

A Week in the Horn

21st September 2012

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Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives swears in the new Prime Minister

Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, previously Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia on Friday (21st September). An extraordinary session of the House of People's Representatives approved the nomination of Ato Hailemariam by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which had elected him as chairperson of the party last Saturday [15th]. Taking the oath of office, Prime Minister Hailemariam said: "With the decision of the EPRDF and the parliament, I am very happy to take the responsibility of being prime minister." Education Minister, Ato Demeke Mekonnen, elected last week as deputy chairperson of the EPRDF, was elected Deputy Prime Minister, taking over the post from Ato Hailemariam.

Following the swearing in, Ato Hailemariam thanked Parliament for the honour they had done in asking him to serve as Prime Minister. He was, he said, taking office at a time when Ethiopia, under the wise and far-sighted leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles, had "turned a corner to become one of three fastest growing economies in the world." It was very different from the possibility of utter disintegration that the country had faced 21 years earlier. "Thanks to the unreserved self-sacrifice of our great leader as well as the immense efforts of the peoples of Ethiopia, despondency has finally given way to hope; and darkness to brightness." Ato Hailemariam said his responsibility would be one of ensuring the continuity of the process that the party had put on a solid basis under Prime Minister Meles' visionary leadership; to work on the basis of collective leadership to ensure the continued implementation of the policies and strategies laid down, and further enhancing and strengthening of the results already achieved in economic development and democratization. Ato Hailemariam referred to

the late Prime Minister as a brilliant generator of ideas, the embodiment of self-sacrifice, a true man of the people and a rare specimen of hard work and dedication who relentlessly championed the cause of the poor, leading his party in the successful fight against poverty and backwardness. So the first order of business and his responsibility as the new prime minister was ensuring the continuity of these policies and of honouring his legacy.

Ato Hailemariam noted agricultural development was the central element of the Growth and Transformation Plan and a significant driver of economic growth. The efforts made to modernize agricultural practices and improve productivity would be expanded with further work towards changes in attitude and developing skills through increased adult education processes and the introduction of more advanced agricultural practices. There would be intensive efforts to expand irrigation, and measures to enhance the role and the share of the private sector in the expansion of commercial agriculture. Government efforts to improve the status of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists would continue with encouragement of settlement in villages to allow for the provision of access to water and other amenities, the introduction of techniques of modern animal husbandry and the development of crop production. Ethiopia, of course, has the largest number of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in Africa.

The new Prime Minister noted the importance of tapping the country's large youth population and of improving their educational and entrepreneurial skills. The youth, he said, "will indeed be the solid basis on which our future prosperity and development will depend." The important role of universities, research centres and professional associations in building a democratic culture was underlined. He also spoke of the need to increase the role of mathematics and science in educational curricula, and the importance of increasing the participation of women in development, emphasizing the need to expand mother and child health protection, and provision for people with special needs.

Ato Hailemariam stressed that the vision of the party and government was to become a middle income economy within a decade. Industrial and manufacturing growth would be pivotal in ensuring the necessary growth of a middle class to help achieve this. The government would continue to support foreign direct investment but also give special emphasis to nurturing domestic private sector involvement. It would hold public-private consultation forums to encourage the development of the private sector; it would also address the various bottlenecks that had stifled private sector participation. The government would make every effort to speed up development and expansion of micro and small-scale enterprises, and facilitate housing, railway and road construction projects to resolve urban housing and transport challenges. The new Prime Minister noted that the rate of inflation was falling but said more measures were needed to bring it down to "healthier levels". He hoped the better rains of the past rainy season would contribute significantly to this. The Prime Minister said the expansion of the economic infrastructure was the key to ensuring growth of the productive sectors of the economy, and the government would redouble efforts to speed up the timely completion of the road, railway, hydropower, telecom and transport infrastructure projects laid down in the Growth and Transformation Plan. He said Prime Minister Meles had given maximum priority to the realization of the construction of the Renaissance Dam, and added: "we will do everything in our power to ensure the completion of the dam, if possible ahead of schedule."

Ato Hailemariam spoke of the need to address the corrupt practices of the rent seeking political economy and of mobilizing the public to help deal with sources of corruption which he itemized as the “land and tax administration system, public procurement procedures and the inefficiency of our trading system.” He said the government would create an environment in which people could play an active role in meeting these challenges. The reform movement, already underway in public institutions, would be further strengthened to improve good governance and ensure civil servants had a real sense of public service. He spoke of the importance of the justice system to ensure the protection of basic freedoms and establish a competitive free market system. He said the police and courts will expand their ongoing reform programmes to meet expectations. Drastic legal measures would be taken to put a stop to corrupt practices, and the supervisory measures introduced by Parliament in recent years would be increased.

