

## **A Week in the Horn**

### **30<sup>th</sup> March 2012**

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## **Deputy PM and Foreign Minister briefs Executive Board Members of UN institutions**

A delegation representing members of the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, WFP and UN-Women met with H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, on the 24<sup>th</sup> March.

During the meeting, Hailemariam spoke extensively about Ethiopia's foreign policy in general, its participation in UN peace-keeping operations in the sub-region, the progress made in ensuring good governance in Ethiopia and the cooperation with UN development partners. Furthermore, in response to questions from the audience, he also addressed issues ranging from best practices, regional integration, civil society, green economy and sustainable development.

In his briefing, he underlined the importance Ethiopia attaches to poverty reduction and said that the fight against poverty was the 'Alpha and Omega' of the country's policy and strategy on national security. He further explained that the root causes behind national security challenges prevailing in Africa were of an economic nature and that there was a close relationship between poverty and national security problems. He went on to say that since Ethiopia identified poverty as the prime enemy of the people, the need for accelerated economic and social development has been a matter of top national priority embedded in the country's development strategy. Since the implementation of this strategy requires substantial amounts of foreign capital and technology, economic diplomacy has been placed at the centre of the country's foreign policy and used as an instrument to facilitate international trade and foreign direct investment. He said that the double-digit growth rates Ethiopia has scored in the past eight years was a clear indication of the success of the policy the country has been pursuing.

With regard to peace and security in the sub-region, he highlighted Ethiopia's efforts to bring peace and security in Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan. In relation to Somalia, he requested that the United Nations development partners undertake rehabilitation projects in that country in order to alleviate the suffering of the people and enable them to have access to basic social services. He also stressed the need for the international community to remain engaged in the effort to resolve the current dispute and bring lasting peace between the Sudan and South Sudan.

Regarding Eritrea, he explained that Ethiopia has been making tireless efforts to resolve the border dispute through dialogue. He also pointed out the unrelenting destabilization activities of the Eritrean government, the latest manifestation of which was the recent killing and kidnapping of innocent tourists in the Afar region of Ethiopia, that was carried out by Eritrean backed terrorists. He informed the delegation that the proportionate and measured action that Ethiopia took on 15<sup>th</sup> March to dismantle three terrorist camps inside Eritrea was a response to make the Eritrean regime understand that it must desist from training, arming and sending terrorists across the border into Ethiopia with the intention of destabilizing the country.

On the issue of democracy and good governance, he stressed that the people of Ethiopia, who are multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious, live together in unity and the existence of democratic institutions and the full participation of the people in the governance of the country was needed to sustain it. He said that democracy for Ethiopia

was not an option but a necessity and assured the delegation of Ethiopia's commitment to good governance and democracy.

Concerning Ethiopia's cooperation with UN Institutions, he expressed appreciation for the United Nations Country Team for ensuring that the United Nations Development Assistance (UNDA) Action Plan for 2012-2015 has been fully aligned with Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan for the same period.

With regard to international trade, he pointed out that Ethiopia had started an accession process with the WTO. He added that Ethiopia had already submitted its document. He said that the most important best practice Ethiopia can point to, is the participatory process it follows in its development endeavours. Examples of this include: water and soil conservation management programmes that have been successfully implemented in the past five years, with the active participation of millions of people in the rural areas of the country; the country's Health Care Extension System that has been described as the best in Africa, mainly because it focuses on women; and promotion of micro and small enterprises.

As for regional integration, he informed his audience that the Ethiopian government was of the view that infrastructure development is key to regional integration. To this effect, **Ethiopia has embarked upon an extensive infrastructure programme aimed at linking the region.** He mentioned the already completed road link and power interconnection between Ethiopia and Sudan as an example. He also talked about the planned road link and power interconnection between Ethiopia and Kenya.

With regard civil societies, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister clarified his government's understanding of what civil society organizations are supposed to be. He said that they should be organizations that represent the interests of their members and that their activities should centre around that. He mentioned the example of teachers' associations, women's associations, etc. From this point of view, he said that more than 20 million people were organized in various associations of such a nature.

Addressing a question as to Ethiopia's commitment to a green economy, he informed the delegation that Ethiopia was working towards becoming a hydrocarbon free economy by 2025. He added that the country was already implementing projects geared towards the production of clean and green energy by tapping into hydro, wind and bio-fuel resources. He said that in the not-too-distant future, Ethiopia would become a major producer of sugar and as a result, a major producer of ethanol as well, thus adding to its clean energy production potential. He went on to say that the huge afforestation campaign currently taking place throughout the country will also greatly enhance the development of Ethiopia's green economy.

In relation to South-South co-operation he said that Ethiopia was working closely with the Group of 77 and the 'BRICS' group of countries with a view to boosting South-South cooperation. In this regard, he said that the main focus was towards achieving food self-sufficiency. He informed his audience that the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has produced a study on how to achieve food self-sufficiency in Africa. The document has been presented to the UN and is awaiting the latter's decision.

