

A Week in the Horn **24th April 2015**

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News in brief

African Union

The African Union has strongly condemned the inhuman and barbaric killings of innocent Ethiopians in Libya. A statement issued by the AU (April 20) said “the Chairperson of the Commission strongly condemns the barbaric and cowardly act” of terrorists in Libya. The statement underlined the urgency for enhanced international action to address the situation in Libya.

The African Union announced on Tuesday (April 21) that it was deploying a team of 59 Observers to observe the national elections being held in Ethiopia next month. These will include nine Long-term Observers who arrived in Addis Ababa on Monday and 50 Short-term Observers who will be deployed May 17-28. The election is on May 24.

Ethiopia

On Sunday, the “Islamic State in Iraq and Syria” (ISIS) released a video showing the barbaric killing of 28 Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians who had been residing in Libya. The House of Representatives declared three days of national mourning (April 22-24) for these barbaric killings, carried out by the “Islamic State” in Libya. (See article)

Hundreds of thousands of people attended a government-organized protest in Addis Ababa to express their concern over the killings in Libya. The Prime Minister told the demonstration that the government and the people should fight extremists, combat human traffickers and create jobs. (See article)

The 4th **Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa** took place at the weekend (April 18-19) in Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State. Opened by Prime Minister Hailemariam, the Forum, on the theme of “Secularism and Politicized Faith” was attended by the Presidents of Kenya, Mali, Rwanda and Uganda, ambassadors, UN and AU officials, academics and scholars. (See article)

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom and senior officials of the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday visited bereaved families of the victims of the barbaric massacre by the ‘Islamic State’, and offered deepest condolences and sympathies to families and friends.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom held talks on Monday (April 20) with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mozambique, Mr Oldemiro Baloi on issues of bilateral, continental and global concern.

State minister Ambassador Berhane attended the Asian African Conference in Jakarta commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Bandung Summit. (See article)

Ethiopian Airlines' inaugural direct flight to Tokyo's Narita International Airport left Addis Ababa's Bole International airport, on April 21, 2015. 2015 is the 60th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and Ethiopia.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh participated at the weekend in a regional Summit at Aqaba in Jordan at the invitation of the King of Jordan along with the Presidents of Kenya, Tanzania, and Somalia. The meeting was held within the framework of strengthening efforts and maintaining coordination and consultation to counter extremism and fight terrorism. Jordan currently chairs the UN Security Council.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has agreed to establish a liaison office in Djibouti to boost anti-piracy efforts off the Horn of Africa. Foreign Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf and NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary-General for Operations Francesca Tardioli signed an agreement on Wednesday (April 22).

A delegation of UK businessmen led by the UK Ambassador to Ethiopia, accredited in Djibouti paid a two-day visit to Djibouti to look at investment opportunities and business possibilities in the country. This was the first British business mission to Djibouti.

Eritrea

The EU unveiled a 10-point plan to counter the rising numbers of refugee deaths in the Mediterranean. A meeting of EU foreign and interior ministers on Monday (April 20) agreed to increase funds for rescue operations and to share responsibility for resettling refugees and migrants.

The UNHRC said that as many as 850 refugees may have died on Saturday (April 18) when another boat sank off the coast of Libya. 350 of those who died when the boat capsized were said to be from Eritrea and most of the rest from Syria.

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta has appointed General Samson Mwathethe as the new Chief of Defense Forces. The appointment was announced last Friday (April 17) when Lieutenant-General Samson Mwathethe was promoted General. The President said General Julius Karangi would start the handover process this week.

A meeting of Kenya, Somali and UNHCR officials on Tuesday (April 21) agreed to set up a tripartite commission to organize repatriating the refugees from the Dedaab refugee complex. Foreign Minister Amina Mohamed said there was no timeline for closing the camp and sending the refugees home depended upon available resources. She proposed holding a pledging conference to acquire international support.

Somali scholars in Kenya have strongly condemned Al-Shabaab's terrorist attack on Garissa University. In an assembly held in the largely Somali-inhabited Eastleigh area of Nairobi on Saturday (April 18), Somali scholars joined other Muslim communities in Kenya condemning extremists and offering full support to the Kenyan government and the people of Kenya in the fight against such "barbaric" terrorist attacks.

Somalia

Somali Prime Minister Sharmarke held talks with Kenyan Deputy President Ruto on Tuesday (April 20) to assess progress over the agreement signed in 2013 for voluntary repatriation of refugees. This followed recent calls by Kenyan Deputy President Ruto for the closure of Dedaab refugee camp complex.

An Al-Shabaab bomb destroyed a bus carrying UN civilian employees in Garowe, Puntland, on Monday (April 20), killing at least ten people and wounding seven others; at least 10 people were also killed when a suicide bomber rammed a car into a busy restaurant in the centre of Mogadishu on Tuesday (April 21)

The Head of the Interim Jubaland Administration, Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed Islam (Madobe) has announced that the newly formed Parliament of Jubaland will be inaugurated on Saturday (April 25) when a speaker will be elected. Representatives from the Somali Federal Government and federal member states have been invited, as well as delegations from IGAD, Kenya and Ethiopia.

Somaliland's electoral commission has announced that the Somaliland presidential election due this year will be held on June 1, 2016.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir told the National Assembly on Monday (April 20) that he rejected violence and was offering a "comprehensive political process" to end the civil war. He called for an immediate end to violence and negotiations with the armed opposition, the former political detainees and other stakeholders to form a government of national unity with him as leader.

Sudan

The AU and IGAD Observer Mission to last week's Presidential and national elections issued their interim reports classifying the elections as peaceful and fair. (See article)

The chairman of Sudan's National Electoral Commission, Mokhtar al-Asam, said on Tuesday (April 21) that voter turnout figures in Sudan's elections last week had been revised from 38% to 42% of those registered.

Officials from Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations concluded a four-day meeting on Sunday (April 19) discussing an exit strategy for the peacekeeping troops deployed in Sudan's western region of Darfur. Discussions would continue in the second week of May.

Barbaric killings of Ethiopians in Libya: condolences and solidarity....

On Sunday, the "Islamic State in Iraq and Syria" (ISIS) released a video showing the barbaric killing of 28 Ethiopian Christians who had been residing in Libya. Some were beheaded and others shot in the back of the head. This un-Islamic and un-civilized action provoked universal condemnation around the world.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn extended his deepest condolences and those of the Government to the families and friends of the victims and to all the people of Ethiopia. Expressing the strongest condemnation of the gruesome and barbaric acts of the ISIS terrorists, the Prime Minister called for the Ethiopian people to unite and stand firm in Ethiopia's long fight against acts of terrorism wherever they might occur. Prime Minister Hailemariam said the brutality shown in the cold-blooded execution of "our Ethiopian brothers over the weekend by the Islamic State is only indicative of the fact that such terrorist groups want no more than to wipe out the human race from the face of the earth."

