable number of leading members of the two organizations merged in the Arbegnoch-Ginbot7 for Unity and Democracy Movement set up in January. Nearly a dozen senior members in both organizations were said to have been arrested by Eritrean security after they resisted the joining of these two organizations. This has been a common factor among the armed Ethiopian opposition movements based in Eritrea when Eritrea has pressurized them to unite or carry out operations of which they disapprove. The Ogaden National Liberation Front lost a number of its central committee members in 2013 after a congress in Asmara, and the much divided Oromo Liberation Front has suffered from similar problems. The Ethiopian Patriotic People's Party has been the worst affected and many of its leaders have disappeared in Asmara or elsewhere in Eritrea over the years when they objected to President Isaias' aims.

The defection of the TPDM from Eritrea will also be taken as an insult personally by President Isaias. He has, in the last two or three years, been coming to rely more and more on TPDM fighters as his distrust of his own forces grew. Indeed, after the attempted coup in Asmara in January 2013, when the Ministry of Information building was briefly occupied by dissident Eritrean troops, President Isaias, apparently distrusting his own forces, brought in hundreds of TPDM fighters to deal with some of the more important aspects of security in Asmara. The TPDM, much to the disgust of the Eritrean population, was also being used extensively in the highly unpopular task of searching for conscripts who had fled from their units or people who were trying to escape conscription. According to some reports, the President had even decided recently to put the TPDM in charge of the infamous Eirairo prison complex where the G15 are kept.

In an attempt to try to minimize the damage of this incident and the escape of the TPDM leader and most of its fighters, Eritrea put up the TPDM Deputy Chairman, Mekonen Tesfay, who remained in Asmara, to claim that the numbers, motives and facts behind the defection are exaggerated and propaganda. He claimed that Mola Asgedom had been heavily criticized

for lack of leadership and capacity at the last TPDM executive meeting and that the executive committee had rejected him as a leader for the united front. This was why Mola had fled. He had taken no more than a handful of fighters with him and there had been no fighting with Eritrean army units, rather implausibly suggesting that “there were no Eritrean forces in the area as this happened to areas closer to the Sudanese border.” In fact, Mekonnen even claimed the whole incident was a blessing in disguise: “Now that the main obstacle towards the unification and overall struggle against the Ethiopian regime is gone, the struggle will continue in full force and TPDM will join the Coalition movement with all of its fighters.” He gave no indication of the strength that remained to the TPDM.

While some elements still remain unclear, or classified, the whole episode has underlined a point that Ethiopia has constantly repeated in the last few years. It is not time to relax UN sanctions on Eritrea. Eritrea is still continuing to implement policies in defiance of the UN Security Council. It has made no effort to change its policy of destabilization of its neighbors nor its assumption that aggression and belligerence are necessary elements to a foreign policy. It also underlines that the statements of Eritrean officials indicating or even promising a change in policy should not be accepted without concrete evidence of a change. Over the last year or so, for example, Eritrean officials have indicated that the open-ended national service conscription, which has in some cases lasted for nearly twenty years, had changed and conscription would be limited to the original 18 months. Some suggested this might indicate a change in Eritrea’s aggressive posture. Despite these comments, even promises, there has, in fact, been absolutely no change on the ground. Nor has there been any indication that there will be.

Steadily expanding Ethiopia-China bilateral ties

Ethiopia and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) have enjoyed long and historic ties based on their common values. Both are very aware of their ancient civilization and their long histories, though diplomatic relations were only established in 1970. Since then China has proved itself a real and dependable friend in many areas. It has played a significant role in helping the fight against poverty, and the economic relations between the two countries bears witness to the level and strength of cooperation. With the establishment of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, the relationship was transformed into a new strategic partnership. Ethiopia, strongly supportive of the objectives of the Forum, hosted and co-chaired the second Ministerial meeting of the Forum in 2003. Trade relations have shown significant progress following the Government of China’s allocation of quota and tariff free rights to African countries. As a result, Ethiopian exports to China, mainly agricultural produce, have risen substantially. Since 1991, Ethiopia has been following the model of a democratic developmental state economy and has been going through a dynamic political and socio-economic transformation for the past two decades.

The relationship between the two countries has been further strengthened and characterized by close and comprehensive consultation and cooperation for win-win socio-economic development not only through strong government-to-government relations but also through party-to-party ties and people-to-people contacts. Besides the excellent bilateral relations the two countries have collaborated in the international arena to promote global peace, harmony, responses to climate change, and other areas of common concern. The frequent exchanges of visits of top officials have contributed a lot to the excellent multifaceted relations. Recent exchanges of visits include President Dr Mulatu Teshome visiting China in July 2014 and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in June 2013; Deputy Prime Minister Demeke

Mekonen in May 2013 and November 2014. China's Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited Ethiopia in May 2014; Vice Premier Madam Liu Yandong in November 2013 and Foreign Minister Wang Yi in January 2014. It underlines the great interest both countries have shown in further strengthening their relationship.