Finally , the leader of the delegation, the Ambassador of Norway at the United Nations, made his concluding remarks in which he thanked the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister for his extensive briefing which covered many important issues, in response to which the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister wished the delegation a good visit to Ethiopia.

The Executive Board Members are drawn from 20 countries representing various regions and they are in Ethiopia for a joint field visit from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> March. The objective of the field visit is to enable them to get first-hand experience and assess the extent to which United Nations institutions are contributing towards Ethiopia's efforts towards achieving sustainable development goals.

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting of AU and ECA Finance Ministers**

The 5<sup>th</sup> Joint Annual Meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development was held on 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> March under the theme: "Unleashing Africa's Potential as a Pole of Global Growth."

The meeting, whose keynote speech was delivered by Prime Minister Meles, was preceded by four days of discussions among the committee of experts which opened on Thursday last week [22<sup>nd</sup> March], when the AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Maxwell Mkwezalamba, urged the meeting to come up with ideas on how best to position Africa in the existing global environment, marred as it was by low growth rates, high rates of unemployment and a near collapse of the economic systems. Mr Mkwezalamba expressed confidence that the meeting would provide clear guidance and set priorities to position the continent for robust growth. He observed that many African countries came through the financial and economic crisis better than many other countries and the performance of many developed countries demonstrated that new sources of growth were required to address existing imbalances. The State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ahmed Shide, said the impact of the current Euro zone crisis on Africa has yet to be properly analyzed - some African countries were being affected by a downturn in their trade flows as well as the drying up of finance, and in some cases, weak demand in Europe might cause the price of commodities to fall. Africa also needed infrastructural improvement as there were still gaps across the continent. The UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the ECA, Abdoulie Janneh, stressed the need to have a clear vision of where Africa should be headed and said the continent must rise to meet its domestic, regional and global challenge. One particular area deserving attention was unemployment, especially of youth, he noted, and creation of jobs would depend ultimately on increasing productive activities.

In his keynote address at the opening of the ministerial meeting on Monday [26<sup>th</sup>], Prime Minister Meles said that to take advantage of the window of opportunity now opening for Africa, Africa must first build effective and pro-development states, must massively invest in infrastructure, adequately train its people, promote manufacturing investment and technological capacity building and must encourage growth and investment in agriculture. While it was fashionable now to characterize Africa as a potential pole of growth because of its enormous natural resources, its demographic advantages and improved macro-economic management, in fact these factors had

always been present. And until recently the demographic advantages, for example, were considered as a source of instability and violence because of the massive youth unemployment. The Prime Minister said that reforms in economic and political governance carried out more than three decades ago generated de-industrialization, enfeeblement of the African state and an associated malaise rather than growth and transformation.

However, the emerging economies, in particular the phenomenal growth of China and India, had dramatically transformed the demand for Africa's mineral and agricultural resources. The search for new frontiers of investment opportunities by the emerging countries and the need for advanced countries to reduce domestic demand and to reform were other major reasons to encourage Africa to become the next growth pole. Indeed, overall, the Prime Minister added, "the current global environment thus creates a unique opportunity for us to use our demographic and natural resources' advantage to attract investments and catch this new wave of industrial relocation." At the same time "we have to liberate our minds from the neo-liberal ideological shackles that have hindered progress". This has devastated Africa's economies over past decades. It needs to be discarded before the continent can do the things that it needs to do to transform its economies. African governments should now make massive investments in infrastructure mostly through public investments, build primary, secondary and tertiary level education and technical and vocational training and train their people. Where possible, the private sector should fill the gaps. **[Full speech available]**

In his address, Dr Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, also noted that Africa had the potential to become a driving force in the world economy. He underscored the need to create an enabling economic environment to unleash its potential and eradicate poverty. He emphasized that Africa was on a rising economic trajectory because of the efforts of African countries to improve macroeconomic growth.

### **Baseless accusations don't affect Ethiopia's proper use of aid**

Recently, it has been quite common for reports from international organizations to detail the way Ethiopia since 1991 has embarked on its ambitious transition to a democratic state under the leadership of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The country has held four multi-party elections and established a decentralized system of governance. Aiming to become a middle-income country by 2025, it has organized a succession of medium-term plans based on the Millennium Development Goals. The first of these was the Sustainable Development Programme for the Reduction of Poverty (SDPRP), and the second the Programme for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) with poverty reduction as a central policy concern. The successful administration of these programmes provided bold steps towards accelerated growth with emphasis on commercialization of agriculture and private sector development as well as on scaling up of pro-poor investments and the promotion of good governance and democracy to achieve the MDGs. The share of total spending on poverty-related sectors rose from 42% in 2002/03 to over 64% by the end of 2007/08.

Now, the Government has embarked on a new five-year Growth and Transformation Plan (2011-2015). The aim is to foster broad based development in a sustainable

manner to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) envisages major transformation of the economic structure, seeking to double agricultural production and significantly increase the share of industry in the economy. The plan seeks to achieve total access to electricity and safe water by 2015, reduce infant mortality rates from 101 per 1,000 to 67 per 1,000 and cut the maternal mortality rate by more than half from 590 per 100,000 to 267 per 100,000. Recent reports by the United Nations show Ethiopia is among the handful of nations identified as capable of meeting all eight MDG goals by 2015. Several processes and structures have been put into place which will help millions of Ethiopia's poor to break free from an inter-generational cycle of poverty. Investments in education and health sectors have risen significantly and the human development indicators have improved. The poverty head count ratio has been reduced to 29.2%, down from 38% in 2004-05.

