

News in brief

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*News in Brief:*

**African Union/ IGAD**

The Peace and Security Council of Africa held its meeting in Gambia, Banjul (**December 30**). The meeting was devoted particularly to the evolving and worrying situation in the Republic of South Sudan.

The Executive Secretary of IGAD, Ambassador (Eng) Mahboub M. Maalim has commended (**December 31**) President Salva Kiir Mayardit and Dr. Riek Machar for each appointing negotiation teams, noting this to be an important development towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict in South Sudan. Ambassador Maalim also thanked the parties for heeding the call on December 27th by the IGAD Summit of Heads of State and Government for dialogue and further commended the parties for strongly agreeing in principle to reach a monitored cessation of hostilities.

**Ethiopia**

Preparations are underway to launch the construction work of the 210-km highway project. The Modjo-Hawassa highway project that has 4-lane dual carriageway will be implemented in four phases.

Activities are being carried out to increase agricultural productivity by 15 percent during the current production year, said Ministry of Agriculture (**January 2**). The Ministry sets target to achieve the goal through increased use of irrigation, utilization of fertilizers, compost and improved seeds.

India's largest exporter of processed food products, Allansons Ltd, signed agreement (**January 1**) to establish meat processing plant. The processing plant would help to improve Ethiopia's meat export and also enable pastoral communities to benefit from their animal resources. Allana chooses to build the plant in Ethiopia taking into consideration the country's livestock potential and its favorable climate, Aman R. Kahan, representative of the group said.

Members of the negotiating teams from the Government and opposition of South Sudan gathered in Ethiopia on Thursday (**January 3**) for peace talks. The Peace talk is hoped to end nearly three weeks of conflict that has left thousands dead in the world's newest nation. The talks in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, brought about by the east African bloc the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and supported by the United Nations and African Union, started with mediators meeting representatives from both sides separately ahead of direct talks between the opposing groups.

## **Djibouti**

United States has donated 26 new vehicles to Djibouti's Defence Ministry. Defence Minister Hassan Darar Houffaneh and Chief of the Armed Forces Zakaria Sheik Ibrahim received (**December 30**) the donation from deputy chief of mission at the US embassy in Djibouti, Julie Stuft. Defence Minister Hassan appreciated the donation from the United States of America, praising the good relationship between the two countries. According to Djibouti media, the vehicles are intended to assist Djibouti's plans to deploy new 1000 troops to Somalia.

## **Kenya**

A grenade attack (**January 2**) on a popular nightclub outside the coastal Kenyan city of Mombasa wounded at least 10 people, police said. The incident occurred at a nightclub frequented by tourists in Diani, some 15 miles outside Mombasa.

## **Somalia**

Car bomb exploded outside a hotel in Somalia's capital (**January 1**). The death toll of a twin car bombing at a hotel in Mogadishu rose to 11, with many of the victims to be security force members, a police spokesman said. At least 40 other people were injured. "The death toll has hit 11 people, including three attackers and five security personnel, while the rest were civilians," said Gen. Mohamed Yusuf Omar Madale, a Somali police spokesman. At least four people were killed in the first attack Wednesday, Madale said, and half-hour later, another car bomb exploded just few meters from the scene of the first blast, killing at least seven people, mostly security officers.

Al-shabab takes the responsibility for the twin bomb attack in Mogadishu. A statement posted to a website associated with the Al-Shabaab terrorist network Thursday (**January 2**) reads: "The mujahideen forces carried out the attacks and they will intensify their attacks against the government of Somalia and the African Union troops in the country."

Somali Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed toured (**January 1**) the Ministry of Defence and discussed with Somali security forces before meeting the Minister of Defence, Chief of Defence Forces and other senior military officers to discuss the ongoing re-building and modernization of the Somali security forces as well as future operations against Al-Shabaab. The Prime Minister also visited more than 800 new Somali National Army recruits at Jazeera Military Training Camp. "2014 will be the year of success in destroying the terrorists that only want to bring indiscriminant violence and instability to Somalia. Alongside our AMISOM partners we will continue to make progress in liberating areas of Somalia still under Al-Shabaab control," he said.

Somali Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed sends his condolences (**January 2**) to the families of the victims of the bomb attack on Jazeera Hotel in Mogadishu. The Prime Minister, said: "I send my personal condolences to the victims and families affected by last night's attempted attack and wish those injured a quick and full recovery." "Last night's attempted attack at Al Jazeera Hotel will only strengthen the people of Somalia and the government's commitment to tackle those who threaten the security and stability of Somalia with indiscriminate violence and killing," he added.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif condemned (**January 1**) the attack on Jazeera Hotel in Mogadishu. "We condemn this cowardly attack aimed at dulling the optimism of the Somali people as we look forward to a new year," said Ambassador Annadif, while singling out the courage of the Somali security forces and AMISOM troops for their quick response.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced (**December 30**) the appointment of Philippe Lazzarini as his Deputy Special Representative, as well as Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, in Somalia. Mr. Lazzarini, a citizen of Switzerland, will serve as Deputy to Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Nicholas Kay, who heads the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).

