

A Week in the Horn

27th April 2012

- **Somalia's Draft Constitution finalized**
- **The AU Peace and Security Council discusses the Sudan/South Sudan conflict**
- **Brazil's Foreign Minister visits Ethiopia**
- **A Government/Diaspora discussion forum**
- **Constitutional rights for religion and the rule of law**

News and Views (Page 8):

- **Kenya and Somalia's maritime boundary uncertainty stops oil exploration**
- **Colorado State University Signs an MOU with Hawassa University**
- **Ethiopia and South Africa are working closely to boost relations**
- **EPRDF Executive Committee concludes its regular meeting**

Somalia's Draft Constitution finalized

On Monday [23rd April], Somalia's Prime Minister, Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, announced that the draft constitution had been finalized. The Prime Minister said the draft, drawn up by the Independent Federal Constitution Commission and the Committee of Experts, was in conformity with the stipulations of the Charter, the timeline of the Roadmap and the Principles agreed at the Garowe meetings. He added that the effort of the TFG, of the Commission and of the Committee was a culmination of eight years of concentration on the constitution-making process. In 2004, it had been agreed in the Charter that a crucial element in ending the transitional arrangements would be the completion of a Federal Constitution based on equality, fairness and justice. A key benchmark in the Roadmap signed on 6th September last year was the call to complete the draft constitution by 20th April. The Prime Minister said that "it is with certain pride that I announce that the benchmark has been achieved on time." He thanked the Somali people for their "passionate contributions" to the document and the members of the Commission and the Committee who had "placed the public interest before their private interests," as well as others including "our technical partners in the international community." He stressed that this represented an important milestone in the path towards a new constitution in compliance with Sharia'a Law, though some senior clerics claimed that the draft endangered Islam and the nationhood of Somalia. The Prime Minister said it would inaugurate a new era of constitutional processes which will allow for humane principles and fair processes in Somalia avoiding the whims of powerful individuals, groups or ideologies.

The draft constitution will now be presented to a National Constituent Assembly for adoption on 15th May as agreed by the Roadmap and the Garowe Principles. The Assembly will be drawn from a cross-section of Somali society and will consider the draft over a two week period before voting on its provisional ratification. A positive vote will turn this draft into the Provisional Constitution of Somalia. It will remain provisional until the government can organize a national referendum. The Prime Minister said: "This constitution belongs to the Somali people. If we use it properly, maintain it properly, improve it properly, it can become a powerful instrument for our collective liberation from oppression, human rights violations and all forms of indignities. Used properly, it will usher in greater freedoms, economic development and prosperity."

Meanwhile, Kenya's Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister, Richard Momoima led a delegation of senior armed force commanders to Mogadishu this week. Mr Momoima said Kenya would soon reopen its embassy in Mogadishu and appoint a new ambassador. The delegation had talks with President Sheikh Sharif and senior government officials. The visit came as reports from Lower Juba suggested Kenyan-supported TFG forces and allied militia were moving closer towards the Al-Shabaab stronghold of Afmadow where Al-Shabaab has been intensifying its defences. A military spokesman for the TFG in Lower Juba was also quoted as saying that the allied forces were building up their operations in the region. Abdiweli Farah Elmi told *Somalia Report* that TFG and Kenyan forces had also now established measures and parameters for their advance towards Kismayo, their main target in the region. He noted that the airstrikes on Al-Shabaab positions had contributed significantly to the allied operations, killing a number of senior Al-Shabaab commanders and affecting their fighters' morale.

Elsewhere, officials in Hiiraan region have said they expect the deployment of Djibouti troops to Belet Weyne and other places in Hiiraan region in the next few days. The troops from Djibouti will be replacing the Ethiopian forces which helped the TFG and allied militias drive Al-Shabaab out of Belet Weyne at the beginning of the year. Djibouti is providing a battalion for AMISOM to join the Ugandan and Burundi troops presently deployed. A battalion has also been promised by Sierra Leone.

