

## **A Week in the Horn** **23<sup>rd</sup> December 2016**

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### **News in Brief**

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

The AU's Department of Political Affairs started a three-day consultative meeting in Abuja, Nigeria on the development of an African Union Policy for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Africa, on Monday (December 19). It brought together experts from AU organs, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, academia, human rights experts and journalists working in the field of business and human rights in Africa.

#### **Ethiopia**

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn inaugurated the third dam in the series of cascading hydroelectric projects in the Gibe-Omo basin, the Gilgel Gibe III dam, on Saturday (Dec. 17). (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, who received the Special Envoy to Japanese Prime Minister, Ambassador Yoshifumi Okamura on Thursday (Dec. 22), called on the Japanese government to encourage investors to engage in Ethiopia, particularly in the development of industrial parks.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Workneh Gebeyehu held discussions with the USAID Administrator Gayle E. Smith on Monday (Dec. 19). While noting that USAID has been supporting Ethiopia in various frontiers and empowering citizens to be more productive, the Minister underlined that Ethiopia has been working to ensure active participation of society at grass-roots level in all socio-economic and political activities of the country.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu bade farewell to the outgoing Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Ethiopia, Ambassador Ali Bahraini, on Monday (Dec. 19). The Ambassador expressed his appreciation of growth and development in Ethiopia, to which he said he was a witness during his tenure in the country.

State Minister Mrs Hirut Zemene received the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Morocco, Mrs Nezha Alaoui M'hammdi, on Friday (Dec. 23). The two sides discussed ways to further deepen bilateral cooperation.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mrs Hirut Zemene met with a Japanese delegation led by Yoshifumi Okamura, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan on Thursday (Dec. 22). On the occasion, State Minister Hirut noted that Ethiopia highly values the role played by the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in promoting structural economic transformation.

An Ethiopian delegation headed by State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemene, concluded its participation on the 4<sup>th</sup> High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa that deliberated on common agenda on Africa's position in the UNSC held in Oran, Algeria (Dec. 17-19).

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ato [Mr] Yonas Yosef conferred with the Special Representative of the Chinese Government for African Affairs, Ambassador Xu Jinghu on Tuesday (Dec. 20). State Minister Yonas appreciated the efforts of the Government of China in supporting Ethiopia's flagship projects such as the Ethio-Djibouti railway line, Gilgel Gibe III power plant and the development of industrial parks in the country.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Ethio-United States Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Working Group meeting was held on Thursday last week (December 15) in Addis Ababa. (See article)

Recent exchanges and consultations between high-level delegations of Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have opened up a new era of cooperation between the two countries. (See article)

A Qatari delegation led by the Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Mohamed Abdulrahman Jassim Al-Thani, paid an official visit to Ethiopia this week (Dec.19-20). (See article)

A high-level joint Ethio-Kenya cross-border meeting was held at Addis Ababa on Tuesday (Dec.20) with the aim of implementing cross-border projects to end clashes over grazing land and water shortages in Ethiopia's Borena and Dawa zones and Kenya's Mersabit county. Ethiopia's Minister of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs, Kassa Tekleberhan and Kenya's Devolution and Planning Cabinet Secretary, Mwangi Kiunjuri, led the respective delegations.

Over the week, people who were detained by the Command Post for participating at the violence occurred in various parts of the country are returning to their respective areas after receiving training. Prime Minister Hailemariam who was present at the Tolay training center, said that the government would provide the necessary support to rehabilitate the detainees and get them back to their normal lives.

Ethiopia has joined the group of the world's top biodiversity-rich countries, Mega-diversity countries, during the UN Biodiversity Conference held in Cancun, Mexico last week.

## **Eritrea**

Yemen's Minister of Fisheries said on Wednesday this week that the Eritrean authorities had finally released 154 Yemeni fishermen, arrested many months ago. The Ministry has set up a committee to look into whether the fishermen were mistreated during their long detention in Eritrea. It said it had been trying to establish a mechanism with Eritrea to end the repeated detention of Yemeni fishermen.

The Dutch government has decided to strengthen control over the Eritrean government's continued efforts to collect the notorious 2% tax it imposes on all members of the Eritrean Diaspora who wish to use any Eritrean consular and other services. (See article)

In her latest piece on Eritrea, merely a recycled version of earlier pieces this year, Ms Bronwyn Bruton of the Atlantic Council, repeats yet again her call for changes in US policy towards Eritrea. (See article)

## **Kenya**

President Uhuru Kenyatta on Monday (December 19) urged the European Union to provide more support to AMISOM, pointing out that al-Shabaab was a threat to regional and global stability. The President was opening the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly at Kenyatta International Convention Centre in Nairobi and he called on European parliamentarians to "insist on bolder investment in security in the Horn of Africa."

The Coast Regional Coordinator, Nelson Marwa, told journalists this week that new and elaborate security measures were in place to ensure Kenyans and foreign visitors could enjoy the Christmas and New Year holidays in peace. He said security had been heightened along the Coast and there were different security arrangements that Kenyans had not seen before.

## **Somalia**

The National Leadership Forum meeting in Mogadishu on Tuesday (December 20) announced the appointment of a National Drought Committee. The Forum also called on aid agencies, the international community and donor countries to respond to what they described as "a very alarming drought situation." The committee will be responsible for drawing up emergency relief plans for each region and the Federal Information Minister told the media that most development projects will be halted to focus on the emergency response projects in drought stricken areas.

AMISOM and the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS) announced on Sunday (December 18) that they had jointly embarked on an operation to open up key supply routes in Hir-Shabelle region. Operation Antelope is already underway and intends to restore more than 150 kms of roads in this agricultural region of central Somalia.

