

News in brief

AU, IGAD and the UN call for immediate ceasefire and urgent dialogue in South Sudan
The French Foreign Trade Minister's official visit to Ethiopia
Ethio-Djibouti Border Administrators and Commissioners' Committee meeting
The new Somali Prime Minister endorsed by Parliament
Eritrea's efforts to lift sanctions: a mockery without changes in policy or behavior
Irrigation and Sugar Development: Growth and Transformation Plan performance.

News in Brief:

African Union/IGAD

Chairperson of the African Union (AU) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia, and the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, reiterate (December 25) AU's and IGAD's call for an immediate cessation of hostilities, and inclusive dialogue among all concerned stakeholders in South Sudan. Expressing their profound concern by reports of mobilization of tribal militias in South Sudan, The AU and IGAD noted that the situation threaten to further escalate the conflict and transform it into an exceptionally destructive inter-ethnic violence that would put in danger the very existence of South Sudan.

Ethiopia

Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Alemayehu Tegenu announced (December 24) most of the recommendations made by the International Panel of Experts (IPoE) on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) have been implemented while implementation of the remaining would be completed shortly.

Amount of revenue Ethiopia is securing from the horticulture sector is increasing year by year, the Ethiopian Horticulture Producers and Exporters Association reported (December 26). Association Chairperson Zelalem Mesele said the country has obtained 265.71 million USD during the 2011/12 year, which shows a 41.71 million USD increase compared to the previous year. Flowers constitute the biggest share in terms of revenue enabling the country to obtain 212.56 million USD, while the balance goes to vegetables, fruits and herbs.

Gilgel Gibe III hydro-power project will commence operation at the beginning of the coming Ethiopian New Year (September 2007), Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy said. 80 percent of the construction of the project has so far been finalized. The installation of Ethiopia-Kenya power transmission line will also be finalized in the coming two years, connecting Kenya to Ethiopia's power grid, according to the Ministry. In the first phase Ethiopia will export 400mw power. Currently the Kenya town of Moyale is getting power from Ethiopia.

Djibouti

Djibouti's Energy Minister, Ali Yacoub Mahamoud and the regional director of Shanghai Electric, Shi Shizhong, signed on Monday (December 16) an agreement for the construction of a 63KV power line. The 90km line links Ali-Sabieh and Nagad regions of the country. The completion of the project will boost supply of energy to the future railway line which will link Djibouti to Addis Ababa. In July, Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn launched the construction of Djibouti-Ethiopia electric railway line measuring 784 km.

Kenya

The 23rd extraordinary summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) member states held on Friday (December 27) in Nairobi. The extraordinary summit was expected to discuss the situation in South Sudan and Somalia. Heads of State and government from Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia were to converge at State House Nairobi.

Somalia

Somali Federal Members of Parliament approved Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed as the country's Prime Minister, following a vote in the Parliament on Saturday (December 23). The speaker of the parliament announced that 239 of the lawmakers voted in favor of the appointment. Shortly after being approved the new Prime Minister was sworn in the presence of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. "As the new Prime Minister tasked with forming a government, I promise to create an administration that will respect the constitution and the principle of good governance," President Ahmed said addressing the lawmakers.

An independent United Nations expert Shamsul Bari urged (December 27) the Somali Government to finalize and carry out a human rights roadmap endorsed by the cabinet in August 2013. The roadmap defines the Government's responsibilities and sets goals to be achieved in a short period of time. "Finalizing it would demonstrate a sincere commitment by Government to

rebuild the foundation and structures of human rights in Somalia,” Mr. Bari stated. He also called on the country’s new Prime Minister, Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, and the international community to seize the opportunity to build a new Somalia where “the rule of law and the respect of human rights for all Somalis would be the norm.”

Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed Mohame officially takes over responsibility and duties of the Office of The Prime Minister (December 26). Speaking during the handover ceremony he thanked the president, parliament and the outgoing Prime Minister H.E. Abdi Farah Shirdon for their support during transition. “I would like to assure the Somali people that we will put together a professional and transparent government that is committed to deliver public services”, the Prime Minister said adding that the government will utilize the available local knowledge and experience, and will set strategies to build institutional capacities for delivering concrete results to the Somali people.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud reiterated that Al Shabaab is still a danger to the Somali people. The President said this while he was addressing Somali National Army (SNA) commanders in Mogadishu (December 24). President Mohamud, added that the militant group is planning to turn Somalia an epicenter where they can launch attacks on the neighboring countries. "If we don't defeat Al Shabaab, they will seize this country and such issues can lurch the country backward but we will not allow them," Mohamud told the army commanders.

South Sudan

Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn and Kenyan President, Uhuru Kenyatta arrived (December 26) in Juba, South Sudan in an attempt to mediate between the government members of the ruling party and army who have defected. The two leaders concluded their first round of talks with President Salva Kiir. Consultations, which are part of regional efforts for solutions to the conflict in South Sudan, are continuing.

Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, Tedros Adhanom, told reporters in Juba (December 26) that the leaders of Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan discussed a range of issues. "The issues we discussed were among others: one is cessation of hostilities and the second is the immediate start of talks or dialogue to settle the issue politically, and the third issue is on the detainees who are suspects of the coup," he said. "Leaders also have underlined that the unconstitutional means to remove democratically elected government should be condemned, and any solution to this crisis should be through political dialogue and the IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on

Development] countries," he noted. "The two leaders who were here will do their best to resolve this problem amicably," he added.

The United Nations has expressed (December 26) hope that reinforcements including troops and critical assets such as helicopters will reach strife-torn South Sudan within the next two days, as it seeks to protect civilians in a conflict which has killed over 1,000 people. "We are in desperate need for improved capacity and strength to be able to implement the mandate (to protect civilians) in a much more proactive way," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative Hilde Johnson told a video news conference from Juba, South Sudan's capital.

