

## **A Week in the Horn** **20<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

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### **News in Brief**

#### **Africa and the African Union**

South Korean President Park Geun-hye is to pay a State Visit to Ethiopia and the African Union Commission next week (May 25 to 28). This will be the first-ever visit by a Korean head of State to Ethiopia. President Park will also travel to Kenya and Uganda.

During his visit to the World Economic Forum meeting in Kigale last week, Prime Minister Hailemariam held talks with Rwanda President Paul Kagame, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, Alpha Condé of Guinea, and the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission Erastus Mwencha. Discussions covered economic integration of the Horn of Africa, development cooperation and security issues, as well as the implementation of Pan-Africanism on the continent.

#### **Ethiopia**

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn told the visiting Sudanese Public Diplomacy Delegation on Saturday (May 14) that the existing "extraordinary and exemplary friendship and solidarity" between Ethiopia and Sudan could play a crucial role in bringing peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Prime Minister also noted both countries had agreed to work tirelessly towards the economic integration of the Horn region. (See article)

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Ethiopian National Day**, the Silver Jubilee of the overthrow of the military dictatorship of the Derg will be celebrated nationwide next week on May 28. (See article)

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom met with Kristian Jensen, Foreign Minister of Denmark, on the side-lines of the 4<sup>th</sup> **Women Deliver International Conference** being held in Copenhagen this week (May 16-19). The two sides discussed issues of mutual interest and ways to further enhance their growing bilateral and regional cooperation and cooperating in agricultural development.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, held discussions with a delegation from Germany's Parliamentary Group on East Africa, headed by Ms Anita Schäfer, on Thursday (May 19). Ambassador Taye explained the behavior of the Eritrean

regime and its support for insurgent groups [which] creates a security problem. He also noted the number of refugees from Eritrea was increasing. Ms Schafer said negotiations could be the means to bring the two countries together.

State Minister, Ambassador Taye attended celebration of the 68<sup>th</sup> Independence Day of Israel on Wednesday (May 18) at the Sheraton Addis Hotel. Israel's Ambassador to Ethiopia underlined the historic relationship of Ethiopia and Israel, and indicated that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would be making an official visit to Ethiopia in July.

State Minister, Ambassador Taye met with Ambassador Armen Melkonian, non-resident Ambassador of Armenia to Ethiopia on Tuesday (May 17). Ambassador Melkonian said Armenia would like to open an embassy in Addis Ababa and was keen to establish political consultation platforms with Ethiopia and prioritize inter-cultural exchange.

State Minister Ambassador Taye met with Mr Laurence Robertson, Chairman of the UK All Party Parliamentary Group for East Africa on Tuesday (May 17). Their discussion covered bilateral and regional issues of common interest including the challenge posed by the El Nino-induced drought and the issue of migration.

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved a US\$200 million International Development Association credit to support the growth and development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ethiopia on Wednesday (May 18). A recent World Bank study found that financing constraints for Ethiopian SMEs was a key obstacle to job creation and growth. SMEs have a key role under the current Growth and Transformation Plan for creating employment opportunities.

A High-Level Trade and Investment Mission from the UK visited Ethiopia last week (May 10-12), meeting with officials from the Prime Minister's cabinet, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Water, Irrigation and Electricity, and a small, select group of business leaders during its three-day visit. The Trade Mission was led by Prime Minister David Cameron's newly appointed Trade Envoy to Ethiopia, Richard Benyon. (See article)

Two Ethio-German Business Fora were held in Hamburg and Munich last week (May 11-12). The Fora were organized jointly by the Embassy and Consulate General of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Berlin and Frankfurt in partnership with the German-Africa Business Association: Afrika-Verein, and the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce for Munich and Upper Bavaria. (See article)

The Ethiopian city of Adama and the Partizansky District of Minsk in Belarus signed an agreement on cooperation, in Minsk on Tuesday (May 17). The agreement envisages cooperation in culture, tourism and sport, education, healthcare, youth policy and other areas.

Ethiopia is celebrating the 6<sup>th</sup> African Vaccination Week (AVW) from May 18 to May 24 under the theme: "Close the Immunization Gap; Stay Polio Free". AVW's campaign to increase awareness of the importance of vaccination, as well as celebrate significant progress to date, was launched in Assosa in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State on Wednesday (May 18).

A growing number of the children kidnapped by a South Sudanese militia group have been recovered and have been returned home following negotiations with the kidnappers.

According to Gambela regional officials 44 children have so far been returned; others are expected soon.

### **Djibouti**

Twenty engineering students left Djibouti on Wednesday (May 18) for China to receive technical training on the railway sector. It's the second group to go to China as part of the "skills transfer" agreement for the building of the Djibouti Addis Ababa electric railway line which, when it becomes fully operational later this year, will have the capacity to transport 3,500 tons of goods.

### **Eritrea**

Leaked documents from Asmara show the Government's concern over the forthcoming report from the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. The Government appears to be organizing its supporters and members of the Diaspora to produce a large scale petition attacking the Commission of Inquiry (See article).

President Isaias of Eritrea has been quoted saying "Somalia is a problem of a nation that has disintegrated; it's a question of a nation that has gone into internal and external crisis." He said "When you have one [country] divided, fragmented from within .... that's very sad." He said "Somalia does not exist," though he added "we would like Somalia to revive, we would like this nation to come to normalcy again."

An Irish Dublin MEP and Member of the European Parliament's Development Committee, Brian Hayes, was in Eritrea over the weekend to visit agricultural partnerships set up by Irish Aid, Teagasc and Irish development partner VITA. Mr Hayes [said] the visit was also a good opportunity to view EU funded projects and meet EU officials working in the country.

France 24 is allowed to visit Eritrea; its reports make it clear that many people were terrified of talking to the media. The reports note the restrictions on freedom of movement, both inside and outside the country, as well as the indefinite nature of national service. (See article)

### **Kenya**

President Kenyatta said on Thursday (May 19) that the construction of the security wall along its border with Somalia would help deter terrorists from entering the country. He emphasized that the wall was not aimed at deterring movements of people but merely to enhance security. The wall is made up of a series of concrete barriers, fences, ditches and observation posts overlooked by CCTV stations.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has urged Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta not to close Dadaab refugee camp. A statement on Thursday (May 19) suggested that a high-level bilateral review on the refugee situation in Kenya should be conducted by the government and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In a telephone conversation, the Secretary-General also expressed deep appreciation for Kenya's decades of generous hospitality to asylum-seekers and refugees.