AMISOM announced this week that it had finalized plans to transfer control of the Somali National University back to the Federal Government of Somalia. The campus has been the command headquarters of AMISOM's Burundi contingent for several years. The troops will now be relocated to Jowhar.

The Director of the Puntland presidential palace in Bosaso was shot and killed on Tuesday (December 20). Al-Shabaab later claimed responsibility for the murder.

## **South Sudan**

The UN Security Council on Saturday (December 17) extended the mandate of UNMISS for another year, strengthening the mission's mandate with additional powers to protect civilians. The Council reiterated "its increasingly grave alarm and concern regarding the political, security, economic and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan." (See article)

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, suggested on Monday this week (December 19) that the UN Security Council should impose an arms embargo on South Sudan to prevent the likely occurrence of genocide. He told the Security Council, "If we fail to act, South Sudan will be on a trajectory towards mass atrocities."

Petroleum Minister Ezekiel Lol Gatkouth arrived in Khartoum on Sunday (December 18) for talks on oil transit fees. He held talks with Oil Minister Mohamed Zayed Awad to discuss the renewal of the oil agreement, which expires at the end of the year. It followed joint technical committee meetings to review oil fees after the fall in oil prices.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said on Tuesday this week (December 20) that its teams were providing lifesaving humanitarian assistance, including emergency medical support, to displaced and conflict-affected families in the Greater Equatoria region. The IOM said the number of internally displaced persons across the country had now reached 1.87 million.

## **Sudan**

AU chief mediator, Thabo Mbeki arrived in Khartoum on Tuesday (December 20) and met with President Al-Bashir. They discussed the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access in the Two Areas and Darfur. Mr Mbeki also met with a delegation of the opposition Future Forces for Change to discuss the political situation and the way forward for peace and democratic change. He said the High-Level Implementation Panel would continue to do its utmost to broker solutions to the problems of Sudan.

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## Prime Minister Hailemariam inaugurates Gilgel Gibe III Hydro-power Project

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn inaugurated the third dam in the series of cascading hydroelectric projects in the Gibe-Omo basin, the Gilgel Gibe III dam, on Saturday (December 17). The Gilgel Gibe III dam (1,870MW) is the third in a series of dams, which include the existing Gibe I (1,844MW) and Gibe II (420MW) dams. Two further dams, Gibe IV (1472 MW) and Gibe V (560 MW), are also planned. The whole series of projects is a demonstration of Ethiopia's firm commitment to become a regional hub for green energy.

The Gilgel Gibe III dam, which is the third largest hydroelectric plant in Africa, will increase the country's total installed capacity to 4,260MW. It is 243meters high, and has an installed generation capacity of 1,870 Mega Watts. It is a roller-compacted concrete dam with 10 turbines, each with a generation capacity of 187MW; several started generating power last year. It is located 450km. from Addis Ababa in the South Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The Salini Impregilo Group, an Italian construction company, conducted the civil works, while the Chinese-based Dongfang Electric Corporation (DEC) carried out the mechanical and electrical work. The construction cost of the project was 1.5 billion Euros. The Ethiopian government covered forty percent of the total cost of the construction while the balance was covered by a loan, secured from the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China.

At the inauguration ceremony, Prime Minister Hailemariam told over two thousand guests including senior government officials, Ambassadors, and representatives of the Salini Impregilo Group, that the occasion was an indication that moving from one success to another was becoming a tradition in the country. The Prime Minister noted that the dam would significantly increase the supply of renewable power in the country and enhance regional integration through development of power infrastructure. **About half of the power produced by Gilgel Gibe III will be used in Ethiopia; the other half will be exported to Kenya (500 MW), Sudan (200 MW) and Djibouti (200 MW).** Kenya has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to purchase electricity from the dam and the World Bank approved financing for a transmission line to Kenya in July 2012. Underlining the government's focus on the development of green energy sources, Prime Minister Hailemariam underlined Ethiopia's total determination to realize its aim to reach middle-income status and become a renewable energy hub for Eastern Africa.

Engineer Azeb Asnake, the Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Electric Power, emphasized that Gilgel Gibe III would almost double the country's current hydropower supply and would have a significant impact in furthering its development efforts. Engineer Azeb added that the project would play a pivotal role in coping with the nation's increasing demand for power, a demand growing by over 30% a year. Following the inauguration, the Ethiopian Investment Commission Commissioner, Fitsum Arega, said this renewable power project would accelerate the expansion of large-scale manufacturing industries in Ethiopia. It provided additional power to address the country's growing demand. He noted that the cost of electricity in countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Bangladesh, which compete with Ethiopia in the textile sector, is four times higher than in Ethiopia. This, he said, created an additional opportunity for the country to offer available and reliable power for investors.

During the inauguration, the Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador La Yifan, congratulated the country on the completion of the Gilgel Gibe III dam. This, he said, would strongly assist in raising the flow of Foreign Direct Investment to the country and significantly ensure increased access to power for citizens, as well as promising industrial transformation in the country. Praising the government's political determination to realize the project, he called the dam "yet another landmark achievement in this country".

Pietro Salini, the Chief Executive Officer of the Salini Impregilo Group, said the Gilgel Gibe III dam would improve the technical capacity of local industries and technology transfer, in addition to assisting the overall economic growth of the country. He said workers from more than 30 countries participated in realizing the project, which represented an important engineering reference point at the global level because of the technical characteristics and number of workers involved.

