

A Week in the Horn 24th August 2012

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Prime Minister Meles Zenawi's untimely death....

The Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia announced on Tuesday morning [21st Aug] that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had died on 20th August at 11:40 pm at the hospital where he was under medical treatment. In a statement the Council of Ministers said Prime Minister Meles had been undergoing medical treatment over the previous two months. He had recently been showing remarkable improvement, but had unfortunately had to be admitted back to hospital two days earlier when his condition worsened due to a sudden infection. All attempts by his physicians to treat this were unsuccessful, and the Prime Minister died at 11:40 p.m. on 20th August.

The body of the Prime Minister was flown back to Addis Ababa the following evening, and thousands turned out on Tuesday evening to receive it on its arrival at Bole International Airport, Addis Ababa. A military band played as the coffin, draped in an Ethiopian flag, was taken from the Ethiopian Airlines flight. The ceremony was attended by ministers, military and religious leaders, diplomats and others. The arrival of the body was broadcast live by Ethiopian Television as well as other local media which also showed scenes of mourning as thousands huddled in the rain waiting to pay their respects as the coffin passed slowly through the streets. Many carried photographs of Prime Minister Meles; others held up placards reading: "Meles, your legacy will never die." The widespread grief was palpable; the passing of a leader who had been in power for over twenty years stunned and saddened the entire country. The Government declared a state of national mourning to last until the funeral takes place on 2nd September. In the meantime the coffin has been taken to the Grand Palace where Meles' body is now lying in state until the funeral service on 2nd September. Increasingly, crowds have also been passing through his residence to pay their respects to his family.

The National Committee set up to organize the arrangements for the funeral and burial of Prime Minister Meles announced this week that the funeral will be held a week on Sunday, on 2nd September. The National Committee said that various subcommittees have been set up to deal with different aspects of the occasion. The Committee said that the way people had welcomed the body of the late Prime Minister back to Addis Ababa demonstrated just how close he had been to the hearts of the people, and it said it would be making proper arrangements for the public to pay homage to the late Prime Minister.

The Council of Ministers' statement noted that Prime Meles Zenawi was a far-sighted and visionary leader who gave his all to the cause of extricating Ethiopia and its peoples from poverty and backwardness, and above all had great love and clear vision for Ethiopia and its peoples. He had built a party and a government that had started to turn his aims and his vision into reality, raising

Ethiopia's stature high in the international arena. He was instrumental in drawing up the right mix of policies for the country and had, by his leadership, placed Ethiopia on the path of democracy and development, ensuring that a renaissance of the nation was realizable, and was within reach. He was the chief architect of the five-year Growth and Transformation Plan, to the successful implementation of which he fully dedicated himself, despite nursing a serious medical condition for the past two years.

Under his great leadership not only has peace and stability been maintained in Ethiopia, the country has also made tremendous contributions towards sustainable peace and stability elsewhere, in Somalia, in Sudan and South Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia. The statement said history and Africa as a whole will always remain grateful for his contributions. He, along with other African colleagues, created the NEPAD Programme in order to allow Africa's voice to be heard and for the continent to take its rightful place in global trade and development, in democracy and good governance, as well as in peace and stability. He made sure Ethiopia would be the first to implement these ideas and play a responsible role in Africa. He was an example to all peoples of Africa, a great leader who lit the bright candle of hope in Ethiopia.

The statement said Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, as the voice of the developing world, successfully fought for a just and equitable global economic system. As a great leader who believed in safe and balanced use of global natural resources, he made Ethiopia a show-case of Green economic development. His wisdom and vision rightly received international recognition and acclaim. He made relentless efforts to put in place a constitutional democratic system that could guarantee peoples' equality and citizens' human and democratic rights, good governance and improvement for the livelihood of the millions living in poverty. He was a great son of Africa and an apostle of change. His death is a massive loss to Ethiopia and indeed to Africa.

The Council of Ministers took comfort and solace from the fact that he had left behind a solid democratic and developmental constitutional system. His ideas and vision for change have become ideals for 80 million Ethiopians. His initiatives on behalf of a democratic developmental system have ushered in new hope and a determination for change and for a better life for all Ethiopians and indeed more widely. His policies and strategies, implemented through the determination and tireless efforts of he himself and of his colleagues in party, government, and throughout the country, have clearly shown their capacity to provide for the rapid change and development of Ethiopia. His constitutional developmental democratic system is built on firm foundations. Ethiopia, the Council emphasized, will always be proud of Prime Minister Meles' achievements, and it remains confident that the efforts at making Ethiopia's renaissance a reality have indeed become irreversible. The basic policies and strategies that are the fruits of Prime Minister Meles' intellect will continue to be implemented. The individual and group rights enshrined in the Constitution will continue to be consolidated. The efforts of building democratic institutions will continue along the path and the vision set out by Prime Minister Meles.

