

A Week in the Horn

29th July 2016

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

A meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) is being held in Beijing this week (July 28-30). It is being attended by Ministers of Foreign Affairs and other officials from 53 African nations, as well as by the African Union Chairperson and the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Commerce of China. The Forum will evaluate the implementation of the FOCAC Johannesburg Summit held in December last year.

Ethiopia

The Forum of African First Ladies Against Breast and Cervical Cancer hosted the 10th Stop Cervical Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference, which was held in Addis Ababa this week, Sunday (July 24) to Wednesday (July 27). Organized by the Office of First Lady, Roman Tesfaye, Prime Minister Hailemariam and Foreign Minister Dr Tedros were among the Ethiopian government officials and other international dignitaries who attended. (See article)

Dr Mulatu Teshome, the President of FDRE, has called for more efforts to curtail the spread of HIV/AIDS. The President made the call at the opening of the 13th regular conference of the National HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Council held this week on Tuesday (July 26) in Addis Ababa.

President Mulatu Teshome met with the outgoing Ambassador of the Netherlands; Mrs Lidi Remmelzwaal at the National Palace on Thursday (July 28). The President has urged Dutch companies to diversify areas of engagement in Ethiopia.

President Mulatu Teshome hosted a farewell event at the National Palace on Monday (July 25) for the Ethiopian national athletics team, who will take part in the Rio 2016 Olympics Games.

On the occasion of the opening ceremony of the African Dignity Forum, held on Monday (July 25), Deputy PM Demeke Mekonnen stated that Africa has to try its level best to change its current status in the global political economy and overcome its predicaments.

In a meeting with Dr Tedros on Wednesday (July 27), the UK's Trade Envoy, Richard Benyon, recalling his recent visit to Hawassa Industrial Park referred to Ethiopia as "a trail-blazer in this part of the region".

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom met with the President of Somalia's South-West State, Sharif Hassan Sheikh, on Wednesday (July 27). Sharif Hassan acknowledged the role of the Ethiopian government in rendering support to promote peace and stability in Somalia. Dr Tedros on his part said Ethiopia would further reinforce its endeavors towards enduring peace and stability in Somalia.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom met with the outgoing Ambassador of the Netherlands, Mrs Lidi Remmezwaal on Wednesday (July 27). Ambassador Remmezwaal noted that relations between Ethiopia and the Netherlands have shown a positive trajectory over the years.

A High-Level Ethiopian delegation led by State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-silassie is taking part in a meeting of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which is being held in Beijing this week (July 28-30).

The 2nd Diaspora festival commenced in Bahir Dar, with the visit of members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community to industrial facilities in and around the city on Thursday (July 28).

The European Union (EU) has extended a 20-million Euros grant to Ethiopia in a bid to create jobs in northern and central Ethiopia as part of efforts to deal with the challenge of migration.

UniCredit, a European financial leading Group, said Ethiopia is likely to be one of the fastest growing markets for western exporters in the next five years. UniCredit is a leading European commercial bank operating in 17 countries, with over 143,000 employees, over 7,800 branches and an international network that spans 50 markets.

Djibouti

Djibouti has become the 14th country and the third east African country to join the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), an international investment grade multilateral finance institution investing in key infrastructure projects across Africa.

Ali Guelleh Aboubaker, Minister of Investments in the Office of the President, said the government of Djibouti was committed to proactively investing in essential infrastructure to drive economic growth and attract international private investors to infrastructure investment opportunities.

Eritrea

The first International Conference on Eritrean Studies was held last week (July 20-22) in Asmara under the theme of "Eritrea: the way forward." (See article)

Hagos Gebrehiwet, head of the PFDJ Economic Affairs, headed a working visit to the People's Republic of China last week. The delegation included the Ministers of Public Works, Finance, National Development, Education and Agriculture. The delegation met with Ms Xu Lvping, Vice Minister of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPC and held talks with the Minister and Vice-Minister of Trade and the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs.

A conference on money laundering and combating financing terrorism organized by the government and by the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) opened on Tuesday in Asmara.

According to the UN FAO the "keremt" rains (June to September) started on time in Debud, Anseba and Gash-Barka regions and crops and pasture in most inland areas are currently in good condition. Latest meteorological forecasts for the period from June to September indicate increased likelihood of above normal rainfall over most of the country.