China and Ethiopia signed a Trade Cooperation Agreement in 1996 in order to strengthen their trade relationship and the amount of trade has steadily progressed. The total trade turnover (expressed in terms of value of the two countries) reached nearly US\$ 2.7 billion in 2013, rising from US\$353 million in 2004. The volume of trade in recent years has increased by an average of 16.7% annually, though the balance remains firmly in favor of China at the moment. The main exports of Ethiopia to China are oil seeds, sesame, leather and leather products, natural gums and mining products. Given current trends and Ethiopia's fast economic growth, Ethiopia expects the trade balance to improve in the next few years.

Ethiopia and China signed an Investment Protection and Promotion Agreement in 1998 and the Government of China has also demonstrated its policy of encouraging Chinese investors to invest substantially in African countries through its "GO Global" policy. During the FOCAC Summit held in Beijing in 2006, the Chinese government also announced the establishment of a China-Africa Development Fund, and pledged to commit US\$5 billion to encourage Chinese investors to invest in Africa. The Fund was established in June 2007, and a branch office was opened in Addis Ababa in April 2010 to facilitate the activities of Chinese companies in Ethiopia as well as in Eastern Africa. The level of Chinese investment has now reached unprecedented levels in Ethiopia and Africa. In Ethiopia there is also great potential to further increase investment, particularly in the manufacturing sector. The Huajian Shoe Factory, which was established 2 years ago, employing more than 4,000 Ethiopians, is one such good example, and it has substantial plans for expansion. The total capital of Chinese companies registered in Ethiopia between 1992 and 2014 is calculated at US\$2.76 billion. Much of this is in the manufacturing sector, and is investment in line with the Government's development priority areas.

In order to encourage further Chinese investment in Ethiopia, a "Framework Agreement on Strengthening Cooperation in Industrial Transformation" was signed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development of Ethiopia and the National Development and Reform Commission of China earlier this year. The Agreement creates a platform for attracting investors from China and, to implement the Agreement, a Joint Steering Committee has been established. It held its first meetings in Guangzhou, August 5-6. The Agreement is expected to encourage Chinese investors in priority development areas.

In addition to financial cooperation agreements, technical cooperation agreements have also been signed in the fields of education, health, agriculture, science and technology, culture and other areas. The Chinese government has offered technical support in human resource development through scholarships and long- and short-term training, sharing its development experience. Other developments have included significant support for Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET); sending doctors and supplies of medical equipment and medicines as well as building facilities like the Tirunesh-Beijing Hospital. The Government has also dispatched volunteers to assist in many areas including computer and networking, agriculture and pasture development.

The Government of Ethiopia and China signed a Technical and Development Cooperation Agreement in 2002. Since then, the Chinese Government has committed more than US\$10

billion in terms of commercial and interest-free loans and grants. The financial support provided by the Chinese Government has enabled Ethiopia to carry out a number of major infrastructure projects including the Addis Ababa-Adama Expressway, the Airport-Meskel Square Road, the Addis Ababa Light Rail project, the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway project, Gibe III Hydro Power Plant, Adama Wind Farm Phase I and II, a number of power transmission and sub-station constructions with upgrading the National Grid system, sugar projects including Kesem and Omo 2 and 3, the upgrading and expansion of Ethio-Telecom and a water supply for Addis Ababa City.

The Government of Ethiopia is also looking for more support for other infrastructure projects such as the Mekele-Haragebeya Railway project and the establishment of Special Economic Zones and industrial parks which are a central element in the plans for the next Growth and Transformation Plan. The feasibility study for the Mekele-Haragebeya Railway project has been carried out by the independent consulting company (CIECC), and submitted to the Government of China. For development of Special Economic Zones, Ethiopia hired the Chinese Association of Development Zones as consultants. During his visit in May 2014, Prime Minister Li Keqiang promised to support these projects.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, on his visit to China to attend the 70th anniversary of the Chinese People's victory against Japanese aggression marking the end of World War II, held discussions with Chinese officials on attracting investment to the manufacturing sector, a major priority in the second Growth and Transformation Plan. The Prime Minister held warm and successful talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang covering ways to enhance Ethiopia's manufacturing sector, infrastructure, and poverty reduction endeavors. He also signed a series of agreements on various aspects of cooperation to help increase Ethiopia's manufacturing capacity. Both President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang commended Ethiopia's commitment to fighting poverty and transforming the country. They assured the Prime Minister that China would continue to provide strong support to Ethiopia to help it achieve its vision of becoming a middle-income country by 2025. Both countries expressed their mutual interest to work together to lift their relationship to a higher level.