Following its visit to Mogadishu, the Security Council is visiting Kenya where it will address issues of terrorism and the problems posed by recent increases in immigration flows, refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as Kenya's recent announcement that it plans to close the Dadaab and Kakumo refugee camp complexes. (See article)

The Kenyan Parliament has summoned Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary, Amina Mohammed, and Interior Cabinet Secretary, Joseph Nkaissery, to explain why the Government wants to expatriate refugees at Dadaab camp to Somalia. The two Cabinet Secretaries will face questions from the Parliamentary committees on Defense and Foreign Relations.

## **Somalia**

President Mohamud called on Parliament to endorse the electoral modalities to clear the way for the 2016 elections on Wednesday. He said time was running out and asked Members of Parliament to take up the challenge and expedite the process fast.

The UN Security Council visited Mogadishu on Wednesday this week (May 18). The Security Council, which was last in Mogadishu in 2014, is looking at the political and security situation as the country enters a critical phase in its preparations for elections in August and continuing concerns over the political process. (See article)

Kuwait's Acting Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled told Somalia's Defense Minister General Abdulkadir Sheikh Dini, on a visit to Kuwait, on Tuesday (May 17) that Kuwait would continue to support the Somali Government in all its anti-terrorism efforts.

The EU has appointed Brigadier Robert Magowan, a British Royal Marine officer, as Operation Commander for the EU Naval Force Somalia-EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta. Brigadier Magowan replaces Major General Martin Smith. Also from the UK, and is expected to take up his duties at the beginning of June. The EU Naval Force Somalia was launched in December 2008 to help control piracy; it also protects vessels of the World Food Program and other vulnerable shipping, and supports AMISOM and other international missions.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia, Ambassador Francisco Madeira congratulated Somalia and Somali youth on the occasion of the Somali National Youth Day (May 15). He said it was a time to reflect on their contributions to the country; and promised AMISOM's support in forging a secure and enabling environment for meaningful and sustainable development in Somali.

Puntland President, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, dismissed the Chief of Police and the Commander of the Paramilitary Birmadka Forces in Puntland on Sunday (May 15) as part of a package of security reform. The sackings followed recommendations from a fact-finding committee set up ten days earlier, following a shoot-out that left the Puntland Security Minister Abdi Hirsi Ali (Qarjab) wounded.

Jubaland President, Ahmed Islam Madobe, fired the first deputy-president, Abdullahi Ismael Fartag, and replaced him with Mahamud Sayid Aadan, a political leader from the Gedo region. The move follows reconciliation talks earlier this year between the administration in Kismayo and leaders of the Marehan clan in Gedo region.

Somaliland celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of self-proclaimed independence on Wednesday (May 18) with President Ahmed Silanyo stating firmly in Hargeisa "Don't lie to yourself. The land and the people of Somaliland are not going back with Somalia. So let's be two separate countries and peaceful neighbors."

## **South Sudan**

The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) monitoring the security situation in South Sudan said on Friday last week (May 13) that the Government of South Sudan had yet to fully declare the number of its forces currently in Juba. It said CTSAMM was not therefore in a position to declare completion of transitional security arrangements in Juba. Under the peace agreement, the government will keep 3,420 troops in Juba including army, police, prisons and the presidential guards; the opposition SPLM-IO is allowed 1,410 troops. All other forces must move 25 kilometers outside Juba.

South African Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa, arrived in Juba, on Monday (May 16) to push the reunification process of the factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), launched at a meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, under the auspices of South Africa and Tanzania. Mr Ramaphosa, who is also President Zuma's Special Envoy, met President Salva Kiir and First Vice President, Riek Machar, in separate meetings on Monday.

Zhong Jianhua, China's Special Representative for African Affairs, told journalists in China's capital Beijing, on Tuesday (May 17) that the reunion of President Kiir and Vice-President Machar was a positive step in stabilizing South Sudan.

## **Sudan**

The Egyptian-Sudanese Higher Committee is planning meetings in Khartoum next week (May 25-26) with seven under-secretaries of ministries from both nations participating. Experts will also participate to discuss the work of the 29 specialized joint sub-committees. These will be followed by a meeting of the Foreign Ministers and then a presidential summit in Cairo later.

The United Nations Security Council on Friday (May 13) extended the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for another six months at the same number. UNISFA has 4,500 uniformed personnel, including troops, military observers and police, but is mandated to have another 1,300 if necessary. Deployment of more forces would depend on the progress of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The Security Council reiterated its call for the two governments to form the Abyei Area Administration and Council.

The tripartite team tasked with developing an exit strategy for the hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) arrived in the North Darfur capital, El-Fasher, on Saturday (May 15) to assess the situation in the region. Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Ali al-Sadiq, said the team aims to assess the humanitarian, security and political conditions in Darfur in order to develop a clear roadmap for the mission's exit. The UN has linked withdrawal of the peacekeeping operation with a ceasefire within a peace agreement in which protection of civilians can be ensured.

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## **The Sudanese Public Diplomacy Delegation meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam**

The High-level Sudanese Public Diplomacy delegation, which had a highly successful week-long visit to Ethiopia last week (May 8-15), was composed of high-level government officials, investors, academics, teachers, youth and women representatives, prominent

personalities and artists. Led by Dr Omar Suleiman Adam, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Speaker of the Sudanese [Council of States], the delegation was warmly received by members of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team and senior government officials, including the Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, Abadula Gameda, and the State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye-Atske-Selassie. The Sudanese delegation's program included visiting various development projects as well as excursions outside Addis Ababa to Benishangul Gumuz and to the Al Nejeshi Mosque and the Abraha-Wo-Atsbeha rock church in Tigray. They also had meetings with President Dr Mulatu Teshome and with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn.

Their meeting with the Prime Minister took place on Saturday last week (May 14) and their discussion covered a range of issues, concerning the visit of the Public Diplomacy Delegation, bilateral ties between Ethiopia and the Sudan and the way to enhance links between them, and regional cooperation.