## **South Sudan**

On Tuesday (**December 31**) forces led by former Vice President of South Sudan, Dr. Rick Machar, recaptured Bor, the capital of Jonglei state which is 200 kilometres (125 miles) north of the capital Juba. UN humanitarian chief in the country Toby Lanzer said, civilians in the town face "an increasingly dire situation: water, food and medicines are running out, sanitary conditions are worsening." UNMISS reported "extra-judicial killings of civilians and captured soldiers" and the "discovery of large numbers of bodies" in Juba, Bor and Malakal, the main town in oil-producing Upper Nile state.

South Sudan's government forces vowed (**January 20**) to re-take the strategic city of Bor, which rebel forces captured on Tuesday, while also claiming the rebels were set to march on the capital, Juba. "We are advancing to Bor because these people want to come to Juba," South Sudan army chief of staff James Hoth Mai told reporters. "We don't yet have a ceasefire and we don't want them to come and get us, he added. Military spokesman Philip Aguer said the rebels were forcibly recruiting civilians to march on the capital. However, a rebel spokesman in Unity state dismissed the army's claims, saying the government side had resorted to a "war of allegations" ahead of the peace talks.

## **Sudan**

The Sudanese army announced Tuesday (**December 31**) the recapture of an area located in the eastern part of the Nuba Mountains. The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) managed to retake Al-Ardiba where it captured "more than 30 armed vehicles, a large number of military hardware and ammunition, said a press statement issued in Khartoum. The military communiqué further said this operation marks the end of the first phase of the "Decisive Summer" operation in the eastern parts of the Nuba mountains, adding that the army would continue its attacks in all axes against the rebel groups. President Omar Al-Bashir, in a speech delivered on Independence Day, Tuesday, commended the recapture of Al-Ardiba from the SPLM-N fighters and stressed that SAF operations are not directed against the Nuba civilians in South Kordofan.

### ***Efforts to resolve the impasse in South Sudan***

It has been three weeks since the crisis begun in South Sudan. Conflict began after South Sudan's President Salva Kiir had revealed on December 15 that he had foiled a coup which, he claimed, had been orchestrated by a disgruntled faction in the army which had backed former Vice-President, Dr. Riek Machar. Dr. Machar had been sacked in July when the President dismissed his entire cabinet. The President said the next day that the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Movement (SPLM) was fully committed to the peaceful and democratic transfer of power and would never allow political power to be transferred through violence. Former Vice-

President Machar himself denied any involvement in a coup, and said he was unaware of any such attempt. He blamed President Salva Kiir for fabricating the allegations in order to settle political scores and target political opponents.

A delegation of IGAD's Council of Ministers led by Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros, the chair of the Council, visited South Sudan and met with President Salva Kiir and other officials. Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, the Chair of the African Union and of IGAD, and President Kenyatta of Kenya, then visited Juba on Thursday last week (December 26). As we noted last week, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kenyatta met with President Salva Kiir, and other stake holders. Their meeting focused on the cessation of hostilities, the start of talks to settle the crisis politically, the situation of detainees suspected of “attempting the coup” and the humanitarian problems.

In agreement that "any solution to this crisis should be through political dialogue”, and that IGAD should work towards finding an amicable solution between the parties, the IGAD Heads of State and Government then held its 23<sup>rd</sup> Extraordinary Summit in Nairobi, Kenya on Friday last week (December 27) under the chairmanship of Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, and discussed the situation in South Sudan. The meeting was attended by Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti; Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya; Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, President of the Federal Republic of Somalia; Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda; Bakri Hassan Saleh, First Vice-President of the Republic of Sudan; and Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Sudan. The Executive Secretary of IGAD, Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, and Ambassador Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, also attended. The meeting was briefed on the emergency three-day IGAD Foreign Ministers' visit to Juba (December 19-21), by Dr. Tedros Adhanom as well as hearing details of their visit to South Sudan from Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kenyatta.