Following China's fast economic transformation of the last 30 years, many labor-intensive first-generation industries are looking for favorable places to relocate. Ethiopia is one of the main targets for Chinese companies because of its strong relationship with China and its relative peace and stability. It also has a government committed to development, macro-economic stability and a conducive investment environment. During the bilateral talks in China last month, both sides reiterated their intention to vigorously implement the Production Capacity Cooperation Framework Agreement signed in May last year. This largely focuses on enhancing Ethiopia's manufacturing sector through technical and financial support and experience sharing. Both President Jinping and Prime Minister Keqiang indicated Ethiopia was well-positioned to benefit from Chinese cooperation in such areas as urban planning, human resource development, capacity building, oil and gas exploration and agricultural modernization. Prime Minister Hailemariam underlined Ethiopia's continued interest in attracting investment from China. Ethiopia and China are also committed to expanding areas of cooperation in social sectors, especially in health. Prime Minister Li Keqiang promised, during President Dr Mulatu Teshome's visit to China in July 2014, to build a Modern Referral Hospital in Ethiopia. A project proposal for the Ethio-China Tertiary Hospital (with a total cost estimated at US\$383 million) has been prepared by the Ministry of Health and submitted to the Ministry of Commerce of China.

Economic development in Ethiopia has looked to closer economic links between Ethiopia and other countries, like China. The relationship with China has provided Ethiopia and other countries with economic development that they can really own themselves. China's policies are based on the principles of promoting mutual advantage and a serious commitment to win-win bilateral relations. China's readiness to stay away from the concept of conditionality underlines its understanding of Ethiopia's need to own its own economic development strategy. This is one explanation why relations between China and African countries, including Ethiopia, have become so close and successful, as demonstrated in FOCAC. It also explains why they will continue to expand and be effective.

In 1979 a partial opening-up policy was initiated by President Deng Xiaoping. Since then Chinese leaders have followed their own model of economic development focusing on market-oriented economic development and subsequent reforms. These began with the phasing out of collectivized agriculture, and expanded to the gradual liberalization of the socialist market economy, fiscal decentralization, increased state-owned enterprises, creation of a diversified banking system, development of stock markets, rapid growth of the private sector, and opening-up to foreign trade and investment by establishing Special Economic Zones. The result was rapid and sustained economic development. The success of China has showed to the world that sovereign countries can choose their own independent model of development in accordance with their own characteristics. Developing countries, especially African countries, can draw many lessons from China's model of economic development, from the experience of Chinese visionary leadership and the disciplined work culture of the Chinese people.

September 18 - a bleak and dismal anniversary for Eritrea

Fourteen years ago today on September 18, 2001, President Isaias arrested eleven of Eritrea's leading ministers and political figures. This group, known as the G-15 because they were originally part of a group of fifteen leading officials, had signed a couple of open letters critical of President Isaias's actions. Three members of the G15 were abroad and escaped arrest and one retracted his participation.

The arrested members of the G15 were Petros Solomon, former minister of defense and minister of maritime resources; Haile Woldetensae, former foreign minister and of education; Brigadier General Estifanos Seyoum, former director-general of inland-revenue; Major General Berhane Gerezgiher, former commander of the armed forces; Berakai Ghebreselassie, former minister of information and education; and Saleh Idris Kekya, former minister of transport and communication. These six may still be alive. The five who are believed to have died are Mahmoud Ahmed Sherifo, former foreign minister, minister of local government and chair of the electoral law drafting committee; his wife, Aster Fissehatsion, former regional head of personnel; Hamed Himid, a director in the ministry of foreign affairs; Germano Nati, former regional director of social affairs; and Major General Ogbe Abraha former chief of staff of the armed forces, minister of trade and industry and of labor and social welfare. All were members of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice's central committee and were National Assembly members.

They had signed open letters to President Isaias in May and August of 2001 calling for convening the provisional National Assembly and the PFDJ central council, which Isaias in his capacity as President and as head of the party had refused to do. They called for the

President to be governed by the constitution and the law, and [for] the legislative and executive branches to perform their legal functions properly. They also called for protection of human rights, freedom of expression and political discourse, formation and freedom of action of civic organizations, the dismantling of the Special Military Courts, for long-term prisoners to be brought before a regular court of law, and the independence of the judiciary to be guaranteed. Subsequent events have consistently underlined the accuracy of their complaints.

None of G15 were ever changed or tried, and none have been seen again. Both the Government and the President have refused to give any information about them, though they are known to be detained in a specially built prison, Eiraeiro, in one of the most inhospitable regions of Eritrea. They are kept in solitary confinement under appalling conditions. Reports from former guards who fled the country several years suggest at least five of them may have died under their ill-treatment. The remainder are reported to be physically or mentally affected and in poor health. One former guard has reported that Haile Woldetensae ‘Drue’ has lost his sight.