At the same time, the government would continue to provide support to strengthen human rights and democratic institutions to help develop a democratic culture, working with the Human Rights Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman, the National Electoral Board, legally functioning press and media institutions and opposition political groups. The Prime Minister noted the government was ready to work closely with independent civic organizations, professional associations and other mass organizations which had, he said, “an indispensable role to play in developing the nascent efforts to build a mature democratic order.” It would, however, take all necessary measures to deal with any forces that attempted to engage in political and terrorist activity under the guise of religion.

The Prime Minister said the government would continue to maintain the influential voice that the late Prime Minister Meles had developed in regional, continental and international fora. It would continue his efforts to provide for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, working for a successful end to the negotiations between Sudan and South Sudan, and in Somalia. He noted the immense contribution the defence forces had made to peacekeeping. This would continue. He said the National Defence Forces were firmly committed to defend the constitutional order from any internal and external attacks and they deserved admiration for the way they discharged their missions so successfully. They and the people would continue to guard against all those trying to carry out acts of terror with either internal or external support. Ethiopia, he said, “will remain a stable and democratic nation within the Horn of Africa.”

In conclusion, the new Prime Minister asked everybody to intensify their efforts to fully and successfully implement the aims and vision of their late great leader; he hoped that the new Ethiopian New Year (2005) would be a year of success and of exceptional progress.

...after Ato Hailemariam chosen as EPRDF Chairman

The Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the country’s ruling party, chose Acting Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, to succeed the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi as party chairperson at a two-day meeting of the party’s 180-member Council last weekend, 14th and 15th September. The EPRDF also chose Ato

Demeke Mekonnen, the Minister of Education, as the party's deputy chairperson. Ato Hailemariam who was also Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as Deputy Prime Minister from 2010 took the position of Acting Prime Minister following the death of Prime Minister Meles on 20th August. The appointment of Ato Hailemariam as chairperson of the ruling party cleared the way for him to be acknowledged and sworn in as Prime Minister by Parliament today (Friday 21st September). Under the Constitution, the leader of the largest party in Parliament is chosen as Prime Minister; and in choosing Ato Hailemariam as its chairperson, the EPRDF, which controls a majority of the seats in parliament, endorsed him as its prime ministerial candidate.

In 2009, the EPRDF put in place a mechanism for the selection and succession of party leaders with a view to ensuring the continuation of the democratic processes of the party. On the basis of this, the party had already taken the first steps in implementing broad leadership changes with a number of retirements of leading figures at the party congress in 2010. More retirements were expected to take place at the next congress in early 2013, and the process was expected to culminate with the retirement of Prime Minister Meles in 2015. However, the untimely and sudden death of the late Prime Minister Meles, last month, forced the party to bring forward the final phase of the planned succession to elect Hailemariam Desalegn as party chairman to continue to spearhead the broad vision of the late Prime Minister.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Meles, Ethiopia has moved from a largely backward agricultural economy, left in ruins after years of civil war, to a nation undergoing industrialization, and registering impressive economic performances with annual growth rates of over 10 per cent for some eight years. It has become one of Africa's most rapidly expanding economies, despite a lack of the minerals or hydrocarbons which have boosted the other fastest growing economies in Africa.

At the same time, over the last decade, Prime Minister Meles emerged as one of the most influential of African leaders. He played a leading role in Africa's negotiations on climate change, in peacemaking in Sudan and in combating extremism and working to create lasting peace in Somalia. The late Prime Minister effectively put Africa on the world's map, and as a skilled and effective negotiator and spokesman for the continent, he forced leaders in the developed world to listen to the pressing concerns of the continent.

The new chairman of the EPRDF, Hailemariam Desalegn, in the aftermath of the funeral of the late Prime Minister Meles, reassured the people of Ethiopia that the country will continue to advance and implement the various policies and strategies set in place by its long-time leader. The government will continue on its path of registering sustainable development in order to extricate the people from economic deprivation and backwardness and strengthen the democratic process.

Ethiopia under the guidance of Prime Minister Meles was transformed from a deeply conflicted, war-torn, peripheral Horn of Africa state into a diplomatic and economic powerhouse, and a beacon of peace, security and stability in Africa. Driven by its national interests, Ethiopia forged strong relationships not only with the US, but also with China, India, Turkey, the EU, the AU, Brazil, and other countries and organizations around the globe. These strong foreign relations, based on the policies and strategies

laid down by the administration of the late Prime Minister, will continue under the country's new leadership. The nation, as well as the Party, well understands that Prime Minister Meles's work was left unfinished by his death. By keeping to his own plans for succession, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front has demonstrated that the country and its own leadership is prepared to pay the necessary price to continue on the path of development and progress laid down by the late Prime Minister.