Kenya

The UNHCR said this week that an estimated 42,000 Kenyans were living under false pretenses in the Dadaab refugee camp complex. They would undergo a “relocation” and “reintegration” process as part of an expanded effort by the UNHCR to reduce Dadaab’s population from 343,000 to 193,000 by the end of this year. The government has now agreed to gradual phasing-out of the camp and the UNHCR is now asking donors to provide an additional \$115.4 million to carry out the agreed program of refugee relocation and repatriation.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has appointed Mohamed Aden Kofi as the new Director of Immigration to [replace] General Abdullah Gafow who was recently named as the chief of the country’s National Intelligence and Security Agency.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud met the new AMISOM force commander Lt. General Osman Noor Soubagleh, at the weekend and called for enhanced coordination between AMISOM and Somali National Security Institutions, and urgent deployment of enhanced forces to crush al-Shabaab and ensure the forthcoming elections are secure from any attacks.

A six-day long festival of books, culture and literature opened last Saturday (July 23) in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. The festival, now in its ninth year, attracted authors, artists and scholars from around the world, including representatives from Nigeria, Germany, Britain, Ghana, Italy, France and South Africa. (See article)

At a forum held in Mogadishu on Wednesday (July 27), attended by women leaders from all Somali regions, government officials, regional representatives, religious leaders, clan elders and members of civil society, Attorney General Ahmed Ali Dahir reaffirmed government commitment to end female genital mutilation and other forms of gender violence. The Ministry of Women and Human Rights and the Office of the Prime Minister with the support of AMISOM organized the meeting.

President Ahmed Silanyo met with the EU Special Representative for Somalia and Somaliland, Mr Michele Cevone D’Urso, and Deputy British Ambassador to Ethiopia, Cat Evans, and other diplomats on Sunday (July 24). President Silanyo reiterated his commitment for the next election in Somaliland to take place in March next year.

An ex-MP, Salah Nur Ismail ‘Badabado’ was apparently one of those involved in the twin car bomb explosions in Mogadishu on Tuesday (July 26). The attacks, in which up to 20 people died, were aimed at the UN compound and the entrance of Mogadishu International Airport but failed to reach their target.

Cabbaas Idiriis (John Drysdale) who died earlier this month in Hargeisa, was remembered at this week’s Hargeisa Book Festival. (See article). The first foreigner to acquire Somaliland citizenship and vote in Somaliland elections, he arrived in Somaliland in 1943. During a long career as a colonial officer, diplomat, businessman, historian and publisher, he became a prolific writer and a notable analyst of political events in Somaliland, Somalia, East Africa and Southeast Asia.

South Sudan

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) said on Wednesday that President Salva Kiir had expressed “willingness [towards the] deployment of foreign troops”. This followed a meeting between President Salva Kiir and JMEC Chairman Festus Mogae. (See article)

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir attended the Arab League Summit in Mauritania this week before travelling to Morocco to hold discussions with King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud of Saudi Arabia. The two leaders discussed the “fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries and a number of issues of mutual interest”.

Sudanese President Omer Al-Bashir, is expected to be in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on Friday (July 29) where he will be honored at Nelson Mandela Hall in Addis Ababa University by the African Initiative for Pride and Dignity.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon this week urged all parties in Sudan, including the Government, to take concrete steps to build confidence and to move towards a credible and inclusive national dialogue. He called on those who have not signed the road map proposed by the African Union panel to do so.

The United States Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, Ambassador Donald Booth on Tuesday (July 26) started a visit to North Darfur state. He met with senior military and security officials in El-Fasher to discuss the conditions of IDPs and the government efforts to achieve security and stability in the state. He hailed government efforts to achieve reconciliation and conflict resolution, and said the US would continue to support peace and stability in Darfur.

Minister of Minerals Ahmed Sadiq al-Karouri said this week that Sudan expects to produce 100 tonnes of gold this year, becoming Africa's second largest producer by the end of the year. It currently ranks third in gold production behind South Africa.

The 10th "Stop Cervical Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa" Conference

The Forum of African First Ladies Against Breast and Cervical Cancer hosted the 10th Stop Cervical Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference (SCCA) organized by the Office of the First Lady of Ethiopia, Mrs Roman Tesfaye, in partnership with the Princess Nikky Breast Cancer Foundation. The Conference was held at the African Union Plenary Hall in Addis Ababa, this week starting on Sunday (July 24) and closing on Wednesday (July 27).