The Prime Minister noted that although terrorist groups like Islamic State targeted all of humankind regardless of religion, color and race, they also often carried out their "acts of terror under the guise of religion." He warned people to be aware of their divisive tactics of trying to set religion against religion, people against people. ISIS had executed Egyptian Christians in Libya in February and carried out other barbaric killings of those opposed to ISIS, including both Muslims and Christians in parts of the Middle East and Northern Africa. Prime Minister Hailemariam said these underlined the need for resolution by both the people and the Government in the war against terror.

Ethiopia was first faced with terrorist activity in the mid-1990s, when it had to take action against Somali-based terrorist group, Al-Itihaad Al-Islamiya. A decade later in 2006, the Somali Islamic Courts Union, and its extremist Al-Qaeda affiliate-Al Shabaab - declared a jihad against Ethiopia, posing clear dangers both to the Somali Government and to Ethiopia, as well as the region as a whole. Another Al-Qaeda-linked organization appeared in Yemen, **and it was because of these threats, supported as they were by a neighboring country, that the Government of Ethiopia issued its Anti-Terrorism Law in 2009.** Based on international practice as well as mindful of the threat of terrorism to the peace, security and development of the country and indeed more widely, Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Law is now often described as a model for an anti-terrorist legal framework. Some African countries have adopted the Ethiopian model and, in light of the growing threat of terrorist activity, some European countries are now reconsidering their own Anti-Terrorism Proclamations to take account of the increased threats.

It was on the basis of this history of resistance that the Prime Minister reiterated Ethiopia's firm stance against terrorism. He recalled the country's legacy of the peaceful coexistence of peoples of all religions, and of Muslims and Christians alike, and reaffirmed the strong commitment of the Ethiopian people and Government in the face of the barbaric killings of Ethiopian citizens by "Islamic State".

The House of Representatives held an emergency session on Tuesday (April 21), preceding discussion with a minute of silence for the victims of the atrocity. The Representatives decreed a three-day period of national mourning Wednesday to Friday this week, (April 22-24) with flags flying at half-mast throughout the country and in all embassies, consulates-general and trade offices abroad. This national mourning also included those Ethiopians killed in the troubles in South Africa in the last two weeks. Members of the House of Representatives offered their own condolences to the families of the victims. They strongly condemned the barbaric terrorist acts of the 'Islamic State' and called on the Ethiopian people to remain united and determined for the long fight against terrorism.

During the debate in the House of Representatives, MPs cited Islamic verses preaching tolerance and underlined the centuries-long tradition of religious co-existence [in Ethiopia]. "The slayings committed by the terrorists (in Libya) are a shocking deed that stands contrary to the Holy Koran," said Hajji Mohammed Aman Jemal, President of the Ethiopian Muslim Affairs Supreme Council. He said that according to the Holy Quran, "Human beings are sacred and above other creatures." This showed the respect it has for all mankind, oblivious of their color, ethnic origin and religion. Hajji Mohammed also reminded the representatives that the Prophet Mohammed had explicitly ordered Muslims not to harm Ethiopia adding that the acts carried out in Libya were therefore atrocious acts that "blatantly disrespected both Islam and the Holy Quran." The Ethiopian Muslim Affairs Supreme Council has strongly condemned the murders of Ethiopian Christians in Libya by the "Islamic State" atrocity, describing them as genocidal acts that should never be committed on human beings.

Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, called on all compatriots to "maintain Ethiopia's ancient tradition of unity, love and compassion". The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church called for a week of prayer for the victims. The Patriarch said the prayers would be held in churches at home and abroad for seven consecutive days. He also said the Church extended its heartfelt sympathies to the victims and their families. Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom said there were Ethiopians among the traffickers who sent migrants on the dangerous journeys towards Europe. He told Parliament that those traffickers had blood on their hands and asked "Haven't you had enough? Don't you have feelings for your fellow brothers and sisters?"

On Wednesday (April 22), the start of the three days of national mourning was emphasized by a demonstration of solidarity held in Addis Ababa's Meskel Square. Hundreds of thousands of people of all groups and faiths showed their solidarity in a demonstration of the oneness of the heart and spirit of the Ethiopian people. The demonstration and solidarity march underlined the strength of the fabric of the nation and showed that no act of terrorism can disrupt the country's growth and development. Addressing the crowd, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, said that the killing was intended to create division among Ethiopians between Christians and Muslims, but Ethiopia's long history of religious tolerance, he stressed, "cannot be hampered by this evil act." He said all Ethiopians, of every shade of opinion, of all parties and every religion, condemned these acts in the strongest terms possible.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also unreservedly condemned "the horrific and deliberate massacre of innocent migrants committed by terrorists in Libya" calling the killings inhuman actions against innocent people, even more so when these actions were supposedly committed in the name of religion. Atrocities of this kind had nothing to do with religion, the Ministry said. This merely "illustrated the psychotic and atrocious nature of terrorism and violent extremism. There could never be any excuse for such deliberate crimes against humanity." The Ministry also stressed that the Government is ready to repatriate any and all Ethiopians in Libya and called on all Ethiopians residing in Libya to contact the nearest Ethiopian Embassies in Cairo and Khartoum for assistance. The Government is also contacting other stakeholders to help Ethiopian citizens leave Libya.

There has been worldwide condemnation of the murders. Pope Francis, the head of the Roman Catholic Church and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon both condemned the killings. The UN Secretary-General said he "utterly deplores the targeting of people on the basis of their religious affiliation." The U.N. Security Council condemned "the heinous and cowardly apparent murder" and stressed that the 'Islamic State' group "must be defeated and that the intolerance, violence and hatred it espouses must be stamped out." The Security Council demanded the immediate release of all hostages held by the extremist group and called for those responsible for the "reprehensible acts of terrorism" to be brought to justice.

The African Union strongly condemned the inhuman and barbaric killings of innocent Ethiopians in Libya and in a statement the Chairperson of the Commission, Dr Dlamini-Zuma strongly condemned "the barbaric and cowardly act" of terrorists in Libya. The statement underlined the urgency for **enhanced**

international action to address the difficult situation in Libya, marked by the collapse of law and the increasing presence of terrorist groups, some of which have pledged allegiance to the 'Islamic State' (Daesh). The Chairperson of the Commission expressed the African Union's commitment to continue working with all relevant African and international partners to curb the actions of terrorist organizations.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AUPSC), at its 499th meeting held on Thursday (April 23), issued a statement expressing its profound shock and sorrow at the heinous criminal acts committed by ISIS. The Council conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Ethiopia, as well as to the families of the victims of this atrocity. The Council decided to dispatch a delegation, to be led by its current Chairperson, to express its full solidarity and that of the entire African continent with the Ethiopian people and Government. **The Council said the delegation, made up of one representative from each the five regions of Africa, would also consult with the Ethiopian authorities on the best ways and means to effectively address the threat of terrorism and the current situation in Libya.** Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom, in a letter to the Council on April 21, requested that the African Peace and Security Council hold an emergency Ministerial-level meeting in relation to the kidnapping and killing of Ethiopians and other African citizens and other crimes committed by terrorist groups. The Minister also asked the AUPSC to deliberate on the situation in Libya and on ways to eliminate terrorist groups present in the country.