Ato Hailemariam attends the inauguration of Somalia's new President

The new Somali President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, was inaugurated on Sunday 16th September in Mogadishu. The ceremony was attended by regional leaders and representatives, including Ethiopia's then Acting Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, representatives of other countries, including Turkey's Deputy Prime Minister and the State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, as well as other dignitaries and members of the international community.

Speaking on the occasion, the newly elected President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, said he would work on a consensus among separatist groups in the country to establish security and stability in the region. "Our first priority is to secure unity but not through use of force," said President Mohamud. He said that he was aiming to change Somalia's bad reputation over terrorism, piracy and hunger. Furthermore, he promised to tackle insecurity, fix the country's ailing economy and reconcile Somalis in order to rebuild the country. He said he would make the country "a better place" than it was now and vowed to closely work with the international community in restoring the status of the country in the world community. The outgoing President, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, for his part promised to work with his successor and urged the new President to strengthen the country's armed forces to tackle insurgency and terrorism in the country. Sheikh Sharif said he was delighted to see Somalia inaugurate a leader inside the country for the first time for over forty years.

Ato Hailemariam warmly congratulated the newly elected President of Somalia and the great people of Somalia for conducting the election with calm and maturity but also for reaching this point of peace and democracy with persistence and resilience. He said that "the civility with which the other presidential contenders have accepted the result of the election is a hopeful indication that Somalia is finally closing the old chapter of war-lordism and chaos." "Ethiopia", he added, "is hopeful that with the spirit you have now exhibited and with the characteristic entrepreneurship of the Somali people, your great country will assume its rightful place in the community of nations."

Ato Hailemariam emphasized that Ethiopia had all along been firmly on the side of the Somali people in the country's long journey in search of peace and reconciliation. On this arduous march, he said, they had celebrated together the few successes that had been achieved and comforted each other in times of crisis and deadlock. Indeed, he said "the two countries have fought together against the forces of evil and buried their sons in the same graveyard." Ato Hailemariam said the relationship went far beyond politics: "It is embedded in strong people-to-people relations; and during the last two trying decades, Ethiopia has been a second home to our Somali brothers and sisters."

Ato Hailemariam stressed that the two brotherly people would continue to live in the same neighbourhood, go to the same mosques, attend the same schools, and continue to undertake joint business activities. Many Somalis have found their partners for life in Ethiopia. He said it was "incumbent on our two governments to build on the positive values of our relationship to establish a legitimate basis on the solid people-to-people level and use this to strengthen and deepen our relationship further". Recalling the contribution of the late Prime Minister Meles, Ato Hailemariam said "Our great leader, who for the better part of his life laboured tirelessly to bring peace to Somalia, is not with us today. I wish he had lived to see this happy moment when the Somali people and the world are celebrating the inauguration of a Somali President legitimately elected by its people. This certainly is a moment for the arrival of which he dreamed and longed for. In the last 21 years of his leadership, resolving the Somali crisis was always at the centre of his foreign policy agenda. Somalia always came to his mind in all regional and international forums and he made sure that Somalia got the international attention it needed after years of indifference by the international community. Prime Minister Meles relentlessly worked towards the realization of this day, and continued to do so to the last days of his life."

Ato Hailemariam expressed his hope and expectation that Somalia's political actors would make good on their solemn promise to their people that they will break away from the country's past. It was no small comfort, therefore, that "the quest of Somalis for lasting peace and stability is already paying dividends." He added: "It is altogether fitting that all Somalis here today renew their commitments to stand firm and resolute against all the forces of division and extremism that have wrought havoc and unparalleled misery to millions of Somalis."

Ato Hailemariam assured the people of Somalia and President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud that his government will continue to uphold the spirit of fraternity that the late Prime Minister Meles had established with Somalis and that it will continue to support the new President in all spheres in his arduous task to rebuild his country. He concluded: "We understand that you have a long way to go to bring your nation to the level of your peoples' expectations. But I can assure you that the destination is reachable, whatever the odds. You have the good will of your people, your neighbors' and of the international community at large. Make use of this political capital; be careful not to squander it."