This year's Stop Cervical Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference had the theme "A decade of accomplishment, our enduring legacies and the challenges ahead." The Conference aims to ensure the provision of strategic guidance, based on concrete lessons learned in the field of cancer prevention and control over the past decade. It brings together Heads of State and Government, parliamentarians, African First Ladies, leaders of cancer research institutions and hospitals, scientists, heads of UN agencies and other International Organizations, civil society and private sector representatives as well as cancer survivors from all corners of the world. The Forum is also devoted to galvanizing and harmonizing efforts to strengthen country level programs and initiatives to end cancer.

In sessions of the 10th Stop Cervical Breast and Prostate Cancer in Africa Conference, the First Ladies of Member States of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa dwelt at length on ways to encourage prevention of cancer in the continent. Ethiopia's First Lady, Mrs Roman Tesfaye, stressed the fact that poverty remains one of the major causes for women's vulnerability to cancer. She emphasized the need to support this strategic insight and to work proactively to ensure the economic empowerment of women, underlining the importance of enhancing women's overall capacity. She noted that the economic empowerment of women had been instrumental in reducing women's vulnerability to cancer and galvanizing efforts to create preventive measures. Speaking about the challenge of the stigma of cancer across the continent, the First Lady, who is also Chairperson of COMESA's First Ladies, said the challenge was not confined to COMESA but existed on a wider level across the continent. First Lady Roman reiterated the need to work relentlessly towards creating public awareness, providing adequate medical services, and putting in place effective preventive measures, as well as providing the opportunities for early diagnosis and treatment to respond to the challenge of cancer on the continent. The First Lady also stressed the need for concerted and comprehensive action by governments and international bodies to stop cervical breast and prostate cancer in Africa.

Prime Minister Hailemariam addressed the Conference on its second day. He said that in response to the increasing challenge of cancer, Ethiopia was implementing a national strategic plan to prevent cancer. He noted that this was a growing disease, killing many people in developing countries, and he stressed the necessity for these countries, particularly those in Africa, to act to prevent the disease. A report published in 2014 showed that

there were 847,000 new cases of cancer in Africa and 591,000 deaths in 2012, representing 6 percent and 7.2 percent of the world total. The Conference drew attention to the fact that cancer is increasing at an alarming rate in Africa, and that it kills more people than HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis combined. Inadequate investments in infrastructure for prevention, and lack of early detection, treatment and palliative care have been identified as one of the main challenges in addressing cancer prevention. Lack of awareness was another problem as affected persons often only report the disease when it is already at an advanced stage. Equally, lack of fully equipped medical facilities, access to quality and affordable treatment, still pose a challenge in many African states.

On the same day, Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, delivered a goodwill message at the Conference. Dr Tedros said, "We are all here for one reason: to stop the toll that cervical, breast and prostate cancer has on the health and lives of Africa." He said that one of the challenges that cancer presented to Africa and developing countries elsewhere was that it was most often diagnosed too late. This, he said, was unacceptable in the 21st century. The Foreign Minister said a lot had been done during the last decade and there was much to learn from each other's experiences in strengthening country initiatives and on efforts to put an end to cancer. Dr Tedros pointed out that Ethiopia had been working very hard to reform its health sector. The Minister, who is a candidate for the position of Director General of the World Health Organization, emphasized the importance of enhancing awareness to help address the stigma of cancer and help prevent it through community-based health education efforts. He said the Conference offered the chance to reflect on the successes "we have achieved to date and use the momentum gained to do more in the next decade." He added: "When I'm elected as Director General of World Health Organization, I will make cancer the main agenda."

The conference honored First Lady Roman Tesfaye as Chairperson of the First Ladies Forum against Cervical, Breast and Prostate cancer. First Lady Roman, who now takes over the leadership of the Forum from Kenya's First Lady, Margaret Kenyatta, called for efforts to curb the problem of cancer to be scaled up across Africa in the next few years. She called on partners and stakeholders to take concerted and strong measures against cervical, breast, and prostate cancer. Underlining the seriousness of the challenge to the people of Africa and particularly women, First Lady Roman said about 70% of all cancer related deaths occurred in Africa, and a significant number of these came from cervical cancer. She added about 66,000 new cancer cases occur every year in Ethiopia because people did not have proper awareness of the disease. The Forum strongly encouraged African governments to initiate, fund and implement national cervical cancer programs.