Begun in 2008, the construction of the dam has, of course, been attacked by some local Kenyan and international environmental advocacy groups who claimed the project's environmental and social impact assessments were insufficient. These anti-dam groups came up with a series of unfounded and miscalculated negative claims about the possible environmental and social impact of the dam, particularly on people living around Lake Turkana in northern Kenya and along the Lower Omo in Ethiopia. They launched a series of political campaigns to try to prevent international organizations from becoming involved in funding the project, hoping to halt construction. The African Development Bank in August 2009 accepted calls by these organizations for its compliance review and mediation unit to review the dam's environmental impact, and therefore delayed any decision about a pending loan.

They also produced flawed "studies" and even succeeded in misleading a UNESCO committee, albeit [this was] short-lived. Indeed, the Ethiopian government withdrew its funding requests and decided to construct the dam with its own finance. At the time, both the anti-dam groups and others thought that the project would collapse. In August 2010, Ethiopian former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi vowed to complete the dam "at any cost", saying about critics of the dam that "They don't want to see developed Africa; they want us to remain undeveloped and backward to serve their tourists as a museum." The growing Ethiopian economy, coupled with prudent fiscal policy and cost-effective construction methods, enabled the advancement of the project.

In fact, in response to the series of unfounded claims, Ethiopia responded by providing copies of reports both of its own and [from] Kenya and a delegation composed of Water, Environment and National Heritage representatives, and of a joint mission by the World Heritage Committee and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which visited the area. Accordingly, the World Heritage Committee unanimously acknowledged that neither the Gilgel Gibe III Dam, nor the sugar projects impacted on the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site of Lake Turkana.

### **7<sup>th</sup> Ethio-U.S. Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Working Group meeting**

The 7<sup>th</sup> Ethio-United States Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Working Group meeting was held on Thursday last week (December 15) in Addis Ababa, with the respective delegations led by Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, and State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemene, and the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Tom Malinowski, and the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Ethiopia, Peter Vrooman.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Ethio-US Democracy, Governance and Human Rights Working Group Meeting addressed a broad range of issues. These included the Ethiopian government's commitment to pursue political reform and programs, respect for constitutional rights and the constitutional obligations and prospects for dialogue under the State of Emergency, as well as the need to support a strong and vibrant media and ways to counter 'hate speech' while respecting basic freedoms. The meeting also considered the important role of civil society in strengthening good governance and the annual U.S. human rights report.

The Working Group provides a regular opportunity for representatives of the U.S. government and of the government of Ethiopia to discuss the full range of governance and human rights issues openly and frankly. Indeed, in their opening remarks both sides welcomed the opportunity for frank exchanges of views between the two countries and underlined the value of continuing such Working Group meetings on a regular basis. Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh, mentioned the importance of such consultations for both countries, in terms of creating understanding and strengthening bilateral ties. The Foreign Minister extended his gratitude to the Government of United State of America for the consistent support it has offered to Ethiopia, particularly its generous humanitarian assistance during last year's appalling drought.

As far as political reform programs were concerned, the Ethiopian delegation noted that the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), had carried out extensive self-evaluation at all levels of the party leadership. Following this, the government was now in the process of conducting extensive, 'deep', reform from federal down to local levels of administration and governance. It pointed out that in order to avoid abuse and misuse of government power, a new strategy to restructure the federal government administration had been set up: "authorities have been appointed based on merit and performance". In the first place, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn had recently restructured the leadership of the Federal Government in a new and comprehensive fashion. This had been approved by parliament. The new leadership included some experts [appointed] to cabinet and senior government positions in order to bring different voices into the government. The appointments were largely based on the relevance of expertise, knowledge and skill rather than any considerations of party membership or of loyalty. The administrations of the federal, regional states were also carrying out similar reforms in regard to their respective leaderships, paying particular attention to the concerns of the people and concentrating on addressing issues of bad governance. Indeed, the regional states were also carrying out changes of position and leadership from the regional down to the local government levels. New cabinets and executive councils had already been formed at federal and regional as well as local levels.

The Ethiopian delegation emphasized the Government's strong commitment to reform the country's electoral law. **The aim is to introduce some elements of proportional representation into the electoral**

**process to ensure that elections would in future effectively reflect the views of representatives of all sections of society.** The Government of Ethiopia is also planning to increase transparency and strengthen democratic institutions, including, in particular, such institutions as the Human Rights' Commission, the Ombudsman and the Office of the Federal Auditor General, as well as the Federal Ethnic and Anti-Corruption Commission and other bodies. In addition, taking into consideration the growing demands of the youth and the need for job creation and wealth generation, the Government, as part of its implementation of reform, has recently committed itself to the establishment of a "Mobile Youth Fund" with a starting budget of 10 billion birr, to be implemented in every *woreda* across the country. This will provide a start for a complete regeneration of the job market for young people.

The Ethiopian delegation underlined the fact that the country witnessed anti-peace protests, predominantly in some areas of the Oromo and Amhara regions. The unrest meant that the Government had to exercise its responsibility to provide for peace and security, obliging it to declare a State of Emergency as a key factor in restoring peace and stability. This had, the Ethiopian delegation pointed out, substantially brought peace to the country.

### **Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia vow to strive for major breakthroughs in priority areas**

Recent exchanges and consultations between high-level delegations of Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have opened up a new era of cooperation between the two countries, offering the objective of developing the future trajectory of their bilateral ties and expanding previous long-term multi-layered links between the two peoples. These high-level contacts, mapping out the future of Ethio-Saudi Arabian ties, aim to base bilateral ties in the major priority areas, **ranging from agriculture and trade to renewable energy development and tourism.** They also demonstrate a political will and the sense of urgency to explore prospects for more diversified cooperation beyond traditional links in the face of new challenges. Prime Minister Hailemariam's official visit to Saudi Arabia and his talks with Saudi officials last month provides an example of the importance of expanding links beyond the issues of peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the Middle East to other fields including agriculture, cattle rearing and fattening, leather and leather products.