The Council statement also underlined that the constructive and peaceful role that Ethiopia has been playing in the Horn of Africa and in Africa at large, to ensure mutual benefit for all, will continue unchanged and with vigour. Ethiopia will remain, today as in the past, an example of good neighbourliness. Its constructive role within the African Union and the international community will continue to be based on the vision and directions laid out by Prime Minister Meles. The Council of Ministers emphasized that Ethiopia would remain committed to the excellent relations it has established with all its partners and friends.

The Council of Ministers expressed its real appreciation of the outpouring of heartfelt love from the peoples of Ethiopia for the Prime Minister when they learnt of his illness. The followers of all faiths have been praying for his recovery. The Council said it was deeply appreciative of this tremendous

torrent of support during this tragic period and of the dedication of the peoples of Ethiopia to the peace and stability of the country. It called upon all Ethiopians to endure these trying times with traditional Ethiopian fortitude and unity and asked them to work hand in hand to ensure Ethiopia's sustainable development, peace and the interests of its peoples for the future. The Council of Ministers' statement said that while the loss of the country's visionary leader was one loss too many, Ethiopians today more than ever were duty bound to act together to implement Prime Minister Meles' vision for change and for the building of a developed and prosperous Ethiopia. It called on all Ethiopians to redouble their efforts to endure this difficult time and to ensure that Ethiopia would indeed achieve the goals laid out for it by "its visionary leader".

The Council offered its heartfelt gratitude to all the medical personnel who had done everything possible to provide Prime Minister Meles with the necessary medical support during his illness. It also expressed its appreciation to all world leaders, who over the previous two months had expressed their best wishes and support for the Prime Minister.

.....Messages of condolence and solidarity - from Africa....

President Ismael Omar Guelleh of Djibouti said he was deeply sorrowed to learn the death of "Djibouti's great brother". "In this difficult time, the Government and People of Djibouti express their solidarity to the people of Ethiopia. Meles' determination to bring his country among the top economic powers in the continent has started yielding fruit. As a role model for courage and conviction, Meles will be remembered for his brave fight against terrorism and violence in the region. Africa has lost one of its best men."

Uganda's President, Yoweri Museveni, said the death of Prime Minister Meles was not only a tragic loss to the people of Ethiopia but to the entire continent of Africa. "The late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi will always be remembered for his historic struggle for the unity of the great people of Ethiopia and his contribution towards the economic transformation of his country. As for Africa, we have been robbed of a great Pan-Africanist and a reliable partner in the struggle to bring peace and stability as well as the economic emancipation of the continent."

Kenyan President, Mwai Kibaki, said: "On behalf of the Government and the People of Kenya, I convey our deepest sympathies to the family of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the Government and People of Ethiopia following this devastating loss," adding that "the late Prime Minister is a pragmatic and visionary leader who helped stabilize his country and placed it on the economic growth path."

South Sudanese Information Minister, Barnaba Benjamin, said "it's a very, very sad day for the people of the Republic of South Sudan and the people of the East African region as a whole... We in South Sudan in particular, consider Ethiopia and especially Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, a strategic ally that always never let a friend down. Indeed we greatly mourn him and we extend our extensive condolences to the people of Ethiopia." South Sudan has declared three days of national mourning for Prime Minister Meles.

President Zuma of South Africa described Meles' death as "an absolute tragedy for Africa and the people of Ethiopia to mourn such an exceptional leader who contributed as an active role-player in various continental and global initiatives". He had been a strong leader, not only for his country but on the African continent, acting as mediator in numerous talks, particularly in the Horn of Africa region.

President Jonathan of Nigeria described Meles' death as a major loss for Africa. "He was a great African statesman, who was also a friend of Nigeria, a nation-builder and a great servant of the Ethiopian people," he said, adding that "he held strong convictions about establishing a just and

prosperous society for his people, a cause to which he devoted his considerable energies, and which deservedly earned him respect and honour among a grateful Ethiopian nation.” President Jonathan acknowledged Prime Minister Meles’s vision for a united and strong Africa, and said “The passing of Prime Minister Zenawi at this time when Ethiopia and, indeed, all of Africa, stood to benefit from his wisdom and experience in building a stable and prosperous continent is a great loss that will be hard to remedy,” he said. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo noted that the death of Meles Zenawi had robbed Africa of a “committed, forthright, visionary and fearless leader....I have seen his performance at the African Union and it is because of his brilliance that leaders of Africa and I decided to hand over the AU NEPAD programme to him.”

Mrs Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia, said Meles was an economic transformer and a strong intellectual leader for the continent. She added "in our regional meetings he stood out because of his intellect and his ability to respond and to lead dialogue on matters relating to African development. He will be missed in all of our meetings and all of our endeavours".