The Conference concluded on Wednesday with closing remarks from Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, who also emphasized the need to give political will, resources and skills of Africans to combat cancer on the continent. In its final communiqué, read out by Dr Kebede Worku, Ethiopia's State Minister of Health, the Conference called for the scaling up of regional efforts in the fight against cancer in general and against cervical, breast and prostate cancer in particular. It noted with great concern the growing burden of cervical, breast and prostate cancer in Africa and its damaging effect on the communities, nations and the entire region. It acknowledged that the incidence of cervical, breast and prostate cancer was rapidly rising with some parts of the continent reporting the highest rates of cervical cancer of up to 40 cases per 100,000 women. This, it said, "is further confounded with the highest maternal mortality rate in the region resulting in unacceptably high number of women deaths." The communiqué called for intensified public awareness with the participation of all stakeholders, particularly, religious and community leaders as well as civil society organizations and the media. It encouraged exploration and promotion of innovative technologies to advance cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment and palliative care. It said countries should "Invest in human resource development for cancer to create competent cancer workforce by taking advantage of experience sharing, knowledge transfer, networking, and by using available technologies." In other words, it concluded, it was necessary to "Mobilize and allocate resources for cancer control and care to as much level as the depth and magnitude of cancer deserves.

Ethiopia making 'tremendous strides' in improving peoples' well-being

Founded in 1963, the Boston Consulting Group is a global management consulting firm and one of the world's leading advisors on business strategy. Last week, it released its "**Sustainable Economic Development Assessment**" for 2016. Covering more than 160 countries this assessment tracks relative well-being levels in more than 160 countries. The Boston Consulting Group claims its Sustainable Economic Development

Assessment (SEDA) is a powerful diagnostic designed to provide government bodies with a perspective on how effectively their countries convert wealth, as measured by income levels, into well-being. It also helps to identify specific areas in which a country is lagging behind others, even after taking into account its income level and growth rate.

The Sustainable Economic Development Assessment defines well-being through three fundamental elements comprising ten dimensions. The three basic elements are economics, comprising income, economic stability, and employment; investments, which include health, education and infrastructure; and sustainability, covering income equality, civil society, governance, and the environment. The assessment covers not only the current level of well-being but also at how much has changed in recent years. It then calculates scores overall and for each of the ten dimensions. To assess the link between wealth and well-being, it examines how effectively countries convert wealth into well-being and economic growth into improvements in well-being.

The assessment says firmly: “We find a clear, measurable link between financial inclusion and well-being. In addition, three SEDA dimensions, civil society, governance, and infrastructure, are strongly linked to financial inclusion.” It notes connections between financial inclusion and the assessment’s dimensions of civil society, governance with strong infrastructure driving improvements in financial inclusion. Good infrastructure, including reliable power supplies, effective telecommunication networks and well-functioning payment infrastructure, offers gains in financial inclusion, it says. Gender equality also has important links to financial inclusion. In fact, two key factors, a smart regulatory approach and solid infrastructure, create a foundation on which the private sector can develop innovative approaches to expanding financial inclusion.

The assessment predominantly focuses on financial inclusion and there are two major reasons for this. The first is that the financial services’ sector is a prime example of how effective collaboration between public and private sectors can create the basis for companies to generate both profit and meaningful benefits for citizens. The second is that there has been tremendous technological and business model innovation in financial services over the past five years, and these advances that have driven an impressive expansion in financial inclusion. Overall, it emphasizes that public and private sectors both have roles to play in establishing the foundation for financial inclusion. It says firmly that a government regulatory approach in consultation with the private sector should play a central role in infrastructure development, either directly through public investment or indirectly by creation of a framework for private investment. Companies, it says, have an opportunity to maximize the social impact they deliver by tying their social impact efforts more closely to their core business. The experience in financial services underlines the considerable untapped potential for private enterprises to generate positive social impact by taking advantage of new technologies to create new business models.

The Boston Consulting Group says leaders around the world are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that GDP alone cannot provide a full picture of a country’s performance. It stresses that the Group’s assessment shows the private sector can make crucial contributions to ‘well-being’ particularly where there appears to be a strong link between access to financial inclusion and ‘well-being’. More specifically, it notes access among under-served groups for services such as money transfer services, deposit accounts, insurance, credit and simple payments are major windows of opportunity. They can help the private sector to contribute to the public good.

The assessment finds several of its findings for 2016 mirror those in the previous year and suggests this indicates some significant trends. One is that countries with high current-level scores in sustainability, which includes income equality, civil society, governance, and environment, generate the greatest progress in that element. In both years, most oil-rich countries, those whose rents from oil are equivalent to more than 10% of GDP, were below average in converting wealth and growth into well-being. Countries with faster economic growth tended to have very low recent-progress scores in the environment in 2015 and 2016. **Countries in sub-Saharan Africa continue to make major strides, outpacing the median recent-progress score in health this year and last.** It notes the importance of infrastructure, and suggests those with poor infrastructure are struggling to catch up.