The AU Peace and Security Council discusses the Sudan/South Sudan conflict

The African Union Peace and Security Council held a ministerial level meeting on the situation between Sudan and South Sudan on Tuesday this week [24th April]. After briefings from both sides and discussions it issued a communiqué which included a seven-point roadmap calling for a cessation of hostilities. The Council told Sudan and South Sudan to stop all hostilities within 48 hours and gave them two weeks to restart the negotiations which broke down earlier this month, and ninety days to complete negotiations and settle their disputes over oil, citizenship and boundary issues. It said Sudan and South Sudan should withdraw their respective forces from disputed border regions, keep troops within their own borders and stop supporting rebel groups in each other's territory. It also demanded the two states should stop issuing inflammatory statements and propaganda that could escalate the conflict. The AU Peace and Security Commissioner, Ramtane Lamamra, said if the two parties failed to resolve their disputes the AU's High-Level Implementation Panel, headed by former South African President, Thabo Mbeki, would be disbanded. In three months, the panel would end its mission "either bringing the parties to agree, to sign and to implement all that is needed to resolve the issues at hand, or by formulating a comprehensive report for the Peace and Security Council to endorse and for the international community to support as final and binding." The Peace and Security Council has asked the UN Security Council for Chapter VII endorsement of the roadmap which would be legally binding on both sides.

Ambassador Susan Rice, US Permanent Representative to the United Nations and this month's Security Council president, said that Security Council members had seen the AU communiqué and would be consulting their governments. Ambassador Rice herself called it "a positive and constructive contribution" and said the US would be consulting with other council members "about their readiness and willingness to contemplate next steps that reflect the thrust of the AU communiqué." Earlier the UN Security Council called for an immediate end to fighting between Sudan and South Sudan. It welcomed the withdrawal of the Southern forces from Heglig, and demanded an immediate end to aerial bombing by Sudan, urging an immediate ceasefire and a return to negotiations. The Council is considering further options including the possibility of imposing sanctions.

The AU Peace and Security Council meeting came as both sides continued to build up their forces around the oil-producing border areas and continued to issue inflammatory statements. They made conflicting claims last weekend over Heglig, with South Sudan claiming its forces withdrew following international pressure while Sudan said it had forced them out with heavy losses. The fighting in Heglig and aerial bombings led to rhetoric about declarations of war from both sides. South Sudan President Salva Kiir said on Tuesday [24th] that Sudan had 'declared war' on his country following the north's repeated bombing of the south. Sudan President Omar Al-Bashir made a fiery speech last week in which he said there will be no negotiations, and on Monday, he said "I direct the army to restore our rights and repulse any aggression on any inch of the country and at any time". He added: "our dialogue with these people will be through the gun because they only understand the language of the gun." Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ali Karti, said fighting must stop before talks could take place; South Sudan's Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Deng Alor, told the AU PSC that it would "not be enough to return to negotiations as they were". He said the AUHIP did not have enough authority to force agreement on contentious issues. The mediation mechanism needed to be enhanced and supported by the international community.

South Sudan President Kiir has been on a visit to China this week where he was asking for Chinese economic assistance and giving Chinese leaders a briefing on the situation. China's President Hu Jintao called for restraint and expressed hope that the two states would cease conflicts along their border and settle their issues through negotiations. A Chinese official said on Wednesday that President Kiir had cut short his five-day visit because of the rising threat of war. Certainly, the fighting along the border has brought the prospect of an all-out war very close.

The disputes have already halted almost all the oil production on which both countries depend economically. A recent comment suggested that "Sudan cannot afford to live without oil and South Sudan cannot survive without it." Indeed their economies remain closely interlinked since oil from South Sudan can only be marketed through Sudan. Experts believe that any new pipeline, whether to Lamu through the LAPSSET corridor from Juba or another route, **will take years to build**. There are also still questions over funding. In turn Sudan needs the income from transport of South Sudan's oil. The economy of both countries is being seriously affected and the situation will have major long-term effects on both parties unless they rapidly restart negotiations and come to a settlement of the questions of oil, citizenship and the border as well as other outstanding issues.