The Prime Minister warmly welcomed the delegation and praised them for accepting the invitation. He said the peoples of the two countries had long and deep connection. They were, he said "tied by blood" adding that the "two countries are related since the civilizations of Aksum and Merowe" fifteen hundred years ago. The Prime Minister emphasized that the two countries had a lot of similarities and their ties were long-lasting. He said: "governments may come and go but the strong relations between our two countries will remain flourishing". They had been friends for decades, the Prime Minister said, now the relationship was developing further than ever before.

Prime Minister Hailemariam praised Ethiopia's late Prime Minister Meles and President Omar Ahmed Al-Bashir for bring the friendship of the two countries to these levels. Sharing insights about the similarities between the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan, the Prime Minister remembered a discussion he had with President Omar Al-Bashir when they had realized that Sudan and Abyssinia (Ethiopia) had the same meaning: both words mean 'burnt face'. The two peoples were the same and certainly they were destined for mutual growth and development.

The Prime Minister said he has met President Omar Al-Bashir three times in the last month, in Bahir Dar, in Djibouti and in Kampala. He said they had firmly agreed on one issue, "to work together on full regional economic integration". The Prime Minister pointed out they had started and would continue to work in the areas of road infrastructure development, use of ports, energy and commerce, widening the opportunities for mutual economic growth of both countries.

Both the Sudan and Ethiopia believed in the peace and prosperity of the region, the Prime Minister said. One example of this was the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam which the Prime Minister described as "a monument of our ties and of mutual benefit." In conclusion, he called on the members of the delegation, which represented so many different sectors of Sudanese society, to work closely and together with Ethiopian counterparts.

Dr Omar Suleiman Adam, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Speaker of the Council of States and Head of the Sudanese Public Diplomacy Delegation, took the opportunity to thank the Ethiopian government and people for the warm hospitality the delegation had received in Ethiopia. He also thanked Prime Minister Hailemariam for giving the delegation the time to discuss their visit. He described delegation's visit as remarkable and historic. He

said it had witnessed a wide range of the huge developments taking place in Ethiopia, and he described the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam as "a Dam for our mutual benefit", adding, "as its name indicates, the Dam will contribute for the growth of Ethiopia and regional countries". Speaker Omar Suleiman Adam described the peoples of the two countries as one interrelated on many levels. He underlined the readiness of the members of the delegation to work together with their Ethiopian counterparts in the future.

### **Ethiopian Business Fora in Hamburg and Munich**

Two Ethio-German Business Fora were held in Hamburg and Munich last week (May 11-12). The Fora were organized jointly by the Embassy and Consulate General of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Berlin and Frankfurt in partnership with the German-Africa Business Association: Afrika-Verein, and the Hamburg Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce for Munich and Upper Bavaria. More than 200 German companies and entrepreneurs participated with representatives from the respective business communities, senior government officials and the private sector of both countries.

Dr Yinager Dessie, Commissioner of the Planning Commission with the rank of Minister led the Ethiopian delegation, which included the State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Regassa Kefyalew, and the State Minister of the Ministry of Industry, Dr Mebratu Melesse and around 15 representatives of business organizations and institutions. Dr Yinager made keynote speeches to both Fora, noting that the occasions would boost the steadily growing business links between the two countries. Germany is a strong development partner of Ethiopia, the Commissioner noted, providing Technical and Financial Cooperation, as well as support for the education, food security and agriculture sectors.

The Commissioner said that Ethiopia embarked on its Second Growth and Transformation Plan last year, with the resolve to continue the growth registered during the first Growth and Transformation Plan (2010-2015), during which it had achieved over 10% growth. It had laid down key priority focus areas for this plan period and set important strategic goals to realize a structural transformation of the economy, increasing industrialization. In this, light manufacturing was being given a key role. Plans include substantial infrastructure support including the building of industrial parks to bring together the basic requirements for investors. These include roads, power and other facilities requirements and offer an integrated approach attractive to businesses. Light manufacturing industry, the Commissioner said, "is the sector where our country has a huge comparative advantage due to massive agriculture resources and affordable and trainable labor." He also noted the government's "far-sighted vision" on environmental protection with its Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy that aims to create a zero carbon emission economy by 2025.

Dr Yinager also underlined that Ethio-German trade had witnessed continuous growth in volume. Germany was one of the biggest buyers of Ethiopian coffee and also an importer of various textile products. Finished products such as machinery, engines, motor vehicles, chemicals and medicines are among the main German products exported to Ethiopia, he said. Overall, agriculture and agro-processing, renewable energy and manufacturing were the central areas on which the discussions focused, and German businesses involved in these sectors showed significant interest in the possibilities of investment.

State Minister Dr Mebratu, described Ethiopia's plans to bring change in the economic structure, laid out in the second Growth and Transformation Plan, and the building of

industrial parks. He invited German investors to participate in the major sectors that would be serviced by the industrial parks and zones. Ambassador Kuma, who addressed both fora, welcomed participants, and underlined that business-to-business relations between Germany and Ethiopia should be strengthened and widened. He emphasized that economic fora of this kind would provide valuable impetus to encourage business relationships.

The Fora offered substantial opportunities to facilitate interaction, promote business discussions and exchanges between businesses and the possibilities to open up a network of relationships between businesses and the authorities, as well as learn about the real potential available in Ethiopia. During the visit, the Ethiopian delegation therefore visited renewable energy projects and manufacturing sectors in Germany, visiting Hamburg's renewable energy projects as well as MAN Truck and Bus AG in Munich. MAN is collaborating with Mesfen Industrial Engineering in the production of heavy trucks. Dr Yinager encouraged the German government and the different State authorities to support and collaborate with German investors to enable them to invest in Ethiopia.

Dr Yinager also visited Senvion, a company [that] provides wind energy solutions. The company, along with Energy Enablers and ABB Group, reiterated their long time interest to engage in wind energy production in Ethiopia as well as sub-station plant building. The delegation explained the huge potential of Ethiopia in the clean energy sector and encouraged the companies to work to realize such projects in Ethiopia. They took the opportunity to see how off-shore and on-shore wind turbines are working to supply power to the city of Hamburg.

The delegation also held a working dinner with See Alliance in Hamburg. The meeting, co-organized by Afrika-Verien, focused on the huge potential Ethiopia has in the agriculture sector. Dr Franz-Georg von Busse, Chairman of Agribusiness Alliance urged German companies to look into the opportunities in Ethiopia and support the sector with their expertise, experience and technology. Dr Stefan Liebing, Chairman of Afrika-Verien, the German-African Business Association, appreciated Ethiopia's development policies, which he said were independent of any foreign dictation and had registered commendable results following an independent course of development. Dr Liebing noted the fact that Ethiopia had been given some prior attention by German companies and a bilateral steering committee, to provide assistance and resolve challenges faced by German businesses in Ethiopia, had been formed. The establishment of such a mechanism, he said, showed that "we have moved from the stage of strategic talks to strategic implementation."