The results indicate that the top ten countries in current well-being are to be found in Western Europe. Norway holds the top position as it has done since the launch of the assessment four years ago. **In terms of recent progress, however, the top position goes to Ethiopia, whose performance, the assessment says, “is emblematic of the gains in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole: 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa are in the**

top quintile in recent progress.” In fact, according to the Boston Consulting Group, many developing countries are posting some, essentially weak, improvements in ‘well-being’ but a total of **15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and especially Ethiopia, are making “tremendous strides” in improving the ‘well-being’ of their people.** The assessment said among the myriad of industries Ethiopia used the private sector to contribute to the public good are health care, energy, manufacturing, and telecommunications. Rwanda is another sub-Saharan state that scores highly.

The report noted, “In fact, the most compelling solutions for broadening financial inclusiveness are being deployed not in the developed world, but in emerging economies.” It said that in most cases innovative solutions came from small start-ups. The Ethiopian government, for example, had prepared a private sector development strategy to improve the productivity and modernization of the agricultural sector, and boost the technological sophistication and economic input of the industrial sector. **It had also identified the development of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) as a key industrial policy direction for creating employment opportunities for millions of Ethiopians.**

According to the World Bank, while this may be impressive, it is not sufficient and much more remains to be done to unleash the full potential of SMEs. In fact, the government has made it very clear that it is very aware of this. The second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTPII), launched last year and covering the period to 2020, is giving more emphasis to the importance of private sector development and therefore easing access to finance for MSMEs. It has also begun to put in place helpful public support programs covering this aspect of development. This is one of the elements quantifiably analyzed by the Boston Consulting Group. Its analysis, in fact, suggests some of the important actions that need to be taken to unleash private sector innovations in countries striving to convert growth and wealth into well-being. It recommends **effective regulation**, which can avoid interfering with innovation, while still protecting the public interest; as well as the application of a policy of **competition** that should encourage new entrants into the market and innovation.

South Sudan continues in crisis

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), the body tasked to oversee implementation of the South Sudan peace agreement, said on Wednesday this week (July 27) that President Salva Kiir in a private meeting, despite public statements to the contrary, had expressed a willingness to accept deployment of foreign troops in Juba. In a statement to the Sudan Tribune, the JMEC said the President had made this comment in a meeting with JMEC chairman Festus Mogae. Among the key points discussed was the President’s willingness to consider the deployment of a regional protection force in accordance with the recommendations of the IGAD Plus Summit and the Summit of African Union Leaders. The JMEC said it would now resume regular meetings in Juba and work to ensure the peace agreement is fully implemented. It said its “only interest is to see a solution that promotes peace and a return to normality as well as security in South Sudan.” The President earlier said publicly, after the IGAD and African Union proposal to send regional forces to support UN peacekeepers in the country, that he wouldn’t allow “a single foreign soldier” in South Sudan. He repeated this on Tuesday during the swearing-in ceremony for the first deputy president Taban Deng Gai. He said then “Dr Riek Machar has been calling for intervention of foreign forces, international or regional, so they create a buffer zone. We will consider that as an invading force.”

The JMEC statement also said that the JMEC Chairman “has decided that, due to the complexity of the issues involved [in the replacement of Riek Machar by Taban Deng], this is a matter that should be considered and deliberated upon by the JMEC members, both the South Sudanese and our International Partners.” The JMEC chairman will continue to consult regional leaders and international partners to “discuss the political impasse at this sensitive and difficult time for South Sudan.” He met with Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, IGAD Chairperson, on Tuesday (July 26) “to discuss the latest developments and the way forward for South Sudan.”

It was a little over two weeks ago, on Monday (July 11), First Vice President Riek Machar once again fled from Juba following armed clashes at the presidential palace, and attacks on his residence. The fighting resulted in the death of more than 300 soldiers and civilians. The violence that took place was chaotic, and details of exactly who was involved, who started it and why, have remained unclear. Many civilians fled to the UN base, where many had sought refuge in the early days of the violence in December. The reaction to this latest outbreak of violence

was immediate. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he was “deeply alarmed by the ongoing fighting in Juba between soldiers of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the SPLA in Opposition,” adding “this outbreak of hostilities in the capital, on the eve of the country's fifth anniversary of independence, is yet another illustration of the parties' lack of serious commitment to the peace process and represents a new betrayal of the people of South Sudan, who have suffered from unfathomable atrocities since December 2013.” He stressed that the resurgence of violence could cause a dramatic deterioration in the security situation across the country and demanded that IGAD should make every effort to resolve the new outbreak of conflict.