In its communiqué, the IGAD leaders recalled the hopes expressed on July 9, 2011, on the occasion of the independence of the Republic of South Sudan and recognized the peace, security and development that had been achieved in the country. They expressed their concern at the unfortunate events of December 15; the subsequent escalation of conflict; the deterioration of the humanitarian situation; and the reported widespread atrocities, deaths and displacement of civilian population. They condemned all unconstitutional challenges to the constitutional order, democracy and the rule of law and any change in the democratic government of the Republic of South Sudan through the use of force. The communiqué called on all parties to refrain from steps that might inflame the conflict along ethnic and sectarian lines; it strongly condemned “the bankrupt and opportunistic ideology of ethnic and religious sectarianism”; and called on all humanitarian actors to act quickly to provide necessary assistance to civilians. It specifically called on all armed groups to open humanitarian corridors and ensure protection of civilians. The communiqué noted the discussions between the IGAD Council of Ministers and President Kiir and others on December 19, and commended the expressed commitment of both sides to engage in dialogue.

The IGAD Summit also reiterated the necessity for immediate pursuit of a political solution including an all-inclusive dialogue, and it welcomed the commitment by the Government of

South Sudan to begin an unconditional dialogue and to an immediate cessation of hostilities. It called on Dr. Riek Machar and other parties to make similar commitments. It requested all parties to accept a monitoring, verification and stabilization mechanism; to undertake urgent measures in pursuit of dialogue including a review of the status of detainees in accordance with the laws of South Sudan; and to create a conducive environment for all stakeholders to participate, calling on all stakeholders in the conflict to participate in talks. The Summit decided to ensure the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers, strongly condemned all “criminal acts of murder, sexual violence, looting and other acts against civilians and unarmed combatants”, and demanded anyone involved in such actions should be held responsible.

The IGAD Summit appointed General Lazaro Sumbeiywo of Kenya and Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Ethiopia's Ambassador to China, as IGAD Special Envoys to South Sudan and called on all stakeholders in South Sudan to liaise with the IGAD envoys and the Council of Ministers to support dialogue and related political and technical reforms. In addition, it called on the United Nations, the African Union and the International Community to support the IGAD process; ensure humanitarian assistance is immediately delivered to all affected people. It called on IGAD member states to direct the IGAD Council of Ministers to continue working with the Government of South Sudan, to make contact with Dr. Riek Machar and other leaders, keep the Summit informed, monitor the safety of IGAD citizens and coordinate their evacuation as necessary.

Following the Summit, Current Chair of IGAD and the AU and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn gave a direction to follow the implementation of IGAD decisions and Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros, travelled to Juba on Monday this week (December 30). They had discussions with President Salva Kiir and Dr. Tedros also held a telephone conversation with Dr. Riek Machar. Prime Minister Hailemariam was then able to confirm that as part of IGAD's efforts representatives of President Salva Kiir and of Dr. Riek Machar would meet in Addis Ababa on Friday (January 3). The two sides are expected to reach agreement on the cessation of hostilities, on peaceful resolution of the current political crisis and on ways to reduce tensions.

IGAD's Executive Secretary, Ambassador Maalim on Tuesday commended President Kiir and Dr. Machar for appointing negotiation teams. This was, he said, an important development. He also welcomed the efforts of the IGAD Special Envoys in promptly engaging both parties and expressed his gratitude to both Kenya and Ethiopia for facilitating their work. He acknowledged the crucial role of humanitarian actors and urged the international community and all stakeholders in South Sudan to support their work. Ambassador Maalim further called on all involved to desist from violence while modalities for talks are finalized.

The United Nations has also demonstrated its concern over the situation in South Sudan. The Security Council, acting on UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's recommendation, unanimously agreed on Tuesday last week (December 24) to transfer "urgently and temporarily" additional peacekeeping forces to South Sudan. In resolution 2132 of 2013, the Security Council authorized the increase of the overall force levels of the existing UN Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS) up to 12,500 troops of all ranks, compared to 7,000 currently deployed, and of a police component of up to 1,323, compared to some 700 currently. The UN will borrow these

forces and assets from other UN forces deployed in different parts of Africa. The Security Council expressed "grave alarm and concern" over the rapidly deteriorating security and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan and called upon all parties to immediately cease hostilities. It commended the initiative of IGAD's Ministerial Council in seeking to open dialogue and mediate between key leaders. It urged all to cooperate.

The members of the Security Council were subsequently briefed (December 30) via video-conference by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Hilde Johnson, and by the UNMISS Force Commander, Major-General Delali Johnson Sakyi. The Council expressed their deep concern at the situation and in particular the impact of the crisis on South Sudan's civilian population. They reiterated their support to the IGAD efforts to bring about peace, welcomed the IGAD Summit of December 27, and continued engagement of IGAD to push for immediate dialogue among South Sudan's leaders. They also welcomed the efforts of other countries. The Council underlined and repeated its call for immediate cessation of hostilities and for President Salva Kiir, former Vice-President Riek Machar and other political leaders to engage urgently in direct talks without preconditions. It stressed that there should be no further delays in implementing cessation of hostilities and the commencement of dialogue. The Council renewed calls for full protection to be afforded to civilians, foreign nationals and United Nations personnel and facilities, as well as provision of humanitarian access, release of all political detainees, security of economic infrastructure, including oil installations and the safety of the employees, and an end to all violence. The members of the Security Council also underlined their determination that all responsible for human rights violations would be held accountable.