The European Union, the US, the Russian Federation and others also expressed their solidarity with Ethiopia. A statement by the United States government condemning the killings in "the strongest terms," said the fact that these "terrorists killed these men solely because of their faith lays bare the terrorists' vicious senseless brutality." A statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry expressed its sympathy and solidarity with the Ethiopian people and said "the acts carried out by ISIS and other terrorist groups with inhuman cruelty should be given prompt and resolute rebuff." A Book of Condolence was opened on Wednesday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa and in all Ethiopian diplomatic missions overseas.

...repatriation from Yemen and xenophobia in South Africa

In recent weeks the conflict in South Yemen has meant Ethiopia has been working to protect its citizens living there as well as more recently those facing problems in South Africa from the outbreak of xenophobia in Natal. Last year, the Government was faced by the sudden and unexpected need to repatriate 150,000 citizens who had been working in Saudi Arabia. Since then the Government has been steadily improving its efforts to provide for the safety, security and well-being of Ethiopians resident abroad, whether in Saudi Arabia, Yemen or South Africa. Despite the saddening and horrific killings of innocent migrant Ethiopian citizens in Libya at the beginning of the week, these efforts to repatriate Ethiopians from Yemen and South Africa as well as Libya are continuing. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' National Committee responsible for bringing people back from Yemen is continuing its activities, although the Saudi Arabia Government suggested earlier this week that the coalition's military operations against the rebels in Yemen were beginning to wind down. Following the attacks on Ethiopians and other Africans in South Africa, the Ethiopian Embassy in Pretoria, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here [in Addis] is working to contact citizens and repatriate those that wish to leave South Africa. In both cases it is also asking its partners and others to assist where possible.

At its emergency session on Tuesday, the House of Peoples Representatives expressed their solidarity with the Government's determination to continue to fight terrorism and extremist activities, not only in the region but also internationally. It strongly emphasized the need to further strengthen the fight against terrorism and condemned the atrocities of extremists operating under the cover of religion. The Members of the House also expressed their condolences to the families of victims and to the whole Ethiopian people. Stressing that the fight against terrorism and against illegal human traffickers was not just the job of the Government, they called on everyone and all communities to take part in these struggles. Members noted that whatever the political stance, all should respond together to resist any attempt to violate the sovereignty of the country. Dr Tedros noted that the history of Ethiopia's battle against terrorism underlined one major advantage Ethiopia had - the closeness of Christians and Muslims in the country, with the religions intermingled to the point where "Christians help Muslims build mosques and Muslims help Christians build Churches," as they had been doing for centuries. Attempts to create tensions between Christians and Muslims had failed and he said these two segments of society were continuing intact and in solidarity as always.

The Foreign Minister underlined the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was deeply and aggressively involved in working to repatriate Ethiopian citizens where necessary. It was also closely involved in creating public awareness of the dangers of illegal human trafficking activities. There had been a number of deaths directly and indirectly resulting from the actions of human traffickers. It was now time to put a complete end to their damaging activities. Dr Tedros, underlining his condolences to the families of the victims, said it was particularly tragic that some of those who died were youngsters. He said it was particularly important for young people to realize that we can all grow by working together here in our country. It was preferable, he emphasize, to use the opportunities available in Ethiopia which allowed people to change and better their lives here in the country. The Prime Minister also told the demonstrators in Meskel Square on Wednesday that the Government would further step up its efforts to stop human trafficking. He urged religious institutions to contribute their share to the efforts to stop human trafficking and migration, and called on the youth to help the Government in its efforts to create jobs at home and to refrain from migrating to other countries and risking their lives. The Mayor of Addis Ababa City, Driba Kuma, underlined that his administration would continue to do everything possible to create more jobs.

Dr Tedros said that the Government had now put in place arrangements to help all those Ethiopian nationals in Yemen, Libya and South Africa who are looking for help and who wanted to come back home. The Government had arranged all the necessary facilities and was, of course, covering all the expenses and providing accommodation. It was also providing follow up support for the returnees to re-integrate and take up opportunities in Ethiopia again. The Government has, in fact, been giving priority to those who want to be repatriated ever since the successful repatriation of about 150,000 citizens from Saudi Arabia since last year. It is currently working to repatriate citizens from South Africa, Yemen and Libya.

The Ethiopian Embassies in Egypt, Khartoum and Pretoria in South Africa are currently working hard to maintain the safety and security of Ethiopian citizens in Libya and South Africa. The Embassy in South Africa has announced it is organizing precautions, in conjunction with the Ethiopian community to protect the lives of Ethiopians from the savage xenophobic attacks by mobs in Durban and other areas last week when three Ethiopian citizens died.

The violence that broke out in South African townships in Natal the other week did not target Ethiopians exclusively, though the first to be affected were Somali and Ethiopian nationals in Soweto township, owners of grocery shops. The mobs attacked, forcing them to flee their homes and places of work. Foreign shop owners in Durban were the next to be attacked and then any African foreign nationals were threatened and told to pack up and leave. Thousands were displaced and forced to live in temporary makeshift refugee camps for the displaced. The trouble followed reported remarks by the Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini, though he said his remarks had been misinterpreted and he did not believe foreigners should be driven out of South Africa.

Shortly after the outbreaks of violence and as soon as it became clear Ethiopian citizens might be involved, Ethiopian Ambassador Mulugeta Kelil and other embassy staff members travelled to Durban from Pretoria to investigate. On Tuesday last week (April 14) they met with local authorities and South Africa's Minister of Home Affairs as well as Ethiopian community members. The Embassy has expressed its satisfaction that the South African Government is stepping up the security presence in areas where attacks occurred, and welcomes the fact that the authorities had arrested a number of people suspected of committing attacks. The Ambassador was also pleased to hear that the South African Government was committed to continuing to hunt down and bring to justice those involved in the attacks. On Wednesday last week, Ambassador Mulugeta also met with the Zulu King to discuss the mob attacks on foreigners within Zulu areas of Natal. The King subsequently spoke on the radio, condemning the killing of foreigners and calling on all South Africans to live with foreigners in harmony and peace. The Embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are continuing to work closely with all the relevant authorities and stakeholders to ensure the safety of Ethiopians residing in South Africa.

The Embassy in Yemen is continuing to work to register and repatriate Ethiopian citizens in Yemen under exceptionally challenging conditions. It is in continuous communication with citizens wherever possible as well as with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Addis Ababa, arranging for flights and other aspects of repatriation. Given the continuing state of conflict in the country and the military activities of the pro-government coalition, the situation remains extraordinarily difficult.