The GTP identifies good governance (including respect of human rights) and capacity building as one of its strategic pillars. It specifies making progress in these areas as an important pre-requisite for attainment of development objectives. Ethiopia is a party to most of the core international human rights instruments, including CEDAW, ICCPR, ICESCR, CEDR, CAT, CRC, and CRPD. Chapter Three of the Constitution provides an extensive list of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. International human rights standards and instruments, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR), are laid out as points of reference in the constitution.

The significant progress already registered under the GTP in both economic and human development have meant Ethiopia has deservedly received significant recognition for its efforts from the international community and from partner countries. As the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2015 has recently revealed, the GTP is the "anchor on which the [Assistance Framework] is based". It noted that in addition to reducing poverty, achieving consistent double-digit growth, improving human development indicators and encouraging consolidation of democracy and good governance, Ethiopia presented a real opportunity for pulling its entire people out of poverty and it offered "a lesson and model for other Least Developing Countries". The Framework said the country's "young democracy", having experienced consistent economic success over the past decade had become "bolder and braver", pushing all-out for growth and prosperity through some very ambitious strategies and plans.

UNDAF Ethiopia 2012-2015 was aligned with the new national development strategies and its current programme came at a critical time for Ethiopia "as it undergoes a major strategic shift to embark on a transformational growth trajectory aimed at not only lifting millions of poor people out of poverty but placing it strongly on the path to become a middle-income country by 2025". There was a convergence between Ethiopia, the UN system and the development partners around the MDGs, and the GTP provided the organizing principle for this UNDAF (2012-2015). Many of Ethiopia's bilateral and multilateral partners have now begun to harmonize their development cooperation programmes with the GTP to produce maximum aid productivity and efficiency. Most, convinced that their aid is being effectively used for the intended goals, are also increasing the amount and effectiveness of their aid.

Norway is one of Ethiopia's bilateral partners. It is now considering increasing the quantity and quality of its development assistance as indicated in the jointly prepared Strategic Plan for Development Cooperation 2012-2014. The Norwegian Organization

for Asylum Seekers noted that “we have increased development assistance because Ethiopia is one of Africa’s biggest success stories, both in terms of economic and social conditions. Amongst other things, it is one of the countries in the world that has done most to meet the Millennium Development Goals.” Norway’s Minister for Development and Environment, Erik Solheim, says Ethiopia needs more aid to become even better. Population-wise, it is Africa’s second-largest country. It is an important country, and many people are still living in poverty. Whilst Ethiopia was the symbol of famine in the 80’s, the country has now taken many steps to prevent poverty. In addition, **they are the leading country in Africa when it comes to combating climate change, and this is an important matter for us.** They are also important to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Somalia and Sudan.”

The 2012-2014 Ethio-Norway Development Cooperation has now been harmonized with the directions of Ethiopia's GTP following several consultations with Norway's various partners and NORAD recommendations **based on field visits to programme sites which provided the proof that the aid was being used to achieve the mutually agreed intended goals.** The programme is also considering a continued increase in government-to-government support, and it underlines that the NGO (strategic partnerships) channel will continue to be vital for such interventions as the support for the struggle against FGM or the Civil Society Support Programme. In 2010, the composition of Norwegian aid-flows through the respective channels were: Government-to-Government 21% (NOK 21,377 mill.), NGOs (strategic partnerships) 48% (NOK 48,141 mill.) and through multilateral agencies 31 % (NOK 31,092 mill).

Regrettably, there are still, however, a few self-appointed advocacy groups such as Human Rights Watch (HRW) and Amnesty International that continued to suggest, as they have done to other partners, that development assistance to Ethiopia should be stopped, or at least decreased, despite the fact that all investigations have repeatedly demonstrated that aid money is administered to achieve the targets and goals jointly developed by the donors and the Government of Ethiopia. These bodies have criticized Norway for its cooperation with Ethiopia, claiming that “donor money is being used, at least indirectly, to fund the villagization programme”. They have also suggested that donors have a responsibility to ensure that their assistance does not facilitate forced displacement or any associated violations. What they have failed to do is provide any evidence that their claims are based on anything more than unsubstantiated allegations.

Equally, they have ignored the fact that the Ethiopian Government's commitment for the last two decades has never been questioned and that Ethiopia and Norway have a functional and well-developed "Risk Assessment and Prevention" mechanism. This operates both at preparatory and implementation stages of any programmes, and lays out the basis for the practical as well as financial reports of aid scrutinized by Embassy personnel. In addition, to get a more professional and in-depth assessment of the financial aspects, the Embassy employs an auditing firm. What is more, increased use of monitoring visits provides another tool to prevent misuse or reveal possible gaps between reports and reality. The Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also put in place guidelines to deal with handling any suspicion of financial irregularities. Indeed, it is in line with its own objective assessments and these guidelines from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Embassy of Norway in Ethiopia has simplified the programming of its national development cooperation into two sectors both harmonized with the

GTP: one covers the environment, climate adaptation and clean energy and the second is good governance.