This month, a Saudi Arabian delegation headed by Abdurahaman bin Abdalmuhisin Alfadly, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, visited Ethiopia. Prime Minister Hailemariam met the Saudi delegation and underlined Ethiopia's interest in exporting value-added products in general and agricultural products in particular. He emphasized that export-oriented agricultural investment areas would be better geared towards the generation of employment opportunities. He underlined the huge potential for investment in livestock and vegetable development among others.

The Saudi Minister, who acknowledged Ethiopia's enormous potential in agriculture, also held talks with Ethiopia's Minister for Farming and Natural Resources, Dr Eyasu Abrha, on possible ways of acquiring 100,000 hectares to invest in alfalfa production for animal forage and livestock processing. He said a joint Ethiopia-Saudi Arabia technical team [would] conduct a feasibility study on the agro-ecology sector to help implement the project [which] would be set up. Dr Eyasu, stressing that Ethiopia aspired to become a middle-income economy by 2025, noted that the Second Growth and Transformation Plan had identified agriculture as a crucial area for economic growth and industrial sector development. He [said] investment projects like this Saudi project would play a fundamental role in creating jobs, generating hard currency, and opening markets for smallholder's livestock activities.

These contacts, cementing mutual trust and a common understanding of possible mutual benefits, offer the prospects of providing a real basis for the full spectrum of bilateral ties between the two countries. They also demand all-rounded interaction, embodying a process of common development to help the two countries move along the road to sustainable peace and co-prosperity in the region. The Prime Minister's meeting with Saudi officials last week was another case featuring the paramount importance of expanding bilateral ties in various areas, economic, trade, and investment as well as security and regional issues. Similarly, the Prime Minister's visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia last month and his talks with members of the Saudi business community, reviewing the state of the bilateral relations with the framework of economic diplomacy, stressed the need to elevate business interaction to new and higher levels. It was in this context that Prime Minister Hailemariam encouraged the business community to bring their enterprises and invest in Ethiopia.

Consultations between the high-level government officials play a paramount role in encouraging people-to-people ties featuring historical, linguistic, societal, cultural and spiritual links grounded in the firm landscape of an ancient inter-civilization exchanges. Tourism is one aspect of this that can be fully embraced by both countries to expedite people-to-people ties. These can further encourage all-rounded bilateral and people-to-people ties. This public diplomacy aspect gives reality and meaning to the growth of bilateral ties and will encourage creativity and innovation. It will also allow both countries to increase their economic and political ties as well as usher in a flourishing future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Concretizing links over renewable energy and infrastructure was a point raised by the Senior Advisor at the Royal Court of Saudi Arabia, Ahmed Alkhateeb when meeting Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu on December 15. Mr Alkhateeb who is also board chairman of the Saudi development fund, indicated that Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia enjoyed excellent ties in the political sphere but suggested the need to inject greater impetus into the economic field. He said Riyadh would provide the necessary support for its citizens who invested in Ethiopia. Mr Alkhateeb also held talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam on various issues of common interest. They agreed to work in concert in the field of renewable energy, and Mr Alkhateeb expressed Saudi Arabia's **interest to develop and import energy from Ethiopia to Saudi Arabia**. During the visit the Saudi delegation which included representatives of the livestock, energy, finance and industry sectors, met five other ministers, including the Minister of Livestock and Fisheries, Professor Fekadu Beyene. Ethiopia has the largest livestock population in Africa and Saudi investors could benefit greatly from investment in the sector. The delegation also visited the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) during their visit to look at the capacity for renewable energy that the Dam will generate.

These visits all offer the possibilities for Ethiopia to synergize the development strategies and comparative advantages of Ethiopia's Second Phase of the Growth and Transformation Plan with that of the development vision and potential of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, for the benefit of a further growth in Ethio-Saudi relations.

### **Qatar's Foreign Minister on an official visit to Ethiopia**

A Qatari delegation led by the Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar, Sheikh Mohamed Abdulrahman Jassim Al-Thani, paid an official visit to Ethiopia this week (December 19-20). During the visit, Sheikh Mohammed met with President Dr Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu and other high-level government officials.

President Dr Mulatu Teshome held talks with the Qatari Foreign Minister on Tuesday (December 20). The discussions covered ways of enhancing cooperation between the two countries in terms of investment and financing development projects as well as strengthening people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges. President Mulatu emphasized the potential and the attractive investment environment in Ethiopia, and mentioned various incentives for investment provided by the government of Ethiopia. The two sides also discussed possible new areas for investment projects and economic cooperation. President Mulatu recalled the recent reciprocal visits by high-level delegations from both countries, which, he noted, had resulted in the signing of a number of agreements. A road map to implement the signed agreements had also been prepared and would become effective in three month's time.

Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Abdulrahman Al-Thani said cooperation between Qatar and Ethiopia showed progress and economic and financial cooperation would be further strengthened for the mutual benefit of both countries. The Foreign Minister emphasized that Qatar wanted to play its proper role, together with Ethiopia, in helping to ensure peace and stability in South Sudan and Somalia. He said: "we have agreed on a road map that helps different government officials and business communities from Qatar to visit Ethiopia in the next three months and to identify concrete projects between our two countries in the years to come".