The African Union Commission in a statement expressed its heartfelt condolences on "the untimely passing away of Ato Meles Zenawi, the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia" adding that "The Commission will remember the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi for his exceptional contribution to the advancement of the objectives of the AU and the promotion of Africa’s interests in the global fora.” The Commission also salutes Ethiopia’s contribution, under Prime Minister Meles’s leadership, to the promotion of peace and security in Africa, both within the framework of the AU and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). It added: “In this respect, mention should be made of the deployment of Ethiopian peacekeepers to Burundi, Liberia and Abyei, as part of AU or United Nations Missions, as well as the support extended to the Somali authorities and AMISOM in their efforts to defeat terrorism and extremism in Somalia and pave the way for lasting peace and reconciliation in that country.” The Commission said " Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has also overseen the dramatic transformation of his country, which is today one of the top economic performers on the continent." Expressing its deepest condolences the Commission said "the death of Meles has robbed Africa of one of its greatest sons".

The Executive Secretary of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Engineer Mahboub Maalim, in a letter of condolence said that he and members of IGAD have learnt with great sorrow and shock the untimely passing away of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. “It is a great loss not only for Africa but to IGAD and the continent. During his five years chairmanship, the IGAD region greatly benefited from his wise leadership and his valuable contribution to the development of IGAD as a regional institution. Under his leadership IGAD shone in the international arena due to his successful management of the volatile situation affecting the region. He tirelessly worked for peace in Somalia, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia. IGAD’s fraternity will sorely miss the great man with a focused vision and brilliant leadership. His vision of regional economic integration and infrastructural development including the Great Renaissance Dam were inspirational to all of us.”

..... and the rest of the world

A statement from the office of UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon said: “Prime Minister Zenawi will be remembered for his exceptional leadership and advocacy on African issues within and outside the continent, as well as for overseeing his country’s economic growth and development.” It also expressed the Secretary-General’s gratitude for PM Zenawi’s strong support of UN peacekeeping and peace-making operations, and for “his active commitment to working with the United Nations on numerous global peace and development challenges.” Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said Ethiopia under Meles had “played a key role in both the region and the African continent”, and he hoped that “his successor will continue to be a driving force on a wide range of issues, from brokering peace negotiations to shaping development relationships.”

The President of the European Council, Mr Herman Van Rompuy and the President of the European Commission, Mr Jose Manuel Durao Barroso, jointly issued a statement that "it was with great sadness that we received the news about the passing away of Prime Minister Meles." On behalf of the European Union and themselves, they offered their sincere condolences and extended their deep sympathy to the family and all the people of Ethiopia, describing Prime Minister Meles as "a respected leader who demonstrated his strong personal commitment over many years to improving the lives of not just Ethiopian but all African peoples. Through his work on African unity, climate change, and development he promoted peace and stability, particularly in the Horn of Africa [and] in his time, Ethiopia made great advances towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals".

U.S. President Barack Obama praised Meles' "unyielding commitment to Ethiopia's poor," citing his "personal admiration for his desire to lift millions of Ethiopians out of poverty through his drive for food security.". US Secretary Hillary Clinton said she had admired the Prime Minister's "personal commitment to transforming Ethiopia's economy and to expanding education and health services. He was an important and influential voice in Africa, and we especially valued his role in promoting peace and security in the region." She added "I am confident that Ethiopia will peacefully navigate the political transition according to its constitution." Michael Honda, Co-chair of the US Congressional Caucus on Ethiopia and Ethiopian Americans also expressed the Caucus' condolences on the loss of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Congressman Honda said "Meles Zenawi's commitment to Ethiopia was unwavering in spirit and practice. His role in promoting peace and security in the region and developing the economy of Ethiopia was unparalleled". He reaffirmed the readiness of the Caucus to work with the Ethiopian Government "to ensure stability, equality and justice in the bright futures of both Ethiopia and the broader Horn of Africa, while also lending support to Ethiopian-Americans during this time of transition."

The President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, have sent condolences with President Hu Jintao describing Meles as "an outstanding leader of Ethiopia and a renowned statesman". China, he said will never forget "the important contribution he made to the establishment and development of the comprehensive cooperation between China and Ethiopia". The Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, said it was with a deep sense of shock and sorrow that he had learnt of the sad and untimely demise of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Describing Ato Meles as a towering statesman of Ethiopia and Africa and as a person who effectively articulated and advanced the continent's interests in international fora, he said Ethiopia had lost a remarkable leader whose contribution towards the peace, progress and development of his country would be long remembered. Mr Singh said that the traditionally close and friendly relations between Ethiopia and India had gained enormously under the leadership and guidance of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

British Prime Minister David Cameron said Prime Minister Meles was an inspirational spokesman for Africa on global issues and provided leadership and vision on Somalia and Sudan. "His personal contribution to Ethiopia's development, in particular by lifting millions of Ethiopians out of poverty, has set an example for the region. Our thoughts are with his family and with the nation of Ethiopia. He will be greatly missed". Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said "it is with great sadness that I learned of Meles Zenawi's death. He was a hugely significant figure in Ethiopia's history, in particular helping guide his country from extreme poverty to an era of economic growth and development. My deepest condolences go to his family and the people of Ethiopia."