Dr Yinager, who noted Ethiopia's appreciation of German companies who were investing in Ethiopia, pointed out that with its Agriculture-Led Industrialization Strategy, Ethiopia was focusing on increasing the productivity of the agriculture sector. Without this, the Minister said, it was not possible to realize the industrialization which would bring the necessary structural transformation to the country's economy. He underlined the government's interest to learn from German experience in order to minimize the challenges of the sector, and said the recently launched Second Growth and Transformation Plan expected a lot from German companies.

Besides holding the Business Fora in Hamburg and Munich, and visiting a number of German companies, the visit provided the occasion for agreement on a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Ethiopia's Ambassador to Germany, Ambassador Kuma Demeksa and Dr Stefan Liebing, Chairman of Afrika-Verein, to establish a high-level business steering

committee to facilitate and promote trade and investment between Ethiopia and Germany in the fields of agriculture, infrastructure, pharmaceuticals/chemicals, textiles, leather and energy, as well as [to] promote private sector development, business-to-business links, regional value chains and value addition. The Memorandum also allows for joint consultations to resolve problems as well as help create a conducive environment to work in Ethiopia and an enabling environment for German investors and the establishment of an Ethiopian-German Business Forum to meet annually.

### **UK's High-Level Trade and Investment Mission visits Ethiopia**

A High-Level Trade and Investment Mission from the UK visited Ethiopia last week (May 10-12), meeting with officials from Prime Minister's cabinet, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Water, Irrigation and Electricity, and a small, select group of business leaders during its three-day visit. The Trade Mission was led by Prime Minister David Cameron's newly appointed Trade Envoy to Ethiopia, Richard Benyon, who stated in advance that the aim of the visit was to boost trade relations between the UK and Ethiopia and provide opportunities for UK businesses to strengthen its knowledge of the growing commercial possibilities in Ethiopia.

The visit was a follow-up to the highly successful UK-Ethiopia Trade and Investment Forum organized in London last year on 21<sup>st</sup> October. Attended by Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom, it attracted over 400 participants to hear about the investment potential that Ethiopia had to offer. At the time, Dr Tedros noted that the Forum was the country's highest profile investment outreach on the international stage. For potential investors, the Forum was certainly a unique opportunity to engage directly with the government and senior decision-makers in one of the most topical investment destinations in the world.

The visit of the delegation from the UK last week focused on opportunities in infrastructure, extractives and manufacturing. It offered possibilities for participants to deepen relationships in Ethiopia and secure new investments in one of Africa's fastest growing economies. On the first day of their visit, the mission met with Dr Debretsion Gebremichael, Minister of Communication and Information Technology with the rank of Deputy Prime Minister. Richard Benyon said he was delighted to have been appointed UK's Trade Envoy to Ethiopia, and he was "excited to be here and see first-hand the opportunities Ethiopia offers for UK businesses. I look forward to building a lasting trade relationship with Ethiopia that brings benefits to both our countries." Investment opportunities and prospects in the country were discussed at an economic briefing session given by Josephine Ngune, Resident Representative of the African Development Bank and Melanie Robinson, Country Head of the UK's DfID.

Later, the High-Level Trade and Investment Mission met with State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie. Ambassador Taye briefed the mission on the parameters that had made Ethiopia one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, underlining the participation of private sector in the economy and the importance of foreign investment. The State Minister said there were opportunities available in the country which he said would be an asset for a productive partnership with Ethiopia. Ambassador Taye added that the visit of the mission would allow it to see and obtain first-hand information on the various areas of investment potential in a country which was one of Africa's most emerging economies. He believed the visit would encourage new investment.

The mission was also given a ministerial briefing session by Motumua Mikassa from the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity. Discussions covered the ongoing efforts by the Government to catalyze sustainable energy growth in the country as well as the untouched investment opportunities in clean energy technologies, power generation, irrigation and electricity. In another meeting, the Minister of Mines, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Tolosa Shagi, shared key opportunities for potential investment in mining and infrastructure with representatives from UKTI, KEFI Minerals and Circum Minerals. Issues of mineral extraction licensing were also discussed.

The High-Level Trade and Investment Mission also held a series of bilateral meetings and business-to-business discussions with Ethiopian business representatives to explore opportunities in other areas, as well as to investigate the ease of doing business in the country and to look at building foundations for future commercial activities. UK businesses are investing in a range of sectors in Ethiopia, including education, leather, mining, oil and gas, and food processing. British companies are actively involved in the transfer of knowledge, management skills and in creating local employment, all of which contribute to building the economy. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office, United Kingdom Trade and Investment and the Government of Ethiopia facilitated the visit of the UK Trade and Investment Mission.

### **Ethiopian National Day, Ginbot 20, will be celebrated next week**

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ethiopian National Day, the Silver Jubilee of the overthrow of the military dictatorship of the Derg, will be celebrated nationwide next week on May 28. The day marks the demise of the repressive military regime and the dawn of a new era of peace, development and democracy for the Ethiopian People. Under this new government, all the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia are recognized equally under the constitution, irrespective of any gender, sexual, religious, ethnic or cultural differences or affinities.

As a result, the country's political, social and economic environment started to show tremendous changes. The new government lost no time in mapping out plans setting out its priorities and identifying poverty as the most formidable enemy, which should be addressed immediately, and reversing the collapse of the economy. Ethiopia, during the Derg regime, became known for drought, famine and instability previously. Now, the country has inscribed its name among the leading emerging economies of the world. Indeed, its economic and overall development is recognized as one of the fastest in the world. In its process of democratization, Ethiopia held its fifth nation-wide democratic elections last year. Altogether the socio-economic and political situation of the country has altered radically and completely following the overthrow of the military regime and the coming of Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) to power in 1991.