### **The Deputy Prime Minister in Finland**

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, led a high-level delegation on an official visit to Finland last week (19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> March) at the invitation of Finland's Foreign Minister. During his visit, the Deputy Prime Minister held talks with the newly elected President of Finland, Mr Sauli Niinistö, and the ministers of European Affairs and Trade and International Development Cooperation, and the former President of Finland on bilateral, regional and international issues of concern to both parties as well as with Foreign Minister Tuomioja.

The Deputy Prime Minister said that Ethiopia could learn a great deal from best practices in Finland as it had started to implement a Growth and Transformation Plan which aims to double agricultural production and lay the basis for industrialization as the engine for sustainable development. Finland, as one of Ethiopia's development partners, has been cooperating in health, notably the provision of safe drinking water and education. He expressed his conviction that Finnish support would remain vital for reaching the GTP targets. Bilateral cooperation would provide Finnish expertise and support in land management and soil conservation and assist participation by women in all spheres.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister also briefed his counterpart on the situation in the Horn of Africa. He noted that security in Somalia had been steadily improving thanks to the efforts of IGAD, the TFG and AMISOM with the support of the international community to weaken Al Shabaab. He emphasized the necessity to build on the Garowe principles to deal with the end of the transition, noting that the drafting of the constitution and organizing the Constituent Assembly were well underway. He called on the international community to support those administrative bodies being put in place in recently liberated areas and underlined the need to revive hope and public confidence. On Sudan and South Sudan, the delegation detailed the consultations being undertaken under the AU Panel and within the IGAD framework on outstanding issues including border demarcation, oil, Abyei and citizenship.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister noted that Eritrea, despite the imposition of UNSC sanctions, had continued its acts of destabilization including most recently the latest fatal attack on tourists. He pointed out that Eritrea continued to train, arm and support opposition and terrorist forces in the region and the international community must stringently implement the UN sanctions. Any claims by Eritrea about the Ethiopian Eritrean border issue were, of course, nonsense: Ethiopia fully and unconditionally accepts the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission decisions and believes dialogue is the way to resolve all issues with Eritrea and normalize relations that could lead to sustainable peace.

Mr Tuomioja pledged Finland's development support focusing on soil conservation and land management, education, health and other areas of mutual interest. He noted the progress achieved in Somalia and pledged Finland's support for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and for support of collaboration efforts by the international community. He appreciated Ethiopia's efforts to ensure an equitable utilization of the

waters of the Nile, and expressed gratitude for its support for Finland's bid to be a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for 2013-2014.

The Deputy Prime Minister also briefed Finland's Minister for International Development, Ms Heidi Hautala about the case of the two convicted Swede journalists, their breaking of the law and their conviction by due process of law. He provided details of the Anti-Corruption and of the Societies and Charities Laws, noting that Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Law was a copy of similar laws in developed democracies and its implementation was carried out according to both the letter and the spirit of the proclamation. Participation in politics was a right for citizens and, as in other countries, Ethiopia refuses to allow political groups to accept foreign funding. Democracy and human rights can only be strengthened through indigenous civil society supported by local constituencies. He emphasized that many NGOs were operating in Ethiopia, supporting public development efforts and protected by the rule of law. In this regard, he made it clear he appreciated the support from Finland for development based on mutual respect and benefit. Minister Hautala noted how her Ministry considered respect for human rights as a central element in all development co-operation.

During his visit, the Deputy Prime Minister also visited a number of Finnish companies including Nokia and attended presentations made by a number of other companies. He urged them to take advantage of the multi-faceted opportunities now available in Ethiopia particularly in the areas of telecommunications and infrastructure, geological surveys and mining, fertilizer development, solar energy and the disposal of waste and recycling. The delegation was briefed on the activities of the Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation (Finn Fund) which receives 90% of its budget from the Finnish Government. The fund is involved in various projects in different countries including the construction of the recently completed Radisson Hotel in Addis Ababa. The delegation urged the Fund to explore investment co-operation and joint ventures in the areas of tourism, food manufacturing and power generation.

The Deputy Premier also visited Demola to watch how students, companies and university professors were working on new ideas. It is described as an innovation engine run by value-creating professionals with the aim of unleashing the creativity of Finnish society. The Deputy Premier noted Ethiopia's interest in helping develop relationships between entrepreneurs and institutions to improve the quality of services through new innovations based on research. He hoped it would be possible to arrange twinning between Demola and Addis Ababa's Technology University. The Addis Ababa Technology University will also have a twinning partner in Tampere University which is famous for its technology and science programmes. A number of Ethiopians, including the Deputy Prime Minister himself, are graduates of the institution, which has been upgraded from the level of an institute to becoming one of the international universities in Finland. The University's Vice-President briefed the delegation on the achievements and plans of the University most of whose students come from Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere in the world. There are also plans for twinning Tampere with an Ethiopian city.