The Security Council commended UNMISS leadership and personnel for their work and encouraged troop- and police-contributing countries to continue to support the Mission, as well as provide deployment of new military and police peacekeepers. They also commended the Member States which responded to the requests for extra forces and enablers to bolster UNMISS and called upon the Government of South Sudan to immediately accept all such offers without conditions or regard to the country of origin.

### ***Ethiopia moving to implement the recommendations of the International Panel***

The International Panel of Experts (IPoE), established in December 2011 to study the impact of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on downstream countries, was an initiative of Ethiopia. It was specifically aimed to build confidence and trust about the project among the lower riparian states, Egypt and Sudan. The Panel, composed of two experts from each of the three countries as well as four additional international experts, produced a report that supported the findings and deliberations made by Ethiopia about the Dam.

The IPoE vindicated Ethiopia's claim that the construction of the GERD would benefit all three countries and cause no appreciable harm to any of them. Among other points, the report unequivocally noted that the design of the GERD fully met with international standards and design criteria. It detailed the benefits accruing to the region as well as to the three states, including production of 15,000Gwh of renewable hydropower energy. The report affirmed GERD's vital role in boosting power interconnections throughout the region and, in light of Ethiopia's policy of exporting surplus energy, the contribution to infrastructural integration.

The report also noted that GERD will help to reduce flooding in downstream countries through regulating the flow of the water throughout the year which in turn will also create opportunities to develop large tracts of land for irrigation in Sudan and Egypt. The report indicated that the construction of GERD had the added benefit of preventing the Aswan High Dam and other dams in the downstream countries from the silting up, a process which has already either shortened their dam-life quite literally or given rise to excessive costs for the removal of silt from the reservoirs. The fact that GERD is being constructed in a much less humid area than many of the dams lower down the river also means a saving of billions of cubic meters of water that previously evaporated. As the Nile is one of the most erratic trans-boundary waters in the world, GERD's benefit in saving the water from evaporation will also help the imperative of equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile Waters among the riparian countries. In short, the IPoE report confirmed that the benefits of the construction of the GERD go well beyond the developmental needs of Ethiopia to provide benefits for the downstream countries. It should lay to rest all major worries in that regard.

The Report of the Panel also listed some recommendations that it suggested should be carried out, some by Ethiopia and others jointly by all three countries. As the initiator of the IPoE, Ethiopia accepted the report immediately and indeed started implementing the recommendations provided. It also continued to cooperate with Sudan and Egypt to form a national committee to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. At a second meeting of the three Water Ministers, of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, on December 4, agreement was reached on the composition and tasks of a national committee drawn from the three countries. They agreed that the main responsibility of the national committee should be conducting the hydrological modeling and socio-economic impact assessments that the IPoE had recommended. The Water Ministers are scheduled to hold their third meeting this weekend (January 4-5) in Khartoum to finalize their agreement and find solutions to some of the remaining outstanding issues.

Ethiopia has already announced that it has finalized most of the recommendations made specifically to it by the Panel. The Minister for Water, Irrigation and Energy, Mr. Alemayehu Tegen, affirmed that most of the recommendations have been finalized in accordance with the directions suggested by the IPoE. He noted that most of these were essentially related to the engineering, procurement and construction elements (EPC) of the GERD project. In fact, the very nature of EPC contracts demands periodic and phase-by-phase review of design documents based on up-dated findings of hydrological, geo-technical and geological work as construction proceeds. In other words, most of the recommendations were made not because of any faults found in the design but were related to the periodic nature of the studies. Indeed, in that regard, since the IPoE's term ended before the preparation of the Level 2 design updates and reports, one of the recommendations was that these should be prepared as part of the follow-up process. Accordingly, Ethiopia did in fact prepare the Level 2 reports as part of the relevant engineering, procurement and construction contracts, in effect anticipating the recommendations of the IPoE.