Brazil's Foreign Minister visits Ethiopia

On Monday this week [23rd April], Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam held discussions with Brazilian Foreign Minister, Antonio Patriota on a visit to Ethiopia. The Deputy Prime Minister provided an extensive briefing on the social, economic and political transformation that is underway in Ethiopia and on the peace and security situation in the Horn of Africa. He noted that Ethiopia and Brazil had a lot in common including the federal system that both states followed. Technologies used in Brazil could also be used in Ethiopia because of this shared background. Now the two countries had ample opportunities to share experiences with each other. The Deputy Prime Minister, referring to the current visit of the Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, Abadula Gameda, to Brazil, emphasized that Ethiopia wanted to improve its knowledge of Brazil's federalism. The Speaker is leading a delegation of federal and regional councils' members at the invitation of the Brazilian government. Ethiopia would also like to share experiences in a number of areas - education, agriculture, and research in sugar development and processing as well as leather processing, infrastructural development and the ability to attract investment.

The Deputy Prime Minister underlined Ethiopia's desire to diversify foreign direct investment and attract investment from other countries in addition to Turkey, India, China and European states. He said Ethiopia would like to see investment from Brazil. Ethiopia, he added, was well aware that the

development of a country depended upon technology transfer not just the western handout approach. In addition to strengthening the bilateral relationship, the Deputy Prime Minister said Ethiopia would also like to expand its links with Brazil **in multilateral fora like the United Nations and extend South-South cooperation, advancing the African agenda of engagement with Brazil.** He also briefed the Brazilian Foreign Minister on recent developments in Somalia and the current conflict between the Sudan and South Sudan.

For his part, the Brazilian Foreign Minister described the existing relationship between Brazil and Ethiopia as very positive. He said that there was a unique opportunity to further strengthen this relationship **since the two countries now have embassies in their respective capitals.** Indeed, Brazil had many embassies in Africa, a demonstration of the fact that, for Brazil, Africa holds a unique place in the world. He also noted the progress made in Ethiopia, witnessing as it was double digit economic growth that showed the country was on the right lines. Indeed, its demography, and the achievement of political stability and peace in Ethiopia, were crucial for Brazil. Concerning the peace and stability of the region, Mr Patriota noted Brazil's keen interest in seeing the spectre of failed state overcome. He suggested that this and similar problems might be resolved through the correct mix of regional attention, UN support and the involvement of key countries.

To further strengthen the existing relationship between Ethiopia and Brazil, Mr Patriota's visit was marked by the signing of five agreements. These covered Bilateral Technical Cooperation to establish the modalities by which Ethiopia can benefit from Brazil's impressive successes in capacity building; the Waiver of Visas for Holders of Diplomatic, Official and Service Passports; the Establishment of a Mechanism of Political Consultation; the Establishment of a Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation which will allow the two parties to indentify areas of possible bilateral cooperation; and a Protocol of Intention on Technical Cooperation, opening doors to share best research practices as well as facilitating the transfer of modern agricultural technology inputs. Coincidentally, Ethiopian Airlines announced this week that it was planning to start flights to Sao Paulo in Brazil later this year. Sao Paulo with its population of around 20 million is one of the largest and richest cities in the world. **This will be Ethiopian Airlines first flight destination in Latin America.**

During his visit, Mr Patriota also held discussions with Prime Minister Meles who noted that Ethiopia was keen to benefit from Brazil's vast and relevant experience in areas of technical cooperation, investment and expertise in infrastructural projects. He emphasized that **Brazil's pro-poor policies and dramatic economic development could be a source of inspiration for Ethiopia and for many developing countries in Africa.** Mr Patriota also attended a meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council on Tuesday [24th] to underline Brazil's engagement and interest in peace, development, stability and democracy in Africa.