## NEPAD's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

A New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) Colloquium was held here on Wednesday [21<sup>st</sup> March] to commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the organization. Present were a number of NEPAD's founders and supporters including former Presidents of Nigeria and South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo and Thabo Mbeki, the former President of Ghana Jerry Rawlings, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr Jean Ping and other key stakeholders. The colloquium had the theme "Africa's Decade of Change: Accelerating NEPAD Implementation through Domestic Financing", and in a keynote speech, Prime Minister Meles pointed out that a key milestone for Africa's renewal had been achieved with NEPAD serving as a common and shared vision. "The NEPAD agenda has retained its significance and relevance 10 years on!" the Prime Minister said, adding that it represented the hallmark of Africa's desire to build a lasting development platform fully owned and led by Africans. "The journey so far", he added, "has been a learning experience since its establishment in 2001" and the process of reviewing the accomplishments of NEPAD provided important lessons with regard to sustainable development on the continent. The Prime Minister stressed that NEPAD had matured into the flagship development programme of the African Union. Its activities had promoted stronger African ownership through creative partnerships with African stakeholders and it had contributed immensely to the transformation of the policy design and implementation of Africa's development objectives. Africa faced complex and enormous challenges but it was moving towards better political consensus and policy coherence, and Prime Minister Meles said it was witnessing a new era of renewed momentum. The developmental state, he said, was playing a critical role in this process. Certainly, global realities continued to influence Africa's development outlook but equally Africa was showing continued economic growth. Among the reasons for this were good macro-economic governance and improved investor confidence. At the same time Africa must continue to build on its domestic resource base for self-reliance and ownership. Prime Minister Meles said the last decade in Africa had been a period of change and progress and the focus for the future must be the implementation of key programmes and projects in key sectors such as infrastructure, energy, agriculture and enhancing African ownership. NEPAD had a clear role to play.

## Sympathizing with the wrong-doer

Mr Charles Onyong-Obbo has recently written a couple of articles in an online magazine *The East African*, entitled "What grand mischief is Meles Zenawi up to now?" and "Ethiopia's ploy to get West to move on Eritrea". These were apparently written to investigate the causes of Ethiopia's alleged military actions and possible consequences. 'Alleged' because the author jumps between issues, invents 'facts', makes unwarranted assumptions and ignores Eritrea's behaviour, a rather critical element in any consideration of events in the Horn of Africa.

Mr Onyong-Obbo, of course, presents himself as someone privy to the sort of information only available to inner circles of government, but as his aim is to portray the pariah state of Eritrea in a positive light, he has to take the trouble of concocting fictions. His claim that Israel and Qatar are mediating between Ethiopia and Eritrea is complete nonsense. It has even been denied by President Isaias. Similarly, his claims that the five tourists recently killed in the Afar region were killed in an exchange of fire between Ethiopian security forces and ARDUF guerrillas, bears no relation to what

really happened when ARDUF terrorists stormed the camp, deliberately killing five of the tourists and taking two others hostage along with two other Ethiopians. Mr Onyang-Obbo's version tells us more about his own views than the reality of what happened to the tourists.

Mr Obong-Obbo not only invents, he also manages to shut his eyes to facts that are obvious to everyone else. He appears oblivious to the destabilizing activities of Eritrea when he writes: "Eritrea's regime continues to be treated with suspicion by other countries of the region", failing to mention that it has gone to war with all its neighbours and continues to be engaged in all kinds of hostilities towards them. He ignores the fact that Eritrea's links to the Al Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab militants has been unequivocally confirmed by the UN Monitoring Group's reports, which led to the imposition of sanctions by the UN Security Council in 2009 and 2011. Most surprising is the author's claims about the recent Ethiopian carefully proportional military measures against Eritrea. In the article "Ethiopia's ploy to move the West on Eritrea" he suggests Ethiopia was staging a ploy to get the West to intervene as the major powers close ranks with Al Shabaab. It hardly needs the comment that the world has labelled Al-Shabaab as a terrorist group and a threat to peace in the region and the world.

Ethiopia has, of course, urged the international community time and again to stop Eritrea from destabilizing the region and put a stop to the regime's hegemonic aspirations and its belligerent foreign policy. The international community at various levels, including the Security Council, the AU and IGAD, has condemned Eritrea's activities, but the regime has largely ignored their actions. It has continued to attack civilian and infrastructural targets, abduct tourists and others, and transgress the territorial integrity of its main target, Ethiopia, through surrogate terrorist groups. Despite this, Ethiopia has continued to try to find peaceful solutions through dialogue with Eritrea, ignoring the numerous attempts that might have warranted military measures. The tipping point was, however, finally reached when an Eritrean surrogate group attacked, killed and abducted European tourists in the Afar region. This effectively constituted an act of war entitling a sovereign state to an act of self-defence in accordance with Article 51 of the UN charter. Ethiopia then took a careful, calculated, restrained and proportional measure on 15<sup>th</sup> March, targeting three military camps where terrorist groups were being given training by Eritrean regular army units. The idea that this was intended, as Mr Obong-Obbo suggests, to embroil the west in a military intervention is bizarre and absurd. It also ignores the fact of Ethiopia's firm adherence to collective security and its vehement opposition to any use of force.