The UN Security Council's latest resolution on Somalia

On Tuesday this week [18th Sep] the UN Security Council met to consider Somalia, unanimously adopting Resolution 2067 (2012), reiterating its commitment to a comprehensive and lasting settlement. It recognizes that a stable Somalia is of vital importance in ensuring regional security and welcomed recent progress including the convening of the National Constituent Assembly, the adoption of the provisional Somali Constitution, the work of the Traditional Elders and the Technical Selection Committee in approving the Members of Parliament and the establishment of the new Federal Parliament, the selection of its Speaker and a new President. This, it said, represented the completion of the Transition in Somalia and was an important milestone in Somalia's path to more stable and accountable governance. The Council welcomed the continued role of regional bodies, including the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development, commended the contribution of

AMISOM and appreciated the continued commitment of troops, police and equipment to AMISOM by the Governments of Burundi, Uganda, Djibouti, Kenya and Sierra Leone. The Council notes the Secretary-General's forthcoming high-level event on Somalia (26th September) would provide an opportunity for Somalia's new leadership to consolidate its partnership with the international community. It looks forward to the Secretary-General's inter-agency review of the United Nations presence in Somalia. It requests he presents options and recommendations to the Security Council by 31st December.

In Resolution 2067, the Security Council expresses its determination to work closely with the new institutions and government, encourages the new President to expeditiously appoint an inclusive, accountable Government, and a Prime Minister to appoint a cabinet as soon as possible. It emphasizes the government role in reconciliation, lasting peace and stability, and calls on it to implement all postponed elements of the 6th September 2011 road map. It stresses the importance of developing a programme to define post-transition priorities, and requests that the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations entities provide assistance. It says a national referendum on the Provisional Constitution and general elections should take place within the term of the current Parliament.

It notes the Somali authorities have the responsibility to support reconciliation and deliver effective and inclusive local administrations and public services to the people of Somalia. It reiterates its willingness to take measures against individuals whose acts threaten the peace, stability or security of Somalia. The resolution expresses concern at reports of financial misappropriation, and calls for full cooperation to rapidly set up and effectively operate the planned Joint Financial Management Board. It requests that all partners involved in the economic reconstruction of Somalia increase their coordination and capacity-building of the relevant Somali institutions.

The resolution reiterates Security Council support to AMISOM and welcomes the progress made in improving security in Mogadishu and beyond. It emphasizes the need to continue efforts to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups. It urges the Somali authorities to complete the restructuring of the national security forces. It welcomes support to AMISOM by the African Union's partners, especially the European Union's African Peace Facility, and calls upon partners to support AMISOM through the provision of funding for troop stipends, equipment, technical assistance, and through the United Nations Trust Fund for AMISOM. It welcomes the signing of the National Security and Stabilization Plan, and emphasizes the importance of an early establishment of the National Security Committee.

The resolution encourages member States to continue to cooperate with Somali authorities and each other in the fight against piracy, and underlines the primary role of the Somali authorities. It requests the Somali authorities, with assistance from the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations entities, to pass a complete set of counter-piracy laws without further delay, to ensure effective prosecution of suspected pirates and those associated with piracy attacks, post-conviction transfer of pirates prosecuted elsewhere to Somalia, and the imprisonment of convicted pirates in Somalia, as soon as possible. It urges the Somali authorities to declare an Exclusive Economic Zone, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to promote effective governance of waters off the coast of Somalia.

The resolution emphasizes that the protection of human rights will be essential for the legitimacy of the new Somali authorities, and calls on Somalia to fulfill its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. It strongly condemns systematic violations and human rights abuses perpetrated in particular by Al-Shabaab and its affiliates, calls for immediate cessation of these and emphasizes the need for accountability for all such violations. It demands all parties allow full, safe and unhindered access for timely delivery of humanitarian aid.

The representative of Somalia subsequently called the resolution a landmark and said it augured well for the new Government's efforts to forge ahead towards peace and security and to engage more effectively in the fight against piracy. He expressed thanks to the international community particularly those who helped in the fight against Al-Shabaab. He called for continued international support so the full machinery of government could be put in place and popular elections could be held.

Meanwhile, the new Somali President has decided not to attend the UN General Assembly meeting in New York. He has announced that he has too many "tough tasks in his in-tray". The General Assembly is scheduled to start next Monday (24th September) in New York.

President Mohamud made the announcement while meeting members of Parliament and some of the failed presidential candidates. He said because of the multitude of tasks awaiting him, he had decided not to go to New York. He will therefore miss the UN Secretary-General's meeting on Somalia, scheduled for 26th September. The President did not say who would be representing Somalia at the meeting.