The Embassies in Cairo and Khartoum are also working to the best of their ability to register and repatriate Ethiopians from Libya where there is no embassy at the moment because of the overall security problems

there since the overthrow of Colonel Ghaddafi. The horrific atrocity at the weekend and the activities of 'Islamic State' underline the difficulty of operating in Libya either directly or indirectly.

The 4th Tana High-Level Forum: the annual Meles Zenawi Lecture 2015....

The 4th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa was held April 18-19 in Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State. The Forum was attended by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, President Youweri Museveni of Uganda, President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita of Mali, the Vice-President of South Sudan, Prime Minister Sharmarke of Somalia, President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali of the Puntland Administration and His Highness the Emir of Kano, as well as former Presidents, Festus Gontebanye Mogae of Botswana and Benjamin Mkapa of Tanzania, the former Prime Minister of Tunisia Rashid al-Ghannushi and more than 200 Ambassadors, UN and AU officials, academics, scholars, religious leaders and other participants drawn from different local and international institutions across Africa.

The Forum began with the annual **Meles Zenawi Lecture**, this year dwelling on two interrelated topics namely Pan-Africanism and the Legacy of Kwame Nkrumah. Former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki made a compelling presentation on "Historical Perspectives of Pan Africanism". In a statement read out at the Forum, Mbeki highlighted three major principles of Pan Africanism. The first identified Pan Africanism as a progressive agenda that seeks to realize a united, free and prosperous Africa. He said NEPAD and the AU were the institutional manifestations of Pan Africanism and the embodiment of its founding principles. The second principle of Pan Africanism, according to Mbeki, is related to the concept that Pan Africanism seeks to make use of universal values relevant to African continent. Highlighting the universality of Pan Africanism's core principles, Mbeki said, "Pan Africanism works for those who seek liberation in the developing world and those that fight police brutality in the developed world." He noted that Pan Africanism is essentially a people's movement. He said, Pan Africanism represents the people's voice for transformative change, dignity and justice. The third principle lies in "the celebration of our progress and our heroes." He stressed liberation from colonial bondage as a major achievement in realizing the aspiration of early Pan Africanists and praised the legacy of Nkrumah, Benbela, Sekou Toure, Samora Machel and Haile Selassie as early examples of Pan Africanism and "Meles was a foremost intellectual, Pan Africanist and Liberator of his time." Mbeki wound up his presentation underlining the need for vigorous self-introspection to learn from the past and live up to the challenges of the present.

The Meles Zenawi lecture was given by Ali Mufuruki, founder and executive chairman of InforTech Investment Group of Tanzania. The title was "Reflections on the Late President Kwame Nkrumah's Pan Africanism legacy". In a stimulating and intriguing presentation, Mr Mufuruki challenged the viewpoint that Nkrumah's legacy as an early Pan Africanist was flawless. He said, in hindsight, Kwame Nkrumah failed Pan Africanism by promoting what later proved to be the impracticable idea of a United States of Africa. He also said his rule in Ghana was marred by nepotism, corruption, under-development and dictatorship as well as indifference to the situation of the ordinary Ghanaian. Mr Mufuruki noted that by the time he was toppled by a military coup, Nkrumah's non-capitalist economic management had left Ghana seriously worse off. He argued that Nkrumah's emphasis on promoting Pan Africanism to the exclusion of all else was a failure, and suggested that the current xenophobic attacks in South Africa testified that the ideals of Pan Africanism for a united Africa have a long way to go before they can be realized.

Lakhdar Brahimi, veteran Algerian diplomat and former UN Special Envoy to Syria, also shared his thoughts on the early days of Pan Africanism and his reminisces of the Bandung Conference, which he described as a major diplomatic milestone in the liberation of Africa and in the germination of the ideals of Pan Africanism. He criticized Mr Mufuruki's presentation on Nkrumah for its lack of context and disagreed with the conclusion that Nkrumah had failed Pan Africanism. He said that at the time the non-capitalist development path and a one-party system as opposed to multi-party system was in vogue, adding that "failure to understand the common wisdom of the time leads us to a faulty conclusions."

Discussants subsequently drew a sharp distinction between the continuing importance of Nkrumah's vision of Pan Africanism and his less satisfactory activities as a President of Ghana. They also highlighted the need for true unity in Africa and condemned the xenophobia in South Africa as "shameful vandalism". The call for a single passport for Africans was strongly applauded.

...and the theme of the Forum: "Secularism and Politicized Faith"

The opening session of the 4th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa on April 18 was addressed by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who emphasized strongly that the topic of "secularism and politicized faith" was no mere academic exercise. The Forum aimed to investigate the challenges that

politicized faith posed for the security of Africa and unpack the concept of secularism within the context of the post-independence African state, and the Prime Minister said “we should be clear-headed about what it is that we can do in order to understand the interplay between the two and to address the unwholesome consequences for a political order operating on the ordinary notions of fair play and justice.” He further noted that the blurred line between legitimate exercise of religious freedom and secularism was impinging on the secular order of the continent. He noted that “While the crisis that has befallen the concept of secularism as a result of growing politicization of faith is by no means unique to Africa, the continent’s complex religious, ethnic and linguistic diversities coupled with the relatively weak nature of institutions made the threat resulting from a lack of clarity on both issues even more destructive.”

The Prime Minister also underlined the point that politicized faith wreaked havoc as terror groups continue to commit mayhem against the peoples of the continent. He said the Forum would be “instrumental not only in sharpening the intellectual debate on the topic but more importantly point to ways and means to find a consensus that can help build viable state institutions to sustainably ensure the fullest possible protection for the fundamental democratic and human rights of all citizens irrespective of their creed, faith or economic background.”

The former President of Nigeria, Chief Obasanjo, Chairman of the Tana Forum, presented a report on the annual state of peace and security in Africa. He said the continent had “no doubt witnessed some transformations in the last decade or two, ranging from advances in the use of communication technology, to rapid economic growth triggered by an expanding market for Africa’s commodities; and a burgeoning youth population able to innovate in this environment,” but he added “at the same time, our potential to translate these transformations into stable peace and development for African people is hampered by the continuing threat of armed conflict, along with its transmutations.” Chief Obasanjo also noted that armed conflicts had “become a recurrent reality in Africa since independence. From 1960 till the present, fifty per cent of African states have been ravaged by one form of conflict or the other.”

The Forum’s first session was the Heads of State and Government panel on “Secularism, Politicized Faith and Security.” Moderated by former President of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, members were President Kagame of Rwanda, President Museveni of Uganda and President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita of Mali. President Museveni placed the issue of secularism and faith in the perspective of catering to the interest of the people. He cited the successful transformation of China and its rise to become the second biggest economy in the world, suggesting it was worthwhile to study how China organized itself as a society in terms of faith and secularism. He stressed the importance of asking whether managing diversity in all its forms best served the interest of the people. He called on leaders of Africa, to “avoid extremism based on religion and tribes and focus on Africa’s interests” and added “Your tribe is your identity; your interests are prosperity, education and economic transformation.” among others.