Sudan

Sudanese president, Omer Al-Bashir, vowed to not postpone the general elections of 2015 saying "it will be held on time". Speaking to the members of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in Gadaref, eastern Sudan on Thursday (December 26) Bashir said that the elections will be held as scheduled and "will not be delayed even for one hour". Bashir also announced the ruling party would elect a new chairman soon adding this elected leader will be the NCP candidate for the presidential election of May 2015.

Presidential Assistant, Jaafar Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani said (December 25) the government's conduct of radical change in its executive and legislative structures targeted meeting impending challenges and popular aspirations. Al Mirghani also calls on the international community to back the trend. Regarding the on-going violence in South Sudan, the Presidential Assistant expressed sorrow, and said Sudan would continue efforts to contain it. He urges the warring parties to resort to dialogue.

AU, IGAD and the UN call for immediate ceasefire and urgent dialogue in South Sudan

Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, the Chair of the African Union and of IGAD, is leading African mediation efforts to find a peaceful solution for the political crisis in South Sudan. The Prime Minister, along with President Kenyatta of Kenya, traveled to Juba on Thursday (December 26) to meet the President of South Sudan, Salva Kiir, and other stake holders. The previous day, the Prime Minister and Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, reiterated the calls of the AU and of IGAD for an immediate cessation of hostilities in South Sudan. Their renewed call came against the background of rapidly escalating tension in South Sudan which led to the outbreak of armed conflict. The call for cessation of hostilities came on the basis of intensive consultations by the AU and IGAD with President

Salva Kiir and other South Sudanese stakeholders, as well as with a number of international actors, including the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, as well as the Special Envoy of the United States to Sudan and Norway.

In a joint statement, the AU and IGAD said they were profoundly concerned by reports of the mobilization of tribal militias in South Sudan. This threatened, the statement said, to further escalate the conflict and transform it into exceptionally destructive inter-ethnic violence that would put in danger the very existence of South Sudan. It noted that South Sudanese stakeholders should be fully cognizant of these perils and their responsibilities to save their young State. The AU and IGAD reiterated their call for both leaders to act with a sense of patriotism and responsibility towards the entire community of South Sudan. It said that in this Christmas season the AU and IGAD wished to emphasize the fundamental values of peace and respect for human life shared by all Africans, including the people of South Sudan, who have experienced the horror of war for far too long. The AU and IGAD reiterated the urgent imperative for an inclusive dialogue among all concerned stakeholders based on rejection of the use of force, respect for human rights and dignity, the rule of law and constitutional legality, and underlined their readiness to facilitate such a dialogue, building on the outcome of the visit undertaken earlier to Juba by the IGAD Ministerial delegation led by Dr. Tedros Adhanom, the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia. The AU and IGAD statement said they welcomes the expressed commitment of both sides to engage in dialogue and call on them to create a conducive environment for this, an environment which should be inclusive, and include detainees.

The aim of the emergency three- day visit, to Juba, South Sudan, by the IGAD delegation (December 19-21), led by Dr. Tedros, was to discuss ways to seek an all-inclusive and peaceful political settlement to the crisis and an end to the days of fighting. The delegation was made up of the Foreign Ministers of IGAD Member States: Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda; and was accompanied by the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, the Special Representative of the Secretary General for United Nations Mission in Sudan and a representative from the Africa Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP).

Meeting with South Sudanese President Salva Kiir, Dr. Tedros said that as fellow Africans, as concerned and supportive neighbors, and as custodians of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ushered in the birth of the independent Republic of South Sudan, the Foreign Ministers of IGAD Member States were gravely concerned at the unfortunate events that had taken place on December 15. They expressed their profound concern at the deteriorating situation and appealed for an immediate cessation of hostilities by all parties and a return to peaceful political dialogue, in an inclusive and holistic manner. They said they were deeply concerned about threats to the lives of civilians and called on all parties to protect civilians and respect human rights. They also called on all political leaders to exercise maximum restraint. They further expressed their solidarity to the people of South Sudan in this time of distress and tribulation, and affirmed their determination to do all necessary to assist the leaders of South Sudan to resolve the current crisis in a peaceful and expeditious manner so South Sudan could enjoy the fruit of its independence. They had come to Juba, they said, was to fully understand the situation in South Sudan; to get first-hand information of the situation on the ground; to hear the government's proposals for the way forward and for a solution to the problems; and to help find

an inclusive and peaceful political solution to calm tensions after the week of ethnic strife that was estimated to have killed hundreds.

President Salva Kiir thanked the delegation for their visit and provided its members with detailed information on how and when the conflict occurred. President Kiir, said an attempted coup had triggered the violence and placed the blame on the former Vice-President Riek Machar. Salva Kiir reminded the delegation that he and Riek Mackar were former rebel fighters and senior figures in the governing Sudan People's Liberation Movement, which had led South Sudan to independence after a civil war with the government in Khartoum that lasted 22 years. However, divisions were revealed within the SPLM earlier this month when the former Vice-President denounced what he called the President's "dictatorial" behaviour.

President Salva Kiir revealed that he had foiled a coup orchestrated by a disgruntled faction in the army which had backed the former Vice-President who had been sacked in July when the President dismissed his entire cabinet. The President said the coup plotters had moved into action after an SPLM meeting in Juba. An unidentified person had fired some shots in the air and this had been followed a little later by an attack on the army headquarters. The President said the next day that the SPLM was fully committed to the peaceful and democratic transfer of power and would never allow political power to be transferred through violence. In addition, he added that the government was in "full control of the security situation", though the authorities also found it necessary to move swiftly to impose a dusk-to-dawn curfew, suggesting that the coup plotters had caused real panic. In talking to the IGAD delegation, the President said that the situation was manageable, but he also expressed his deep concern that hostilities were escalating and tribal and civil war might occur unexpectedly. Former Vice-President Machar himself has denied any involvement in a coup. He has said he was unaware of any attempt, and he blamed President Salva Kiir for fabricating these allegations to settle political scores and target political opponents.