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, said that it was with profound sorrow that he had learnt the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. He said the Prime Minister would always be remembered with great appreciation for his contribution to the development and welfare of his country, his remarkable efforts and the leadership role that he had played in contributing to lasting peace and stability in the region as well as for "his valuable endeavours to enhance the relationship between Turkey and Ethiopia". The Prime Minister of Japan, Yoshihiko

Nond, said that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was fully committed to the social and economic development of Ethiopia, made great efforts in working for regional peace and stability, and contributed a lot to facilitating the TICAD process (Tokyo International Conference on African Development) and strengthening Ethio-Japan relations.

Other messages of condolence have been received from the Government of Spain; President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan; President Lee Myung-bak of Korea; Paul Kagame President of Rwanda; Dr Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of Tunisia; the President of Botswana, Lieutenant General Sertse Khama Ian Khama; Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayad Al Nahyan Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Vice-president of the United Arab Emirates; the Prime Minister of the Government of the Russian Federation, Dmitry Medvedev; the Prime Minister of Finland, Jyrki Katainen; the Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeldt; the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen; the Prime Minister of Viet Nam, Nguyen Tan Dun; and Hamadi Jebali, Prime Minister of Tunisia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to express its deepest gratitude to all who stood by the country in this moment of grief.

Acting Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn speaks to the press

The Acting Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, spoke briefly to the press on Tuesday 21st August, for the first time about the sudden and untimely death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, he said, had spent his life struggling for development, progress, equality and justice and had shown wise leadership throughout his time in office, “working to establish a democratic developmental state on a concrete foundation.” He said that the people of Ethiopia were a living witness to “the wise leadership that had brought about the implementation of policies and strategies to produce tremendous changes over the past ten years”. Ato Hailemariam hailed Meles’ leadership saying that he had “lived his life burning like a candle for the good of his people”. He said Prime Minister Meles had sacrificed his entire life to the development of his country and died all-too-suddenly as he was leading the country with high zeal and commitment. “The loss of his exceptional leadership is great - a leader like him is a once in a lifetime phenomenon”, he added. The Acting Prime Minister vowed that in order to “implement government policies and strategies the leadership will work with more vigour, utilizing the skills and knowledge developed through Meles’ wise leadership over the past two decades”. He said that this loss would leave a void that was difficult to fill, particularly given Prime Minister Meles’s dynamic role at a national, continental and even global level. Nevertheless, he stressed, the members of the government and leadership of the country would work together, collectively contributing their level best to implement the policies and strategies already laid down and registering tangible results. He affirmed the commitment and readiness of the leadership; and he urged the people of Ethiopia to stand by the side of the new generation of leaders of the nation to fully support the Growth and Transformation Plan.

“A hero never dies”: Ethiopia in mourning for Prime Minister Meles

On Tuesday 21st August, Ethiopians woke up to hear the state media break the news that Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had passed away after battling illness for two months abroad. That evening, thousands went to receive his body at Bole International Airport and follow his coffin to the National Palace, weeping and chanting - “a hero never dies” – all the way along the route, chanting. Now, in the long standing tradition of Ethiopians in mourning, thousands upon thousands are visiting the palace, to express their heartfelt condolence to the family and as a sign of respect to “a man who worked his life to death”, a man who dedicated his entire life to the fight against the brutal Derg regime and to uplifting his people from backwardness, oppression and poverty. In Addis Ababa and in regional cities across the nation, people are gathering to express their sadness with men weeping and women

beating their breasts in the traditional way of expressing grief. Government and other officials are filled with melancholy and hundreds were present in tears at the airport to welcome the body of the prime minister.

The sorrow has affected all levels and sections of society. Ethiopian athletes gathered at the stadium in Addis Ababa to mourn the death of Prime Minister Meles on Tuesday. Haile Gebrselassie, Kenenisa Bekele, Meseret Defar, Deratu Tulu, gold medallists and heroes of the Olympics met to express their sorrow. Haile Gebrselassie said "I have no words to express my grief on the death of Prime Minister Meles. Since the Barcelona Olympic, Prime Minister Meles was always supportive of us every time our team left for the games" Tears streaming down his cheeks, Haile said "Meles was a hero of heroes who led us, providing us with flickers of hope and calling on all Ethiopians to bring his noble dreams to reality". Twice Olympic champion, Kenenisa Bekele, said "the news of the death of Prime Meles, came to me as a real shock." He added: "Prime Minister Meles has done a lot for our country and for the development of athletic sports through his continuous support and encouragement."