The same day, Prime Minister Hailemariam also held talks with Qatar's Foreign Minister. They discussed ways to strengthen cooperation over a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. Speaking after the meeting, Ambassador Mesganu Arga, Ethiopian Ambassador to the State of Qatar, noted that the two countries had reached agreements to work together in rural investment and infrastructural development. Ambassador Mesganu said Ethiopia and Qatar had also agreed to work together in maintaining peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

In his meeting with Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, Sheikh Mohamed Abdulrahman Al-Thani discussed the road map of economic cooperation and the financing of infrastructural developments, as well

as strengthening the historic ties between the two countries and fostering foreign relations. They discussed elevating their partnership and working closely on various issues in various bilateral, regional and multi-lateral fora. Foreign Minister Dr Workneh emphasized the close long standing ties between Ethiopia and the State of Qatar and commended the agreement to establish a Joint Ministerial Commission. He welcomed and commended the recent exchange of high-level visits between the leaders of the two countries, and praised the growing partnership of the two countries in trade, investment and infrastructure development as well as security and stability. He called for further strengthening of cooperation in these sectors and for further exploration of cooperation in such areas as financing of **public and private investments in the energy sector**. At a joint press conference, Sheikh Mohamed Abdulrahman Al-Thani said " We agreed to boost our relationship in the areas of investment, financing, infrastructure and tourism." Dr Workneh said both countries had agreed to take their relations to the highest level, and had also [discussed] developments in various bilateral and multilateral relations to enhance the national interests of both countries, adding "to this end, we have signed 11 agreements and MoUs."

Sheikh Mohamed Abdulrahman Al-Thani, who said the occasion had been his **first visit to Africa** as well as to Ethiopia, commended the government and the people of Ethiopia for the warm hospitality accorded to his delegation. Emphasizing that it was in the interest of Qatar to work closely with Ethiopia, the Minister said Qatar was very willing to enhance cooperation with Ethiopia in different areas. Welcoming the increasing bilateral ties between the two countries, the Qatari Foreign Minister also stressed the need to further expand their investment and economic partnership. He noted the impressive and rapid growth of Ethiopia and the opportunities for partnership that had developed: the sectors for business and investment ties were widening and the potential for cooperation was high. Sheikh Mohamed Abdulrahman Al-Thani also congratulated Ethiopia on becoming a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and looked forward to cooperation in the future.

### **The UN Security Council extends UN Mission in South Sudan**

Expressing its deep concern at the security situation in South Sudan and the possibility of an outright ethnic war, the UN Security Council on Saturday (December 17) extended the mandate of UNMISS for another year, until 15 December 2017, and strengthened the mission's mandate with additional powers to protect civilians. It also repeated its intention to consider sanctions against those whose actions undermined peace, stability and security in the country. Unanimously adopting resolution 2327 (2016), the Council reiterated "its increasingly grave alarm and concern regarding the political, security, economic and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan resulting from a political dispute within the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) and subsequent violence caused by the country's political and military leaders."

The Security Council demanded that all parties immediately end the fighting throughout South Sudan, and that the South Sudan's leaders implement the permanent ceasefire in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan that they signed in August 2015. It demanded that the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan comply with the obligations set out in the Status of Forces Agreement between the Government of South Sudan and the United Nations, and immediately cease obstructing the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in the performance of its mandate. It also demanded the Transitional Government immediately cease obstructing international and national humanitarian actors from assisting civilians. The Council authorized UNMISS to use "all necessary means" to protect civilians under any threat of physical violence, to deter violence against civilians, to implement a Mission-wide early warning strategy, to maintain public safety and security within UNMISS Protection of Civilian Sites, and to deter and prevent sexual and gender-based violence. It said the Mission should monitor and investigate human rights abuses and violations, create conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict.

The Council decided to increase the overall force levels of UNMISS by maintaining a troop ceiling of 17,000 troops. This includes the 4,000 Regional Protection Force. It increased the police ceiling to 2,101 personnel. It authorized the Regional Protection Force to use all necessary means, "including robust action where necessary", to accomplish its mandate. It took note of the Transitional Government's intent to conduct an inclusive national dialogue, but also expressed its intention to consider "all appropriate measures, as demonstrated in resolutions 2206 (2015) and 2290 (2016), against those who took actions which undermined peace, stability and security in South Sudan." The Council stressed the sanctity of United Nations protection sites and specifically emphasized that people involved in attacks against UNMISS personnel and premises, or any humanitarian personnel, could well meet the criteria set out for in resolution 2206 (2015).

The Council members remained divided in fact over the issues of sanctions, with the US Permanent Representative suggesting an arms embargo was called for and that targeted sanctions would be an effective tool to send a message to leaders on both sides. The Russian Federation Representative, however, was concerned by the use of "the stick and not the carrot". He said the supporters of sanctions ignored the IGAD decisions that sanctions were "counterproductive". China also stressed that the Council should act with prudence over the issues of sanctions. Egypt welcomed the level of consensus reached, describing it as "real political gain of the day." While punitive approaches had proven ineffective, the resolution would send a united message to South Sudan's warring parties. The Council, he said, should focus on reaching a political breakthrough and promoting dialogue, adding that all parties in South Sudan bore responsibility for alleviating the suffering of its people. Senegal underlined the importance of working in close cooperation with the delegation of the African Member States. A united approach was required in full cooperation with organizations and countries of the sub-region, including exchanges with the African Union and IGAD. There must be an effective response to threats to civilians, as well as implementation of the peace agreement and the monitoring of human rights. The Angolan representative stressed the current situation in South Sudan should be addressed through meaningful political dialogue leading to a permanent ceasefire and, in turn, sustainable peace. Spain underlined that it was essential for UNMISS to operate without restrictions in order to fulfill its mandate, protect civilians and distribute humanitarian assistance.