All of this, including the conduct of the studies, the implementation of the recommendations and Ethiopia's full participation in the tripartite meetings of Water Ministers of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia, underlined Ethiopia's commitment to relay the message to the general public and to the governments of Sudan and Egypt that the construction of GERD is for the real benefit of downstream countries. While Sudan fully recognized the benefits of the GERD, it is unfortunate

that vestiges of the age-old culture of suspicion and mistrust between the Nile riparian countries still linger in Egypt, to counter Ethiopia's message of genuine cooperation. Equally, Ethiopia's completion of the unilateral recommendations of the IPOE is certainly a milestone in Ethiopia's efforts to establish equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile Waters.

### ***Changes in Somalia are “promising and encouraging”***

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Somalia, Ambassador Wondimu Asaminew, has underlined that the relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia is evolving and consolidating because of the essential role that Ethiopia is playing to help Somalia stabilize. This, he said, was a continuation of Ethiopia's role in the forefront of all the peace processes initiated over the last two decades, particularly the last peace process that had resulted in the foundation of the new Federal government. Talking to the media recently, Ambassador Wondimu detailed the efforts undertaken by the Ethiopian government, especially over the signing of the Jubba agreement on August 27 last year in Addis Ababa, by the Federal Government of Somalia and the Interim Jubba Administration. This aimed to establish the modalities of administration and governance for the Lower Jubba, Middle Jubba and Gedo regions. He noted that the perceptions of Somalis stakeholders towards Ethiopia, including politicians, parliamentarians, civil society representatives, elders and others, had changed. Following the genuine support Ethiopia has been giving to Somalia, they now considered Ethiopia a trusted friend and a partner. Ambassador Wondimu said the two countries, with political will on both sides, would now be able to build upon the existing favorable relationship.

In response to questions, Ambassador Wondimu noted that there had been a dramatic improvement in peace and security in Somalia as Al-Shabaab was driven out from the large cities, although it did still occupy remote rural areas. He said the good news was that the political and psychological roots that had helped Al-Shabaab to flourish were now drying up. For the first time in more than two decades, there was an internationally recognized and legitimate government in Somalia, which was trying to expand its reach into the regions, offering hope in the heart of Somalis. He emphasized that terrorist organizations like Al-Shabaab and other extremist groups only thrive when there has been political collapse, accompanied by despair and social dislocation. Now with the roots of extremism slowly drying up in Somalia, Al-Shabaab is weakening on the military and political fronts. Ambassador Wondimu pointed out that AMISOM was now implementing new strategies to liberate the whole country. With Ethiopia now joining AMISOM, he said “I hope there will be remarkable changes in the next few months,” adding “I think it is the beginning of the end of Al-Shabaab”.

Ambassador Wondimu explained that Al Shabaab was not operating in isolation. It remains the main terrorist organization operating in Somalia but it was an essential part of a global terror network. It was not purely military but was also a social and psychological phenomenon, and once the extremist tendencies were drained away then elements like Al-Shabaab would become isolated and alienated from the public. He said many of those that currently help Al-Shabaab do not support its political goals, but assist it out of fear. The terrorist acts perpetrated by Al-Shabaab were in that sense an expression of weakness. More recently, he said, a series of

positive signs could be seen, with businesses mushrooming in Mogadishu and people living calmly and confidently. Al-Shabaab, in fact, was losing its momentum, he said.

Referring to the overall role of the international community in Somalia, Ambassador Wondimu said international partners and the region were closely working together to bring peace and sustainable security to the country. In the past there had been different and competing interests and initiatives that had hindered the peace process. Now, he said there was a consensus on the way forward among international partners and the future looked promising. There was, however, an exception to this. Ambassador Wondimu noted that the Government of Eritrea was still not a “constructive force” in the region. It continually looked for possibilities and means to cause instability. He said there was no doubt that the UN sanctions imposed on the government had an impact but despite this the Eritrean government had refused to make any changes in its behavior. Ethiopia, and other countries in the region, had to remain consistently alert to the activities of the Eritrean government.

Ambassador Wondimu said there were two major problems Somalia was facing at this time, one was the presence of Al-Shabaab and the other was the political situation. With agreement that security of the country remained the first priority, there was no doubt that Al-Shabaab would be defeated through the coordinated efforts of AMISOM and the Federal government military forces. On the political front, Ambassador Wondimu pointed out that the relationship between the central government and the various regions must be normalized in order to produce a more peaceful and stable country. He said international partners were trying to reconcile the regions and the center, pointing out that Ethiopia had succeeded in Jubba. He said that they would continue to work on this, and he was “hopeful as of next year we will have a strong government in Somalia.” He stressed that there was still a need to build confidence between the communities in Somalia and to change the political culture. He said the ongoing optimism and the beginning of economic revitalization could make Somalia another responsible partner for the regional peace and development agenda. There was certainly “a promising and encouraging change in Somalia”, adding that if Somalis able to build on this momentum then in a few years time “we shall see a new Somalia”.