Following the discussions, the President committed himself to take a number of specific actions, including unconditional dialogue with former Vice-President Machar and other political leaders in South Sudan who had disagreed with their government's position; a cessation of hostilities; to using the good offices of IGAD to contact Dr. Riek Machar and other members of the opposition, including Mme. Rebecca Nyanden. He said the armed forces of the Government of Republic of South Sudan will ensure protection of civilians and humanitarian workers; and that the dispute should remain exclusively at the political level and not become an ethnic, sectarian or tribal conflict. The delegation, led by Dr. Tedros, said it appreciated President Kiir's frankness and his readiness to take the road of dialogue.

The delegation also met with Mme Rebecca Nyandeng De Mabior, widow of the late Dr. John Garang, and briefed her about the outcome of their meeting with President Kiir. She also appealed for restraint and stated her determination to deal with political differences through dialogue. The Foreign Ministers explained the IGAD delegation would contact Riek Machar immediately and explore the opportunities for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. At the same time, the delegation unreservedly condemned the killing of civilians and United Nations peacekeepers and extended their condolences to the families of those who had died. They called on all armed groups to respect the laws of war, including the protected status of peacekeepers

and humanitarians. They further urged all parties to refrain from steps that might inflame the conflict along ethnic and sectarian lines. The delegation said it was confident that an opportunity existed for the tide of conflict to be turned, and that the leaders of South Sudan had the chance to return to peaceful political dialogue. The members of the delegation said they were sure that the will for peace was strong and that patriotic and principled leadership could bring South Sudan back from the brink of disaster. Dr. Tedros emphasized that the crisis in South Sudan could only be resolved by peaceful political action.

At a press conference the delegation expressed its determination to remain closely engaged with the situation in South Sudan and said it would remain in daily contact with South Sudan's leaders. It would be available to return as needed, which IGAD has done with the visit of the leadership of its current chair, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta in Juba on December 26.. The members also underlined their commitment to facilitate political dialogue among the South Sudanese, with the immediate aim of ending violence and threats of violence, ensuring the protection of civilians and the safe delivery of humanitarian supplies, as well as the longer term goal of ensuring that the issues of political agreement, societal reconciliation, constitution-making, and inclusive and holistic national dialogue, were all addressed in such a way that South Sudan can achieve peace, stability, democracy and development. The IGAD ministers said they greatly appreciated the support IGAD had from the AU and the UN and urged these bodies to continue their support. They said IGAD stands ready to provide concrete support including a venue and necessary facilities for dialogue to commence within the next few days. The attempt of mediation between the different stakeholders continued on December 26 with the discussion between Prime Minister Hailemariam, President Uhuru and President Salva Kiir on ways to find peaceful solution to the crisis. After the consultation ended Ethiopian Foreign minister, Dr. Tedros told reporters in Juba (December 26) that the leaders of Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan discussed a range of issues. "The issues we discussed were among others: one is cessation of hostilities and the second is the immediate start of talks or dialogue to settle the issue politically, and the third issue is on the detainees who are suspects of the coup," he said. "Leaders also have underlined that the unconstitutional means to remove democratically elected government should be condemned, and any solution to this crisis should be through political dialogue and the IGAD [Intergovernmental Authority on Development] countries," he noted. "The two leaders who were here will do their best to resolve this problem amicably," he added. IGAD continued its 23rd extraordinary summit on Friday (December 27) in Nairobi. The extraordinary summit was expected to discuss the situation in South Sudan. Heads of State and government from Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia were to converge at State House Nairobi.

The positions sanctioned by the two parties in the conflict create difficulty to start dialogue for the time being, however. President Kiir said he was willing to sit down unconditionally and discuss with the former Vice-President, but speaking from unknown place, Dr. Machar, who also said he was ready for dialogue and was determined to end the fighting that had killed hundreds of people and driven thousands from their homes, insisted that his detained allies including Pagan Amum were freed. He said they should be allowed to go to Addis Ababa. Once that happened, then dialogue could start immediately. The government, however, has made it clear it will not accept any demand for the release of politicians detained over the "foiled coup".

President Kiir said because they were criminal, there was "no way we will release anybody who is accused of a *coup d'état*", adding "we are only ready to negotiate with him unconditionally."

The clashes which started in Juba on December 15 have now gone into a second week, reaching the country's vital oil fields and destabilizing Africa's newest state. With no talks, fighting has continued to rage in the eastern parts of the country, and much of Jonglie, Unity and the Upper Blue Nile states have fallen under Dr. Machar's forces. The Government forces on December 24 however, announced that they re-take the city of Bor, Capital of Jonglie. The major concern is now the potential escalation of the crisis and of violence. According to officials, thousands of people have been killed since violence erupted, and thousands of people have been sheltering in United Nations buildings in Juba, for example, after fleeing their homes. Fighting between military factions have spread from the capital to other areas, raising fears of a slide into civil war, and underlining that the difficulties in healing the fractures within the country will be great, and will take a long time to achieve.

On Tuesday, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2132 (2013) to increase the UN Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS). The Security Council condemned the fighting and targeted violence against civilians and specific ethnic and other communities which have resulted in hundreds of deaths and casualties and tens of thousands of displaced persons. It also condemned reported human rights violations and abuses by all parties, including armed groups and national security forces, and emphasizing that those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be held accountable. The Security Council commended the IGAD Ministerial Group initiative seeking to open dialogue and mediate between key leaders, and urged all parties to cooperate, and the steps taken by UNMISS to implement its mandate and give refuge to civilians caught in the fighting. The Council noted that the situation in South Sudan was a threat to international peace and security and called for immediate cessation of hostilities and to increase the force levels of UNMISS. It therefore decided to increase UNMISS' military component up to 12,500 troops of all ranks, as well as a police component up to 1,323, and also authorized the appropriate transfer of troops, force enablers and multipliers from other UN missions, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the Interim Security Force for Abyei, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire and the UN Mission in Liberia.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon welcomed the urgency and collective resolve of the Security Council and said he was "determined" to ensure that UNMISS had the means to carry out its central task of protecting civilians. Expressing deep concern about the reports of ethnically targeted violence, including extrajudicial killings and mass graves, he said there was no military solution to the conflict. It was, he said, a political crisis and it required a peaceful, political solution, adding that United Nations was working closely with parties on the ground to establish a basis for negotiations. The Secretary-General said now was the time for South Sudan's leaders to show their people and the world that they were committed to preserving the unity of the nation that was born out of their long struggle for independence.