The representative of South Sudan welcomed the renewal and extension of the mandate of UNMISS. He said the situation had improved following the recent agreement of South Sudan to implement the Joint Transitional Government of National Unity-United Nations Security Council Communiqué of September 4, which concerned the deployment of the Regional Protection Force. At the same time, he expressed his disappointment that the Council continued to deliberate on issues of peace and security without adequate consultations with the African region. He said the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its most recent Extra-Ordinary Summit earlier in the month had noted that an arms embargo or sanctions on South Sudan would not provide a solution to bring about permanent peace and stability. What was required was dialogue and commitment by all South Sudanese parties to implement the agreement. He said his Government continued to oppose "negative threats of sanctions and punishment, which only undermined cooperation." Any call for an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on senior Government officials would only weaken the Government's effectiveness. He said that rather than negative threats of sanctions and punishment, South Sudan needed a positive and constructive agenda that included the return of security and stability. He noted President Salva Kiir had recently declared a unilateral ceasefire, with instructions to the national army to fight only in self-defense with amnesty granted to those who had taken up arms against the State.

The South Sudan representative also noted this week's launch of a national dialogue that would include all stakeholders. The President issued the decree on Monday (December 19) appointing over 30 eminent persons as members of the national dialogue steering committee to develop an agenda for the dialogue and work with experts and resource persons to facilitate the process. However, rebel leader, Riek Machar, rejected the President's call for national dialogue, calling it a "bogus" move, and several commentators expressed their dismay that the list of names did not include any members of armed opposition groups. The appointed members appear to be members of the President's Sudan People's Liberation Movement, parties allied to the government or religious leaders and individuals loyal or sympathetic to his administration.

### **The Dutch Government controls collection of Eritrea's infamous Diaspora Tax....**

The Dutch government has decided to strengthen control over the Eritrean government's continued efforts to collect the notorious 2% tax it imposes on all members of the Eritrean Diaspora who wish to use any Eritrean consular and other services. This follows an official report on the activities of the Eritrean government in the Netherlands, detailing the way the Eritrean government has been working through political activists of its single and ruling PFDJ to intimidate Eritrean refugees in the Netherlands. The report made it clear that it was unacceptable that people closely allied to the Eritrean regime, such as members of the Youth wing of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (YFPDJ), should be active in refugee reception centers in the Netherlands. In February, this year a Dutch Court dismissed an attempt by a member of YFPDJ to sue Mirjam van Reisen, Professor of International Relations, for libel over her concerns that the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service was using interpreters connected to the "centre of the Eritrean intelligence in the Netherlands". The judge accepted that the YFPDJ was the "eyes and ears" of the Eritrean regime, gathering intelligence for the government in Asmara and being responsible for attempts to intimidate UN personnel, journalists, Professor van Reisen and Eritreans in the Diaspora.

The Dutch government has now made it clear it plans much stricter regulation to prevent YPFDJ activity and action to be taken by the Ministries of Social Affairs and Employment, and of Foreign Affairs to put a stop to the intimidation and pressure that has become prevalent against members of the Eritrean community in the Netherlands. In June this year, a parliamentary debate led to a number of parliamentary motions calling for action to deal with the "influence of Eritrea in the Netherlands." Following the debate, the DSP-Groep Amsterdam and Tilburg University produced a report that confirmed the concerns expressed in Parliament and detailed the way the Eritrean government tried to influence members of the community and the fear and mistrust it had induced in the community.

The report carried out extensive literature and documentary research as well as organizing focus group sessions and interviewing dozens of international experts, informants from policy, welfare and support organizations, lawyers specializing in migration law and with Eritrean cases and with people from the Eritrean community and various Eritrean organizations as well as the Eritrean Ambassador and representatives of the embassy. It identified some 20,000 people with an Eritrean background currently living in the Netherlands of whom some 14,000 had arrived in the last five or six years, fleeing from the current regime. It said the community was highly polarized with "a lot of mistrust and fear".

The report identified the Youth PFDJ or YPFDJ Holland as part of the international youth movement set up by the PFDJ in Asmara. It said it was the most active and visible organization of the PFDJ. Like other PFDJ organizations, the YPFDJ has explicit political goals to strengthen the PFDJ and to control what happens within the Diaspora. The embassy was also under PFDJ control. The report said there were strong indications that the PFDJ had either infiltrated or taken over many of the Eritrean organizations in the Netherlands, and the Embassy and the PFDJ, which operated from within the embassy, played an important role in the monitoring or direct managing these organizations, though the embassy itself merely claimed to offer support.

The YPFDJ has been described as a central element in Eritrea's "sinister international network of spies and thugs", carefully organized by the regime to spy on its own citizens in the Diaspora. Members, often wearing T-shirts with an "Eri-blood" logo, can be seen at almost any Eritrean opposition meeting, gathering information and harassing critics. They often break up meetings, and have been accused of systematic harassment of opposition members, hacking computers and phones and providing information leading to the arrests of members of families back in Eritrea. It is clear from the UN Commission of Enquiry's report earlier in the year that the Eritrean regime has, in fact, constructed a sophisticated Eritrean spy network around the world using it to control the Eritrean population in the various countries where they reside. Eritrean representatives in foreign countries recruit spies to conduct surveillance of Eritreans in the Diaspora, including any members of political organizations or religious entities, and more generally working to detect any "suspicious or undesirable policies perceived to be against the needs of the Government". Anyone who tries to develop independent initiatives or organizations in the Diaspora is liable to experience warnings, threats, intimidation and attempts to take control.

