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A three-day workshop to discuss ways of expediting efforts to attain MDG-5, improvement of maternal health, concluded on Wednesday (July 16) in Addis Ababa. Delegates from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, DRC, India, Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sudan and Tanzania attended.

Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome met with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Vice President Li Yuanchao and Premier Li Keqiang during his seven day official visit to China (July 7-13) He also attended the Eco-Forum Global Annual Conference in Guiyang (July 11-12). **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam held discussions at the weekend with President Ahmed Mohammed Silanyo of Somaliland who was en route to London. The talks focused on security, trade and the dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland. They agreed to reopen the border between Ethiopia and Somaliland which had been closed for some weeks for security reasons.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros met with Ambassador Imran Yawar of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Ethiopia on Tuesday (July 15) and discussed ways to expand their economic partnership, expedite high-level contacts and exchanges and fast-track all-round cooperation.

State Minister, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos held talks with a South Korean delegation led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lee Kyung-Soo on Friday (July 11). He stressed Ethiopia's wish for closer cooperation in trade and development and for more South Korean business investment.

The State Minister, Ambassador Berhane held talks with a delegation from the IGAD Project Management Unit, on Thursday (July 17) to discuss IGAD's first International Scientific Conference on Health to be held December 3-6 in Addis Ababa. It will focus on health issues of cross-border populations, pastoralists and refugees. **(See article)**

The United State Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration visited camps for South Sudan refugees in Gambella Regional State on Friday (July 11). Mrs. Anne Robinson also visited Eritrean refugee camps in Tigray Regional State. She

thanked Ethiopia for its assistance and its open and unrestricted policies towards refugees. UN envoy, Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Dubai, also visited refugee camps in Gambella on Wednesday (July 16).

A 14 person delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industries was in Ethiopia this week to further strengthen business ties between the two countries. It met with members of the Ethiopian and Addis Ababa Chambers of Commerce and officials of the Ethiopian Investment Commission.

A new conference center, the Nile International Conference Center was inaugurated in Bahr Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State, on Sunday (July 13) in the presence of Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonen, Foreign Minister Dr . Tedros, Ambassadors of Nile Basin states and other dignitaries.

The Spokesperson of the Foreign Ministry said this week that tripartite talks on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to discuss formation of a committee to conduct two proposed studies involving a hydrology simulation model and a trans-boundary social, economic and environmental impact assessment are expected to restart in August.

The Ethiopian Ministry of Education signed an agreement on Wednesday (July 16) with the Somali Minister of Education, Isa Mohamed, to provide scholarships for Somali students in Ethiopia. The Government also provides scholarships to refugees from South Sudan and Eritrea.

Ethiopian Airlines is now flying daily to and from London Heathrow, with an additional service departing from London Heathrow on Tuesdays to link to its daily services to 49 African destinations through Addis Ababa.

Djibouti

Djibouti's Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf said on Wednesday (July 16) that Djibouti will soon contribute 950 additional troops to AMISON, 450 within a few weeks and another 500 a couple of months later. There are 1,000 Djibouti troops currently serving in AMISOM.

Eritrea

The Canadian Federal Government has formally warned Eritrea that its only diplomatic outpost in Canada, the Consulate in Toronto will be shut unless it ceases all involvement in collecting the 2% tax from Eritrean expatriates and Diaspora members. **(See article)**

Kenya

Kenyan police on Tuesday (July 15) seized 341.7 kilos of heroin hidden in the diesel tank of a ship, the biggest ever single seizure of drugs at Mombasa. MV Bushehr Amin Darya, a stateless vessel was detained at sea last week after reports it might be carrying drugs.

On Monday (July 14) the Independent Policing Oversight Authority released a critical report of the police operations looking for members of Al-Shabaab in Eastleigh that began in April. The report noted command confusion and failures of coordination, and said the constitutional right of suspects to be released or charged within 24 hours was ignored and police had taken money to release people.

Somalia

Somali Minister for Foreign Affairs and Investment Promotion, Dr. Abdirahman Beileh, made an official visit to Spain this week, the first by a Somali Minister. **(See article).**

The United Nation's Security Council on Friday (July 11) issued a statement condemning recent Al-Shabaab attacks and calling for UN Member States to make more contributions to support the Somali National Security Forces and help bring those responsible for acts of terrorism to justice. **(See article)**

An 18-member Technical Committee on the Formation of an Interim South West Administration has been approved at a ceremony attended by the President, Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament and regional leaders in Mogadishu. This is the first step towards implementation of the agreement on the region reached on June 23.