Mushe Semu, the chairman of the opposition Ethiopian Democratic Party, speaking to journalists said "the news of the death of Prime Minister Meles was really heart breaking. He is a man who spent his life fighting a brutal dictatorship and came out victorious only to form a strong party. He had the acumen to stir up a great political and economic revival in Ethiopia. Given his vision and exceptional capability, his death is a great loss," he added. At the continental level Meles's "role cannot be underestimated by helping the integration of African states in the fight against poverty and economic malaise, and driving Africa towards development", he said. Girma Seifu, a member of the parliament, said he had always admired Prime Minister Meles for "his extraordinary zeal", offering consolation to his family and friends.

Members of the business community and economists reflected on the intellectual qualities Meles demonstrated as a leader and thinker. Dr Demis Chanyalew, economist and policy analyst, described Meles "As a policy analyst, student and teacher of the subject of development, I understand Meles as a man who initiated great ideas and toiled to implement them." Indeed, he was "a man who came up with substantive theoretical models that benefit his country and the world at large and struggled hard to implement his ideas" Dr Eyob Tesfaye, a macroeconomist, said he was "a man who broke a long-standing and well-entrenched view of poverty and engineered Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan, signifying a paradigm shift". Zemedneh Nigatu, managing partner of Ernst and Young called on the Ethiopian people to strive to continue the country's double digit growth by implementing the GTP as the ideas expressed there were the handwork of "the visionary Meles". Elleni Gebremedhin, just retired head of the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange described him as a man who was "deeply convinced that his country had to be food self-sufficient and worked towards that end with much vigour".

Artists commenting on the death of Meles said that his untimely death was a shock and a saddening incident. Serawit Fikre said "a visionary may die but vision never dies; toiling for 21 years, Meles has done great things, but we shall work to bring his visions to fruition." Getachew Belete, head of the Ethiopian Writers association said : "Meles was a great leader , who had a great role in the initiation and implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan." Dawit Yifru, chairman of the Ethiopian Musicians Association, also lauded him for his prime role in supporting Ethiopian art.

Meles Zenawi (1955-2012), President and Prime Minister of Ethiopia, 1991-2012

Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, passed away on 20th August. He had been Prime Minister of Ethiopia since 1995. He was the chairman of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, and Chairman of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Leading the EPRDF to victory over the military dictatorship in 1991, he was President of Ethiopia from 1991 to 1995, and

became Prime Minister following the first general election that year. As President and then as Prime Minister, his government was responsible for introducing a new Federal Constitution, based on the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia, and a multi-party political system, as well as presiding over the introduction of the private press in Ethiopia and of an economic system which produced steady economic growth in the last decade and introduced safety-net programmes which have produced several victories in the war on poverty.

Meles Zenawi was born Legesse Zenawi on 8th May 1955 in Adwa in what is now the Tigray Regional State. Educated first at the Queen of Sheba School, he was chosen as a scholar of the General Wingate School in Addis Ababa in 1968, moving on to Haile Selassie 1st (now Addis Ababa) University in 1972. A pre-medical student, he dropped out of the university at the age of 19, to join the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which was set up when the student Tigraean National Organization decided to launch armed struggle against the military dictatorship, the Derg, in February 1975. He then took the nom du guerre of Meles in memory of Meles Tekle a student activist killed by the Derg. A little over a year after joining the organization he became an alternate member of the Central Committee and a full member in 1979. What contemporaries described as "his immense intelligence, political acumen, extraordinary command of languages (Tigrinya, Amharic and English), and rhetorical brilliance" rapidly brought him to prominence in the Front. He was chosen to head the TPLF's cadre school set up in 1983 at the TPLF's Second Organizational Conference and elected to the Executive Committee. He was subsequently elected head of both the TPLF and of the MLLT, and he became the first chairman of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) when it was set up in 1989.

After the ERPFD swept into Addis Ababa in May 1991 and the military dictatorship collapsed, Meles, as Chairman of the EPRDF, became President of the Transitional Government and Chairman of the Council of Representatives, the legislative body of the transitional government until 1995. In 1995 after the first elections organized under the new Federal Constitution drawn up in 1994 and promulgated in 1995, he became Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The introduction of federalism created nine regional states with their own parliaments and provided the nations, nationalities and peoples in the country with their first opportunity to govern their own areas. It was enthusiastically welcomed.