IGAD leaders were also quick to respond. They held an Extraordinary Summit on July 17, on the margins of the African Union Summit in Kigali and UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon discussed the South Sudan peace process with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, the chair of IGAD and the other IGAD Heads of States. IGAD condemned the renewed fighting and the loss of lives and casualties, as well as the destruction of properties, which have continued. It also condemned targeting of the UN compound and attempts to prevent the civilian population obtaining protection. IGAD urged President Salva Kiir and First Vice President Dr Riek Machar to assume their responsibility and take immediate measures to prevail upon their respective military leaders to stop the fighting. IGAD also called for the urgent revision of the mandate of the United Nation Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and increased numbers of troops from the region to be sent to Juba. The African Union also backed the request for African troops with a robust mandate to reinforce UN peacekeepers in South Sudan. This force would be able to provide protection to the South Sudanese leadership and essential government infrastructures including the Juba airport as well as defend citizens at risk of violence in the capital.

The immediate reaction of the government and of President Kiir was negative and the government also organized demonstrations in Juba and in some other areas to underline its determination to reject the deployment of additional foreign forces with senior officials vowing to fight them should they deploy. More recently, after President Kiir paid a visit to see President Museveni in Kampala, there have been indications that he might be more prepared to accept an intervention force and now this week, privately at least, he has been more receptive to the idea. Conversely, Riek Machar's SPLM-IO, immediately supported the deployment of an intervention force. A statement by the SPLM-IO said Machar would immediately return to Juba once troops on the ground were in a position to ensure his safety. His officials said he was still close to Juba and would return any time soon.

The situation, however, was complicated by President Kiir's demand on Thursday last week (July 21) that Riek Machar should return to Juba within 48 hours or be sacked, and then this week by his announcement that he was appointing Taban Deng Gai, as First Vice President, in place of Riek Machar, due to Dr Machar's reluctance to return to Juba. The President said he replaced Riek Machar with General Taban Deng Gai, to fill a vacancy created by Machar's absence, following the recommendation of a group of SPLM IO leaders in Juba. General Taban Deng Gai, who was previously the head of the SPLM-IO negotiation team, said those SPLM-IO leaders who had asked for his appointment had done so not because he wanted to remove Machar as head of the SPLM-IO, but because it was just a matter of filling a vacuum.” He said, if Dr Machar returned, “I will gladly step aside if that could bring peace to South Sudan.”

The appointment was originally strongly and quickly criticized by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), the highest body established under the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan last August, to monitor implementation of the agreement. It called it a violation of the peace agreement, though it was more cautious in its statement this week. The UN also warned the government that the appointment violated the agreement. In an interview with Aljazeera TV on Wednesday this week (July 27), Dr Machar said his replacement by General Taban was “illegal”. He said he was still the First Vice President according to the peace agreement and he was only awaiting deployment of a third force in Juba in order to return to his office. Dr Machar said under the peace agreement signed in August last year President Salva Kiir had no power to appoint a replacement.

Since the outbreak of violence in Juba in December 2013, the flight of the SPLM-IO leader, Dr Machar from the city and the subsequent civil war, thousands of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands forced to flee their homes and take refuge in neighboring countries or remain as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). IGAD finally managed to mediate a ceasefire and peace agreement in August 2015 and in April this year Dr Machar finally returned to Juba as First Vice President to participate in the formation of the Transitional Government of

National Unity. Even to achieve this required serious pressure on both sides by IGAD leaders and the international community, and it has not prevented continuous violence and numerous violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement recorded by Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM). It is not surprising that many consider that neither the Government nor the SPLM-IO nor their respective leaders has any genuine interest or desire to reach an effective peace agreement. Certainly they continue to make little effort to do so or to bring an end to the murderous violence affecting the country.

Eritrea holds its first International Conference on Eritrean Studies

The first International Conference on Eritrean Studies was held last week (July 20-22) in Asmara under the theme of “Eritrea: the way forward.” At one level, this was part of the celebrations of the 25th anniversary of Eritrea’s de facto independence this year. At another, it was also yet another [attempt] to try to correct the country’s demonstrated record of gross and systematic human rights abuses.