Referring specifically, to the collection of funds through the 2% diaspora tax, and other "voluntary" contributions and "donations", the report noted that "Very large amounts are involved and the pressure to meet these large amounts is being increased substantially." It emphasizes that collection is an important task of the YPFDJ and PFDJ members. The tax must be paid to use any consular services, in contravention of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. The report concludes: "The diaspora tax and financial contributions seem to be part of a system of fear and intimidation." It also adds that because of the lack of public financial management in Eritrea, it is impossible to know how far such contributions are used for military activity in the region, and "in contravention to the weapons embargo placed on Eritrea by the UN Security Council." So, the overall result of the activities of the YPFDJ is that a "lot of fear and mistrust exist within the community," and trust in the rule of law is being undermined by fear of reprisals. The report says that pressure and intimidation against members of the community by the YPFDJ must be considered to be "a proven and established fact."

Last week, the Dutch Cabinet issued an account of the progress in controlling Eritrean government activity and influence. It said it wasn't acceptable for foreign authorities to influence the freedom of citizens in the Netherlands. It emphasized that intimidation, force or extortion could not be allowed. Although the public prosecutor could not investigate Eritrean embassy involvement in criminal offences, such as extortion and intimidation, it could and would investigate any concrete evidence that such offenses are taking place. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had investigated options for prohibiting collection of the Diaspora tax in the

Netherlands. In October, the Ministry prohibited the collection of taxes if fraud, force, extortion or other criminal offences were involved or if the tax revenue was being used for specific military goals, contravening the weapons' embargo of UN Resolution 2023. **The Netherlands is the third country to limit such Eritrean activity, following Germany and Canada.** The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is now commissioning further investigation into the methods used to collect the Diaspora tax in other European countries, and a report is expected by mid-next year. In the meantime, the Organization for the Reception of Asylum-seekers is responding to the DSP-Groep Amsterdam and Tilburg University report, taking precautions to prevent the presence of people allied to the Eritrean regime in its reception centers. It will in future refuse access to members of the Youth PFDJ, described by the civil courts as "an extended arm of the dictatorial regime"; the Organization's volunteer coordinators will watch out for any political or religious activities that might disturb people in the centers.

### **...while Ms Bruton recycles her call to ignore Eritrea's regional activities**

In her latest piece on Eritrea, merely a recycled version of earlier pieces this year, Ms Bronwyn Bruton of the Atlantic Council, repeats yet again her call for changes in US policy towards Eritrea. Carefully ignoring much of the reality of Eritrea today, she claims Eritrea is trying to break out of what has been, in fact, a state of self-imposed isolation arising out of its own regional policies. Ms Bruton argues that an 'engaged' Eritrea would be very good news for the region. That is something we might all agree on, but it remains impossible to engage with Eritrea unless it changes policies.

Ms Burton, cheerfully ignoring almost the entire history of the last two decades in the Horn of Africa, argues that Washington "must drop outdated notions about the threat that Eritrea poses." In reality, as Ms Bruton must know, if she knows anything about the region on which she now claims to be an expert, Eritrean foreign policy, as carried out by President Isaias, has been based on aggression ever since Ethiopia recognized its independence. Those policies have led to conflict with Sudan, Djibouti (twice), and Yemen as well as a major war with Ethiopia. In every case, Eritrea started the conflict. Eritrea has also consistently provided logistics, training and arms support for anti-government movements in Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia. It continues to do so in at least three of these cases.

President Isaias has, in fact, been quite consistent in his view that the only way to resolve problems with neighbors is through aggression and conflict. Eritrea's external behavior and foreign policy have been described as "a projection of the historic grudges the president and his close circle have with the international community", and there has been no change in two decades. Equally, despite all Ms Bruton's claims, there has not been any indication that Eritrea has any intention, genuine or otherwise, of changing its attitude or behavior. The recent infiltration of over a hundred terrorists from Eritrea into northern Ethiopia last month is merely the most recent example of a continual series of deliberate provocations.

In the past two years Eritrea, says Ms Bruton, has made serious efforts to improve its relations with European countries. It has formed new alliances with Arab and African partners, and has sought to re-enter IGAD. To this end, it has invited a carefully selected number of journalists and others, including Ms Bruton, to visit the country. Ms Bruton emphasizes that the UNHCR has been permitted to tour prisons, or, in fact, to look at one specific prison. It may be a start, as Ms Bruton suggests, but Eritrea actually has several hundred prisons, holding tens of thousands of political prisoners, none of whom have been tried or sentenced and all of whom are held at the whim of the President who has on a number of occasions denied holding specific prisoners or even acknowledging their existence. Equally, a visit to one prison, and a few carefully orchestrated tours by selected visitors can hardly provide much of a balance to the terrifying mass of devastating and detailed evidence collected in the Report of the UN Commission of Enquiry into Human Rights in Eritrea and the Report's conclusion that the regime has been responsible for repeated crimes against humanity over twenty years. Ms Bruton merely ignores the Commission.

Ms Bruton does find a number of what she rather desperately calls 'positive' steps. She describes the recent release of what Eritrea says are all its living Djiboutian prisoners of war (four in number) as a major development "that bodes well for regional stability." This seems a somewhat exaggerated response when it has taken 8 years and two sets of Security Council sanctions, as well as Qatari mediation, to persuade Eritrea to even admit it held any prisoners. Eritrea still refuses to give any details of the dozen remaining Djiboutian troops missing since 2008: they are widely presumed to have died in custody, like many of Eritrea's political prisoners.