The French Foreign Trade Minister's official visit to Ethiopia

Senator Nicole Bricq, French Foreign Trade Minister, paid an official visit to Ethiopia at the head of a substantial French business delegation on December 19 and 20. The Foreign Trade Minister's two-day visit was in line with the commitment made by the French Government at the economic segment of the Elysée Summit for Peace and Security earlier in the month, to further strengthen the existing close relations between France and Africa. The economic conference held in Paris on December 4, under the theme "For a new model of economic partnership between Africa and France", included 560 French and African entrepreneurs, Ministers and Heads of State, aimed at laying the corner stone of a new economic partnership. The high level Ethiopian delegation which participated in this conference revealed the various opportunities that Ethiopia presented for French investors, and emphasized the Ethiopian government's commitment to support investment initiatives. In consequence, the Minister made Ethiopia a priority destination on her tour of Sub-Sahara African countries.

The French Minister of Foreign Trade, Mme. Bricq, reiterated the determination of the French Government to further enhance the economic, financial and commercial relations between France and Ethiopia. To that end, Mme. Bricq was accompanied by representatives of 25 French companies, large and small. These covered a large range of expertise, experience and know-how in areas such as power generation and transportation, renewable energy, aviation, logistics, security systems, telecommunication systems and services, road construction equipment, water and waste management, engineering and equipment, banking services, satellite insallation, and services, cosmetics, consumer goods, nutrition, urban transport, certification capacity, agro-industry and engineering for infrastructure development.

Mme. Bricq, together with Minister of Communication and Information Technology with the rank of Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Debretsion Gebremichael, co-chaired the opening session of the first "France- Ethiopian Business Forum" that brought together over 220 participants on December 19. The Forum, organized in collaboration with the Ethiopian and the Addis Ababa Chambers of Commerce, as well as the French Trade Commission, UbiFrance, aimed at creating favorable conditions for the emergence of a commercial and industrial partnership between the business communities of both countries. At the opening ceremony, Mme. Bricq underlined the fact that France is working to triple its trade ties with Ethiopia in the next three years. She noted that Ethiopia was one of the countries registering the fastest economic growth in Africa and stated that France wanted to be present where there is such development.. She committed the French state to the provision of guarantees for all projects that could be developed in Ethiopia through COFACE. COFACE is a globally operating credit insurer, offering companies' solutions to protect them against the risk of financial defaults by their clients. Dr. Debretsion responded by underlining the readiness of Ethiopia to work in harmony with France on power supplies, in relation to the rapid increase of electricity demand.

During her visit, the French Minister of Foreign Trade and Ethiopia's Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Sufian Ahmed, signed two loan agreements for 70 million Euros, granted by the French Development Agency for the implementation of two projects in the field of energy and waste management. According to the agreements, one 50 million Euro loan will be

allocated to finance the reinforcement of power transmission networks which include the construction of 62km of a 400kv high-voltage power transmission line on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, linking Debre Zeit, Dukem, Modjo and Ginchi; and the other 20 million Euros will be used to support the Addis Ababa City Administration's waste management program, financing the establishment of heavy infrastructure for waste management, including the completion of a technical landfill and three transfer stations for grouping, sorting and recycling waste.

Mme. Bricq during her stay in Ethiopia also held discussions with Prime Minister Hailemariam on ways to strengthen bilateral economic relations. Mme. Bricq congratulated Ethiopia on the remarkable and concrete achievements registered in sustainable growth, in the reduction of inflation and in paving the way for the emergence of a middle class in the country. She praised Prime Minister Hailemariam for his personal engagement with French companies working in Ethiopia and for addressing their concerns; she noted the readiness of a number of French companies to provide their services to Ethiopia. She added that as Ethiopia's vision for development went far beyond its borders, France would like to accompany its march to becoming a regional economic power house. Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed the Minister and expressed his appreciation that she had brought such a large business delegation with her. He indicated that Ethiopia considers France as a strategic partner and asserted that there were ample areas of possible cooperation and engagement which Ethiopia would encourage. Prime Minister Hailemariam recalled that renowned French companies were already engaged in the energy sector in Ethiopia, including ALSTOM which was involved in the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. He called on French companies to engage further in the energy sector, and in infrastructure and logistics, especially for both the national railway corporation and for the Addis Ababa light rail network.

Before the completion of her two day official visit, Mme. Bricq visited Hilina PLC, a French-Ethiopian firm specializing in producing enriched food to combat malnutrition, where she was accompanied by the Vice-Ministers of Agriculture, of Trade and of Industry; and also the Ashegoda Wind Farm, where she was accompanied by the Minister of Energy and Water.

Mme. Bricq's visit closes a very fruitful year for France-Ethiopian relationship. Prime Minister Hailemariam had met French President, François Hollande, three times this year, while Ethiopian authorities had also hosted the visits of the French Minister of Foreign affairs, Mr. Laurent Fabius, the Minister in charge of Development, Mr. Pascal Canfin, and of two senatorial delegations have all visited Ethiopia. This trend of frequent exchange of visits is an illustration of the willingness of the two countries to strengthen their relationship further. France has been a good market for Ethiopian commodities and vice-versa. In 2012, total trade between the two countries grew to over two billion birr; up from 0.73 billion birr five years earlier. The balance, however, remains firmly in favor of France with Ethiopian exports amounting to just 210 million birr last year and imports from France reaching 1.81 billion birr. Ethiopia, however, is France's 11th-biggest customer and its 13th leading supplier.