Ever since the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on (July 1) accepted resolution 32/24 which endorsed the Commission of Inquiry’s report into Human Rights Abuses in Eritrea, Eritrea has been intensifying its criticisms of the Commission of Inquiry’s Report on human rights violations in Eritrea. Earlier this year, it tried to activate some of its international supporters to criticize the UN Human Rights Commission of Inquiry’s damning report on the current state of human rights and the use of ‘forced’ labor. Indeed, the Minister of Information, Yemane Gebremeskel, who opened the conference, specifically noted that it could serve “to challenge and refute entrenched and utterly negative narratives on Eritrea.” The portrayal of Eritrea these days, he said, “is atrociously out of sync with the reality in the county. It is also extensive and intrusive in scope to literally vilify and denigrate all facets and aspects of Eritrean life.”

In fact, given the commission’s damning report and its strong findings on Human Rights Abuses in Eritrea, the current international conference [is] apparently aimed at galvanizing every effort to put the mere “feel good” posture on the part of the government of Eritrea.

Despite the government’s persistent efforts to discredit the strong findings on Human Rights Abuses in Eritrea, the UN Human Rights Council had already accepted resolution 32/24 which endorsed the Commission of Inquiry’s report into Human Rights Abuses in Eritrea. Among its 19 recommendations, it reiterates the calls on the Government of Eritrea to end the use of arbitrary detention, put an end to the system of indefinite national service and to allow unhindered access to the country to further missions of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the consideration for the Office to be based inside the country. It calls for Eritrea to resolve a range of systematic abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture and indefinite detention as well as permanent national service and forced labor. It called for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea to be extended for a further year

The Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights welcomed the strong resolution on Human Rights in Eritrea. Chairman Mike Smith said the human rights violations over the past 25 years, had now taken a step closer to being realized. He reiterated that Eritrea was an authoritarian State with no independent judiciary, no national assembly and there are no other democratic institutions in Eritrea. This, he said, has created a governance and rule of law vacuum, resulting in a climate of impunity for crimes against humanity to be perpetrated over a quarter of a century. These crimes are still occurring today. Mr Smith said the Commission hoped that Resolution 32/24 would provide a solid platform for the next steps to be taken by the Government of Eritrea, in partnership with the international community, and will bring justice for the Eritrean people. It also welcomed the resolution’s strong encouragement for the African Union to follow up on the report and recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry by establishing an investigation, supported by the international community, with a view to examining and bringing to justice those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights.

In its report, first published on June 8, the Commission made recommendations to eight parties: the State of Eritrea; the UN Human Rights Council; the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; the UN General Assembly; the UN Security Council, the African Union; Member States; and Transnational Corporations. The resolution responded to this by referring the Commission of Inquiry report and all its recommendations, to the United Nations and its relevant organs for consideration and urgent action. This covers the UN General Assembly and includes the UN Security Council as well as the UN Secretary-General and also the African Union.

Book festivals in Somaliland and in Somalia

A six-day long festival of books, culture and literature opened last Saturday (July 23) in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. The festival, now in its ninth year, attracted authors, artists and scholars from around the world, including representatives from 12 countries, among them Nigeria, Germany, Britain, Ghana, Italy, France and South Africa. The fair invites authors and artists from African countries every year to learn about Somalia. Ghana was this year's guest country. Previous years' guest countries have included Nigeria and Malawi. The event also brings together Somali authors regardless of political beliefs, and indeed the most important part of the occasion is showcasing books and creativity of Somalis.

While the Hargeisa Book Fair is the oldest of such festivals it has now inspired the launch of similar events in Mogadishu and Puntland, and encouraged the organization of Somali heritage festivals in Kenya and in Europe. Puntland President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali opened the Garowe International Book Fair on Thursday (July 28). Co-organized by the Somali Institute for Development and Research Analysis and SCANSOM Publishers, the event, largely funded by the Puntland Government, features panel sessions and speeches by more than 30 keynote speakers including Professor Lidwien Kapteijns, author of "Clan Cleansing in Somalia: The Ruinous Turn of 1991" and the Russian Somali linguist, Dr G. Kapchits. The first Garowe International Book Fair brings together publishing houses and distributors in Somalia, and from the diaspora. It will end on Sunday (July 31).

Next month, the Federal Capital of Mogadishu will hold its second International Book Fair. Mogadishu's first book fair took place in August last year, with more than 30 writers and 3,000 people attending the three-day event. At the time, the city had no public libraries and no commercial bookstores. The first major bookstore in Mogadishu opened three months ago. It sells motivational and self-help books, novels, memoirs, and autobiographies as well as academic works. The owner emphasizes: "The response is quite huge. The need is there. The willingness to read books is there." Indeed, these festivals emphasize the power of the written word as well as celebrate the extensive Somali oral poetic culture. The Somali language didn't have an authorized script until 1972, and oral poetry has played a significant role in with poems even having real political importance particularly during Siad Barre's dictatorship.