Sudan/South Sudan talks continue; Ato Hailemariam meets both sides

As Sudan and South Sudan carried on with their negotiations this week, the AU's High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) continued to try to hammer out a border security agreement to allow the resumption of oil exports from South Sudan. The agreement the two sides reached on oil recently cannot be implemented until further agreements are reached on security issues. Time is running out. The UN Security Council laid down a deadline of 22nd September for agreement and threatened sanctions if this was not met. There has been considerable progress in the last two weeks of talks but no breakthrough yet on setting up a demilitarized buffer zone along the unmarked border, much of which is disputed. AUHIP hopes that Presidents Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan and Salva Kiir of South Sudan will take part in a summit in Addis Ababa this weekend to sign an agreement. President Al-Bashir has agreed to go to Addis Ababa on Sunday [23rd Sep] but officials from South Sudan say President Kiir's attendance will be only confirmed if there is a breakthrough at the security talks.

This week, Ato Hailemariam held discussions with both South Sudan's Vice-President and Sudan's Minister of Defence on issues largely centred on the ongoing negotiations between the two countries. Ato Hailemariam met Dr. Riek Machar, Vice-President of South Sudan on 17th September. Dr. Machar said his government was ready to work closely with the new leadership in Ethiopia, and expressed his strong belief that it would continue with the late prime minister's principled stance on the bilateral ties

between the two countries. He recalled the prominent contribution of Prime Minister Meles to the signing and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He said his government would dedicate the successful completion of the ongoing negotiations between South Sudan and Sudan as a tribute to immortalize the late Prime Minister's contributions to bringing peace between the two countries.

Dr. Machar briefed Ato Hailemariam on the ongoing negotiations under AUHIP auspices. He said the negotiations on pending oil transit issues and the problems of nationality, national debt, the demarcation of border and pensions were progressing well. However, the two sides still held differences over the disputed and claimed areas and settlement of the Abyei issue. On the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone (SDBZ), the Vice-President explained that Khartoum's rejection of the AUHIP's 'centreline' was a factor holding up progress. He called for Ethiopia's support to encourage Khartoum to accept the AUHIP map.

On Abyei, Dr. Machar referred to the talks over the holding of a plebiscite in accordance with the protocol signed to supplement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. He said that despite the long and repeated discussions the two sides were not able to resolve their differences over the appointment of the referendum commission and the eligibility of voters. The AUHIP has therefore decided to refer the Abyei issue to the forthcoming presidential meeting.

The Vice President underlined the importance of supporting the AUHIP. He said South Sudan was "optimistic that the negotiations will be finalized by the end of September." He reiterated his government's request for the support of the government of Ethiopia and for Ato Hailemariam's personal involvement to help resolve remaining issues in contention.

Ato Hailemariam recalled the immense contribution of the late Prime Minister Meles in helping resolve the security situation between Sudan and South Sudan. He assured the Vice-President that Ethiopia would continue its efforts to assist. Noting that the SPLA needed to deliver good governance and development so that the people of South Sudan could enjoy their newly gained freedom, Ato Hailemariam reiterated Ethiopia's support for the ongoing negotiations. He promised to have talks with AUHIP chairman, Thabo Mbeki, before the presidential meeting to see where Ethiopia could assist the panel.

The following day, Ato Hailemariam held talks with Sudan's Defence Minister, Abdelrahim Hussein, and its chief negotiator, Idriss Abdel Gadir. The Defence Minister expressed his government's appreciation of the smooth transfer of power and hoped the excellent relationship Sudan had had with Ethiopia under the late Prime Minister would continue. The Defence Minister recalled that the late Prime Minister had been **the only leader trusted equally by both Sudan and South Sudan**, and he called on Ethiopia's new leadership to maintain this stance.

Briefing Ato Hailemariam, Sudan's chief negotiator explained that, though there were some thorny security issues still unresolved, most of the post-independence economic issues were almost complete. He said "the comprehensive agreement on oil issues that includes transit fees, modality of payment, security of payment, arrears of fees is in the last stage of being drawn up." A modality for trade between the two countries that

includes the banking system and operations between the countries is similarly finalized. He said the two sides have also agreed on independent administration of pensions. In relation to the national debt, the two sides have agreed on a tentative scheme which the chief negotiator said now depends on the decision of creditors. He said that "if all non-external debts are not cancelled by the creditors, Sudan has agreed to share the debts with South Sudan."

On Abyei, Idriss Abdel Gadir, said the two sides had agreed on demilitarization of the region and keeping the traditional mechanism to resolve problems, as suggested by the AU Panel of Experts. There were other matters unresolved, however, and he added that a final answer to these problems would be sought at the forthcoming presidential meeting. While noting that discussions on the protocols for South Kordofan and Blue Nile regions were continuing, he said as far as security is concerned on border issues, a modality for joint agreement of monitoring has been agreed.