Ethio-Djibouti Border Administrators and Commissioners' Committee meeting

The 20th Ethio-Djibouti Border Administrators and Commissioners' Committee meeting was held in Semera, the capital of the Afar National Regional State from December 16 to December 18. The Ethiopian delegation was led by Ato Getachew Hailegiorgis, Director of the Immigration and Nationality Affairs' Main Department, and the Djiboutian delegation by Sirag Omar Abdulkadir, Secretary General of Djibouti's Ministry of Interior. The Meeting heard the reports of various sub-committees and discussed a range of issues relating to the cross-border movement of goods and persons, cross-border trade, contraband trade, peace and security, illegal migration and human trafficking, human and animal health, agriculture and cross-border bus transport.

Ismail Ali Sero, President of the Afar Regional State in a welcoming speech underscored the special relationship that the two countries had established over the years to the benefit of both their peoples. Ato Getachew underlined the excellent bilateral relations existing between the two countries and expressed the satisfaction of the Ethiopian government over the level of mutual cooperation between Ethiopia and Djibouti. He called on participants at the meeting to work on the issues of major importance in order to further bolster convergence. Sirag Omar Abdulkadir, the head of the Djiboutian delegation, noted the vital importance of the Border Commission as a link between the two countries and underlined the way it offered a great opportunity to produce and reinvigorate a new spirit which could achieve greater integration and enhance unity within African countries.

In the following discussions, the two sides' appraisal of the activities of the sub-committees identified problems over the regularity of holding meetings at almost all the border posts. They also noted that failure of the sub-committees to discharge their responsibilities properly had led to the referral of minor cases, which should have been solved at sub-committee level, to the center. The two sides agreed to reactivate sub-committees and implement their duties in resolving problems that might arise in cross-border trade and movement of people. The Djiboutian side proposed to establish a border post at Balho-Eli Daar, taking into account ongoing joint projects including the Port of Tajourah development, and the Tajourah to Mekelle road transport project. Ethiopia agreed with the suggestion which will now be raised at the next Joint Ministerial Commission meeting.

With regard to the movement of pastoralists, both sides reported that these being carried out on both sides in a cordial and cooperative spirit. They agreed to further strengthen this cooperation. The two sides agreed to investigate an incident of cattle rustling reported by Djibouti; and the Ethiopian delegation agreed to appoint contact persons from the Somali and Afar Regional States to verify the matter. Taking account of the value of customary law in resolution of disputes, the two sides agreed to invite local elders to the next meeting of the Commission and Border Administrators. The two sides expressed their satisfaction over the smooth flow of tourists from their respective countries. The Djibouti delegation raised concerns over the smallness of the maximum limit of Ethiopian birr being taken in and out by Djiboutian tourists. The Ethiopian side promised to look into the issue and address it in a manner that took account of the special bilateral relations between the two countries.

The meeting also deliberated over the status of the negotiations on the draft Border Trade Protocol and, in their discussion regarding cross-border trade, agreed to expedite the negotiation process. They both agreed to exchange through diplomatic channels the list of commodities to be annexed to the Border Trade Protocol which is expected to be signed between the two countries at the next Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting. In regard to fighting illicit or contraband trade, both sides noted the adverse effect of these activities of their respective national economies, and agreed on the need for joint efforts to control contraband and illicit trade. Underling the importance of producing mutually reinforcing measures to tackle these activities, the Ethiopian side noted that the joint committee, led by the Trade Ministries of the two countries, is expected to find a solution to the problem.

In an effort to increase the connections between the two people living along the border of the two countries, the Ethiopian side requested the Djiboutian to comment on the Draft Protocol for Cross Border Transport as soon as possible. It informed the meeting that the preparation of the construction of the road connecting Dire Dawa to Dewele had been completed, that the contract had been awarded, and that construction would very soon begin. The Djiboutian side noted that the introduction of third party insurance in Ethiopia was important step for starting up a cross-border transport service.

Referring to human trafficking and illegal migration, the Ethiopian side briefed the meeting on the various efforts under way in Ethiopia to address these. Noting the fact that economic deprivation was the main factor behind illegal migration, the delegation detailed the Ethiopian government's war on poverty, pointing out that a national committee, organized down to grassroots levels was working to create awareness among the population about illegal migration and human trafficking. It also explained the efforts being made to consolidate and strengthen border controls at different places and bring human traffickers to justice. The Ethiopian delegation thanked the Djiboutian side for the humane treatment accorded to Ethiopian migrants and requested Djibouti to continue to maintain this treatment. The Djibouti delegation acknowledged the efforts of Ethiopian government to combat the problem and underlined the need for coordinated effort in exchanges of information. The two sides agreed on the negative impact of illegal migration and its effects as a security and health risk that depleted the limited resources of both countries. While appreciating the current activities of liaison officers, they also agreed on the need for close working relations and coordination between the law enforcement bodies of both states to reinforce border control and bring human traffickers to justice.

In relation to human health, the two sides agreed not to allow in travelers without yellow fever vaccination certificates, except for children below the age of 10. To control illegal smuggling of drugs and medical equipment, they agreed to work closely to coordinate activities and to dispose of all confiscated drugs. Ethiopia promised to offer capacity building training to Djibouti inspectors and to hold experience-sharing visits. To coordinate humanitarian assistance for infectious disease victims in border areas, the two sides agreed immigration officials should allow medical personnel to cross the borders. The Djiboutian delegation proposed a joint immunization program along the common border; which the Ethiopian delegation promised to make a consultation on it with the relevant government authorities. Looking at illegal trade in agriculture and livestock, the two sides agreed to take a number of measures related to the

exchange of information, to assign veterinary personnel, and strengthen quarantine services for livestock and livestock products, for crops and horticulture products, as well as improve the transportation processes for live animals, especially camels, and arrange visits to agricultural and livestock export centers and share experiences.