More than 200 suspects were arrested Tuesday (July 15) in a security sweep aimed at stemming a wave of militant attacks in the Somali capital of Mogadishu during a joint operation by government security forces and AMISOM troops. Soldiers manned checkpoints in Mogadishu while security forces raided the homes and shops of suspects.

South Sudan

The opposition SPLM-in–Opposition protested over the South Sudan Government's acquisition of more weapons from China last month. South Sudanese Defense Minister Kuol Manyang Juuk confirmed the purchase of the weapons.

A delegation from the East African Community visited Juba this week. Richard Sezibera, EAC secretary-general, said the visit was to provide information on the criteria and obligations involved in joining the ECA which is made up of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi. South Sudan has applied to join the ECA.

The South Sudan government has described the sanctions imposed by the European Union on Santino Deng, a senior army general as "unfair and unjustifiable". Last week the EU imposed a travel ban and a freeze of euro zone assets on both General Deng and a rebel commander, Major General Peter Gadet.

Sudan

The Sudanese National Elections Commission announced on Tuesday (July 15) that voter registration for the national elections, scheduled to take place in April next year, will start in

October. President Omar Al Bashir on Monday said the elections will take place as scheduled and urged all political parties to "prepare early and properly", pledging the vote would be "fair and transparent"

President Dr. Mulatu's State Visit to China

The President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Dr. Mulatu Teshome paid a 7-days state visit to the People's Republic of China last week (July 7-13). The visit was connected with the Eco-Forum Global Annual Conference that was held in Guiyang, China (July 11-12). During his visit Dr. Mulatu conferred with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Vice President Li Yuanchao and Premier Li Keqiang. The President also met with CEOs of a number of Chinese companies and financial institutions and visited industrial and technology parks.

During his meeting with President Xi Jinping, Dr. Mulatu expressed the gratitude of the Government of Ethiopia to the Chinese Government and companies for their active engagement in the economic development of Ethiopia through construction of major infrastructural projects and active participation in foreign direct investment. This provided a significant contribution to technology transfer and capacity building. He also requested the Chinese Government to support and encourage Chinese companies and business people to invest in Ethiopia's light manufacturing sectors, including textiles, leather and the leather industry, agriculture, agro-industries, equipment manufacturing, construction materials, manufacturing and other priority areas for investment in which Ethiopia is endowed with comparative advantages. He also requested the Chinese companies and developers to participate in the industry zones development, as China has accumulated vital experience in this field. He also requested the Chinese Government to encourage construction companies to continue their engagement in Ethiopia on the basis of mutual benefit. He emphasized the importance of the national railway network development now under construction in Ethiopia, in particular the Mekelle – Woldia railway project, and the establishment of the China – Africa Railway Academy in Addis Ababa, a project operating under the Forum for China – Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) framework. On multilateral issues, Dr. Mulatu said Ethiopia would continue to work closely and cooperate with China in areas of common interest. He underlined that Ethiopia will continued its contributions to the success of FOCAC.

President Xi Jinping underscored the bilateral cooperation between the two nations, referring to the in-depth discussions he held with Prime Minister Hailemariam twice last year. He stated that China, as a good friend, would continue to support Ethiopia in its endeavors to achieve its growth and development plan and in developing Ethiopia into manufacturing center, a regional air service center and a demonstration center for governance and poverty alleviation. He reiterated his Government's support to encourage Chinese companies and financial institutions to invest in Ethiopia and help in its industrialization and becoming a regional manufacturing center. He reiterated China's willingness to share experiences in attracting foreign direct investment and building special economic zones and industrial zones and to share experiences without any reservation on the planning, construction and management of such zones, technology transfer and human capacity building. President Xi Jinping emphasized the importance of industrial parks to attract more Chinese companies in to Ethiopia and said China would like to make joint efforts

with Ethiopia to make this mutually beneficial cooperation a model for cooperation between China and Africa, pursuing mutual benefit, working results and economic development. He stressed the importance of infrastructure development and reiterated China's willingness to support Ethiopia in the development of its nationwide railway network, adding that China will concentrate on the construction of Addis Ababa – Djibouti railway project.

In regard to development of natural resources, President Xi Jinping reassured Dr. Mulatu that the Government of China will support Chinese companies involved in exploration and development of natural resources in potash, oil and gas and other minerals. He also expressed China's interest to support Ethiopia's economic development endeavor in the agriculture and health sectors.