A week after the G15 arrests, the President closed down Eritrea’s independent press, arresting 10 journalists. These ten journalists have also been kept under similar conditions to those of the G15 ever since. Again reports suggest at least half of them have died under their mistreatment. Those believed to be still alive are: Dawit Isaac, owner and co-founder of Setit; Emanuel Asrat, editor of Zemen; Temesgen Gebreyesus, sports reporter at Keste Debena; Dawit Habtemichael, deputy editor and co-founder of Meqaleh; and Seyoum Tsehaye, freelance reporter and former director of the government’s television station. Those believed to have died are: Fessehaye “Joshua” Yohannes, co-founder of Setit; Medhanie Haile, deputy editor of Keste Debena; Yusuf Mohamed Ali, editor of Tsegenai; Mattewos Habteab, co-founder and editor of Meqaleh; and Said Abdulkader, founder and editor of Admas.

All of the papers were closed and remain closed. There has been no independent press in Eritrea since then. One of these journalists, Dawit Isaac, is a Swedish citizen. He was briefly released, for two days, to visit hospital in 2005, then taken back to prison. In May 2009, during an interview with Swedish TV, President Isaias when asked about Dawit said “We will not have any trial and we will not free him. We know how to handle his kind.” He added: “To me, Sweden is irrelevant. The Swedish government has nothing to do with us.” A year later he said when asked about Dawit Isaac: “I don’t know. I don’t even care where he is or what he is doing. He made a big mistake.”

In an Al-Jazeera television interview in May 2008, the President had a slightly different approach, denying imprisoning any journalists: “There were never any. There aren’t any. You have been misinformed.” Earlier, in an interview in 2003, he called the imprisoned journalists ‘spies’. Claiming they had been bribed by ‘external persons’ during the war with Ethiopia, he said “they are not even journalists. You cannot say a spy is a journalist.” Isaias’s chief political advisor, Yemane Gebreab, also claimed ignorance about the journalists in response to a 2010 inquiry when he said: “I don’t know them at all.”

The President and other Government officials are equally dismissive of the G15. In one of his very few public references, President Isaias told the National Assembly the G15 had committed “treason by abandoning the very values and principles the Eritrean people fought for” apparently identifying these values with himself and his personal rule. In 2010 when

questioned about the G15 by a Qatari journalist, President Isaias said: “By God, I do not know about this issue. This issue can be forgotten.” The President went on “I say we are not prepared to be dragged, and lured, and speak on this subject. This issue is a subject matter of States, the forces that are trying to create a crisis in this country. We do not waste our time talking about this issue, which is trying to lure us into things we do not want to be lured to.” In fact, President Isaias frequently pretends to be ignorant of embarrassing things that have happened in Eritrea, or characterizes unpleasant facts as ‘lies.’” Asked in an Al-Jazeera interview about long and indefinite terms of national service conscription, he dismissed it as: “Another lie... a pack of lies.”

The G15 and the journalists arrested fourteen years ago are, as numerous reports including the exceptionally detailed 484-page Report of the UN Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Abuse in Eritrea published in June this year have made clear, only the best known of Eritrea’s political prisoners. They are no more than a mere fraction of the thousands who have been imprisoned, tortured, killed, and enslaved in the last 24 years. The current estimates of around 10,000 political prisoners seems likely to be an underestimate. The UN Commission obtained first hand testimonies from 550 victims and received 160 written submissions related to 254 individual cases in the Diaspora. On the basis of the evidence it gathered, the Commission found that systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have and are being committed in Eritrea under the authority of the government. Some of these violations, it concluded, may constitute crimes against humanity.

Last week, Elizabeth Chyrum Director of Human Rights Concern - Eritrea (HRCE), wrote to the UK Prime Minister David Cameron to express concern about the way the UK Home Office was using “a completely discredited Danish report as the criteria for determining the outcome of applications filed by Eritrean asylum-seekers who have fled from the open-ended national service characterized by UN and human rights agencies as forced labor or as a modern form of slavery.”

In her letter, Ms Chyrum noted that September marks the fourteenth anniversary of the arbitrary arrest and detention of government critics and independent journalists. She points out that their fate is unknown and they, along with thousands of their fellow citizens were languishing in harsh detention centers without due legal process. She points out there is no independent judicial system in Eritrea; that torture in all its forms is the most defining characteristic of the prison system in Eritrea; that the only university in the country was closed down, and education militarized; and freedom of religion and belief are severely curtailed. The national service conscripts, she points out, are forced to work in government-owned projects, such as farming, dam building, housing and road construction. Many of those who joined National Service in 1994 are still there today and today, she adds, “with numerous mining projects being developed in cooperation with foreign investors, Human Rights Concern - Eritrea (HRCE) has ample evidence to show that most of the manual labor in these projects is being provided by national service conscripts, forced conscripts, forced labor and exploitation of workers against their will and with little remuneration.” She concludes that Eritrea is second only to North Korea in terms of human rights abuses.