President Kagame started by emphasizing that diversity, whether in religion or any other form, was not a danger per se, the problem was rather how “we direct the wealth of our diversity for the benefit of individual countries and for the continent.” He raised three important points which he said were crucial to the current reality of Africa. One was the importance of continued dialogue among societies regarding politicized faith and secularism as a way to resolve the current challenges. He made a comparison of genocide with the extreme brutality of terrorists, both being essentially founded on deep-seated hatreds. He noted that it was critical that the state should protect and serve all its citizens without discrimination and this, he underlined, would avoid the marginalization of communities which could lead to making youth victims of extremism. He also raised the importance of having a legal and constitutional framework that allowed tolerance and decided on what was acceptable and what was not in practicing faith or defining secularism in the context of a given country.

In the discussion, Prime Minister Hailemariam said it was important to see secularism vis-a-vis faith in the specific historic and socio-cultural conditions of a country. He cited Ethiopia as an example of an age-old tradition of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence among followers of faiths long before it came to know anything about notions of secularism. He cautioned the audience on the dangers of taking secularism to the point of having a faith-less society, pointing out that the nature of humanity was essentially spiritual. He put forward the view that the drivers of politicized faith were mainly tied in with the rent-seeking elements of the political economy of the African state. He said groups politicized faith to take state power and collect rent. With respect to secularism and the role of state, the Prime Minister cautioned that the responsibility of the state should be exercised with utmost caution. It must not encroach on the freedom of religion in the context of fighting extremism. Nor should it go to the extent of imposing a specific sect over any other sect. He said there was a need to strike a balance between the role of the state in rolling back

extremes of politicized faith and its place with respect to religious freedom, which requires consensus within society.

Other issues raised during the discussion included the need to intensify cross-border cooperation, and intelligence sharing as key factors to combat extremism. Greater global cooperation under the auspices of the UN Counter Terrorism framework was also encouraged as a way to tackle the extremism and politicization of faith. President Museveni, in response to questions, noted that Uganda was already carrying out cross-border cooperation with Somalia and Chad, but he also stressed the importance of cooperation in economic integration and infrastructure. He said defeating terrorism required victory in both military and ideological terms. President Kagame emphasized that terrorist groups in Africa had been responsible for killing hundreds of thousands of people. "We must start from the point that this is unacceptable. Leaders of any kind, religious, business and government, we must do better than accepting the rule of terror of those taking the lives of our people." He said it was important to act with a sense of urgency to roll back the threat that terrorism posed to security in Africa. He also said that governments could best discharge their responsibility for protecting citizens by cooperating with others, and that, as for cooperation with the UN, this should be through "a bottom-up approach by giving primacy to regional cooperation."

The second day of the Forum saw panels on "African Secularisms and Faith-branded Security Threats"; "Politicization of Faith, Fundamentalism and Human Security"; and "Secularism, Democracy and State Building in Africa: What futures?"

The moderator of the Panel on "African Secularisms and Faith-branded Security Threats", Ismael Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security of the African Union, said the problem in Africa was not an issue of being secular or not, it was rather the problem of the growing culture of extremism. He said the fact was that religion had become one way of identifying oneself, and so extremist groups such as ISIS were able to attract youth from various quarters of the world. He said Africa had a rich normative framework to combat terrorism including the African Charter on Democracy and Good Governance, and he underlined the need to work on capacity-building and educating people to tackle extremism and terrorism.

His Highness, Muhammad Sanusi II, Emir of Kano, explained the situation in Northern Nigeria and the factors that had enabled the emergence of Boko Haram. He described Northern Nigeria as a largely underdeveloped state where unemployment and poverty were rife. He said the state failure in providing social services or security were the major causes that drove youth to extremism. He also underlined that marginalization was a corollary to the rampant poverty that had given rise to Boko Haram, which is creating havoc in the region with the killing and abduction of innocent people. The Emir said that, as poverty and marginalization were the driving force for Boko Haram, it was quite clear that the issues were secular, if couched in religious language.

His Eminence, Archbishop Valentine Mokiwa Bio, President of the All Africa Conference of Churches, discussed the emergence of extremism and terrorism in Tanzania particularly in the island of Zanzibar where he said the lack of good governance and widespread unemployment were making the youth in Zanzibar fall prey to extremist rhetoric. He noted that the state's failure to create job opportunities was breeding hatred against the state. He also suggested that the absence of effective intelligence-sharing among the countries of East Africa was helping extremists take advantage of the situation.

Prof. Amina Mama, Professor in Women and Gender Studies, University of California at Davis, USA, focused on societal relations, with particular emphasis on how women have become vulnerable both to the activities of extremist groups and of state agents. She said the state had contributed to a misogynistic patriarchal order that played against the interests of women. Women, she said, were made more vulnerable by local authorities, pointing out that "long before Boko Haram started abducting women, local chiefs sentenced women to death by stoning". She also said states had a part in the misery of women arising out of the politicization of faith, since women were considered as currency or chattels in conflicts. She said excessive religiosity has decreased the quality of lives of women and called for the need to interrogate society on the plight of women. Dr Alioune Sall, Executive Director, African Futures Institute, Afrique du Sud, said political powers could not ignore religion as faith in private was religion in public. He said that with the rise of extremism, a blurred line between legitimate exercise of religion and politicization of faith was created. This, he said, was the result of a torn social fabric.

In the panel on "Politicization of Faith, Fundamentalism and Human Security", Rachid al-Ghannoushi, Muslim Scholar and Co-founder of el-Nahdah party in Tunisia, shared the experiences of Tunisia in forming

a coalition government of secular and Islamist parties following the overthrow of the Ben Ali Government. Dr al-Ghannoushi said the post-independence government of Bourgiba in Tunisia had tried to neutralize, and at times eradicate Islam from the public sphere. The situation changed little under Ben Ali. Following the Arab Spring, Tunisia fared better than other countries which had gone through the same revolutions, because it said no to vengeance. He said the Islamist el-Nahada and other secular parties were able to operate through the Islamic approach of cooperation as opposed to western style of confrontational politics. Tunisia had embraced the concept of integration of all segments of the polity and this had led to stability and a successful transition to democracy. This, he said, also helped to ensure gender equality and freedom for all the people of Tunisia. He said “Democracy and Islam are not enemies; they can work together,” adding that “Democracy organizes our Shura”. So Dr al-Ghannoushi underlined “we were able to combine democratic and Islamic values in leading Tunisia’s transition.”

Lakhdar Brahimi noted that the Arab Spring had created an opportunity for “Political Islam” to be taken as an organizing ideology. He noted, however, that for this to happen, it needed to make itself acceptable to others and accept that there are other alternatives. Haile Menkorios, UN Under Secretary General and Special Representative to the African Union, challenged the idea of secularism as a complete disconnect between the state and society. He said it was important to note that the state has always considered religion as providing the morality as a basis for an orderly society.