A Government/Diaspora discussion forum

A discussion forum between members of the Ethiopian Diaspora and representatives of government ministries and other institutions was held on Tuesday 24th April at the Civil Service University Hall in Addis Ababa. The Forum was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, and attended by hundreds of members of the Diaspora. Other senior officials from line ministries were also present to introduce the services they offered to the Diaspora. The forum, intended as an annual event, was held as part of the Government's plans to exchange up-to-date information with members of the Diaspora on national issues including the status of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and to discuss ways to help solve any problems that may affect members of the Diaspora and encourage and expedite the country's development through the active participation of the Diaspora.

Addressing the forum, the Deputy Prime Minister defined the main strategic pillars of the country's new Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). These were: registering accelerated, sustainable and fair economic growth; sustaining the agriculture sector so it continues to be the engine of growth over the GTP years; ensuring the industry sector plays a key role in economic development; expanding and improving the quality of economic infrastructure; fostering social development and ensuring its quality; developing capacity and enhancing good governance; and increasing the capacity and development effectiveness of women and youth. Other cross-sectoral elements of the GTP include expanding social security services, promoting population development, creating more employment opportunities, enhancing and expanding the culture industry and building a green economy.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister noted that every government institution had prepared short and medium term plans harmonized to the GTP targets. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, had made all necessary preparations to discharge its share of responsibility for achievement of the GTP with its priority targets sorted out and being acted on. The priorities in descending order had been identified as maximizing foreign direct investment inflows, strengthening technology transfer and technical assistance and boosting trade and image building. Low-interest loans, grants and development assistance, though important, were less relevant over the GTP period as the Government was embarking on an approach to development that depended upon sustainable and predictable sources. The Government recognized that the role of the Diaspora in achieving its priority targets was crucial. It was only with the active participation of the Diaspora that the Government could effectively promote the country's growing investment opportunities; maximize technology transfer and technical assistance; boost its trade relations and create alternative markets to make the best of its export items and import goods at the most reasonable levels as well use the knowledge and expertise of the Diaspora most effectively for the benefit of the country.

Ato Hailemariam said a number of measures have been taken to encourage active participation by members of the Diaspora. There has been the provision of investment opportunities in labour-intensive capital investments in the country. Incentives such as tax relief, low-interest loans (7.5%), and one-stop-shop services are other measures. Anyone who wants to focus on processed and semi-processed manufacturing products are to be encouraged and loans made available for those prepared to invest in feasible projects. A lease-financing mechanism is already in place to assist people to get loans for equipment, allowing it to be used as collateral. Legal procedures to establish a "non-interest bearing bank" are also under preparation. Three kinds of saving accounts have been introduced. With the "Current Account", any member of the Diaspora can hold up to 50,000 USD in foreign currency interest free for a few weeks. The "Saving/Deposit Account" provides for any member of the Diaspora to save a limitless amount in foreign currency for a period of 3 to 6 months with interest payable. Most importantly is the "Birr Account" which has a 10% interest rate to encourage people to save their foreign currency in Birr. This is double the interest rate offered for birr deposits in a Birr Account.

The Deputy Prime Minister noted that the introduction of the Millennium Bond was part of the Government's plan to encourage citizens and the Diaspora to support development in a way that would mutually benefit both. The bonds offered an attractive interest rate to ensure members of the Diaspora will benefit themselves as well as contribute to development. The construction level of the Renaissance Dam had now reached 7% and it would be 13% by the end of the fiscal year [June]. The Government was very pleased with people's participation in buying the bonds, over 7 billion birrs worth being sold in the last year. He thought there was still a huge potential market in the Diaspora and the Government would do everything possible to organize maximum contributions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had prepared a draft Diaspora Policy which will be made available

in all Ethiopian missions abroad for discussions. The draft includes a number of mechanisms to better address the needs of the Diaspora.

During the discussion, participants raised a number of concerns. These included corruption and a lack of good governance, limited infrastructure, lengthy bureaucracy delays and the difficulty in getting loans for projects of their choice. They questioned why the Government insisted that foreigners or members of the Diaspora who had savings of over 200,000 Birr should have to notify the source. They asked when banking and insurance services would be opened for investment by the Diaspora. Other questions included a request for the establishment of a Government/Diaspora Appeal committee to be responsible for dealing with Diaspora problems and to provide support where necessary. There were questions over details of the new Land Lease Proclamation; requests for duty-free privileges for the Diaspora to be reactivated, and for facilitation of Diaspora visits to the Renaissance Dam project site.