Inauguration of President Ahmed “Madobe” concludes the Jubaland State process

President Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Islaan “Madobe” was inaugurated as President of the Interim Jubaland Administration on Saturday last week (September 12) for the second time in Kismayo in a colorful ceremony that included local bands, singing their hopes for a

prosperous and stronger Jubaland. The ceremony was attended by Federal President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake as well as the President of Puntland, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali “Gaas”, the President of the South West State, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, and the Interim Galmudug administration leader, Abdikarin Hussein Guled. Among those also attending were Ethiopia’s Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, representing IGAD as the Chair to the Addis Ababa Agreement, which resolved the problems over the creation of the Jubaland Administration. Others present included the United Nations envoy to Somalia, Ambassador Nicholas Kay, the Majority Leader in Kenya’s National Assembly Adan Du’ale, the IGAD Representative, Mohamed Abdi Afey and the Turkish Ambassador.

Nicholas Kay, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, welcomed the inauguration of Sheikh Ahmed “Madobe” as President of the Interim Jubaland Administration. Speaking at the ceremony, Ambassador Kay said, “I congratulate President Madobe on your election, and I pledge the United Nations’ continued support in addressing the immense challenges facing the Administration in building a Juba that future generations can be proud of.” He added his congratulations to the Federal Government of Somalia and all the people of the Jubaland who had made the day possible “through compromise and a recognition of the national interest”. He also welcomed the contributions of AMISOM and IGAD to the implementation of the 27 August 2013 Addis Ababa Agreement and the Somalia peace and state-building process. Ambassador Kay encouraged President Madobe and the Juba Regional Assembly to restore balance in its composition in an inclusive manner, and also welcomed the recent move to increase the number of seats in the Juba Assembly. He said: “The representativeness and inclusivity of this Assembly will foster confidence in the Administration.” Sheikh Ahmed “Madobe” announced an increase in the numbers of the members of the Assembly a week before the inauguration. Ambassador Kay also stressed the importance of launching the Consultative Forum on creating a Somali-owned electoral process in 2016 and called on all Somali stakeholders to participate fully in the work of the Forum. He said the United Nations remained committed to supporting Somalia’s peace and state-building process.

Following the ceremony, Somali President Mohamud held talks with Ahmed “Madobe” on the relations between the federal government and Jubaland. These were upset earlier this year by the motion of no-confidence passed by the Federal Parliament about the Jubaland Assembly. The controversial subject of representation of other clans in the Jubaland parliament and security were also on the agenda for the talks.

It had been expected that the next High-Level Consultative Conference involving state leaders, Ambassador Kay and IGAD Ambassador to Somalia Mohamed Abdi Afey, would be held in Kismayo during the weekend to discuss the 2016 elections and disputes between the federal states. This did not take place as Puntland’s President, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali “Gaas”, wanted to carry out further regional discussions before the next summit. Nevertheless, the leaders did hold a meeting and the Jubaland State Minister for Lands said it concentrated mainly on two points, “the first was Vision 2016 and the tasks ahead of us. The second was on addressing any differences to foster unity.”

Nicholas Kay said the meeting between the leaders had been a great opportunity to pave the way for the national consultative process that is expected to begin on the September 20. He said: “Today we had a really fantastic opportunity, all the regional leaders and the President and Prime Minister to sit together and discuss the 2016 electoral process. This was the

beginning of what will be a national consultation about the priority issues. Key partners were there, IGAD and the United Nations, and I think it is a good start and then next weekend, they have agreed to launch the national consultation process.” President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid subsequently issued a press statement to announce that the next High-Level Consultative Conference to discuss the implementation of elections and the 2016 vision would be held on September 20, either in Mogadishu or another venue to be agreed upon. Kismayo remains a possibility.

In a press release from the Office of the Presidency, the leaders jointly acknowledged the need to accelerate the political process and underlined the need to ensure that all parties are included in the consultation meeting. This will launch the national consultation process that will provide suggestions and ideas to facilitate the decision-making process for the 2016 electoral process. There will be a series of meetings in regional state capitals before the final deadline in November for plans to conduct the 2016 elections. The announcement demonstrated the progress towards achieving the Federal Government’s Vision 2016, despite the on-going political crisis in Mogadishu. The current government’s mandate expires in September 2016. The UN, IGAD and the international community continue to stand firm that there can be no delay in the 2016 elections.

The re-election of Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Islaan “Madobe” as President of Jubaland on August 15 in effect brought the process of the Addis Ababa Agreement, signed two years ago, to a conclusion. Following the communiqué of the IGAD 21st Extraordinary Summit of Head of States and Governments held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on the May 3, 2013, the Executive Secretary IGAD led a team of Ambassadors of member states to Mogadishu and Kismayo to conduct a confidence building mission and collect views from various stakeholders on Juba regions state formation. The conclusions on the formation of the Juba region state culminated in an agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Leader of the Interim Juba Administration signed in August 2013 in Addis Ababa, after lengthy negotiations chaired by Dr Tedros Adhanom as the Chair of IGAD Foreign Ministers.