The Ambassador also noted that AMISOM had done a good job in bringing peace to the country. Following an official request by the Federal Government of Somalia for Ethiopia to contribute troops to AMISOM, Ethiopia has decided to become involved in the Mission. Ambassador Wondimu said “I was pleasantly surprised when I observed the enthusiasm throughout Somalia, from politicians, parliamentarians, civil society leaders and elders after the announcement that Ethiopian troops would join AMISOM.” He recalled that Ethiopian troops had been particularly effective in the earlier UN peacekeeping missions, in which they had been deployed, including Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Darfur, and Abyei.

### *...and preparations for Puntland's presidential election*

Puntland is holding its next Presidential election on Wednesday next week (January 8). The President will be chosen by the 66 Parliamentarians (64 men and two women) appointed earlier

by clan elders. 34 are new parliamentarians and the remaining 32 are returning MPs. The winning candidate must receive at least 34 votes; if not, the three candidates with the highest number of votes will compete in a run-off. Puntland undertook similar processes in 2004/2005 and 2008/2009.

A statement issued this week said that the Puntland Parliamentary Vetting Committee had approved the new list of MPs after checking the names submitted by the Council of Elders. The newly chosen members of the parliament were sworn-in on Wednesday (January 1) in the presence of President Abdirahman Mohamed Farole, Vice President General Abdisamad Ali Shire, other rival presidential and vice-presidential candidates, former Puntland President General Adde Muse, Islamic scholars, traditional leaders, vetting and conflict resolution committee members and international community representatives.

Somali President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, speaking to the media on the occasion of the New Year welcomed the forthcoming elections in the Puntland regional state, and called on the Puntland community to refrain from any divisions and acts that might cause problems. He urged the newly elected Puntland lawmakers to pick the right person for the Presidency. The prominent Somali Islamic scholar, Sheikh Ahmed Dahir, also called on the new MPs to choose a candidate with good profile and free from corruption “If you elect an irresponsible man to the presidency, you will be held accountable for that mishap in the Day of Judgment”, he said. There are at least 17 candidates for the presidency; among them are the incumbent, President Abdurahman Mohamed Farole, who won in 2009, and Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, a former prime minister of Somalia from June 2011 to October 2012.

At the meeting of the new Parliament on Wednesday, Presidential candidates commended the vetting committee members for their role. The eight-member Vetting Committee was nominated by the President at the beginning of December. On December 10, it began to evaluate the nominations for new MPs made by community elders. In mid-December, President Farole and Vice President Abdisamad Ali Shire, met with other candidates running for the two highest offices, and on December 27, Islamic scholars issued a 21-point declaration calling for peaceful and legitimate election process. They urged the presidential candidates to engage in political campaigns “with responsibility” and to showcase “political objective to attract public confidence”, to “avoid propaganda and character assassination” and to “uphold previous agreements, policies and legislation of Puntland that do not contradict Islamic religion”. The declaration warned all candidates to “avoid any issue that threatens the security and stability of Puntland”, to “avoid making false promises or promises that are not possible,” and “to respect and adhere to any candidate who wins the election.”

At Wednesday's session, President Farole congratulated the new members of parliament on their oath, saying that he didn't want to talk about politics but rather about “security, Puntland unity, the accurate selection process of the MPs and the forthcoming credible election.” Earlier, the President responded to opposition concerns over the fairness of the election by pointing to “many tangible guarantees of fair elections”, including other candidates' use of government-run radio and TV stations, their full freedom of movement, and the protections of the constitution and the electoral law. Other candidates asked for equal air time on government-run TV and radio stations, and requested that their security be guaranteed during the campaigns. These concerns were also raised by the UN. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General, Nicholas Kay, who recently visited Puntland, noted that the UN Somali Office was following the election

process closely: "Every candidate should have the opportunity to access the media, including state-owned media. Journalists should continue to be free to cover the electoral process as they are now," he said.

### *A discussion with Ethiopian community members in Borama*

Last weekend (December 28), Ethiopia's Consul General in Somaliland, Brigadier General Berhe Tesfay, met with hundreds of Ethiopians living in the Borama district of Somaliland, to brief them on events in Ethiopia as well as discussed their problems and the problems of the Ethiopian community in the area. Participants were urged to establish a stronger association which could help put in place more effective and broader self-support packages for members. Discussions also covered the overall development and security situation in Ethiopia as well as the new Ethiopian Diaspora Policy, aimed to improve benefits for the Diaspora as well as its participation in the country's development. The participants were also encouraged to make use of the Government benefits, including housing, now available to them in Ethiopia.