The leadership of the EPRDF has, in fact, instituted major and significant changes across all sectors of the economy with the Growth and Transformation Plans, the second of which was launched last year. A number of major projects now under construction are at the center of the five-year Growth and Transformation Plan. This envisages massive expansion in health and education facilities, housing, infrastructure development, telecommunications and power generation, as well as other areas including industrialization and manufacturing. Enjoying the foundation laid down on Ginbot 20, the country has launched large-scale development projects, including a number of hydro-power dams, of which the best known is the 6,000mw Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Foreign Direct Investment, attracted by the country's

stability and by the conducive environment for investment, is growing at an unprecedented scale. This rising Foreign Direct Investment, the number of new ventures and investments, a flourishing tourism sector and the critical involvement of the private sector as the engine of economic growth and development, are unmistakable signs of the new Ethiopia that has emerged since May 28, 1991 (Ginbot 20).

Today Ethiopia is proud and confident that global companies like GE, Unilever, Tesco, Diageo, Nyota Minerals, South West [Energy], Pittards and many others are operating in Ethiopia, as partners in Ethiopia's fast-changing economic development. Under the current GTP, Ethiopia has embarked on a broad-based effort to encourage industrialization and develop manufacturing on a substantial scale, along with energy production in a fully sustainable manner to produce a carbon-free green economy by 2025. Its policies are attracting a growing number of investors who can help provide the necessary socio-economic developments to improve the living conditions for Ethiopians and win the war on poverty.

The new Ethiopia was constituted on the basis of equality, mutual respect, and the common aims and interests of all the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia as well as of all its religions and faiths. Ginbot 20 didn't only launch Ethiopia as a developmental state, but as a democratic developmental state. May 28, in fact, marks the beginning of the process to create the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Ethiopia's national interests were redefined, to focus on the country's internal vulnerabilities and its very real problems, political and economic. The result, systematically laid out in the new policies and strategies, identified the major threats to Ethiopia and indeed to its survival: economic backwardness and the desperate poverty in which a large majority of the people lived. This was coupled with an understanding of the urgent need for democracy and good governance and for the establishment of democratic institutions and government at all levels. Using the concept of 'unity in diversity', the constitution of 1995 launched a genuine democratic process, offering peace and stability, growth and development and laying the foundation for Ethiopia's Renaissance. Since then, the major focus of government, has been concentrated on resolving these problems. The victory of May 28<sup>th</sup> and the subsequent activities at both federal and regional level, to move the country out of backwardness and conflict and into peace and stability, have led the country down the path of democracy and development. The war being waged against poverty is yielding substantial and successful results.

This is the reason why the anniversary of May 28<sup>th</sup> is celebrated as the National Day of Ethiopia, and this is why Ethiopians will be celebrating Ginbot 20 (May 28) next week with celebrations nation-wide and in Ethiopian Diaspora communities world-wide. It will provide an opportunity to pledge cooperation and support for the shared objective of seeing a modern, prosperous and viable Ethiopia achieve its Vision 2025 and the Ethiopian renaissance.

### **The UN Security Council visits Somalia, Kenya and Egypt**

The UN Security Council started on a four-day visit to Somalia, Kenya and Egypt on Wednesday this week (May 18). This month's President of the Council, the Permanent Representative of Egypt, made it clear the main focus of the trip would be Somalia, though other issues that would be addressed during the mission, among them will be terrorism and the problems posed by recent increases in immigration flows, refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as Kenya's recent announcement that it planned to close the Dadaab and Kakumo refugee camp complexes. In addition, during the visit to Egypt, there would also be discussions on the situation in Libya and the Council would hold talks with the

League of Arab States, which is headquartered in Cairo. Egypt and the UK will co-lead the mission to Somalia; and Egypt will lead the visits to Kenya and Egypt.

In Somalia, the Security Council, which was last in Mogadishu in August 2014, will concentrate on the political and security situation as the country enters a critical phase in its preparations for elections in August and continuing concerns over the political process. The visit is particularly timely as the Security Council is due to start discussions to extend authorization for the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The current authorization expires on 30 May. As part of the preparation for the mission, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon also delivered his latest quarterly report on Somalia (S/2016/430) to the Security Council, last week. This covered the agreements reached earlier in the year for a 275-member lower house to be elected by broad-based electoral colleges, rather than being chosen only by clan elders, as in 2012. The seats, however, would still be allocated to clans on the basis of the 4.5 clan power-sharing formula. The Upper House will be created with 48 seats divided equally among the six federal states, plus three additional seats each for Somaliland and Puntland. Following agreement by Puntland at the beginning of April, the National Leadership Forum agreed on detailed modalities for the 2016 electoral process on April 12, and at a meeting at the beginning of May it also agreed on a political road map for the period 2016-2020, comprising benchmarks and timelines leading to universal elections in 2020.

The Federal Parliament began its deliberations on the electoral process, following a presentation by Prime Minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, on April 30. The report noted that, under the roadmap, a national constitutional conference is due to be held in Garowe, Puntland May 25 to June 5, as well as a drafting retreat by the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission to finalize draft constitution amendments. The Secretary-General also noted that the Boundaries and Federation Commission had begun introductory meetings on federal state boundary delimitation criteria. These will then be submitted to the Federal parliament. The Secretary-General's report also looked at the progress made in the regional administrations and at the "serious difficulties over clan representation" at the Hiiraan and Middle Shebelle state formation conference. The report also considered security which, the report noted, remained a dominant feature of concern to the Federal Government.

On Saturday (May 14) a statement from the United Nations, AMISOM, IGAD, the European Union, the UK and the US, Ethiopia, Sweden and Italy expressed deep concern over the protracted process to approve the 2016 electoral model, submitted to the Federal Parliament by Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke on 30 April. The international partners urged the swift endorsement of the modalities of the electoral process by Parliament and called on all relevant federal institutions to move towards preparing and implementing the 2016 electoral process. Recalling the agreement reached by Somalia's federal and regional leaders on 12 April, they stressed the importance of moving ahead with the implementation of the electoral process. They noted that the agreed modalities of the electoral process were the result of months of nationwide consultations and had been backed by all **the presidents of the existing and emerging federal states, and by the Speaker of the Federal Parliament**. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Michael Keating, said: "Somalia's political future is on hold until this model is approved. It is essential that this happens quickly to allow legitimate transfer of power later this year. Failure to approve this will send a troubling signal both to the world and to the millions of Somalis who want to see progress towards one-person, one-vote elections in 2020."