The agreement involved the reconciliation of all communities in the Juba region; the formation of a Jubaland Regional Assembly; the drafting up and passing of the Jubaland constitution; integration of militia forces into the Somalia National Army; and the agreement to the establishment of Jubaland as a permanent state. The implementation of the Agreement was funded by the European Union, the Governments of Italy and the United Kingdom, and the United Nations. The Addis Ababa Agreement also made a number of stipulations on the establishment of the Interim Juba Administration. These involved the management of federal institutions and structures; the management of security forces and militia integration; and reconciliation and confidence building. Subsequently, the IGAD office of the Facilitator for Somalia Peace and National Reconciliation secured agreements among stakeholders where necessary, and negotiated, mediated and facilitated the execution of all the articles in the agreement. The one exception was article two of the agreement on the management of federal institutions, and this will be dealt with under the wider debates on the Constitutional revenue-sharing process.

European Union to help Africa address the migration and refugee crisis

The European Union (EU) is facing the largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II but it is a situation that has to be seen in the broader context of violent conflict and destabilization in other parts of the world. It is a crisis of unprecedented magnitude that

largely originates from conflicts and persecutions in Europe's wider neighborhood. The violent conflicts or activities of repressive governments in the Middle East and parts of Africa have forced millions of women, men and children to flee their homeland in search of protection and the chance to stay alive. Many have tried to reach the European Union. The flow of refugees has been, and is, supplemented by an increasing flow of migrants, many to be described as economic migrants, looking for jobs or merely a better life. The two categories are not synonymous. Indeed, from the European viewpoint, this is something of a false division as most, migrants and refugees alike, are looking to stay in Europe, whether it is a job they are searching for or just security to live.

For geographic and other reasons, the European Union is the major target for the migrants and refugees from western and North Africa, from Eritrea and Somalia, most recently from Syria and the Middle East and the Yemen. The EU response has been based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility, especially in respect of its own values and its international obligations, but since the beginning of the year, the scale of arrivals has led the EU to try to reorient and re-mobilize its external action instruments to respond to what is now perceived across the EU as a crisis. This has been fired by the public response to the poignant photo of a drowned three-year old Syrian boy on a Turkish beach that finally caught the attention of the European public and launched a widespread debate, finally encouraging European politicians to emphasize the "welcoming culture" of Europe and its ability to "process" migrants.

Certainly, despite previous efforts to limit numbers, hundreds of thousands of people have continued to flee repression, and conflict or search for a better life. They have come across the Mediterranean into Italy or from the eastern Mediterranean into southeast Europe. Sources of refugees include Syria and Iraq, Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and Afghanistan or Yemen. Migrants are more likely to come from Nigeria, Gambia, Senegal or Mali, or to be moving out of the western Balkans from Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, or come from Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to the UNHCR, as of early September 2015, 71% of the Mediterranean Sea arrivals, the majority into Italy or Greece, have been refugees coming from conflict-affected areas, Syria or Afghanistan, or repressive states like Eritrea. Many, a majority, of these are young adult males, and the phrase "European migrant crisis" came into popular use in April this year when five boats carrying almost two thousand refugees to Europe sank in the Mediterranean with a combined death toll estimated at more than 1,200 people. In fact, even if people do manage to reach Europe, their conditions remain very poor. Indeed, scenes of thousands of migrants being held in sports stadiums or makeshift encampments, sometimes lacking food or water, show how inadequate current conditions are for refugees and migrants arriving in Europe in these numbers.

The European Union has now understood that the situation is both serious and complex. The crisis has various different elements: humanitarian, border protection, integration and financial; and the reasons for leaving countries of origin are as diverse. If the European Union fails to respond adequately and does nothing to address each of these elements, or ignores the problems facing a country like Italy that is the first point of arrival for most of those coming from Africa, each wave of arrivals will continue to be bigger than the last. Any nation has an international obligation to rescue people in distress. That is a given, it is not a policy and bearing this in mind the European Commission is now putting forward a comprehensive package of proposals which is intended to help address the crisis that EU Member States and neighboring countries are facing. In theory, this also includes tackling the root causes driving people to seek refuge in Europe.

On September 9, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said: "We Europeans should know and should never forget why giving refuge and complying with the fundamental right to asylum is so important. It is time we started putting in place the building blocks of a truly European migration policy, as we called for back in May. The measures we are proposing today will ensure that people in clear need of international protection are relocated swiftly after arriving, not just now but also for any crisis in the future. If ever European solidarity needed to manifest itself, it is on the question of the refugee crisis. It is time to show collective courage and deliver this European response now."