In response, officials noted that the Government was aware of the effects of corruption and had put in place extensive capacity building programmes to develop capacity and enhance good governance. It had now completed the registration of assets of over 27,000 government officials as part of a determined effort to reduce the level of corruption significantly. There had been significant improvement in infrastructural coverage throughout the country in a remarkably short time. Equally, one of the main pillars of the GTP is expanding and improving economic infrastructure. On bureaucratic delays it was noted that all Government institutions now follow government directions aimed at improving bottlenecks and avoiding lengthy procedures. The process of Business Process Re-engineering had provided significant improvements, though the Government felt more could still be done. One-stop-shop services are now provided in many Government institutions, and the Government would continue to work hard to ensure service delivery mechanisms would be encouraged in all areas.

Participants were told that banks would now be providing loans equivalent to 70% of a given project if it met the bank's feasibility assessments. Government officials pointed out that while they could encourage banks to set reduced interest-rates for loans to the Diaspora or offer tax-relief to Diaspora investments, they couldn't force banks to give loans to projects that failed feasibility assessments. The issue of holding savings over 200,000 birr was related to the threat of possible money laundering, which was an international problem. A mechanism of opening up the banking, insurance and telecom sectors to the Diaspora was under study. An official in the Diaspora Affairs Directorate General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been assigned to deal with Diaspora problems and provide support where necessary. Detailed explanations were given about the new Land Lease Proclamation which had been implemented to put an end to illegal manipulation of land and make land available at a reasonable [lease] price for investment projects that could create job opportunities for the unemployed. Land is public property and the proclamation hasn't changed this principle. **The proclamation doesn't contravene property rights. It rather creates the opportunity for the Government to use land revenue to fund pro-poor projects such as the building of condominiums or the new 40-60 housing scheme.** Under the new housing plan, priority will be given to members of the Diaspora who have the capacity to pay the full cost of a house. Duty-free privileges had been heavily abused, and they would not be restored.

Constitutional rights for religion and the rule of law

Ethiopia began its transformation to a federal democratic system in 1995 with its new constitution containing provisions of general, fundamental and democratic rights, including the right of all Ethiopian communities to protect and promote their religion, culture, language and historical heritage. The constitution stipulates that state and religion are separate. There is no state religion; the state does not interfere in religious matters. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought,

conscience and religion and the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to follow their own religion. The role of the Government with regard to religious diversity is limited to teaching the relevant provisions of the constitution. The right to religious diversity is not merely tolerated it is constitutionally protected and accommodates both religious and linguistic diversity, enabling people to enjoy a state of unity with diversity.

Historically, Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity and Sufi Islamism were virtually the major two religions practiced in the various polities of the Ethiopian state. With the introduction of the new democratic system two decades ago, a number of other religious sects have sprung up, taking advantage of the freedom of diversity of religion. This constitutionally protected religious diversity has allowed people to exercise their religious rights and duties freely. However, it isn't uncommon to find a few people who claim their own version of religion is superior to others and regard religious chauvinism as a necessary part of commitment, a 'virtue' to be cultivated among the faithful. Official theologies largely deal with religious diversity in a cursory or inadequate fashion, often teaching that foreign religions are not only different, but also inferior, even demonic.

Answering questions from MPs in the House of Peoples Representatives about religious extremism last week, Prime Minister Meles noted there were a few extremists in Ethiopia who were violating the Constitution. He recalled an incident in which a few extremist Christians had been waving banners calling for "one country and one religion". A few extremist Salafists were to be seen in the Al Qaeda cell captured in Arsi and Bale, and some had been trying to establish an Islamist Ethiopian state. These were the actions of a handful of extremists who certainly didn't represent the majority of Salafists in Ethiopia. These acts were illegal and unacceptable, violations of the Constitution.