Indeed, Ethiopia's principled commitment to collective security is also evident in its continued referral of Eritrean activities to the Security Council, as well as in its repeated calls for peace talks and a dialogue on the demarcation of the Eritrean Ethiopian Boundary Commission's decisions. Any measures taken by Ethiopia are designed to protect the security of its citizens as well as send a message to Asmara that their attempts to destabilize Ethiopia will not be left unanswered. Equally, it has also made it clear that it has no intention of escalating the problem and that it has no belligerent intentions. What this conveys to the international community, is the need to tighten diplomatic pressures on Eritrea to prevent its destabilizing activity. Ethiopia will not continue to sit like a victim with its arms folded, but this is not to suggest that it is opting for any outright military intervention. Indeed, its actions make it quite clear this is not the case.

Mr. Obong-Obbo is clearly trying to get support for Eritrea using false information, twisted arguments and invented facts. His motives are transparent. It is a futile attempt to gain sympathy for a rogue nation, now widely identified as a regional spoiler and isolated for its behaviour.

### **President Isaias' El Dorado and the CIA**

President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea is known for his lengthy lectures on a number of issues that have little relevance to impoverished Eritrea, while being decidedly circumspect on issues that mean a lot to the day-to-day lives of ordinary Eritreans. President Isaias' penchant for quasi philosophical musings about 'the larger scheme of things in international politics' is certainly hysterical. Everything that he deals with in any of his interviews—generous offer to his people from a very busy leader, as the Eritrean media likes to refer to them—smacks of a tabloid-type conspiracy theory. This would not have been much of a problem except for the fact that his people are undergoing tremendous amounts of abuse while he harangues them for not being patient enough. President Isaias has of course made it a habit to blame his people, whom he nonchalantly refers to as 'the people of this country', for not being able to rejoice at the sight of their children being paraded in humiliation in the name of national service. He has made it a habit to blame them for failing to see the beauty or the wisdom of wallowing in poverty in the name of self-reliance and voting by their feet to leave their beloved Eritrea in droves. He has made it a habit to call them all kinds of names for failing to grasp the notion of 'miraculous economic growth under PFDJ' in the midst of interminable violence perpetrated on them by the very party led and owned by President Isaias. Anyone who disagrees with president Isaias - even if the entire population does, which is pretty much the case anyway - must be an enemy out to get President Isaias and his wonderful policies. He has enemies everywhere - prime among them are the US Government, the CIA and Ethiopia, not to mention the UN and whoever happens to vote against his regime's destabilization adventures in the Horn region. He is quite simply the text book example of what psychologists would call a paranoid. This has been the case for quite some time now, with President Isaias often changing residences to avoid being hit by CIA missiles. If the reality is any guide, President Isaias must fancy himself to be an accomplished survivor. Few would disagree.

As his recent mumbo-jumbo of an interview made it clear, not only has President Isaias taken his paranoia to the next level but he also appears as poised as ever to deftly shuffle his cards to raise his chance of surviving any crisis that might come his way. Except that his confidence is visibly wearing thinner. His recent interview was meant to explain the circumstances that led to Ethiopia's recent attacks against terrorist camps within Eritrea and to lay bare, as it were, what he said was part of a systematic campaign to dismantle the Eritrean state and to derail Eritrea's rapid stride towards economic progress, which he said was turning the likes of the US green with envy. He belittled what he claimed was Ethiopia's 'scavenging' for excuses to deflect attention away from its internal problems, his usual refrain for a long time now. He was very angry with the reporter for asking him about the details of the specific Ethiopian attacks while hastening to add that "all who were there know the truth." That is vintage Isaias in many ways. He tends to be stubborn, if challenged, as he once put it to an erstwhile friend among the many western journalists once supportive of Eritrea's leader. But the most important message he tried hard to convey was that the attack was not Ethiopia's own initiative as the country is already in "intensive care unit" cared for by the US and

its allies. It was rather the handiwork of the US, and more specifically the CIA which, according to Ato Isaias, has no other assignment these days than effecting regime change in Eritrea through unsuccessfully. This, interestingly, it does through hoodwinking Eritrean youths into giving up their land for a non-existent rosy future in the west. The CIA is to blame for the Eritrean youths' desperate flight from President Isaias' cruel repression at home. The message could not have been meant for the rest of the world to believe that it was indeed the US, not Ethiopia, which was responsible for the attack. The message was rather for the Eritrean people - that there are so many things that Eritrea has in abundance that the US and its allies are straining every nerve and muscle to dispossess Eritrea of. In a word, the US is after Eritrea's 'massive' gold reserves.