As the voice of the collective leadership of the EPRDF he was the spokesperson for the political and economic theories linking ethnic identity, state power and economic renewal based on the aim of winning the war on poverty. He told the first press conference he held in Addis Ababa that "he would consider his government a success if Ethiopians were able to eat three meals a day." As part of his "pro-poor" domestic policies, he subsequently pioneered a series of schemes designed to assist those most in need including the Productive Safety-Net Programme which started in 2004, a Social Cash Transfer Programme, and the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange which opened in 2008. The result of these and other similar policies was that when the Horn of Africa suffered from disastrous droughts in 2010/2011, there was no famine in Ethiopia. Ethiopia now ranks among the top categories for policies of social inclusion and equity in its economic management, making major advances in health and education.

In the last decade, Meles has articulated his own vision of the democratic developmental state, drawing on the models provided by Taiwan and South Korea. He argued that the way to achieve accelerated economic development was through a strong and effective state encouraging and directing investment to provide for the areas in which the country could excel, including the production of food and manufacturing goods cheaply. He launched economic policies that led to the achievement of eight years of double-digit economic growth from 2004, with a focus on the development of Ethiopia's energy resources, and began the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam on the Nile. This will be Africa's biggest hydro-electric dam and has fired the

imagination of the country, a symbol of the country's Renaissance. Ethiopia now has one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, and indeed the world.

Once in power in Addis Ababa, Meles demonstrated that the EPRDF and its member organizations were ideologically pragmatic and as Africa's youngest head of state (aged 36) and as the leader of an organization that had overthrown a communist regime, he was welcomed by international leaders. As leader of the EPRDF, he was the first Ethiopian leader to develop a multi-party system to include opposition parties. There were multi-party national and federal elections in 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010, and Meles led the party to victory in all of these.

When the EPRDF came to power in 1991, one of its first acts was to agree to the independence of Eritrea, de facto in 1991, and formally recognized as an independent state in May 1993 after a referendum. Relations between the two countries were close until in 1998 Eritrean forces invaded Ethiopia and precipitated a conflict for which Ethiopia was ill-prepared having greatly reduced its armed forces in the previous few years. The war lasted two years before Eritrea agreed to peace, accepting a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in June 2000. The subsequent decisions of the Boundary Commission did not please Ethiopia, but they were fully accepted in November 2004, though Eritrea has subsequently refused to discuss the practical demarcation of the border. As a result, Ethiopian-Eritrea relations have remained extremely poor, exacerbated by Eritrea's continued support for armed opposition extremist groups and for efforts to destabilize the country even going so far as to support elements in Somalia aligned with international terrorism.

Elsewhere in the region, Ethiopia has played an active role in encouraging peace and stability notably in Somalia where Meles was a mediator and a negotiator for peace, between the clans, steadily working for the rebuilding of the collapsed state in organizing a number of reconciliation conferences and backing the building blocks approach to Somali reunification. At the same time, Ethiopia was closely involved in the efforts to resist the growth of extremism and terrorism in Somalia. He responded to appeals from the Transitional Government in 2006 to provide military support in anticipation of regional or international involvement. In its absence, Ethiopia stayed until 2009 before withdrawing as AMISOM began to deploy on a large scale. Meles remained closely involved and supportive of the process leading to the ending of the transitional period this month.

Meles also played an important role, both directly and through IGAD, in the whole peace process in Sudan and the implementation of the Comprehensive Framework of Agreement which finally resulted in the independence of South Sudan last year. Since then, Meles became the sole international mediator trusted by both sides in the disagreements and intermittent conflicts between the two states. Ethiopia has been hosting the on-going peace talks between the two sides and has managed to keep up good relations with both.

More widely, Meles was an important figure in the transformation of the OAU into the African Union, with the new organization keeping its headquarters in Addis Ababa. He was a strong supporter of gradual progress towards African unification and towards the continent's economic integration. He was a leading figure in the creation of NEPAD and represented Africa in a number of international fora, including G8 and G20 meetings as well as the Copenhagen Summit and other aspects relating to climate change. It was appropriate that UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon appointed him a co-chair of the UN Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing.

Prime Minister Meles became one of the most influential leaders in Africa during the last decade, taking a leading role in the negotiations on climate change, in opposing terrorism and extremism in Somalia and in peace-making in Sudan. He was very clear that he wanted his legacy to be the conquest of poverty in Ethiopia. "As far as halving poverty [in Ethiopia] is concerned we will achieve it. I have no doubt about it. I believe by 2025 we will be a middle- income country with a per capita income of at least \$1,000 a year and at around that time, slightly before perhaps, we will be

completely free of aid of any variety.” He also believed in peace and stability both in Ethiopia and in Africa. He was rightly proud of the Constitution and saw himself as a builder of institutions. He said “We believe that democracy, good governance and transparency and fighting corruption are good objectives for every country, an intellectual leader he wanted ” but he did not believe it was possible these could be imposed from outside: “Internalization of accountability is central to democratization; the state has to be accountable to the citizens”.