At the conclusion of the 20th Ethio-Djibouti Border Administrators and Commissioners' meeting, the delegations agreed to hold their next meeting in Tadjoura, in Djibouti, at a date to be decided later.

The new Somali Prime Minister endorsed by Parliament

The Federal Parliament of Somalia on Saturday (December 21) endorsed the nomination of the new Prime Minister, Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, appointed by the President just over a week earlier. The parliamentary session was attended by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud who appealed to MPs to confirm his choice as Prime Minister. 239 MPs voted in favour of the appointment out of 243 present with two voting against and two abstaining. The Speaker of the Federal Parliament Mohamed Osman Jawari announced the results. The new Prime Minister promised to bring stability to the nation and continue to eliminate terrorists and armed gangs that threatened the peace of the country. He said after the vote that he was very grateful to parliament for endorsing his nomination, and promised to work for the development of the country, and "to form a cabinet of high quality soon." He has to bring the names of the cabinet before Parliament within thirty days.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, congratulated the new Prime Minister on his appointment pointing out that he was taking office as Somalia approaches 2014, "which will be a pivotal year in Somalia's progress towards peace and prosperity." He said the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) would continue to support the Federal Government in its peace- and state-building efforts. He said he understood that Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed would now consult widely in forming his new cabinet, and "aim to establish a broadly inclusive government capable of delivering rule of law, good governance and public services." He urged Parliament, the Government and the Presidency to continue to work constructively together in full respect of the Provisional Federal Constitution, and praised the responsible role being played by the Federal Parliament.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn also extended his warmest congratulations to Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, who officially took office one day after he won the confidence of parliament, on behalf of the people and the government of Ethiopia and of himself. He said "It is my conviction that, under your leadership the existing friendly relationship between our two sisterly countries will be further strengthened for the mutual benefit of our brotherly peoples."

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Somalia, Ambassador Wondimu Asamnew, said last week that all-round relations between Ethiopia and Somalia had been gaining momentum. He noted that both nations had now developed a new type of relationship between their governments and their peoples, demonstrating all-round cooperation paying no attention to the scars left by past

regimes. Since 1991, the two countries had entered a new stage of working for mutual cooperation, which Ambassador Wondimu said had allowed the relationship to build on a solid foundation. They currently enjoyed consolidated relations in the areas of peace, security and economy on the basis of mutual trust and benefit. Ambassador Wondimu noted that the people and government of Somalia had solid trust and confidence that the people and government of Ethiopia were cooperating in the areas of peace, security, economy and politics. There are also agreements at ministerial level to ensure a healthy economic integration, he added. He said that the people and government of Somalia gave credit to the sacrifices paid by the Ethiopian forces to maintain peace and security in their country. Businesses and other socio-economic and political activities were now running smoothly and calmly after the entrance of the Ethiopian forces into Somalia at the request of the government and people of Somalia.

Ambassador Wondimu also said that Al-Shabaab and other anti-peace elements in Somalia had been losing ground inside the country: "Al-Shabaab is weakened. The only thing that it can do now is to carry out suicide attacks." The Ambassador said the joint efforts by the Ethiopian and Somali Government forces, as well as the sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council on the Eritrean regime, all played key roles in weakening Al-Shabab. It was therefore imperative, he said, for the international community and other concerned bodies to tighten and implement the sanctions on Eritrea to help ensure the prevailing peace and stability in Somalia.

Eritrea's efforts to lift sanctions: a mockery without changes in policy or behavior

Eritrea has recently engaged in a heightened diplomatic spree to lift UN sanctions. Eritrean diplomats have been making high-sounding talks about their country's desire to uphold peace in the region, and to form strong ties with other states. They have been publicly claiming they want to rejoin the regional body IGAD. This same government that called IGAD a stooge organization only a few years ago in 2007 is now seeking to rejoin the regional body. A government that is still bent on destabilizing the region is seeking an end to its isolation. In fact, the calculated aim of all these diplomatic efforts is to assist in their mission of bringing an end to the sanctions regime. At the same time, the entire exercise is being conducted on a purely tactical level, manifest in diplomatic niceties but without any substantive behavioral changes, or alterations in policy.

It is public knowledge that the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Eritrea for inimical acts which threatened international peace. The sanctions imposed in 2009, under UN Resolution 1907, were imposed because Eritrea was "providing support to the armed groups engaged in destabilization activities in Somalia and undermining the peace and reconciliation efforts as well as regional stability." The whole range of sanctions, including an arms embargo, the freezing of assets and a travel ban on selected individuals, were imposed on Eritrea for its support to the Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist organization, Al Shabaab, and other armed groups. The other major reason for sanctions was related to the border dispute with Djibouti and Eritrea's total rejection of all calls for negotiation over its unprovoked attack and invasion of Djibouti territory. As the behaviour of the Eritrean regime worsened, as fully reported in the UN Monitoring Group successive reports on Somalia and Eritrea, the Security Council tightened the sanctions to

include among other things both coverage of Eritrea's extortion of a 2% tax from members of the Eritrean Diaspora, the so-called Diaspora Tax, and introduction of due diligence reports to avert possible misuse of the resources from the country's extractive industries.

These and all other evidence make it quite clear that the Government of Eritrea has never made any behavioural changes to warrant the lifting of sanctions. It has continued to harbor, finance, and train as well as offer logistical support to rebel forces of neighboring countries. Evidence demonstrating the belligerent nature of the regime has never been in short supply. Resolution 2023 provided details of the failed plot to bomb African Union Summit in January 2011 carried out by proxies of the Eritrean government. In April 2012, the Eritrean Government abducted over 100 traditional gold miners from the north western area of Ethiopia along the border with Eritrea. It also orchestrated the killing of tourists in the Afar Regional State. Ethiopia's security apparatus has also foiled several other attempts to carry out cross-border attacks and plots. They all evidence the contempt of the Eritrean Government for any ideas of good neighbourliness or of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries.