The final panel of the Forum discussed “Secularism, Democracy and State Building in Africa What futures?”, and Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi from the University of Westminster in the UK, presented evidence that the desire of youth to redefine the world was not solely linked to impoverishment, quoting the case of 30 Sudanese youngsters, who were highly educated and had no shortage of the means of living who had decided to join ISIS.

At the closing session, the Chair of the Tana Forum, Chief Obasanjo, the former President of Nigeria, summarized discussions and closed the Forum, thanking those who attended for their contributions. Earlier, the Heads of State and Government had participated in a tree planting ceremony to inaugurate the Tana Forum Park.

The Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta

The commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Asian African Conference and the 10th Anniversary of the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership have been taking place in Jakarta and Bandung, in Indonesia this week (April 19-24) with the aim of strengthening partnerships between Asian and African countries and sharing the experiences of both regions in boosting economic development. Delegates from the 109 Asian and African countries, 16 observer countries and 25 international organizations were invited to participate in the African-Asian Partnership summit being held under the theme: “Strengthening South-South Cooperation to promote World peace and Prosperity.” The Summit brought together senior technical experts, ministers of various sectors and Heads of State and Government from the invited Asian-African Countries, providing a huge opportunity to discuss and reach mutually agreeable solutions to overcome common challenges through strengthening south-south cooperation. The meeting of senior officials which started on Sunday, April 19 was followed by the Ministerial meeting and by a two-day Summit of the Leaders.

The Summit commemorates the first Asian-African Summit that took place in Bandung in 1955, remembered as the launch of the ‘Bandung Spirit’, marking an important milestone in the history of cooperation between the countries of the two continents of Africa and Asia. The Summit at Bandung was attended by 29 countries which came together to discuss peace, security and economic development in the midst of the emerging problems of the world relating to peace, security and economic development as well as the results of colonialism and the conflict between the Eastern and Western blocs in the Cold War.

In his speech on Monday (April 20), Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, noted that the theme of the conference “is a theme which properly captures the spirit of Bandung: promoting cooperation among the developing and least developed countries in the interest of encouraging peace, harmony and prosperity for all nations.” He expressed the full support of Ethiopia for the meeting and emphasized its importance to promoting inter-regional economic cooperation between and among Asian and African countries. He said Ethiopia worked for stable, democratic, prosperous and cooperative relations between Africa and Asia, and promotes and facilitates exchanges of trade and investment between the two regions. Noting how the two continents had advanced during the previous decades, Ambassador Berhane said that now we can “look at how far we have advanced in terms of our

economic, social and political progress and the challenges that we are facing, individually and collectively, in this epoch of globalization.” Reminding participants about the decline of poverty in both continents, the State Minister remarked that progress has certainly been uneven, both between countries and regions, but poverty had certainly declined significantly in the developing countries of Asia and Africa over the past thirty years. Speaking about the factors that produced reduction in poverty, he cited economic growth as the single most important element, adding that Foreign Direct Investment was also another important factor. He emphasized the benefits of encouraging FDI and noted that it “can and does help to provide an important source of economic development, of modernization, employment, and increased income, and therefore poverty reduction.”

Concerning security threats in various regions in Africa and Asia, Ambassador Berhane underlined the distressing situation in the Middle East and in some parts of North and West Africa, caused by Al-Qaeda, ISIS, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups. Reminding his listeners of the brutal slaughtering of 28 Ethiopians a day or two earlier by ISIS, the State Minister said “Ethiopia strongly and totally condemns the atrocious act of ISIS and the brutal killing and beheading of innocent Ethiopian nationals in Libya.” He said such actions could never, under any circumstances, be justified. He strongly urged that any such actions should be totally and universally condemned. Ethiopia, he said, had been victimized by terrorist groups for over a decade or more, and he reiterated its commitment to continuing to fight terrorism in all its manifestations, as well as cooperating with the International Community in defeating this evil in every way.

During his visit to Indonesia, the State Minister met with the Indonesian State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr A.M. Fathir. They underlined the importance of the relationship between the two countries and their mutual desire to strengthen the partnership. Ambassador Berhane expressed Ethiopia's strong interest in expanding their long-standing diplomatic ties into tangible trade and investment relations. He spoke of the need to conclude an air service agreement that would enable Ethiopian Airlines to open a direct route to Jakarta. Such a direct connection between the two countries, he said, was important in strengthening people-to-people and business relations. Mr Fathir said his country hopes to see an Ethiopian Embassy in Indonesia in the near future. Other topics raised during their discussion included further strengthening of South-South cooperation and consolidating cooperation in international fora. State Minister Berhane also met with representatives of the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and executives and board members of businesses involved in priority sectors of Ethiopia's economic development. Ambassador Berhane underlined Ethiopia's interest and readiness to welcome Indonesian businesses that wished to invest in the country.

Ethiopia's Economic Miracle isn't “running out of steam”

“Ethiopia's Economic Miracle Is Running out of Steam” was the title of an op-ed piece by Mr Robert Looney, published on the Foreign Policy website on April 16. It's a strange article, picking up figures and data going back over a decade and (mis)using these to try and make the point that Ethiopia is now at a turning point, and that economic growth can only be sustained if the government allows and encourages a transition to a more dynamic model driven by the private sector. Significantly, Mr Looney also added the sub-title: “Why it's time for East Africa's big success story to change the way it does business.” This emphasizes the point that the main thrust of the piece is to claim that the ‘developmental state’, however currently successful, would be unable to last the pace. In other words, Mr Looney wants to see a shift away from the current successful developmental state model towards a right-wing neo-liberal agenda.

Mr Looney's very basic errors suggest his knowledge of Ethiopia is minimal. It is extremely disappointing when serious publications like Foreign Policy, with its deserved and substantial reputation, fails to make the most basic check on information in work published on its website, even if the work is no more than an op-ed. It really should have a higher regard for its own reputation, than to allow work it publishes to contain such inaccuracies. The most basic account of Ethiopia will include the information that the country has a parliament of 547 members not 175 as Mr Looney claims.

Mr Looney does make a number of valid points. There has, indeed, been a dramatic difference between the famine images of thirty years ago and the highly impressive growth rate of over 10% over the last decade. Ethiopia is indeed aiming to become a middle-income country by 2025 and is on track to achieve this. It has already met or is coming close to meeting all Millennium Development Goals, including universal primary education and reductions in infant and maternal mortality. The poverty rate has fallen significantly over the last decade to under 26% percent in 2013. Unemployment is falling and inflation is down.

While admitting this, Mr Looney, however, sees this progress as coming at a price and claims the Government's "obsession" with meeting high growth targets at any cost has resulted in widespread popular anger and discontent. He suggests this is visible along regional and ethnic lines. The Government isn't "obsessive" about its growth targets and there is no sign of this supposed "widespread popular anger and discontent" whether in regions or among ethnic groups. To begin with, the growth is largely based on the development of small-holder agriculture, which the Government sees as the backbone of agricultural development. This, of course, has little to do with international finance and far more to do with local input and local development.