Prime Minister Meles’s vision for Ethiopia remains unfinished, but he leaves Ethiopia far stronger in every respect than when he came to power himself. He will be much missed by the Ethiopian people and by Africa. His legacy, however, remains one of inspiration and encouragement for his successor to achieve his far-reaching aims.

The reality denies any claims of "Political instability"

Prime Minister Meles’ unexpected death was, of course, a severe shock and a surprise to Ethiopians and others alike. As the head of Ethiopia’s executive for the past 21 years, Prime Minister Meles was not only a leader who led his country into new chapters of development, peace, and democracy but a person who will always be remembered as a champion of the cause of Africa in international fora. As the Council of Ministers said “Meles was Africa’s apostle of change”; and his loss “is not only a loss to Ethiopia and Africa, but also to the world.” World leaders have been expressing their condolences to the family and friends of the Prime Minister and to the people and Government of Ethiopia.

Others have also expressed concern that the demise of the Prime Minister could herald a period of instability for Ethiopia. Some apparently believe that if the head isn’t able to govern the country directly then there would be a crisis affecting government and party, jeopardizing prospects of business as usual. One has to ask that if this was the case why then did not problems arise during the past seven weeks or so while Prime Minister Meles was undergoing medical treatment abroad? What held the state, government and party together in Ethiopia in the absence of the Prime Minister? This raises questions over the frequently wild speculations and analyses of many in the Diaspora and whether the concern of organizations like the International Crisis Group is poorly researched and ill placed.

The past two months in Ethiopia conclusively prove that the absence of the Head of Government from the public scene does not necessarily lead to any political fractures or trigger party political wrangling in the government, nor does it mean there has to be any political crisis. The lack of this indeed underlines the fact that existing institutions in Ethiopia are mature enough to act and function in the absence of the Prime Minister. This may be contrary to the traditional perception that it is difficult to think of a stable and peaceful Ethiopia in the absence of a leader. But the fact is very clear: we have seen neither any significant political vacuum nor any problems within the administration.

The main reasons for this stability and effective continuity are rooted in the strength of the key organizing principles of state power. These include the federal form of government, the party structure and the Constitution. Unlike previous regimes, the current federal government has devolved substantial accumulated power to the regional states. The 1995 constitution in Article 8 (1) clearly stipulates that all sovereign power resides in the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. The ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) itself is a reflection of this federal system. As it is an alliance of four national groups: the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the Oromo People’s Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Southern Ethiopian People’s Democratic Front (SEPDF) and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF). The most important power in the party is in the hands of the Executive Committee consisting of equal numbers of representatives of the four member parties, elected by the Central Committees of the respective

member organizations making up the EPRDF. This effectively creates a more or less 'fair' distribution of power among EPRDF member parties, preventing the rise of one group over the other. This also provides for continued activity even in the absence of any 'strong man'; other officials in fact are responsible for their own duties and responsibilities.

In the same way, Article 75 (a) and (b) of the Constitution explicitly provides that the Deputy Prime Minister will act on behalf of the Prime Minister in the latter's absence. In other words there is no confusion in the Constitution regarding who will take over leadership of the country (either temporarily or on a permanent basis) in the absence of the Head of Government. This is why government officials can be so definitive that the country is stable and there will be a smooth transition. As Ato Bereket Simon said, Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, has taken over as Acting Prime Minister. He also noted that "There will be no election as the constitutional procedure allows us to continue with the deputy prime minister acting as prime minister for now." He explained that Ato Hailemariam would take over "in parliament and then he will kick off as full-fledged prime minister." The parliament, currently in recess, will reconvene as soon as the funeral of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is held, on 2nd September, in order to start the process and swear in Ato Hailemariam formally as Prime Minister.

Unsurprisingly other groups, like the extremist, Al-Shabaab in Somalia, indulging in wishful thinking, quickly claimed Ethiopia was "sure to collapse" following Prime Minister Meles' death. Again there's plenty of reason to see that this is improbable. Those foreign elements who wish to undermine Ethiopia's security, like the Somali Al-Shabaab, have not, and will not gain any advantage out of Prime Minister Meles' death. It is already clear Ethiopia will continue to be an icon of stability and peace in the region of the Horn of Africa. It might be added that while there have been occasions in Africa where armed forces having responded to the temptation to seize power, in Ethiopia the incumbent government has organized a national defence force with a doctrine that emphasizes professionalism in defence of the state, the constitutional order and the institutions of security. In other words, the forces of national defence are a real deterrent to any who might try a violent, illegal or unconstitutional grab for power or any other activity to disrupt constitutional procedures.