While in Mogadishu, Council members will meet with Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and the Speaker of parliament, Mohamed Osman Jawari, as well as other Somali officials, including members of the National Leadership Forum. As stated in the terms of reference for the mission, an important objective for the trip is to reiterate the Council's expectation that elections will be held in August this year and that the roadmap towards universal elections in 2020 will be adhered to, while also calling for urgent completion of the federal state formation process and constitutional review process. Council members are also expecting an update on the implementation of the government's obligations relating to the partial suspension of the arms embargo under resolution 2244. In this context, President Mohamud is expected to reiterate the call he made during the Council's April 19 debate on Somalia for a full lifting of the arms embargo.

In Mogadishu, Council members will also engage with senior leadership of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the UN Support Office for Somalia (UNSOS) and AMISOM to get updates on the implementation of their respective mandates. In addition, there will be meetings with civil society, including women's groups. Concern about continuing security challenges are likely to top the agenda. In his recent report, the Secretary-General stated that the security situation had actually worsened during the previous six-month period, despite some recent strategic military successes. He said it was essential to take effective measures against al-Shabaab, in particular to ensure that the electoral process could be conducted in a safe and timely fashion. Council members will therefore be particularly interested in discussing ongoing efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Somali National Army and of AMISOM, including any progress with regard to the measures called for in recent Council resolutions as well as any follow-up to the Djibouti summit of AMISOM's troop and police contributing countries (TCCs) held at the end of February. These include strengthening the mission's command and control structures and deploying critical force enablers including helicopters. Kenya has promised to provide two helicopters for AMISOM and Ethiopia three. Council members will also be interested in getting an operational update on progress in the campaign against al-Shabaab and future plans for offensive operations.

The Security Council has also indicated that it will address a number of other issues, including the protection of civilians and measures taken to reduce civilian casualties; the role of women and what the government is doing to promote the participation of women at all decision-making levels and to implement its commitment to reserve 30 percent of parliamentary seats for women; ongoing efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence; implementation of the Somali government's action plan to end the recruitment and use of children by the Somali army; and challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance.

The Security Council is also visiting Nairobi where it will focus largely on humanitarian issues. Council members will be meeting with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and other officials. According to the mission's terms of reference, the purpose of this meeting will be "to engage with the Kenyan government on regional issues of interest" including AMISOM and refugees, and to discuss the risk of acts of terrorism by al-Shabaab in Kenya. Kenya is AMISOM's fourth largest Troop Contributing Country. Another item that will be high on the agenda in discussions with both Kenyan officials and UN agencies, will be refugees. Kenya announced its intention to close down its refugee camps, at Dadaab and Kakuma, on May 6. It cited security concerns and the economic difficulties of continuing to host so many refugees.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees expressed "profound concern" and said such a closure could affect as many as 600,000 people, including approximately 420,000 Somalis. The UNHCR said this week that it expected the numbers of Somali refugees in Kenya would continue to fall due to voluntary repatriation. A report released this week said "As programming for voluntary repatriation gains more focus and support for returnees is enhanced on both sides of the border, there will likely be an increase in returns (**UNHCR planning figure for returnees is 50,000 for 2016 and 75,000 for 2017**)." It said the "UNHCR will advocate with the Government [of Kenya] for local integration of Somali refugees with strong links to Kenya and those whose status may warrant the grant of long term residence." It believed "some 40,000 Somali refugees could benefit from this type of solution during the next two years (2016- 2017)." A number of international NGOs also made it clear they were critical of the decision, and the Somali government expressed its "grave reservations"; it said this would increase the threat of terrorism not improve the situation either in Kenya or in Somalia.

Security Council members have also indicated concern over the decision and they will want to hear more about it. Many Council members seem to share these concerns and will want to consider more about Kenya's intentions and the implications of this decision for humanitarian activity in Somalia. The Security Council will be given an account of the humanitarian situation in Somalia, including efforts to address the impact of the drought in Puntland and Somalia as well as the funding needs. The Secretary-General's report makes it clear he regards the humanitarian situation in Somalia as fragile and there are persistently high and alarming levels of food insecurity and malnutrition. 39 per cent of the population or 4.7 million people are considered food insecure. This is expected to worsen because "the severe drought exacerbated by El Niño conditions has hit parts of Puntland and Somaliland, affecting 350,000 people, especially in the Awdal, Bari, Nugaal, Sanaag, Sool and Woqooyi Galbeed regions. A further 1.3 million people risk slipping into acute food insecurity if they do not receive assistance. The situation is expected to worsen owing to the depletion of available water resources in affected areas and a poor forecast for the coming rainy season."

The Secretary-General also noted that humanitarian access remains a challenge because of increasing insecurity, limited capacity and funding: "The operating environment in Somalia remains dangerous and challenging, with attacks against humanitarians on the rise, even in areas where they have long had access. In January and February alone, 22 violent incidents had a direct impact on humanitarian organizations, accounting for the death of one humanitarian worker, the injury of two others and the physical assault and detention of five more." The Council agenda suggests that Security Council members may be particularly interested in discussing what measures are being taken to address these challenges.

When the Security Council arrives in Cairo for discussions with the Arab League Council, Somalia will also remain on the agenda and discussions are expected to focus on areas of cooperation between the Security Council and the Arab League to support peace and reconciliation efforts in Somalia. Council members are expected to be looking at possible areas of support to address the humanitarian needs of Somalia. In Cairo, the Security Council will also be exchanging views on migration, refugees and displaced persons. Discussions will cover the security challenge resulting from massive movements of refugees and migrants from the Arab region to Europe and on how to address the root causes of migration, as well as regional strategies to combat smuggling and human trafficking. Libya will also be a subject of the discussions with an exchange of views expected on "challenges and opportunities for peace and reconciliation efforts in Libya". One particular focus is expected

to be on efforts to support counter-terrorism activities in Libya as well as state institutions, capacity-building, rebuilding and revitalization of the economy.

### **“Atrocious repression” that the world continues to disregard**

Eritrea, celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of de facto independence this month, and regarded by many as another failing state in the Horn of Africa, is a small country populated by no more than five million people. Indeed, the latest figure on an official website suggests that the Government itself believes the population to number no more than 3.7 million, and even that is only an estimate. Since its independence in 1991, one man and a single party, without a constitution or functional judiciary, offering minimal political or social policies, have controlled and led the country.