The Prime Minister also noted that some extremists wanted the Government to ban the "Ahbashist" sect and prevent its followers exercising their constitutional rights. This he said the Government could not do. The Constitution did not allow the Government to ban "Ahbashism" or any other sect providing they operated within the Constitution. The Prime Minister said the Government had discovered that the demand arose from deliberate confusion orchestrated by a handful of irresponsible and corrupt Salafi business people opposed to recent Government 'pro-poor' measures including the Land Lease Proclamation and the improved system of taxation aiming to end rent-seeking and illegal manipulation of public properties. He said the Government had learnt these people had been orchestrating confusion, and using religion as a means of pursuing their hidden agenda. The Prime Minister repeated that the Government had no intention of choosing between traditional Sufi views or Salafi doctrines or those of any other sect so long as they kept within the law and the Constitution. People should make up their own mind whether or not to follow any sect of religion. Equally, the responsibility to teach the constitutional provisions of diversity of religion and ensure law and order rested on the Government's shoulders. The Prime Minister said the Government had in fact taken every opportunity to ensure respect for the Constitution and it would continue to teach the rights and duties of religions. Encouragingly, there were signs that some extremists were beginning to change their attitudes and stop illegal conduct.

Nevertheless, some still want the Government to go beyond its constitutional mandate and put a stop to "Ahbashist" activity. They have little support and have been reduced to trying to incite violence, claiming the Government has been interfering in religious affairs and trying to discriminate among Muslims. Last week, for example, an article claimed that the "Ahbashist" sect, founded by the Ethiopian-Lebanese scholar, Sheikh Abdullah al-Harari, and seen in the West as a "friendly alternative" to extremist, militant Islamic doctrines such as Wahabism, had been deliberately brought into Ethiopia by the Government. The aim was supposedly to fill the "Majlis", the Islamic Council of Ethiopia, and teach Ethiopians that "Wahabis are non-Muslims". This accusation, of course, ignores the fact that the Government has no right to invite, allow or forbid any religion or sect, provided that the exercise is within the framework of the constitution. The

article then claimed that thousands had demonstrated in the streets of Addis Ababa against “Ahabashists”. In actual fact, as a cursory glance at the photo of the supposed demo could easily prove, the accompanying photo file was more than five years old, and most of those pictured were actually involved in prayer rather than demonstrating. Some even posted old videos on the Internet showing peaceful discussions taking place but then attaching separately recorded sounds of protest in an attempt to substantiate their fallacious claims.

It was all highly irresponsible propaganda, but ironically it may have helped people to know what was going on as it in fact emphasized that there hadn't been any Muslim demonstrations at all. It underlined the point that such deliberate distortions and attempts to confuse are part of the efforts being made by a few extremist Salafists trying to topple the state forcefully. The Government, with public support, will continue to punish any illegal activity as part of its efforts to combat extremism. It will also persevere in its exertions to ensure that the constitutional freedom of religion and the rule of law and order continue to be respected in Ethiopia.

News and Views

Kenya and Somalia's maritime boundary uncertainty stops oil exploration

The disagreement over the maritime boundary between Kenya and Somalia is deterring multinational oil companies from exploring for oil and gas along their coasts. The two countries disagree over the location of their boundary line in the Indian Ocean. Somalia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Abdullahi Haji, says "The issue between Somalia and Kenya is not a dispute; it is a territorial argument that came after oil and gas companies became interested in the region. [But] if the argument continues unsolved, it will change into a dispute." Kenya's Commissioner for Petroleum, Martin Heya, says he is confident the United Nations, which could be requested to help delineate the border, would agree with Kenya's view that the maritime border between the two countries should run horizontally east from the point at which the two countries touch on land. He says the practice in East Africa has been for maritime boundaries to run along the line of latitude. Somali officials say the onshore border should continue into the ocean diagonally southeast and that a horizontal border would be unfair. At stake are legal claims to sell rights for offshore oil and gas exploration and the ability to collect revenue from any discovery. There have been substantial discoveries of gas recently off shore in Tanzania, Mozambique and Madagascar. For the moment companies are unable to drill in the disputed area. Consultants involved in border demarcation say the two countries won't have a legitimate boundary until they sign a treaty that delimits their offshore boundary. This has been difficult but the end of the transition period in Somalia in August may improve the prospects of an agreement.