In this context, Mr Looney doesn't appear aware that so-called 'land grabs' are far smaller than claimed - no more than 300,000 hectares, out of a possible 3 million, have been allocated for agricultural development, and most have yet to be distributed or developed. There has been no displacement of local populations for such developments, as a number of independent investigations have clearly demonstrated. Mr Looney manages to confuse these developments with the widespread and successful village commune programs to provide for facilities including water, housing, education, health and other social services at local level for previously scattered households. It might be added that 70% of Ethiopia's budget goes on pro-poor policies and it has successfully brought poverty levels down by 15% over the past 15 years.

Mr Looney claims that if the EPRDF claims victory in the May national and regional elections this will be the result of repressive political tactics, including harassment of the opposition, crackdown on protests and jailing of critical journalists, rather than its economic progress. He might mention a number of other factors, **not least the failure of the dozen or more opposition parties to produce serious alternative policies, and their failure to co-operate among themselves. At the last election in 2010, opposition parties had some 40% of the vote in Addis Ababa but failed to take a single seat because of their failure to make electoral pacts.** In 2005, of course, the opposition won a significant number of seats, including all in Addis Ababa. In a fit of arrogance for which there was, in fact, no reason, they claimed to have won the election overall, and refused to take up their seats or take over the administration of Addis Ababa. Many voters have never forgiven them.

Mr Looney described Government policies as "authoritarian developmentalism" prioritizing state-directed economic growth over human rights or genuine political pluralism, and adds "this has worked for some time, but can't be sustained for much longer." His argument is that mounting ethnic and regional unrest and limited financial capacity poses serious impediment to continued growth and that public investments in infrastructure, state enterprises, and human capital are outrunning the country's financial capacity. He then argues that the government's hope of achieving its ambitious development goals therefore depend on willingness to scale back its control of the economy and letting the private sector fill the gap - and this requires democratic reforms, or rather in fact, neo-liberal economic reforms, here he also failed to note the significant role the private sector is playing in the economy.

Mr Looney claims, and here again it seems clear he has done no homework, that Ethiopia now faces major funding roadblocks. Certainly, the Government finances some projects through international loans and uses direct local state-owned bank financing to raise funds for other projects. The Nile Dam is being funded in full locally, while the railways are largely, though not exclusively, funded from telecommunication profits. There are, of course, other alternatives, including increasing revenue income, expanding exports and shifting the main thrust of the economy from agriculture to industrialization - all of which is in progress. Mr Looney might have taken a look at the evaluations of Fitch, Moodys' and Standard and Poor credit ratings last year (of B and B1) - it's far from clear that Mr Looney is even aware of the fact that Ethiopia launched a sovereign credit bond last year. Fitch recently provided another B rating this year.

Mr Looney states categorically that "Ethiopia's state-led development model is ultimately unsustainable if the government lacks the capacity to maintain the required rates of public investment." Dismissing any consideration that this might be possible, he says firmly "the only realistic alternative is to scale back state control of the economy, enabling the private sector to drive further growth", adding that this must involve secure property rights for the private sectors, impartial third-party contract enforcement, increased economic freedom, and quality public education. These Mr Looney appears to consider the most important cornerstones of democracy. He should therefore be pleased to know that all have been or are being implemented in Ethiopia over the last decade. In fact, if Mr Looney had bothered to look at the details of Government policies as laid out in the GTP I and elsewhere and also in the GTP II (though to be fair to Mr Looney this has yet to be finalized and published) he would have some idea of what is actually being carried out and to what extent the Government's pro-poor and relevant economic policies are being implemented.

Having made all his criticisms of Government policies, Mr Looney cheerfully contradicts himself in admitting “some selective governance and economic reforms have already begun”. He agrees that a decline in corruption has taken place and the Government has instituted civil service reforms. Indeed, he says this makes Ethiopia second only to Kenya among East African countries in World Bank ranking of government effectiveness. In case this appears too optimistic, Mr Looney then quickly adds that “progress in other areas has been underwhelming and he says “It’s no surprise that the country ranks dead last in World Bank measures of voice and accountability, political stability, and absence of violence.” Ethiopia doesn’t attach much importance to these sorts of rankings, not least because of the typically incestuous use to which they are put. Equally, there are a number of problems with the way Mr Looney tries to use them. One is that the categories are not actually World Bank rankings. They are on the World Bank website but a rather important disclaimer is attached: The Worldwide Governance Indicators are a research dataset summarizing the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank Group to allocate resources.

The other major problem with Mr Looney’s claim is that he seriously misinterprets the figures. Ethiopia does not rank anywhere near last, let alone “dead last”, in these measures of voice and accountability on the World Bank website. Indeed, it ranks above most of the other countries in the Horn of Africa, let alone more widely. In any case, no one with any real knowledge of Ethiopia or the region would seriously suggest that it could rank below the failed states in the region, or the pariah state of Eritrea, in measures of voice and accountability, let alone political stability, the absence of violence, rule of law or control of corruption.

Mr Looney goes on to claim that since 2005, “Ethiopia has also experienced an almost continuous decline in Heritage House’s measure of economic freedom, placing it last in the region.” By Heritage House, Mr Looney presumably means the Heritage Foundation which is no lover of Ethiopia for admitted ideological reasons, but even this says Ethiopia has improved significantly over the last couple of years with “considerable improvements in monetary freedom, freedom from corruption and labor freedom”. It is nowhere near last in any Heritage Foundation measurements in Africa, or even in the sub-region with, for example, Eritrea, which ranks last but one in the world, far below.

There is, of course, room for discussion and debate on aspects of Ethiopia’s economic and developmental policies, but Mr Looney’s article simply doesn’t engage with them. There are always debates among economists, and discussions will no doubt continue over the speed and extent of changes required in policies. Equally, however, there is no need to see these providing the sort of apocalyptic developmental state collapse, of which Mr Looney and other right wing ideologues appear to hope Ethiopia will provide an example.

It is, in any case, worth re-emphasizing one thing in particular. Current policies are working. It is very clear Ethiopia’s state-led development model hasn’t yet “run its course”. There is no sign of what Mr Looney suggests are “abuses associated with that model galvanizing large segments of the population against the government.” It might be added that if Mr Looney had anything like the knowledge he appears to claim, he would know the Government has been consistently and strongly encouraging the private sector and public-private partnerships as well as Foreign Direct Investment and with considerable success. In practice, the Ethiopian developmental state only intervenes in areas where the private sector is unable or unwilling to engage. Investments made in infrastructure development, for example, are meant to ease the constraints limiting private sector involvement and allow it to be competitive.