Both Sudanese officials, however, expressed their government's strong reservations about the map submitted by the AUHIP. This, they said, showed one area well inside Sudan as part of the centreline for the proposed demilitarized zone. Sudan, they said, had therefore placed on the table a new proposal requesting demilitarization of that area and the maintenance of the status quo which would allow the Rezegat into the area for summer grazing and the Dinka to fish there in the rainy season. This would avoid any conflict.

Sudan's Defence Minister also referred to the implementation of UN Resolution 2046 which requires cessation of all forms of hostilities including disengagement with rebels on both sides and the activation of mechanisms to stop hostilities including the establishment of ad hoc committees to jump start negotiations and bring them to a satisfactory conclusion. The Defence Minister said that Sudan needed the aid and involvement of Ethiopia and of Ato Hailemariam in support of the Addis Ababa negotiations.

Ato Hailemariam, who underlined the importance of abiding by the Security Council's resolution on the negotiations, hailed the agreement on the oil issues as an important step towards finalizing the talks. He reaffirmed Ethiopia's full and continued support for the discussions and reassured the Defence Minister that Ethiopia would continue with support, based on its principled stance towards settlement of the problems between Sudan and South Sudan, and consider carefully how it could assist.

Cooperation over the Nile remains Ethiopia's firm policy

In recent weeks, a number of online media outlets have carried statements by unidentified Egyptian officials professing the hope that a new political leadership in Ethiopia might be inclined to compromise over the Nile. Polemics from anonymous functionaries quoted on obscure websites should not be taken too seriously. They cannot be seen as a serious indication of what the Morsi administration's stance on the Nile issue might be. However, when they are uttered by authoritative voices, and become possible portents of policy, they are cause for concern.

This is why the comments of a senior cabinet member of the new government, former General Reda Hafez, deserve to be looked at seriously. His outrageous claim that Prime Minister Meles was to blame for the confrontation between Ethiopia and Egypt over the Nile was totally uncalled for. Indeed, it is a complete misrepresentation of fact. Coming as it does from a senior military officer under the Hosni Mubarak regime, whose trademark sabre-rattling was the linchpin of Egyptian diplomacy over the Nile Issue, it is bizarre. In fact, to the extent that there has been any thawing of relations between Egypt and Ethiopia, it was Prime Minister Meles' farsighted leadership which was primarily responsible. As far as Ethiopia is concerned there has been no reason to change this.

Any Egyptian expectation that the appointment of the new Ethiopian Prime Minister might lead to some radical change in policy over the Nile is based on a flawed understanding of Ethiopia's history, and is an egregious misreading of the government's present disposition towards Cairo, and, by extension, suggests serious misconceptions about the future of Ethio-Egyptian relations.

General Hafez' statements, providing they have been accurately reported, appear to rest on a serious misunderstanding of Ethiopian history. Ethiopian governments, irrespective of their ideology, have consistently striven to safeguard Ethiopia's interests over the Nile. The government of Emperor Haile Selassie, for instance, distributed in 1947 an aide-memoire to all embassies in Cairo, reaffirming Ethiopia's right to use the Nile "for the benefit of present and future generations of its citizens" and "reassert[ing] and reserv[ing] now and for the future, the right to take all such measures in respect of its water resources." Ethiopia reiterated such a right at the 1971 UN Water Conference at Mar de Plata. Even the Derg regime, at the opposite end of the political spectrum, did not differ from its predecessor, trying to solicit funding for Nile projects from its Soviet patron. There is no reason why any Ethiopian government, current or prospective, that respected the interest of its citizens would deviate from this approach.

The point is that considerations of equity, law, and economic development continue to animate Ethiopia's desire to develop the Nile. Today, as in years past, utilization of the Nile remains strikingly inequitable. Ethiopia, which contributes over 85% of the river's flow, makes no use of it; Egypt which contributes nothing continues to argue in favour of its continued status as primary beneficiary. Egypt still justifies this lopsided allocation of use on the basis of obsolete colonial treaties that Ethiopia neither signed nor supported. With all notions of fairness and law in its favour, it is no surprise that Ethiopian governments, past and present, have refused to accept the Egyptian position.

That any Egyptian official would expect a post-Meles government in Ethiopia to be more amenable to meeting Cairo's demands displays a serious misunderstanding of Ethiopia's past. It also highlights a total lack of appreciation of the non-confrontational tone of Ethiopia's present government. In fact, the government of Ethiopia has gone above and beyond the call of duty in trying to assuage Egyptian concerns and reach consensus over a more equitable allocation of the Nile.