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome held similar discussions with Premier Li Keqiang and Vice President Li Yuanchao.

The Eco-Forum Global Annual Conference was held on Friday and Saturday last week (July 11-12), in Guiyang, Guizhou province. President Dr. Mulatu explained Ethiopia's commitment in continuing to push for a high economic growth rate and at the same time developing a green economy. This would mean that Ethiopia would avoid the mistakes in the industrialization process that the now rich countries made and would be able to avoid contributing to climate change. He noted that Ethiopia was also correcting any mistakes that had been made and the Government is starting to manage Ethiopia's environment effectively to reduce the erosion of soils and prevent the pollution of water and air.

The President discussed Ethiopia's Green Economy plan, which has been merged into the current and upcoming 5-year Growth and Transformation Plans. This provides for Ethiopia to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 by 259.5 million metric tonnes of CO₂ e, down from the business as usual amount of 400 million metric tonnes of CO₂ e. This would reduce Ethiopia's annual emissions down to 1.8 tonnes of CO₂ e a year per capita. Ethiopia would, he said, become a net zero carbon emitter and a middle-income country in 2025.

Apart from official meetings and the Eco-Forum Global annual conference, President Dr. Mulatu met with leaders of seven business companies involved in areas of Ethiopia's priority sectors of strategic importance. They included representatives of the textile sector association and the leadership and members of Shandong Chamber of Commerce. Sectors covered in the discussions included textiles, agro-industries, the manufacturing of steel structures, machinery and agricultural equipment. President Dr. Mulatu also held discussions with CEO's of four financial institutions that have been participating in development process in Ethiopia, with a view to encouraging them in the role of fostering business ties between the two nations.

During a highly successful visit which achieved its objective of enhancing bilateral cooperation and friendship between Ethiopia and China, President Dr. Mulatu also visited the Fourth Generation Industrial Park of Foxconn, a Hydroelectric Power Generation Plant, ZTE Corporation, Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd, Huajian Shoe Factory and Stella International Shoe Industry.

Ambassador Berhane holds talks with IGAD Project Management Unit

Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, held talks with the IGAD Project Management Unit, headed by Ms. Fathia Alwan, Program Manager for Health and Development on Thursday (July 17). Also present were Dr. Ahmed Hassen, Program Coordinator for IGAD's Regional HIV and AIDS Partnership Programme (IRAPP), Dr. Grum Hailu, IRAPP Consultant, Afework Kassa, Program Facilitation Officer for IGAD, and Brazzile Musumba, Communication Affairs Officer for IGAD. Discussions focused on how to make a success of IGAD's first ever scientific conference on health with special emphasis on pastoralists and cross-border mobile populations in the region. The aim of the First IGAD International Scientific Conference on Health is to show-case research findings and best practices referring to sexual and reproductive health, HIV, AIDS and harmful traditional practices of present and future importance among cross-border and mobile populations, pastoralists, refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in IGAD member states. It will be held in Addis Ababa, December 3-6.

Ambassador Berhane welcomed the delegates of the IGAD Project Management Unit, and stressed that the planned scientific conference with its emphasis on refugees, pastoralists and cross-border mobile populations would be of major importance for IGAD Member States to create a healthy community of common destiny. He also underlined the need to fill the gap in the field of health-related matters in the region through such a kind of scientific conference, as well as increased political commitment and sustained cooperation. He noted that Ethiopia saw a mutually cooperative partnership in the fields of health, education, and economy as a strategic pivot and emphasized that Ethiopia would be supportive of regional efforts as well as continental issues in order to collectively prevent threats. He reiterated that Ethiopia was committed to support IGAD in successfully hosting the First IGAD International Scientific Conference on Health in Addis Ababa in December. He assured the delegation that all relevant institutions would extend assistance to the Conference and proactively participate in it. Noting the ultimate manifestation of all the social, economic and political ills in the region was conflict, he said the region must address issues of development and poverty in order to avoid this. He pledged that Ethiopia would encourage greater ties with IGAD, IGAD Member States and development partners in order to improve the lives and livelihoods of pastoralists, cross-border and mobile populations.