The theme of the Hargeisa Book Fair this year was leadership and creativity, and the role literature plays in good leadership. Among the questions posed to local and international artists, writers, playwrights, musicians and scholars were: Who are our leaders, past and present? Do we need leaders, and if so what are the qualities of a good leader? The building blocks of leadership, the image and expectation we have of our leaders and the courage and ability that makes a leader will be discussed. Who are our leaders in the arts, and how can art and creativity shape future leadership?

Ms Ayan Mohamoud, managing director of Kayd Arts and Culture, the organization that coordinated the book fair, said "the goal is to reestablish cultural intuitions; no people progress without the development of their arts, culture and literature." She told Voice of America that the idea behind inviting other countries was to help Somalis learn about other African countries: "Somalis have little knowledge about Africa, [and] we believe inviting the scholars from these countries, be it Ghana or Kenya, will shape the views of their people toward the Somalis in their countries."

People attend the Hargeisa Book Fair to demonstrate their love of books, but also to preserve their culture and language. Authors, poets, composers and artists come to display their work and creativity. They also come to raise awareness about preserving the language, participate with their work, talk about the role of literature and how it benefits the Somali language. It gives "the young a chance to learn about what is missing from their work, grasp a lot, ask questions and help preserve the language". Ms Mohamoud said: "The enthusiasm and encouragement it has created among the young people is immeasurable, there are reading clubs everywhere, there are so many authors who want to present their work and books".

At the Hargeisa Book Fair, western classics by authors like Leo Tolstoy and Shakespeare were sold alongside books of Somali poetry and short stories. Discussions were held on key issues including censorship, freedom, creative imagination, and the future. The occasion provided a platform for new authors to promote their books

as well as share ideas, discuss problems and possible solutions. The organizers said “we are defined by the quality of our leadership, as much as we, as a society, develop the leaders in our community. The relationship between leaders and the community they serve, is one that transcends time, space and fields of work. Using art, culture, and creativity, can we imagine a more transparent, value-based leaders-community relationship that can make our aspirations more concrete and less emotional”. So the principles of leadership, the image and expectations people had of leaders and the courage and ability that make a good leader, were discussed with local and international artists, writers, playwrights, musicians, and scholars.

Key speakers included Dr Hussein Mohamed Adam, one of the best known Somali scholars who gave an opening address on Developing International Academic Leadership, looking at the formation of the Somali Studies International Association (SSIA) which he founded and chaired the first meeting in 1978. Dr Edna Adan, former Somaliland Foreign Minister, a doctor, social reformer, and builder of the Edna Adan Maternity Hospital in Hargeisa, Somaliland’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Dr Saad Ali Shire; Professor Kwame Karikari, Professor in Journalism and Mass Communication at the School of Communication Studies at the University of Ghana; South Africa’s Ambassador to Eritrea, Dr Iqbal Jhazbhay; Dr Martin Orwin from the UK’s School of African and Oriental Studies; Professor Atukwei Okai, Secretary-General of the Pan-African Writers’ Association; Nigerian publisher, Chuma Nwokolo Jr.; Dr Morgan Nilsson, from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden; and Dr Abdirashid Ismail, University of Djibouti; Mustafa Abdullahi Feiruz, editor-in-chief of *Somali Studies* an academic journal published by the Institute for Somali Studies in Mogadishu and Mr Mohamud Mohammed Abdillah, Director of the Institute of Somali Language and Literature Studies at Jigjiga University.

One of the major subjects of the festival was the life and works of Musa Galaal, one of the greatest of Somali scholars whose role in the preservation and promotion of Somali literature and culture is beyond all exaggeration. Other sessions covered “Leadership, Youth, Creativity and Transformation”; Media and Leadership”; “The role of leadership in Islam: As epitomized by the prophet Mohammed”; “The Psychology of Leadership”; “Books, poetry and stories of Djibouti”; and the first translation into Somali of *Feedh Qalloocan (From a Crooked Rib)*, one of the works of Nuraddiin Farah, the greatest Somali novelist who writes in English. A number of writers showcased their works.

The 9th Hargeisa Book Fair is now one of the largest public celebrations of literature in East Africa as well as representing the main platform for the arts in Somaliland.