Many have criticized Eritrea's government administration as no more than a tool in the hands of President Isaias to manipulate and control the population. Government policies and institutions are opaque and secretive. Indeed, no clear government ideology or policies are visible apart from the continuation in power of the president and his small circle of trusted advisers. The ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), or rather its head, President Isaias, provides the government, the courts, the police, military and indeed everything else. President Isaias has been and remains openly contemptuous of the principles of democracy, describing democracy as an instrument of the CIA to manipulate the world. He has, himself, made it quite clear that no other political parties, no free media, no right to free speech or even free movement, should be allowed in Eritrean territory. He has made his own lack of interest in an open society very clear: "If there is anyone who thinks there will be democracy or a multiparty system in this country ... then that person can think of such things in another world."

Eritrea is routinely referred to as "Africa's North Korea" because of the repression, the restrictions on daily life and the apparent routine use of torture to crush the slightest signs of defiance. The United Nations has long condemned the all-pervasive system of control and the government's record of systematic human-rights violations. Last year's report of the Commission of Inquiry appointed by the UN Human Rights' Council concluded that the activities of the regime might amount to crimes against humanity. Certainly, Eritrea is still among the most closed countries in the world, and all the evidence suggests that conditions of human rights remain dismal. As the Commission of Inquiry and any number of other earlier reports have made clear, indefinite military service, torture, arbitrary detention, and severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and religion provoke thousands of Eritreans into flee the country each month.

There are no foreign journalists based in the country and it is rare for any to be allowed in. Recently, as part of an effort to improve the image, the prohibition on outside journalistic visits has been slightly relaxed. Some journalists have been allowed in for short, closely monitored visits. Last year a BBC film crew was allowed to film inside the country for two weeks under close control. Most recently, a film crew from France 24 was allowed to travel to Eritrea for a week. During their visit they produced videos and articles about the socio-economic and political situation in Eritrea and tried to give a picture of what life is like in Eritrea and to discover why so many Eritreans flee the country in a bid to reach Europe. The UN quotes figures of up to 5,000 a month; France 24 suggested at least 2,000 a month fled the country. A major reason for this appears to be the threat of indefinite military conscription, a factor pushing thousands of young Eritreans to flee their country. By law, all

Eritreans between 18 and 40 are compelled to serve 18 months national service. In practice, as interviewees confirmed to FRANCE 24, conscripts have to serve indefinitely, many for over a decade. While in service, they receive inadequate pay to support their families, and the financial problems are exacerbated by severe food-price inflation.

Conscripts are also subject to military discipline throughout their service, irrespective of whether they work at civilian tasks. Any infractions are treated harshly, by severe imprisonment, or by physical abuse often amounting to torture. The length of incarceration and type of physical abuse inflicted is at the whim of military commanders or jailers. Female conscripts frequently suffer sexual abuse by senior officers. Some conscripts do work in civil service jobs, but only at conscript pay levels; others are used as forced labor on construction sites and government-owned farms. The construction industry is a government monopoly that uses conscript labor on a large scale. Many examples of this have also been detailed in last year's Commission of Inquiry report.

France 24's reports make it clear that many people were terrified of talking to the media and indeed were almost paranoid about the danger of doing so. They were very aware that arbitrary arrests in Eritrea are the norm. Indeed, a prisoner may or, more usually, may not be told the reason for his or her arrest; even the prison authorities are often not informed of any reason for people's arrival in a prison. Detainees can be, and often are, held indefinitely. Releases, in fact, are as arbitrary as arrests. Few, if any, detainees are brought to trial; and prisoners are held in vastly overcrowded underground cells or in shipping containers, with no space to lie down, little or no light, oppressive heat or cold, and the company of rats or other vermin. Food, water, and sanitation are inadequate; beatings and other physical abuse are common, deaths not unusual.

The government severely harasses citizens who practice religions other than the four it recognizes. These are Sunni Islam and the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Lutheran churches. Prayer meetings of unrecognized religions are disrupted and participants arrested. A condition for release is often a signed statement recanting religious affiliation. The government also interferes with the practices of the four religions it recognizes. The Sunni Grand Imam, like the Patriarch of the Eritrean Orthodox Church has essentially been appointed by government manipulation and authority.

Another aspect of the situation that comes out clearly in France 24's account of its visit include the restriction of freedom of movement, both inside and outside the country. Indeed, all movement is tightly controlled. Eritreans under the age of 50 are rarely given permission to go abroad, and those who try to travel without the correct documents face imprisonment. The authorities adopt a shoot-on-sight policy toward people found in locations deemed off-limits, such as mining facilities and areas close to the border. Despite these risks, thousands people flee the country every month evading the border guards with their shoot to kill orders, and risking the dangers from smugglers and human trafficking along or over the border. Once reaching Europe, they may also now face being returned and refugees and asylum seekers who are repatriated from other countries face detention or worse on arrival back in Eritrea.

### **Eritrea's campaign to pre-empt the UN Commission of Inquiry report due in June**

The UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry into the status of human rights in Eritrea is due to report to the UN Human Rights Council again in June. Following the Commission of Inquiry's report of June last year, Human Rights Council mandated the

Commission to continue its investigations and tasked it to "investigate systematic, widespread and gross violations of human rights in Eritrea with a view to ensuring full accountability, including where these violations may amount to crimes against humanity."

The Commission of Inquiry's Report last year described in detail a state that rules through fear with a vast security network that reaches into every level of society. It cited a litany of systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations carried out with impunity by the government. The Chairman of the Commission, Michael Smith, told the Human Rights Council that after more than two decades of independence, Eritrea was marked by repression and fear, and "Since independence, ultimate power in Eritrea has remained largely in the hands of one man and one party. Those in control often rule arbitrarily and act with impunity... The Eritrean people have no say in governance and little control over many aspects of their own lives." Under the pretext of defending "the integrity of the state and ensuring national self-sufficiency", the government subjected much of the population to open-ended national service, either in the army or through the civil service. All Eritreans are conscripted by age 18, and while national service is supposed to last 18 months, in reality conscripts end up serving for an indefinite period, often for years in harsh and inhumane conditions. He said forced labor was so prevalent that all sectors of the economy rely on it, and all Eritreans are likely to be subject to it at some point in their lives.