So, according to Ato Isaias, Ethiopia's attack, though a clear case of scavenging for excuses, was part of the CIA's orchestrated effort to dismantle Eritrea out of what he calls a sense of desperation at its failure to weaken Eritrea through sanctions. The sanctions have utterly failed, because Eritrea is making more and more progress by the day, despite a series of them having been imposed on the regime. The US and its allies are worried and even desperate because, Eritrea which has weathered so many storms without any ounce of gold is finally becoming absolutely unbeatable with its new gold finds. He even resorted to downright lying when he said that there had been dozens of attacks before the one on 15<sup>th</sup> March, which he bragged had repeatedly been repulsed by Eritrea. All of these were about gold, he told his audience. President Isaias knows the CIA would not buy this because that is not the case. Ethiopia would not buy it because that was not the case. This was rather meant to cajole the Eritrean people into believing that if only they could endure yet more years of humiliation under President Isaias, all would be a bed of roses, what with the tonnes of gold that is lying beneath Eritrean soil. This appears to be the only trick President Isaias is left with to get a new lease on life. And he added, for good measure, that he would not be dragged into escalation of the conflict because he cares more about the economic wonders and other peace dividends his country is making than responding to Ethiopia's—and CIA—provocations.

It would be a relief to many Eritreans indeed if this was really a change of heart from the President except that it is anything but. President Isaias did not and would not escalate because his survival would be at stake, not Eritrea's. He would rather keep on creating phantom enemies to prolong his repressive rule than risk exposing his vulnerability to those he fears most: his own disgruntled comrades in arms and those Eritreans who might dare to lift a finger against him. But by openly talking down any bravado over the matter, what President Isaias did was not so much show his peaceful side to the world as his utter powerlessness in the face of the slightest of moves against his regime. No amount of glittering talk about an Eritrean version of El Dorado is going to make President Isaias any less vulnerable than he actually is.

## News and Views

### Ethiopia hosts the 10<sup>th</sup> African Digital Conference

This week, Addis Ababa has been hosting the 10<sup>th</sup> African Digital Conference with some 300 ICT professionals, experts and other interested parties drawn from numerous countries. Opening the meeting, the Director of ICT and the Science and Technology Division in the UN's Economic Commission for Africa, Opoku Minsah, noted that Ethiopia was one of the African countries that had successfully developed ICT programmes arising from its ICT policies and strategies. The Ethiopian government, indeed, recognized the importance of optimizing the use of ICT tools in its efforts to reduce poverty. One such example, he said, was the government's school-net programme connecting all secondary and preparatory schools in the country and enabling pupils all across the country to have access to quality education through ICT tools.

Director Minsah underlined the fact that another illustration of the innovative use of ICT tools could be found in the agricultural sector and was specifically focused on rural communities. He pointed out that investments had been made to realize the availability of access in lower level administrative structures. This, he said, was intended to enhance training for farmers in the use of improved agricultural inputs and provide them with **timely information on markets for agricultural products**.

Ethiopia's Communication and Information Technology Minister, Dr Debretsion Gebremichael, emphasized that it had been necessity rather than choice that had encouraged Ethiopia's use of ITC tools. He said ICT had played a significant role in bringing about socio-economic development transformation in the country adding that Ethiopia had successfully been using ICT as a major tool to reduce poverty in particular and would continue to do so.

### Preparations to host the World Economic Forum in Addis Ababa well underway

The Head of the National Committee set up to oversee the organization of the forthcoming World Economic Forum said here on Tuesday [27<sup>th</sup> March] that preparations for the Forum were well underway. Professor Mekonnen Haddis told journalists that the committee was working closely with the business community and the media and was now in process of finalizing preparations so that participants would have a profitable, pleasant and successful stay in Addis Ababa.

The World Economic Forum is a huge gathering of world business leaders and Ethiopia is hosting the meeting of the Forum between 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> May. Professor Mekonnen noted that up to a thousand people would be coming to Addis Ababa to participate in the discussions, and they would be able "to see a vibrant Ethiopia and its new face." Ethiopia had been chosen as a host in recognition of its recent transformation and development, reflected in the fact that it has been one of the few countries enjoying fast economic growth in the last few years (double digit growth for the last eight years) and one of few poised to meet all the Millennium Development Goal targets.

Under the theme of "Shaping Africa's Transformation", the Forum is expected to deliberate on strengthening leadership, accelerating investment, and scaling up

innovation in Africa as well as other issues. The occasion offers an immense opportunity to showcase the best of Ethiopia, the beauty of the country and of its people. It will reveal to the world its stability and provide the opportunity for local enterprises to network widely and to set up joint ventures with the international business community.