The European Commission has, therefore, presented a number of concrete measures to respond to the crisis and in preparation for dealing with future problems. One element in this is an emergency relocation proposal for 120,000 of the refugees who have arrived in Greece, Hungary and Italy. The Commission proposes to relocate 120,000 people in clear need of international protection from Italy (15,600), Greece (50,400) and Hungary (54,000). This comes in addition to the Commission's proposal from May to relocate 40,000 people in clear need of international protection from Italy and Greece to other EU Member States. This brings the total proposed to 160,000. The relocation will be accompanied by €780 million EU budget support for participating Member States, including a 50% pre-financing rate to ensure that governments on national, regional and local level have the means to act swiftly.

A second, and more controversial, proposal is to address the external dimension of the refugee crisis. At one level this involves renewed efforts to support diplomatic initiatives and find political solutions to the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya. At the same time the EU is providing assistance to internally displaced persons in Syria and financial support to countries neighboring Syria who are hosting the highest number of refugees from Syria, such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. So far, €3.9 billion has been mobilized for this to encourage the refugees from Syria to remain out of Europe. The EU is also expanding the existing high-level dialogues on migration with its partners. Examples of this have been the Rabat and Khartoum processes with African countries and the Budapest process with Eastern and Central Asian states. There is a Conference planned for early October and a Summit to be held in Malta in November.

The other aspect of this is the plan to set up a trust fund to try to ameliorate some of the pressures that African and in particular some Sub-Saharan states face: demographic pressure, environmental stress, extreme poverty, internal tension and institutional weaknesses. In some cases this has spilt over into open conflict, causing increased fragility, displacement of populations, increased criminality including human trafficking and smuggling, as well as increase terrorism and radicalization. The net result is increased migration and refugee flows. The European Commission wants to tackle these issues and dry up the root cause of migration from Africa to Europe. The Commission, therefore, announced last week that it has allocated €1.8 billion to set up an Emergency Trust Fund to assist stabilization and address the root causes of irregular migration in the regions of the Sahel, Lake Chad, the Horn of Africa, and North Africa. The fund will provide for support for these areas to develop better socio-economic opportunities and migration management policies. Equally, utilization of the trust fund will need to be appropriately monitored especially in countries like Eritrea where there is high tendency of resource diversion for unintended political causes.

In fact, the EU is looking into the possibility of increased aid to Eritrea, though this effort is also associated with trying to halt the flow of refugees from Eritrea. A senior EU official said on Wednesday this week (September 16) that the EU aims to agree on a €200 million

development aid for Eritrea by the end of the year in order to try to stem the exodus of youth. The proposed five-year package, which has been the subject of months of talks, has not been prompted by the latest influx of refugees into Europe and is not part of the proposed Trust Fund, but the consideration has gained impetus as the number of asylum-seekers arriving in Europe has surged. The EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, said this week that the €200 million allocation now needed approval from EU states and a decision was expected "in November but not later than the end of the year". He said "this would be a development contribution to the root causes of migration in Eritrea," adding that the EU funds would not be channelled through Eritrean government agencies. Eritrean human rights activists have pointed out that, while Eritrea certainly needs all the assistance it can get, such assistance will do very little to stem the exodus of young adults from Eritrea. The majority of the up-to-5,000 a month who are leaving the country are people fleeing from endless national service conscription, and the repressive regime.

It's not yet clear what social groups and economic sectors the proposed trust fund will address or how it will work, but the plans do look rather like conventional aid, and it is clear that more aid is unlikely to ease migration, let alone the refugee flows from conflict and poor/repressive government. Increased funding may help provide jobs within a state, might help reduce a flow of migrants, but something else is needed to respond to the flow of refugees from areas of conflict, state collapse or government failures. Knowledge exchange and innovation funding might do more to build stability in these states than any EU aid ever can, even if such a process can only be long-term. In fact, Mr Juncker, in his State of the European Union speech on September 9, suggested that Europe was the destination of choice for refugees because of the European values of free speech, tolerance, acceptance and solidarity, as well as its economic prosperity. He said: "Europe today represents a beacon of hope, a haven of stability in the eyes of women and men in the Middle East and in Africa." If this is the case, improving the governance of the states from which migrants and refugees come, will have an impact on the problem. It will, however, take a considerable time for this to affect those states, and it will require significant changes in EU policy. The European Union looks set to remain the target of both migrants and refugees for a long time to come.

Israel and Ethiopia: the annual trade fair in Addis Ababa

The historic relationship between Ethiopia and Israel dates back thousands of years, reflecting the myths of Solomon and Sheba and the national ideology and spiritual dogma of Ethiopia for more than a millennium. It was confirmed in the *Kebre Negast*, in imperial chronicles and antique *Branas*. Until the 1990s, the central element of the relationship between the two countries was largely dominated by such elements. Now, although the relationship remains close, it is based on very different criteria.