Observers find Sudan’s elections a peaceful expression of the will of the people

Sudan held its Presidential and National elections last week (April 13-16). Among the observers were missions from both the African Union (the African Union Election Observation Mission - AUEOM) headed by former Nigerian President Obasanjo, and from IGAD (the IGAD Election Observation Mission). Both expressed their satisfaction at the peaceful conclusion of the election. The AUEOM, in its preliminary findings, concluded that the results of the election would reflect the expression of the will of the voters of Sudan and called upon Sudanese leaders to strive for genuine and inclusive national dialogue after the election. The IGAD Election Observation Mission stated that the elections were conducted in conformity with international benchmarks for free, fair and credible elections and were conducted in a transparent manner.

The AU mission said it had deployed a 20-member Observer Mission to the elections in accordance with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (2007) and the OAU/AU Declaration on the Principles Governing democratic elections in Africa (2002). The findings of the mission confirmed there was a low turnout of voters and major opposition parties' and some civil society organizations had boycotted the election. Otherwise, the election went off peacefully. The engagement of the AU, from sending a Pre-election Assessment Mission in March 2015 to its decision to send an election observation mission, took into consideration the importance of maintaining contact with the Government, given its role in the peace process and national dialogue in the Sudan. The AU confirmed it would continue to observe post-electoral developments and release a more detailed final report with recommendations that would be shared with the Sudanese authorities within a month of the conclusion of the electoral process.

The Mission's statement said that security measures taken by the Government in some parts of the country had impacted on the quality of the process of the election, but it indicated it was satisfied that most of the polling stations opened within the stipulated time of 8am, though there had been delays in certain instances though these did not compromise the opening of the poll or the overall time allocated for voting. These delays were mainly due to the late arrival of officials. Most of the polling stations were conveniently located within easy access by voters, polling stations, mostly located in public places, were clearly marked and easily identifiable. Their layout was sufficient to guarantee the secrecy of the vote and enhance transparency in the process. Most of the polling stations visited had an almost equal number of registered voters, and the mission noted that the numbers per polling station were quite manageable. The Mission observed that there was a generally low turnout of voters throughout and women were well represented whether as polling officials, security officials, agents or voters. There were adequate election materials in all the visited polling stations and there were no incidents of insufficient materials reported at polling stations, with the exception of some logistical challenges experienced in Al Gezira.

The Mission observed that the 2015 General elections in Sudan did not attract a lot of international observers. Only representatives of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Chinese observer delegation took part in observation. The participation of domestic observers was very limited despite indications that many organizations and institutions had been accredited by the NEC. The report also said agents for political parties and candidates were very few. In most of the polling stations visited, it was mainly representatives of National Congress Party who were present.

Except for a few security incidents reported, the polling process was peaceful and the AU commended the people of Sudan for their peaceful conduct. The report mentioned the continuing insecurity in some parts of the country, namely in parts of Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states where elections were postponed in parts of the conflict areas. The report acknowledged the receipt of a circular from the National Electoral Commission extending voting for one day throughout the country except in the Al-Gezira state where voting was extended for two days. The Mission noted that the extension of voting in Al-Gezira was due to logistic challenges; the extension for the whole country was to allow more voters to cast their ballots due to the generally low turnout.

The statement of the African Union Election Observation Mission declared that the political dynamics of the 2015 electoral process highlighted the fact that Sudan still faced serious challenges to democracy building and national reconciliation. The mission took note of the overall situation and recommended that the Government of the Republic of Sudan sustained efforts to ensure electoral security at all times in all parts of the country, that the NEC took measures to reinforce training of its personnel to enhance harmonized implementation of electoral procedures, and that Parliament undertakes legal reforms to enhance the independence of the NEC as well as the capacity and independence of human rights protection institutions. The AUEOM shared its view that the security concerns and the on-going conflicts in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states needed to be given serious attention, and must be expeditiously addressed side by side with the political and social dialogue. This, the Mission said, could be done in such a way that the dialogue and addressing of the conflicts could mutually complement each other, and thereby lead to complete peace, security, harmony, and political stability as the foundation for development and as solutions for all-inclusive development and progress.

The IGAD Election Observation Mission was led by Dr Mohammud Abdulahi Hussein, Commissioner at the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia. It had 30 members that included Ambassador Yusuf Abdulrahman Nzibo, Commissioner of the Kenyan Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, as well as Commissioners of Electoral Commissions, Ambassadors, Member of Parliaments, Representatives of Member States' focal Ministries, representatives of Civil Society Organizations and members of the IGAD

Secretariat. Members of the IGAD Election Observation Mission were deployed to eight sites, namely: Khartoum (Centre and Omdurman); Khartoum Bahri; El-Gezira State (Wad Madani); White Nile State (Kosti); River Nile State (Shandi); Gedarif State (Gedarif); North Kordofan State (El-Obeid) and the Northern State (Dongola). The teams observed the poll opening, closing and early stages of counting of the election process from April 13-17.

The IGAD mission confirmed that most polling centers opened as scheduled at 8am, though there were a few instances of late opening, and that election materials were adequately distributed on time and in sufficient quantity throughout the four days with a few instances of late delivery. Electoral officials demonstrated good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the sites covered by the observation mission. There was a sufficient number of local observers, but participation by international observers was limited both in number and representation. The turnout of voters was slow and gradual during the whole four days. The secrecy of the vote was generally upheld with the exception of isolated cases of limited space in some polling stations that possibly compromised it. The IGAD observer team noted a remarkably high level of participation and inclusion of women in the voting process. The Mission said the overall environment during the election was peaceful with no major incidents recorded by IGAD observers. The IGAD observation mission recommended to the NEC that training of poll officials needed to be enhanced, and that all parties involved in the election needed to enhance Civic Education especially among the youth and marginalized groups to increase awareness of the election process and its significance. It also recommended that there was a further need to improve the management and application of the Voter's Register to minimize incidence of "missing" names and the problem of some voters being unable to identify or access their polling stations on polling days.

The mission said its preliminary assessment indicated that the election process was credible taking into account that this is the second Presidential and General Elections held during the last two decades, the vast size of the country and the challenges of infrastructure. It also noted that there had been a major improvement in the performance of the electoral body from the last Presidential and General Election in 2010. The Mission appealed to all political players and independent candidates to accept the outcome of the election and the final results when available, and called on them to adhere to legal channels to resolve any disputes. It also encouraged all Sudanese parties, including those that boycotted the elections, to continue to engage in the national dialogue under the auspices of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel, in which IGAD is an active member. The statement noted that the NEC should ensure that elections are conducted in the areas where they were postponed as soon as the circumstances allow.

The Arab League's also provided a mission of 40 observers who travelled to all States of the country during the elections. The League stated that they found the elections were carried out "transparently and in accordance with international standards". The final results of the elections will be officially announced on April 27, but unofficial preliminary results show that incumbent president and NCP candidate, Omer Hassan al-Bashir, had won a sweeping victory.