Colorado State University Signs an MOU with Hawassa University

Colorado State University (CSU) has signed an international Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Hawassa University in Ethiopia's Southern Regional State to provide collaborative research and teaching opportunities for faculty and graduate students at both universities. The MOU was signed in January and a team of four CSU researchers from its Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory came to Hawassa to teach short courses on geographic information systems, watershed management, animal nutrition and forest ecology at the Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, a separate campus of Hawassa. The team also visited potential research sites and met with Hawassa faculty members and Peace Corps volunteers. A senior research scientist at CSU's Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory said that Hawassa University was very similar to CSU in that both universities were about the same size and offered similar programmes. Both had veterinary schools and colleges of natural resources." Both universities can gain from the MOU. Hawassa's enrollment is steadily increasing and it needs an increasing number of trained faculty

members; for CSU, it offers enhancement of faculty, doctoral and graduate student teaching experience, “adding an element of international exposure and gaining a developing-world perspective [which] can be translated back into the classrooms of CSU”. The CSU team is making arrangements to send two doctoral students to Wondo Genet this summer to teach an intensive four- to six-week course in wildlife management. They emphasized that they hoped “to work side-by-side with our colleagues from Hawassa to better understand the ecological rhythms that are keyed to alternating wet and dry seasons. This will be critical information to help conserve Ethiopia’s forests.”

Ethiopia and South Africa are working closely to boost relations

The second South Africa-Ethiopia Joint Ministerial Meeting, as we noted last week, was held on the 17th April in Addis Ababa. It reviewed the status of bilateral relations and explored further areas of cooperation. As Ethiopia’s Ambassador to South Africa, Dr Yeshimebrat Mersha, has pointed out that the two countries have entered into a number of agreements to facilitate their political, economic and social interactions since they established official diplomatic relations in 1994. They signed agreements in 2008 to work jointly in education, agriculture and tourism, business and investment as well as human resource development and efforts are now being made to realize earlier agreements and bolster relations particularly in the areas of trade, investment, education, transport, and tourism. As the ambassador noted Ethiopia exports coffee, sesame, cereals and leather products to South Africa, while it imports edible oil, garments and electronic materials, but the levels remain low, with the volume standing at around 333,000 US dollars a year at the moment. The ambassador said that the embassy was working hard to try to attract more South African investment to Ethiopia. There were only a handful of South Africans currently engaged in the hotel, mineral exploration and business sectors in Ethiopia. There are nearly 80,000 Ethiopians living in South Africa and Ambassador Dr Yeshimebrat said they had pledged a total of 32 million birr for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

EPRDF Executive Committee concludes its regular meeting

The Executive Committee of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) held a regular meeting on Saturday 21st April. The meeting reviewed the performance of various development plans during the last nine months and evaluated natural resource conservation and irrigation progress in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and the Southern Ethiopia Peoples' Regional States over the same period. The Executive Committee said activities in the supply and distribution of agricultural inputs, in job creation, land utilization and administration, in housing and infrastructure development and in the construction industry, as well as the maintenance of governance in urban areas in these regions and in Addis Ababa, had been encouraging. Following the review the Committee agreed directives to help sustain these efforts. It stressed the need to strengthen the attempts to get rid of rent-seeking tendencies and replace these by commitment to development. Meanwhile, the EPRDF training centre has announced that a 45-day second round of capacity building training to middle level front officials began on 23rd April in the EPRDF training centres in Tolay, Birsheleko and Bekoji. Close to 7,000 middle-level party officials are attending the course. They are drawn from the party organization in Amhara, Tigray, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia Regional States and partner organizations as well as Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa City Administrations. Around 5,000 middle-level leaders participated previously in the first round of training which is designed to enhance the capacity of those attending.