Today, the Ethiopian Government's economic and developmental policies and strategies are based on the need to maximize the potential benefits the country would achieve from creating a manufacturing economy on the basis of agro-industrial development. Agriculture, a source of 41% of GDP and engaging 81% of the working population, will provide the spring-board for industrialization. The achievements of the first Growth and Transformation Plan and other developments has led to impressive growth and even produced some millionaire farmers. This has boosted the need for more infrastructure and energy production. The Second Growth and Transformation Plan is concentrating on building up a strong agricultural sector to produce high value commodities which can be processed for value added and lead to significant manufacturing development.

Israel is a country where agriculture is the basis of a highly developed industry both in exporting fresh agricultural products and in agricultural technology. It is also a country which has devoted a great deal of effort into expanding “Agro-technology.” In February this year, the Bloomberg Innovation Index placed Israel as the world’s 5th most innovative state. This is exactly something that Ethiopia could benefit from, and it could provide the basis for lifting the conventional diplomatic ties between the two countries to a higher level. Mrs Belaynesh Zaveda, Ambassador of Israel to Ethiopia, made exactly this point in her opening speech at the Ethio-Israeli Agro-tech Forum that took place on Wednesday last week (September 9): “the combined effort of Ethiopia and Israel can bring significant change to the two countries”.

The Ethio-Israel Agro-tech Forum was principally designed to enhance the development of the agricultural sector in Ethiopia and to strengthen economic and technological ties between Ethiopia and Israel. In the fourth annual forum, last week, an Israeli agro-business delegation consisting of representatives of 15 agro-companies were in Addis to network and to explore possible partnerships with Ethiopian companies.

One of the elements of agro-technology presented at the Forum was to be seen in Safe Pack Products that comes with technology for managing post-harvest loss of crops. According to the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization roughly one third of the food produced around the world goes to waste, 1.3 billion tons every year. In Ethiopia, the Directorate General for Agriculture Extension Services of the Ministry of Agriculture announced last year that the country lost 20 to 30% of the total production of the food chain, mainly during the stages of harvesting, storage and transportation. Data from the Central Statistical Agency revealed that during the post-harvest process teff, maize, barley and beans suffer wastages of 26%, 23.3%, 18.9% and 19.6% respectively. Technologies like Safe Pack Products could reduce this damage by a very considerable amount and provide a significant increase to the agricultural output.

Another Israeli company showing a genuine interest to invest in Ethiopia was Qualified Gene. This is a company working in the dairy and livestock-fattening sectors. Improving livestock standards and production is crucial to improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. Three years ago, a joint meeting between the Ethiopian Livestock Feeds project and the QuickFeed project identified a strong demand for improved livestock, particularly for sheep, both for export and for the domestic urban markets where the demand of better quality produce cannot be met by the traditional livestock production system. The meeting also identified how unregulated grazing can lead to disease and parasite problems and to a lack of control over breeding. This in turn results in inconsistent production which cannot meet the demands of the market. Ethiopia needs more companies like Qualified Gene to work on advanced livestock and dairy production to properly exploit the resources of the largest livestock and dairy herds in Africa.

The potential is well understood by companies in Israel but Ethiopia still needs to continue with the process of encouraging Israeli companies to invest in Ethiopia and share their technological expertise. The State Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture underlined the point when opening the Forum, commenting on the importance of engagement with the new technologies of agriculture and entrepreneurship, and stressing their relevance to the upcoming GTP II. He said it has “become more important than ever to create networking and establish partnership with potential Israeli counterparts.” The manager of Qualified Gene,

David Dror also agreed, saying the Ethiopian Government should work even more energetically to create the necessary awareness among Israeli investors of the stability of the country, the geographic proximity to markets, the huge potential for the agro-processing sector, favorable government policies for investment, the size of the economy and other similar benefits. The Ministry of Agriculture is already working aggressively to make sure it will be able to achieve the goals laid down in the Second Growth and Transformation Plan. Agro-tech partnerships with Israeli companies could be an important element in this.

There are now abundant opportunities on the table for Ethiopia and Israel to benefit from investment and from technology transfer. However, transferring the latter in a speedy, proper and sustainable way may pose possible challenges and requires some care. Martino Peineri in his “Agricultural technology transfer in developing countries and the public sector” warned that effective technology transfer and knowledge-sharing, particularly for developing countries in the new economic and scientific context, requires a new, more complex model. It needs, in fact, knowledge management, gap-filling research, promotion and regulation of the private sector, and environmental impact analyses. The Forum made it clear that all these should be considered carefully as part of the process of agro-tech partnerships, but it also re-emphasized the value and potentiality for agro-technological development, and the value of Israeli input.