Furthermore, Eritrea has never made any effort to stop its support for Al-Shabaab and other spoiler networks in Southern Somalia, the *raison d'être* for the original imposition of UN sanctions. In the striking conclusion of its July 2013 Report, the UN Monitoring Group said “the Monitoring Group has obtained evidence of Eritrea’s support for individuals within this network, in particular to agents and collaborators of Al-Shabaab. As such, Eritrea’s cultivation of these individuals as agents of influence, while purporting to be an act of support to the Federal Government of Somalia, in fact constitutes a threat to peace and security in Somalia. It is also an impediment to the normalization of relations between the Federal Government and its IGAD partners. “

Eritrea’s continued manipulative interference in Southern Somalia, aimed to take advantage of clan and ethnic divisions, is a testimony to its brazen lawlessness. There has been no evidence of any change of behaviour in the form of abiding by the accepted norms of international law. Eritrea has consistently shown its disrespect to Somalia’s peace efforts, rejecting the Djibouti process and repeatedly trying to undermine the Transitional Federal Government. The repeated calls for release of Djibouti prisoners, taken after Eritrea's aggression against Djibouti, made in the UN Security Council Resolutions 1844 and 2023, have fallen on deaf ears in Asmara. This reinforces the view that any plea for the lifting of sanctions can only be seen as a mockery of justice and international law. Equally, the UN Monitoring Group’s reports clearly reveal that the only thing consistent in Eritrea’s behaviour is the way its destabilizing mission in the IGAD region has continued throughout the period of the sanctions' regime. Nor is it anything new to hear allegations that the Government of Eritrea's destabilizing role has gone well beyond the IGAD region, to reach into the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic.

The motives behind the current diplomatic manoeuvres and efforts to lift sanctions are not hard to see. The behaviour of Asmara makes it clear to any unbiased or neutral observer that the regime's understanding of the rules of the game of international relations is both perverse and quite simply wrong. A government which has persistently created stumbling blocs to all IGAD initiatives in Somalia, in particular, cannot also claim to have any genuine interest in re-joining

the organization. The aim is very different: to try to weaken IGAD which has repeatedly taken firm stand against the deliberate manipulations and sinister activities of the regime in Asmara. Its motive is quite clearly nothing else than an effort to divide and weaken the regional block coherence, to try to gain support for its own continued aim of regional destabilization. Any demand by Eritrea to rejoin IGAD must be firmly challenged. It can only be even considered if it is accompanied by a genuine change of behaviour with clear evidence of an abandonment of its mission of destabilization and an end to support for and indeed its 'marriage' with terrorist outfits.

More specifically, the recent talk of mending Ethio-Eritrean relations, the subject of discussion by some sympathizers of Eritrea, also seems detached from reality. It is based on false assumptions about the regime in Asmara which, in reality, has repeatedly made it very clear it is opposed to any form of dialogue. The call for the lifting of sanctions is out of synchronization with any reality on the ground. The suggestion for a symbolic handover of land, followed by resumption of talks a few hours later in the afternoon are no more than a simple parroting of Eritrea's own position. Its simplistic understanding of the matter is evident from the way it ignores the belligerence of the Eritrean Government and its continued efforts to destabilize both the region and Ethiopia. In fact, as Ethiopia's comprehensive five-point peace plan, issued in 2004, clearly indicated Ethiopia's acceptance of the Ethio-Eritrea Border Commission's ruling and underlined its calls for dialogue to its implementation and induce the normalization of relations, the settlement of compensation issues, along with cessation of hostilities. However, the call for peace has been consistently ignored by Asmara despite all attempts to persuade it to listen to sense. All these recent efforts to call for improved relations clearly fall short of any realistic or genuine understanding of the problem, and at best do no more than make a lopsided effort to push the Eritrean agenda with no reflection of reality.

All the evidence shows that Eritrea is continuing to negate regional peace efforts, consistently making alliances with spoiler groups in Somalia and elsewhere. Its hurried efforts to try to dupe both outgoing and now the incoming members of the UN Security Council are a futile attempt to whitewash an extensive, continuing and depressing record of regional, and wider, destabilization. The Security Council needs to be wary of the deceptions of the Eritrean Government, and indeed, unless Eritrea can produce convincing evidence that it has left its dangerous activities behind, it needs to consider ways to tighten sanctions and provide more serious follow-up to the mechanisms of diligence already imposed.

Irrigation and Sugar Development: Growth and Transformation Plan performance.

Since the introduction of the policy of Agriculture Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) as the direction of Ethiopia's economic development framework, the agriculture sector has been identified as the most important economic sector. Ensuring food security by reforming the land-hold system and increasing agricultural productivity has been the central aim of the government. The historic abject poverty in rural Ethiopia and the resulting social and political instability was taken as an existential imperative and it put the government's focus back on agriculture, the

mainstay of the country's economy and on rural Ethiopia where more than 85 percent of the population resides.

Among Ethiopia's still largely untapped natural resources fertile land and water are perhaps the most visible. In almost all regions of the country vast tracts of arable land, across multiple climatic zones suitable for a wide variety of crops and produce, have been left unused. The reasons for this have included such elements as the old settlement patterns that favored certain areas, misguided policy directions, a political climate that failed to prioritize development or encourage investment and a lack of capital. The abundance of water that led to the country being called the water tower of Africa has not helped to improve the situation. In addition to the underdevelopment of lands across the country, the dismal level of agricultural productivity was not even enough to provide for food self-sufficiency.

More recently, things have begun to change. Considering its vast potential and its status as a livelihood provider for nearly the whole population of the country, the present government which came to power in 1991, found it only logical to take agriculture development as the foremost priority in its development policy. It has been consistent and clear in pursuing a policy that puts agriculture development and productivity improvement as the most necessary preconditions for overall economic growth and social development.

The government has also been particularly keen in emphasizing the structural linkage of agriculture and industry, both in supplying cheap raw materials for a nascent industrial base and also in expanding domestic markets for this. For this to happen, of course, the productivity of small-scale farmers has to increase in order to improve their income and their living standards. The optimal way of increasing productivity is therefore through investment to provide means of augmenting labor productivity and the provision of modern agricultural production methods, one of which is utilization of irrigation.