During discussions, the Consul General underlined the longstanding and growing relationship between Ethiopia and Somaliland in the areas of business, security, political and social affairs. He noted the Ethiopian government's ambition and determination to ensure regional sustainable growth which could benefit all segments of society both in Ethiopia and in the Horn of Africa at large. This, he said, would pave the way for more meaningful cooperation between the two sides and would enable the peoples of Ethiopia and Somaliland to have better job opportunities on either side of the border. The Consul General applauded what he described as the encouraging role of the Ethiopian community in reinforcing growing people-to-people relations between Ethiopia and Somaliland. He said he appreciated the spirit of cooperation shown by all Ethiopian communities in Somaliland for their efforts aimed at ensuring peace, security and stability. Borama officials made it clear they shared these sentiments.

The Consul General stressed the readiness of the Consul's office to provide all possible support to the Ethiopian community organizations being established elsewhere in Somaliland as well as in Borama. He welcomed the encouraging start the Borama Ethiopian community association had made in discharging its responsibilities towards resolving difficulties its members might face. He suggested the association could more effectively fulfill its aims if it increased its financial and material capacity, expanding numbers and increasing contributions. He said the numbers in the association were still limited in comparison with the number of Ethiopians residing in Borama and the surrounding area who were estimated at over a thousand. Involving all of these, he said, would make it easier to provide for the satisfactory resolution of challenges facing the association's members.

The Consul General encouraged participants to consider returning home to engage in the wider work opportunities being created by the Ethiopian Government's path of development and its continuing double digit growth. He briefed the association's members on the new Diaspora Policy, noting that the new initiatives will ensure full respect of the rights, duties and benefits of members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in host countries as well as in Ethiopia. Referring to the Government's housing scheme, he pointed out that this was aimed to allow people, including

members of the Diaspora, to acquire a house of their own at an affordable price without having to make excessive payments. Equally, he added, for those who preferred staying in Somaliland, the Ethiopian mission, in collaboration with the community association and the Somaliland authorities would continue to ensure that their rights would be fully respected. He pointed out that they also needed to be aware of their own responsibilities, and said the community should create close and sustainable relationships between its own members as well as with the Consulate General's office as this would pave the way for more effective ways of providing support.

Participants, who welcomed the visit of the Consul General, expressed their readiness to expose any terrorist and criminal activities, and promised to work to uncover any disruptive plots orchestrated by such elements as Al-Shabaab or similar organizations. Before the meeting ended, they also decided to organize a bond-sale event for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in the coming months. A similar event was organized by the community two months ago in Hargeisa. The Consul General welcomed the Borama association's assurances as an indication of the unvarying stand of the Ethiopian people, where ever they might be, in favor of peaceful co-existence and against extremism. He also made it clear he appreciated the constructive role of Somaliland institutions in addressing any problems faced by the Ethiopian community in Borama including amicable resolution of inter-community and intra-community misunderstandings.

A number of Somaliland officials attended the meeting included the Deputy Chief of the Borama district, Mr. Abdi Nur Sugal, the Mayor of Borama City, Mr. Suleiman Hassan Hadi and others from the security sector as well as religious leaders. Mr. Abdi Nur Sugal said his administration was committed to assist in the resolution of any problems affecting the Ethiopian community and stressed that joint efforts to expedite cooperation and organize against common enemies would continue. In this respect, he emphasized the positive role that Ethiopian communities in Borama and other parts of Somaliland could play. The Mayor of Borama City agreed.

### ***Ethiopia's anti-terror legislation and the misguided attempt at politicizing it***

When the decades of armed conflict and struggle that withered Ethiopia ended in 1991, it brought realization that a peaceful Ethiopia needed to accommodate the diversity of its nations, nationalities and peoples, as well as economic development to reduce the pervasive poverty that affected so much of the country. Equally important was the understanding that the establishment of a system that ensured peace and prosperity for all must be predicated upon the principles of rule of law and due processes of law that could guard against arbitrary abuse of the peoples' rights by the state or any other body.

It was with this realization and understanding that the representatives of the Ethiopian people set about drafting the Constitution to establish a Federal Democratic Republic. True to their intentions, the Constitution they drafted was a political document that could satisfy the desires of the peoples of Ethiopia and give a new lease to their aspirations. It laid the foundations for a new state and for political structures; it recognized and gave political power to the hitherto marginalized nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia; and, as a basic and central element, it devoted an entire chapter to the safeguarding of human and political rights.