In sum, there is no indication that the death of the Prime Minister, shocking and unexpected though it was, could lead to any political instability or even to a 'battle' over succession. In Ethiopia today, with its firm constitutional framework, it is impossible to seize power by extra-constitutional means even with the backing of outside powers. The response to the death of Prime Minister Meles and the constitutional procedures already set in motion, with parliament being called into session to swear in Ato Hailemariam as the new prime minister, make it clear that any claims that political instability would ensue in Ethiopia or that there would be problems over a successor to Meles, are in fact so much 'moonshine'.

News and Views

Abune Paulos is buried at Trinity Cathedral on Thursday 23rd August

The body of His Holiness, Abune Paulos, Fifth Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, Ichege of the See of St. Tekle Haymanot, Archbishop of Axum and one of the seven Presidents of the World Council of Churches was buried on Thursday 23rd August at Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa. The body was brought to the Cathedral from St. Mary's Monastery under the escort of patriarchs and bishops, abbots and abbesses of various monasteries and heads of churches in Addis Ababa, members of the training colleges of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, of Sabbath Schools and the people of Addis Ababa. Present at the funeral ceremony, attended by thousands of the faithful, were Government officials, dignitaries, the bishops of the Ethiopian Church, and the Heads of the Coptic Church of Egypt, the Armenian Orthodox Church and the Orthodox Church of India as well as

representatives of the Vatican, of the Greek Orthodox Church and the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Speaking at the ceremony, Acting Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn stressed the achievements of His Holiness in mobilizing the church for developmental activities and in assisting in relief and his work on youth and women's issues and for the problem of HIV/AIDS. Various speakers including the Head of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs' Supreme Council also praised the efforts of the Patriarch and his work in strengthening peace, tolerance and cooperation both in Ethiopia and in the world. A number of countries and organizations have expressed their grief and sent condolences to President Girma Woldegiorgis and Acting Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, including His Majesty, King Juan Carlos of Spain, and the Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergei Lavrov. The Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church has appointed Abune Nathaniel, the Archbishop of the Diocese of Arssi, as Caretaker of the Patriarchate. He will run the affairs of the Church, in consultation with a four-member Standing Synod, until a new Patriarch is elected by the Holy Synod. The election must take place within 80 days.

Somalia's new federal parliament meets in Mogadishu

Somalia's new parliament met for the first time on Monday (20th August) when 211 members out of 275 were sworn in, providing a sufficient quorum for business. The ceremony was attended by President Sheikh Sharif, Prime Minister Abdiweli, former Speaker Sherif Hassan and other observers. Former General Mussa Hassan Abdulle was appointed interim Speaker. His first task will be to prepare for the election of a Speaker and two deputies. This will be followed shortly by the election of the President. The session was welcomed by the Head of the UN Political Office, Ambassador Mahiga, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, who described it as "an historic moment", marking the long awaited end of the transitional period. He said the new MPs, "selected after broad-based, grass-roots consultations and representing all of Somalia's clans had been successfully screened against objective criteria and are now ready to start their important work". The new parliament, when all members are present will have a lower house of 275 members and an upper house with a maximum of 54 members. Representatives of the AU, IGAD and UN together with other members of the international community, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, EU, Italy, Norway, Turkey, UK, US and the International Observers of the Technical Selection Committee flew into Mogadishu at the weekend to reaffirm their support and commitment to the efforts of all involved in the transitional process. In a statement they applauded the patriotism, integrity and tireless efforts of the Technical Selection Committee charged with vetting parliamentary nominations and their courage in ensuring the propriety of the process. They urged the new Parliament to cut its ties with the past of self-interest and 'warlordism', and launch a new generation of Somali politicians which would include proper representation of Somali women.

Government signs peace deal with Benishangul People's Liberation Front

The Ethiopian government signed a peace agreement with the Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) on Wednesday last week (15th August). Under the terms of the agreement, the BPLM agreed to end the armed struggle it had been carrying out for the past 17 years. Jafar Mustafa, deputy chairperson of the BPLM and Dr Shiferaw Teklemariam, Minister of Federal Affairs representing the government signed the agreement at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa. After the signing ceremony, Minister Shiferaw urged the group not to be distracted by any pressure from 'anti-peace elements' and to work towards full implementation of the deal. Jafar Mustafa assured the minister that the leadership of the movement would do its very best to fully comply with the agreement. Ahmed Nasir, the President of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State praised the agreement as an important achievement which would help speed up development activities in the region. He emphasized that the regional government fully supported its implementation. The agreement was signed after two years of talks between government representatives and the BPLM leadership.