Examples of this conciliatory approach are numerous and obvious. Ethiopia, for instance, postponed by one year its ratification of the new Cooperative Framework Agreement for the Nile which it had signed along with other upper riparian states. This

was in response to Egypt's request for time to reconsider the agreement after the demise of the Mubarek government. Despite Ethiopia's good faith in acceding to this request, **Cairo has yet to communicate the outcome of its review**. Ethiopia exhibited a similarly positive spirit following the announcement of its intention to construct the Renaissance Dam on the Nile. Though under no legal obligation to do so, the Ethiopian government proposed, on its own initiative, the establishment of a Tripartite Committee composed of equal numbers of Ethiopian, Egyptian and Sudanese experts, supplemented by international specialists, to assess the impact, if any, of the dam on Egypt and Sudan.

By contrast, there has been no single initiative taken by Egyptian authorities over decades to consult Ethiopian counterparts over projects along the Nile. Egypt certainly never solicited Ethiopia's views during the construction of the Aswan dam, never consulted with it over the diversion of the Nile to Western and Eastern Sinai and never discussed the diversion of the Nile for irrigation in newly reclaimed western desert areas.

Addis Ababa's numerous attempts at initiating consensus-driven negotiations have not occasioned any significant change in Egyptian policy. Indeed, the Ethiopian government's outstretched hand has been met by nothing but a clenched fist. Internal political distractions may have temporarily caused Cairo to temper its previously fiery rhetoric and momentarily discontinue active support to insurgent groups which are anathema to Ethiopia. However, there have been no signs of any significant policy shifts. Cairo has still shown no indication of change in regard to substantive matters. It has not signed the Nile basin Cooperative Framework Agreement, nor has it explicitly disavowed the inequitable allocation of water enshrined in colonial treaties although we always made it clear that these treaties are not binding on Ethiopia.

These, not a change of government in Ethiopia, are the very points that need to be met if any compromise is to be reached. The government and the people of Ethiopia have been remarkably patient and for a very long time. Given Ethiopia's developmental needs and her people's attachment to the Nile, any expectation that some future Ethiopian government will make significant policy changes and accept Egypt's claims is mere wishful thinking. If Egypt is really interested in peace and mutually beneficial development of the Nile basin, it should concentrate on reaching an agreement with Ethiopia's present government. Ethiopia is certainly predisposed to any **mutually beneficial** developments for the river. As it has clearly detailed, its plans for the river will provide significant advantages to both Sudan and Egypt. Now, it is up to Egypt to reciprocate.

It is really regrettable that we are forced by irresponsible statements like that of General Hafez to go into some detail on the issue of the Nile, especially at a time when Ethiopia/Egypt relations have turned over a new leaf since the change of regime in Egypt, and the successful visit of the late Prime Minister Meles some months ago. Needless to say, the Ethiopian government will not be deterred by vicious and counter-productive statements by people like General Hafez from pushing ahead on the path laid down by our late Prime Minister towards a new relationship between Ethiopia and Egypt.

News and Views

Ethiopia among Africa's six best performers in Millennium Development Goals

A 2011 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) report jointly produced by the African Union Commission, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Development Programme placed Ethiopia among the best performing countries in Africa in reducing poverty and infant mortality. The report, made public on Wednesday 19th September) in Addis Ababa, assesses the progress in Africa towards the MDGs. It said Ethiopia's Safety Net Programme in particular stands out as an enviable success with its implementation of public works which had led to the construction of more than 4,400 classrooms providing enormous access to education for rural communities. Ethiopia is placed next to Algeria in registering remarkable economic growth and creating job opportunities for the youth. It gives high attention to human resource development and allocates nearly 20% of its GDP to education. It stands third to Liberia and Malawi in cutting infant mortality by half over the past ten years. UNDP's representative in Ethiopia, Eugine Owusu, said Ethiopia has registered commendable achievements towards meeting the MDGs ahead of schedule with its growing investment and economic growth over the last decade. Other countries among the best MDG performers in Africa were Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Senegal and Morocco. The findings of this year's report confirm that steady economic growth and improvements in poverty reduction on the continent continue to have a positive impact on MDG progress. Overall, Africa is on track to achieve the targets of universal primary education; gender parity at all levels of education; lower HIV/AIDS prevalence among 15-24 year olds; increased proportion of the population with access to antiretroviral drugs; and an increased proportion of seats held by women in national parliament by 2015. The report notes that high population growth can strain the ability of countries to deliver vital public services and undercut progress. It underlines the need for Africa to turn this dynamic on its head, to exploit a 'demographic dividend' which can help drive growth, innovation, and provide a clear competitive advantage. To do this, countries "must invest in their greatest asset, their people, in particular, their growing number of young people, ensuring that they can be productive, innovative, and engaged citizens who will help accelerate MDG progress and achieve sustainable human development".