### **Kenya discovers its first oil deposits, in Turkana**

Kenya's President Mwai Kibaki announced on Monday [26<sup>th</sup> March] that oil had been discovered in the Turkana area, in Kenya's north-west. The President said that a British firm, Tullow Oil, had discovered oil deposits at a depth of between 846 and 1,041 metres. President Kibaki, who made the announcement at a ceremony giving details of the performance of Kenyan public agencies for the last financial year, said this was the first time Kenya had made such a discovery. It was, he added, very good news for his country. It was the beginning of a long journey to make the country an oil producer, and he pointed out that the process would take at least three years. The discovery when exploited will allow Kenya to join its regional neighbours - Uganda and Tanzania - on the list of potential oil-producing countries in the region. Kenya's Energy Minister, Kiraitu Murungi, said that the discovery, Tullow's first exploration in Kenya, came after a frustrating search that had eluded many previous explorers. It followed Tullow's confirmation that the rock structure in Turkana was similar to that in the area in Uganda where the company had earlier found oil. The Minister said he understood from the company that the oil deposits in Kenya might be even larger than those in Uganda. Tullow Oil said the deposits at Turkana had similar properties to the light waxy crude oil found in Uganda. It said it will now be drilling multiple wells to establish the commercial viability. The current well will also be drilled to a depth of approximately 2,700 metres to explore for deeper potential. In a press statement from London, Tullow's Director of Exploration, Angus McCoss, said the oil discovery in Kenya is an excellent start to the company's major exploration campaign in the East African rift basins of Kenya and Ethiopia.

### **Somali Peace Process Signatories Meet in Galkayo**

On Monday this week [26<sup>th</sup> March] in Galkayo, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Somalia, Ambassador Augustine Mahiga met with signatories of the Garowe principles including President Sheikh Sharif of the TFG, Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, the President of Puntland, Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud 'Faarole', and representatives from Galmudug and Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a (ASWJ). Participants discussed ways to complete the transition process, including implementation of the Roadmap and Garowe Principles, and the communiqué issued after the meeting stressed the need to move forward the peace process initiated with the implementation of Garowe Principles and to speed up the organization of development of the National Constituent Assembly, which is to be made up of 135 traditional leaders who should represent their clans according to the 4.5 formula. Each of the four major clans will have 30 clan elders, with 15 representatives for the minority clans, and these traditional leaders or clan elders will select the participants of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA) with the help of their communities, including religious leaders, youths, intellectuals, women, traders, and other civil society members. It has been agreed that the first meeting of the clan elders who will be selecting the delegates of their communities to approve the new constitution should be held in Mogadishu on 25<sup>th</sup> April.

## **Former Somali President, Abdullahi Yusuf, dies**

The former President of Somalia, Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, died on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March, in Abu Dhabi. He was 77 years of age. His body was later flown to Galkayo, his birthplace, where he was buried at a ceremony attended by TFG President Sheikh Sherif who succeeded him as President and the President of Puntland, Abdirahman Mohamed Mohamud 'Faroole'. Abdillahi Yusuf Ahmed is survived by his widow and four children. The people and Government of Ethiopia have expressed their heartfelt sorrow over his death. TFG Prime Minister, Abdiweli, said that the late Abdillahi Yusuf had spent most of his life dedicated to serving his country and the people of Somalia; he would be remembered for re-shaping the history of Somalia. Abdullahi Yusuf was born in the region of Puntland on 15<sup>th</sup> December 1934; he studied law at the Somali National University, and trained as an army officer in the Soviet Union and in Italy. He participated in an attempt to overthrow Siad Barre in 1978 and was forced to flee to Ethiopia where he played a major role in the setting up of the Somali Salvation Democratic Front. This obtained support from the then government of Ethiopia but his relationship with Colonel Mengistu's regime was ambivalent and he spent several years in jail there. In 1991 he returned to Somalia and expelled the extremist Al-ithaad Al-Islamiya from Bosasso to become a pre-eminent leader in Puntland. This became an autonomous territory in 1998 and Abdullahi Yusuf was appointed its first President by its Council of Elders. He served as president until October 2004, when he was elected President of Somalia by the National Assembly meeting in Mbagathi in Kenya, remaining president until after the Djibouti Accords in 2008. The people and Government of Ethiopia will always remember Abdulahi Yusuf's dedication to the causes of peace and stability in Somalia, and his efforts to extend his full support to the efforts Ethiopia had launched against extremism and terrorism in his country. He was a true Somali and a friend for the whole region.

## **Bill Gates praises Ethiopia's progress**

Prime Minister Meles held talks here this week [28<sup>th</sup> March] with a delegation led by Bill Gates, the founder and co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. During the discussions, the Prime Minister expressed his belief that the principles of the Foundation would contribute to enhancing development of the agriculture and health sectors in Ethiopia, and said that the Foundation's 'best practices', gained through long years of working in South East Asian countries combined with its principles would contribute to the achievement of the country's Growth and Transformation Plan. Mr Gates said that Ethiopia has registered a marked improvement in many areas and particularly in the health sector. The community health service which Ethiopia provides through the 34,000 health extension workers was exemplary, he noted, adding the health extension programme had created a lot of access to health services for the public. He said the Foundation would continue to assist Ethiopia in the health and agriculture sectors. The Ethiopian government had a priority to help its people in health and food security and that, he said, was a goal "we have in common." The Foundation will support the efforts of Ethiopia in the prevention and control of malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea, among others, he added. It will also continue to assist the activities of the government to boost agriculture productivity and ensure food security.

Mr Gates was in Addis Ababa for the first time to discuss with government officials and stakeholders the Foundation's activities and the country's health and agriculture

sectors. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation or the Gates Foundation, founded by Bill and Melinda Gates, is the largest operated private foundation in the world.