The 1995 Constitution was, in fact, a novel experiment in state building, establishing a system in which differences of political, ideological or any other nature can be accommodated through peaceful processes. It is a system that is imperative not just for its political expediency but also to ensure that the desires, choices and needs of the peoples of Ethiopia remain the deciding factors in determining the country's priorities and directions. The constitutional order that provides this system, however, is still a work in progress that needs constant tending and active civic participation to improve its standing and correct its mistakes. The nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia are aware of this, and public participation in the political processes of the country has shown unprecedented dynamism and sense of ownership. That is a cause for real celebration.

Regrettably, peaceful political participation has not been the only choice for all those wanting to influence the state's political direction. Some have not willing to accept the foundations of the new democratic federal system and have made efforts to delegitimize the constitutional order, looking for foreign sympathizers for their aims. Others have follow the path of destruction and worked to subvert the democratic, constitutional system through force, intimidation and violence. Repeated calls to these actors, both from the state and from the public, to forsake this untenable course and to promote their cause(s) through peaceful and legal means have been largely ignored. Their chosen course of action and its results have been clear for all to see.

Considering the global trend towards extremism and the peculiarities and requirements of Ethiopia's own need to curb the rising tide of such violent actions, the Government has felt it necessary to take a number of measures. These have ranged from making repeated efforts to engage in discussion with these violent elements to legislating for necessary regulations to deal with the threat through the constitutionally-provided framework of legislative process. An important element among the legislation produced has been the revised press law and the anti-terrorism law.

The anti-terrorism law, which came into force in 2009, is intended to safeguard the security of the country and its people. As the preamble states, its objective is the protection of the "the right of the people to live in peace, freedom and security". To make sure that the legislation did not defeat its own purpose, the legislating procedure, from drafting to adoption, went through a painstaking and detailed process that ensured the basic principles of the constitution were not violated. The government also made a conscious effort to look at the best practices of a number of democratic nations which had introduced similar legislation under strong institutional safeguards. It made Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law narrower in scope specifically to prevent any possible misuse by government agencies. One example of this was giving the power to designate organizations as terrorist to the House of Peoples' Representative as opposed to the executive branch, as is the case in many western democracies.

The restriction on law enforcement agencies' power to detain terror suspects is another instance of this. Under the Ethiopian law, the detention of terror suspects is regulated by rules that are largely similar to the rules governing detention of criminals, including the right of suspects to appear before a court of law within the standard 48 hours. This is in sharp contrast to anti-

terrorism laws in a number of western countries that allow law enforcement agencies to detain terrorist suspects incommunicado for far longer periods, even on occasions indefinitely.

This raises the question as to why Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law draws so much criticism from some corners? Why do some foreign, almost always western, human rights activists describe Ethiopia's anti-terrorism law as 'draconian' when it is in fact only a watered down version of the laws in their own countries? Why are there repeated accusations that those individuals convicted under the law must be seen as 'political prisoners', or as they most often appear to prefer 'journalists'?

Certainly, some of those who throw out these accusations appear unwilling to accept, or are perhaps sometimes unaware, that there is adequate and detailed evidence to support the government's claim that the suspects have transgressed the law. Rather more disturbing is the claim that convicted individuals are journalists and therefore shouldn't be held accountable, apparently solely because they are journalists. This is often supported by an equally absurd claim that there are only one or two independent media outlets in Ethiopia due to the harsh media law and the anti-terror legislation. The briefest knowledge of the highly vibrant and often critical media in Ethiopia should dispel this nonsense.

The Ethiopian Government has repeatedly clarified its very clear and strong commitment to respect the principle of the rule of law. It takes very seriously its responsibility for bringing perpetrators of grave offenses to justice, irrespective of their profession. The fact that some convicted individuals under the anti-terrorism law claim to be journalists has absolutely no bearing on the strictly legal question of whether a criminal or terrorist act has been committed. It also has no connection with the legal proceedings that the law dictates should be followed.

It might also be noted that some, including both journalists and politicians, have clearly associated themselves with organizations and groups that have been labeled as terrorist organizations by the House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia. This is a clear violation of the country's laws. Such association, often repeatedly admitted publicly, has never been the Government's sole reason to institute legal proceedings, even though, ironically, it is seen as an adequate reason for conviction in many democratic countries. It should, however, give pause to those who criticize the government and lead to some rethinking of their blind defense, religious or otherwise, of individuals accused and convicted for inciting violence and terrorist acts.

Ethiopia's new and flourishing constitutional order is the expression of the will of its peoples, and the government has the duty to protect that constitutional order from subversion. The false belief of some groups, institutions and individuals that the constitutional order is not strong enough to withstand sporadic violent action, and their attempts to carry out such activity, often in association with publicly declared foreign enemies, has made no progress. Their other efforts to look for foreign influence to try to put pressure on the Government to change the country's course will be similarly futile.