AfDB approves \$348 million to finance Ethiopia-Kenya power line project

The African Development Bank on Thursday (20th September) approved a \$348 million loan for a \$1.26 billion electricity highway project between Ethiopia and Kenya, which the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) are also co-financing. The project involves the construction of a 1,068-kilometre high-voltage direct current 500 kV transmission line between the two countries. It also includes putting up associated converter stations at Wolayta-Sodo (Ethiopia) and Suswa (Kenya), with a power transfer capacity of up to 2,000 MW. The project is intended to promote power trade and regional integration, contribute to the Eastern Africa Power Pool countries' social and economic development, and reduce poverty. The power will be drawn from a number of existing and future power plants in Ethiopia. Gabriel Negatu, AfDB's Regional Director in charge of East Africa, said "With the approval of this project, we have solidified our position as the key strategic partner for East African countries in the

power sector." The project is being co-financed with the Governments of Ethiopia and Kenya; and the World Bank approved the first phase of the funding, totaling \$684 million, in July.

A workshop on challenges facing journalists in Africa

A two-day workshop on safety for African Journalists, organized by the Federation of African Journalists, the African Union Commission, UNESCO and the Ethiopian National Journalists Union, has taken place in Addis Ababa. The aim was to provide an opportunity for participants to share experiences on issues related to the challenges of African journalists and possible solutions. Participants discussed ways to establish a joint forum of the United Nations and the African Union Commission with a view to assisting and enabling journalists undertake their activities more freely. Ato Shimelis Kemal, State Minister of the Government Communication Affairs Office told the workshop that the Ethiopian government's guarantees on the freedom of press were enshrined in the constitution. He said the government consistently did its utmost to ensure that Article 29 of the constitution, which provides for freedom to the right of thought, opinion and expression without any restriction, was fully implemented. The State Minister said the government gave all necessary support to journalists to enable them to carry out their activities without difficulty or danger and guaranteed their activities. He noted that the government worked closely with agencies working for the rights of journalists.

Registration for elections to the Islamic Affairs Supreme Council

Registration began on Thursday last week (13th September) for the forthcoming elections for the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council. Polling day is 7th October. Registration of voters is taking place in the country's nine regional states and two city administrations of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa. The Ethiopian Ulema Fatwa and Da'awa Council said that the registration process will continue until Saturday (22nd September). The Council has called on followers of Islam above the age of 18 years to register at the polling stations set up in all the *woredas* of the Addis Ababa City administration, at polling stations set up in localities in the nine Regional States, and in Dire Dawa. The Council also urged all those participating to work to make the election free and credible.

EU anxious over political prisoners in Eritrea

The European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs has declared that the EU remains deeply concerned that the Government of Eritrea continues to violate the human rights obligations it has under both domestic and international law. In a statement, Lady Ashton, the EU High Representative, refers to the continued detention without charge or trial since 18th September 2001 of the group of eleven prominent members of Eritrea's National Assembly and of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice, and also of ten independent journalists detained a few days later. Despite repeated appeals by the international community, including the UN Human Rights Council and the European Union, these people have been held for eleven years, without charge or trial, totally incommunicado, with all rights suspended. There have been reports that other journalists have been arrested and detained without a trial. The declaration says the EU is particularly concerned about the reported deaths of some of

the political prisoners and the severe deterioration in the medical situation of others. The continued lack of information on their whereabouts and their access to health care is a clear violation of the human rights obligations enshrined in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which has been ratified by Eritrea. The EU urged the Government of Eritrea to release these prisoners unconditionally, along with other persons detained for their political views. It requests that the government make public all information on the whereabouts of the prisoners and allow them access to their families and to lawyers, not least on humanitarian grounds.

A second AMISOM Formed Police Unit arrives in Mogadishu

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has received its second Formed Police Unit, comprising of police officers from Nigeria. The Unit arrived in Mogadishu on 16th September to join another Formed Police Unit from Uganda. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra, said this was a clear demonstration of the AU's continued commitment to supporting the Republic of Somalia in its endeavour to improve the security of the country. He extended his own appreciation and that of the AU Commission to the government and people of Nigeria "for honouring the pledge of deploying a Formed Police Unit which will go a long way in our effort of supporting the people of Somalia as they strive to improve security in their country". He said Nigeria already had individual police officers in Somalia and "the deployment of the Formed Police Unit clearly demonstrates Nigeria's strong commitment to peace and stability not only in Somalia but also the entire continent." The Formed Police Units are expected to play a crucial role in ensuring improved security in liberated areas, in public order management and the provision of VIP escorts. They will also have a role in training and guiding Somalia Police Force officers in as many police stations as possible.