Ethiopia's record on irrigation is poor. The level of irrigated land is insignificant compared to the available resources of land and water. In 1992, out of the 5.3 million hectares of land suitable for irrigation, only 61,000 hectares were cultivated. That number has since risen all-too-slowly up to 127,242 hectares in 2010. However, this is only a small portion of the target set by the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) for irrigation development. When all the current projects under the GTP are completed, the total area of land under irrigation is expected to reach more than 785,500 hectares. One of the expected outcomes of this is also to boost the already strong productivity of small-scale farm-holders. According to the Central Statistical Authority (CSA) Ethiopia registered a 10 percent increase in crop production this last fiscal year; and the Authority also announced that 254 million quintal yield is expected this fiscal year from 12 million hectares of land. This will be a 23 million quintal increase on last year's produce on almost the same amount of land.

In fact, small scale agriculture has shown remarkable improvement over the past two decades, and has contributed the most important share of the impressive economic growth Ethiopia has registered over the past decade. This improvement has significantly advanced the living standards of farmers and helped achieve encouraging social development. This, it must be said, is as pro-poor as it is broad-based, and it is precisely these conditions that have allowed a leap in

the rise in manufacturing. Equally, there is still a lot of space for improvement. Irrigation development projects like the Qoga Irrigation and Water Shed Management Project in Megech Woreda of the Amhara Regional State aim at further strengthening the rural development gains achieved so far. The Qoga Project, for example, is expected to advance real accomplishments in poverty reduction and food security for more than 14,000 farming households.

Another initiative under the Growth and Transformation Plan is the Meki-Zway Pressurized Irrigation Development Project. This project, which is under construction in the East Shoa Zone of the Oromia Regional State, will play a key role in increasing food productivity in the zone and in attaining an improved water conservation rate for the watershed. Other irrigation projects expected to significantly advance the overall productivity are the Rib Irrigation and Drainage Project, which will benefit 40,000 farmers, the Raya Valley Pressurized Irrigation Development Project, for another 10,000 farmers, and the Gidabo and Billate Irrigation Project, which will benefit 16,000 farmers.

It should be emphasized, however, that the irrigation strategy defined in the Plan is not, limited to modernizing household farming; it also includes developing large-scale cultivation of arable and irrigable lands. In line with its policy of modernizing the agriculture sector in order to increase agriculture productivity and build the base for agro-processing and related industries, the Government has made 3.6 million hectares of arable land available for investors. This available land is intended for commercial farm investment, to cover such crops as cotton, palm trees, sugarcane, coffee plantations and similar primary products. So far, about 470,000 hectares of land has been provided to private investors.

One of the most important and worthwhile examples of these efforts to enhance land use for large scale commercial farming is the Growth and Transformation Plan's strategy for sugar development. From the point of view of economic viability sugar development represents a highly feasible area of investment. Ethiopia has vast irrigable lands, immense water resources, significant advantages in labor costs, and meaningful domestic market demand. The sugar development strategy was also crafted in consideration of the huge job opportunities it will create, the foreign currency it will bring through export competitiveness in the commodity, and in satisfying the growing demand for sugar in the domestic market.

The Growth and Transformation Plan aims to increase the annual sugar production from its current volume of 300,000 tons to 2.25 million by the end of the Plan's period, in 2015. Out of this amount, some 1.2 million tons is expected to be sold for export. The sugar development strategy also intends to increase the annual production of ethanol from the existing quantity of 14,500 cubic meters to more than 181,000 cubic meters by the end of the period. In order to achieve these goals, the government has embarked on an ambitious project of building 12 new sugar factories, including the massive Tendaho Sugar Development Project, and expanding the two older factories at Wonji-Shoa and Fincha.

Ethiopia's sugar development strategy, a perfect example of an integrated development initiative, will cultivate 200,000 hectares of previously undeveloped land through irrigation and will, at completion, create more than 200,000 jobs. Another less often mentioned aspect of the strategy deals with energy. The sugar factories will not only be self-sufficient in energy consumption but

will also contribute a significant amount of electric power to the national grid. The Tendaho Project alone is expected to produce 120mw of electric power and feed 90 MW to the national grid by the time its second phase is complete.

Overall, the sugar projects now underway are expected to make Ethiopia one of the world's top ten sugar producing countries. The Tendaho sugar factory, the largest sugar factory under construction, would have the capacity to crush 13,000 tons of sugar cane a day in the first phase of the project. It is expected to be completed and go operational within a few months. The factory will ultimately attain a production capacity of 619, 000 tons a year, utilizing sugar cane planted on 10,500 hectares

Five of the ten new sugar factories, which are being constructed in the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State, are expected to utilize sugar cane grown over a total 175,000 hectares. Three of these factories will each have the capacity to crush 12,000 tons of sugar cane a day, and the other two will crush 24,000 tons a day. The Kuraz 1 factory, whose construction has now started, will go operational at the end of 2014. Elsewhere, the Tana Beles Sugar Project, which includes 3 factories and a capacity for crushing 12,000 tons of sugar cane a day, is being implemented in the Benishangul and Amhara Regional States of Ethiopia. With 45% and 39% completion of the civil construction and manufacturing plant assemblies, the two factories are expected to be completed and go operational by the middle of 2014. The Wolkait Sugar Development Project, which is located in Tigray Regional State, will have the capacity to crush 24,000 tons of sugar cane a day drawn from 50,000 hectares.

Overall, the irrigation policy in general and the sugar development strategy in particular demonstrate the central objectives of the Growth and Transformation Plan: maintaining agriculture as the backbone of the country's economy and ensuring growth in agricultural productivity in a way that can feed and build the country's manufacturing base. It is a testament to the Government's commitment to focus on economic sectors that can provide Ethiopia with increased comparative advantages in the global market.