Ms Bruton highlights the revision of the judicial code announced last year. It has yet to be implemented. She says the government has announced raising the salary of National Service conscripts (after twenty years at no more than \$10-\$12 a month). No increase has yet reached the conscripts. Government officials promised

two years ago that they planned to limit all future national service conscripts to 18-month terms of service, the length originally set in 1994 but ignored ever since. There is no sign of any action being taken to redeem this promise. President Isaias announced two years ago that he was appointing a committee to produce a constitution for Eritrea, apparently forgetting the National Assembly had approved an earlier draft nearly two decades ago, in 1997, and which he totally ignored. Nothing more has been heard of this supposed initiative.

Ms Bruton, rather desperately and inaccurately, says that implementation of policy changes has been slow, but quickly adds that this is not a surprise, ascribing it to "Eritrea's financial and capacity problems." In fact, of course, this approach, of promising much but delivering little or nothing, is the norm for President Isaias' approach to both government and foreign policy.

Ms Bruton, as usual, comes up with a number of recommendations for US policy makers. In addition to calling as usual for the lifting of UN sanctions on Eritrea, she wants "a rejection of Ethiopian irredentist claims on Eritrea", de-personalization of US policy toward Eritrea, for Europe to take the lead in a new approach to Eritrea, and as an afterthought a recommendation for improvements in the human rights situation in Eritrea, adding that Eritrea should not be singled out for criticism. It isn't, of course, singled out: it simply receives criticism because of its appalling record.

These recommendations completely ignore the fact that Eritrea has made no effort to change the policies that led to the imposition of sanctions. As noted above, there have been no more than occasional promises that are never implemented. The reference to "Ethiopian irredentist claims" on Eritrea is nonsense. It has never had any since it accepted Eritrea's independence in 1993. US policy is only personalized towards Eritrea in the sense that President Isaias retains full control of all aspects of Eritrean policy as anyone with any knowledge of Eritrea knows. **Letting Europe take the lead in improving relations with Eritrea follows from the current desperate efforts to try to minimize the Eritrean refugee flow into Europe. EU promises of extra aid money, however, will have no effect on the refugees fleeing indefinite conscription and appalling repression.** Extraordinarily, the EU, like Ms Bruton, seems to have learnt nothing from previous visits to Asmara. The EU appears to ignore the lessons of the expulsion of the Italian Ambassador in Eritrea in 2001 after he presented a letter of protest over the arrest of the President's leading critics and numerous journalists; or from the deliberate humiliation of Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel, in 2011, when he was promised the release of Swedish-Eritrean journalist, Dawit Isaak, but unable even to see Dawit, let alone have him released when he visited Eritrea.

It is hardly coincidental, if a singular indication of intellectual failure, that Ms Bruton manages to write a 12-page article on Eritrea, including consideration of the Horn of Africa which she claims has been "long recognized as one of the world's most unstable regions" and which she also claims is "undergoing a round of seismic shifts," and yet avoids any mention of the undoubted fact that a central element of Eritrean foreign policy is regional destabilization. This has been carried out quite openly, and often indeed publicly admitted. **Eritrea has armed, trained and financed a number of anti-Ethiopian terrorist groups, including Ginbot 7, the Oromo Liberation Front, the Ogaden National Liberation Front, in its efforts to cause problems to the government in Addis Ababa.** It has supported the FRUD in Djibouti, and al-Shabaab and Hizbul Islam in Somalia and various Sudanese and South Sudanese opposition groups at different times. Ms Bruton carefully ignores all this. She also ignores the way Eritrea firmly controls these organizations, changing their leadership to suit its own policies, to make sure they remain committed to Eritrea's designs on Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti or Somalia, and to President Isaias' repeated mantra that Sudan and Ethiopia cannot survive as single states and his determination to ensure this comes true.

Equally, Ms Bruton shrugs off any criticism of her previous writings, however extensive and detailed. Like the Eritrean regime, she apparently believes that repetition of inaccuracies is sufficient to ensure acceptability: there is no need to correct errors, merely repeat them, and then they become true. This is common practice among Eritrean propagandists and the more vocal of President Isaias' supporters. One example of this was Ms Bruton's nonsensical and wildly alarmist fears of a collapse in Ethiopia and for a flood of Ethiopian refugees to arrive in Eritrea. This is, to put it mildly, highly implausible. Indeed, a more improbably scenario is hard to envisage given, for example, the up to 5,000 refugees a month that have been steadily leaving Eritrea for the last few years.

It is, of course, quite true, as Ms Bruton says, that the Horn of Africa (particularly Eritrea and Ethiopia) would benefit from an end to Eritrea's 'state of war' with Ethiopia, and Eritrea's determined aggression towards the region. The solution is very simple. All Eritrea (or rather President Isaias) needs to do is change policies:

stop continuous efforts to destabilize the region, and Ethiopia, and be prepared to open dialogue rather than start wars. Other points at issue are to be found in the Security Council's latest renewal of sanctions. The Council expressed concern over ongoing Eritrean support for regional armed groups and serious concern at continuing reports of Djiboutian combatants missing in action, as well as concern over Eritrea's refusal to admit the Monitoring Group into Eritrea. The Monitoring Group itself also raised serious concerns over the establishment of a Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates military presence in Eritrea, noting that "external support for infrastructure development that could benefit the Eritrean military," would break the sanctions regime.

It has to be said that a positive response to these points would seem to offer a far more plausible and practical set of recommendations for the Eritrean regime than those dreamt up by Ms Bruton.