The overwhelming climate of repression prompted hundreds of thousands of Eritreans, mostly young people, to risk their lives escaping the country. Mr Smith urged governments in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East to continue to provide protection to Eritreans and avoid sending them back to a country that punishes anyone who tries to leave without permission. He emphasized that "those who assume Eritreans are leaving solely for economic reasons are ignoring the country's "dismal human rights record and the suffering of its people." He added: "In engaging with the Eritrean authorities on solutions to stem the flow of asylum seekers from Eritrea, the international community should place human rights considerations at the forefront of any package of proposed abatement measures"; and he emphasized "it should insist on tangible progress on human rights in Eritrea, in particular the adoption of real reforms that seriously address the problems identified in this report."

The Commission's overall conclusion was that human rights violations were so systematic that they may amount to crimes against humanity and required further investigation. He said the Security Council should refer this situation to the International Criminal Court. In a subsequent press conference, Mr Smith said the choice for Eritrea was either to open up and implement the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations or face the path of the International Criminal Court. He said the Commission did not believe it had been duped by its informants: "there was too much consistency in the way in which people were able to talk about their experiences...every story is different, every story is personal but the elements in the way in which they are treated, the way the system deals with them are sufficiently common that we are absolutely convinced that we described is accurate."

Eritrea strongly attacked last year's report and the UN Special Rapporteur, who was one of the members of the Commission. Eritrean Ambassador Tesfamichael Gerahtu said Eritrea had been "sullied and denigrated with gratuitous and unprecedented irresponsibility by an entity established by this assembly." He said the establishment of the Commission was intended "as a substitute and fall-back option to the UNSC imposed sanctions in order to continuously harass Eritrea for ulterior political motives." He referred to the Commission's "unabashed bias" in dismissing the "existential threats that Eritrea has and is still facing", and accused the

Commission of having "members within its ranks that espouse sinister political agendas against Eritrea due to their close and unorthodox association with subversive groups." In conclusion he claimed "the bleak narrative on human rights in Eritrea that the Commission had portrayed was widely at variance with the prevailing reality in the country." Eritrea, he said, had seriously engaged with the Universal Periodic Review process and with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. It rejected the Commission of Inquiry's report.

Now it appears that the Government of Eritrea has become seriously concerned about what the Commission of Inquiry will say in this year's report. The Government appears to believe the findings of the Commission's next report will again provide massively detailed and convincing accounts of human rights' abuse in Eritrea. It also appears to be concerned that the Commission will have found enough evidence to support the suggestion that human rights' violations have been so systemic that the UN Security Council should refer the issue to the International Criminal Court. The Government has apparently launched an extensive campaign to try and discredit the report before publication. According to government documents, leaked from Asmara, the Government has made extensive plans to mobilize the Eritrean Diaspora and international allies of President Isaias to try to undermine the findings of the Commission.

The documents detail the Government's plan to collect 300,000 signatures protesting the work of the Commission to present to the UN Human Rights Council. One of these is a letter, dated April 12, from the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs detailing the Government's strategy. It was apparently drawn up at a meeting attended by the Director of the Office of the President and Minister of Information, Yemane Gebremeskel; the Minister of Energy and Mines, General Sibhat Efreem; the Chief of Staff of the Eritrean Defense Forces, General Filipos Wolde Yohannis; the head of Foreign Intelligence, Colonel Gaim Tesfamikael; the Temporary Coordinator of the Higher Commission for Human Rights, Ambassador Tesfamikael Gerahtu; and Chief of Police and Security Forces, Brigadier-General Simon Gebredengel.

The letter is addressed to all Eritrean missions and to the Eritrean consulates in Canada and Australia. It urges those it addresses to collect signatures from April 16 until May 27 and ensure they fill their required country quota. The letter lists 25 countries and sets the target number of signatures from each. It says every mission must prepare an action plan for organization of their campaigns and create an organized network for greatest success. It notes that many citizens will travel to Eritrea for 25<sup>th</sup> Independence Day (May 25) celebrations and they should make sure to collect signatures before they leave for Eritrea. For Eritreans in the Diaspora, it will be difficult to refuse to sign. Refusal would mean they would be denied all official assistance from any Eritrean embassy and be unable to obtain passports, visas or any other form of official documentation relating to activity in Eritrea. This is what happens to Eritreans who fail to pay the 2% tax demanded of all Eritreans working abroad.

The documents list the organizing committee which includes the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as the Ambassadors to France, the UK, Germany and Italy. They name eighteen members of the central committee of the Youth movement of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice in Europe to assist in the organization. Another seventeen people from Uganda, Kenya, the US and the UK are named as people "tasked with facilitating communication between the friends of the regime". A further half-dozen international figures, including Ambassador Herman J. Cohen, United States Assistant Secretary of State for

African Affairs from 1989 to 1993, are listed as "friends selected to work with members of the diaspora youth".

According to the schedule laid down, the collected petitions will be sent to the Human Rights Council before June 6. The documents note that the 32<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Council will commence on June 13, and the Commission of Inquiry report can be expected to be presented on June 21. The documents provide fully detailed methods to fill up the petition forms, nine people to sign on each form. They call for every citizen to take forms and give them to family, relatives, friends, colleagues and others. Groups, organizations and communities are to take responsibility in their respective countries. A sample letter from Israel provides instructions to cover a person's testimony, how to expose "lies and accusations", what to say about "Forced labor and National Service", the response to allegations of "Murder everywhere" and "Repression and violations", as well as on "Development in Eritrea", "The influences of external conspiracies", or the "mistaken aims of the Commission".

A draft letter from the Netherlands has the headline: "In Eritrea There is No Violation of Human Rights, but a Strong Drive for Development Aimed at Ensuring Social Justice." This refers back to the usual Eritrean government unsupported allegations that national service continues because of the international community's failure to uphold the Algiers Agreement and because "Ethiopia, regardless of its capabilities, is promising now and again that it will invade Eritrea and bring a regime change." The draft letter even claims, equally inaccurately, that "work is being done to take national service back to its normal duration in the near future." It then covers claims of the developments accomplished "through the policy of self-reliance", before alleging that the exodus of youth is getting worse because of "the red carpet reception by developed nations". It says the numbers of Eritrean refugees is exaggerated because refugees from neighboring countries present themselves as Eritreans. It concludes by stating that "there is no torture or human rights violations that the government commits against its people." This is a claim with which the Commission of Inquiry's report is certain to disagree.