Ms. Fathia Alwan, IGAD Program Manager for Health and Development, noted that the Conference would be a milestone for robust partnership, scientific-based decision-making, sustained resource mobilization and increased political commitment to expedite the health and social development initiatives focusing on pastoralists, cross-border and mobile populations and raising these to a higher level. She added that the Conference would offer innovative approaches for equitable access to RH, HIV and AIDS services among pastoralists, cross-border and mobile populations. She extended her thanks to the Government of Ethiopia for offering to host this first ever IGAD International Scientific Conference on Health. She also noted that the Conference would provide an opportunity for Member States to share knowledge and draw on best experiences of IGAD health and social programs and projects. She urged Member States of

IGAD, academia, development partners and other stakeholders to play their role in the successful realization of the Conference.

Dr. Ahmed Hassen, Program Coordinator of Regional HIV and AIDS Partnership Programme (IRAPP) said the program needed Ethiopia's political and technical support to advance IGAD's programs in the area of health in order to address the needs of millions of cross-border and mobile populations, refugees, IDPs, and pastoralists. The Conference would add value to the sustainability of the program in addressing the social needs of the target populations. It would enable policy makers to gain a clear picture of the needs of pastoralists, cross-border and mobile populations as well as chart the way forward for a renewed partnership to scale up efforts for the provision of improved social services delivery and for the furtherance of social development to these populations.

Dr. Grum Hailu, IRAPP Consultant, noted that the Conference would also show-case Ethiopia's best health interventions. He said it would evaluate the previous health programs implemented by IGAD and supplement national efforts to address hard-to-reach populations. He added that it would allow IGAD to communicate the positive results gained so far in the implementation of the IRAPP program and to lay the foundation for the continuation of IRAPP after 2014. Brazzile Musumba, Communication Affairs Officer for IGAD, gave details of IGAD's cooperation with the World Bank, UNFPA, the African Federation of Public Health Associations (AFPHAs), and Canada to provide Sexual Reproductive Health and HIV and AIDS services to IDP, refugees and pastoralist communities. He said part of the purpose of the Conference was for it to act as a platform to mobilize resources with the view to extend the sustainability of the program.

Capitalizing on the significance of the regional agenda, Ethiopia stands committed to the economic cooperation and regional integration agenda of IGAD in its bid to stand collectively against global challenges and offset the emerging security threats facing the region. The focus of IGAD has been on development since its inception, and Ethiopia has been dedicated to development that is all-encompassing and is owned by all segments of the society. The health of these target populations is one element of this reality. Within the framework of IGAD's development cooperation, Ethiopia has played a positive and constructive role in collaboration with other Member States and international development partners in carrying forward the programs and projects of IGAD, aiming at addressing the needs of cross border and mobile populations, refugees and IDPs. In addition to IGAD's health programs for pastoralists, Ethiopia has made substantial progress in providing basic services to pastoralists and has also focused on programs to provide sustainable livelihoods to millions of pastoralists through community-driven development and other risk management mechanisms. These social investments for the target populations are enabling them to transform their lives and enter the growth trajectories of the region. It will, in fact, create enabling conditions for Member States to produce a people-centered, stable and equitably developing region.

Somalia's Foreign Minister in Spain

Somali Minister for Foreign Affairs and Investment Promotion, Dr. Abdirahman Beileh, was on an official visit to Spain this week. It was the first visit by a Somali Minister to Spain and the invitation was extended to Dr Beileh by Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel García-Margallo. Dr. Beileh who arrived in Madrid on Sunday (July 13) held discussions with Mr. García-Margallo, as well as with Alberto Virella, Director of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and other officials including the head of Africa region at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Discussions centered on the creation and fostering of bilateral cooperation, the reconstruction of Somalia and tackling piracy at sea. Spanish officials showed interest in funding a number of security related activities and projects in the country such as the Somali government's Give up Your Gun and Go to School (GIGS) program to establish vocational training courses and strategies for children between 10-17 years of age unable to be absorbed into the normal school system. The outcome of the meetings was described as positive and underlined the Spanish government's interest in funding priority development projects related specifically to creating employment and alternative livelihood choices for young people as a means of deterring them from terrorism and other unproductive and violent activities. The Somali government will now formulate and submit a proposal to the Spanish Development Agency for consideration for provision of funding for the program.

Dr. Beileh also raised this issue on a visit to the Santiago Bernabeu stadium, home to one of the most successful football clubs in the world, Real Madrid. During his visit he was shown around by one of the Directors with responsibility for external relations and they discussed the possibility of Real Madrid extending its work in organizing youth clubs, funding sports and building stadiums for disadvantaged communities and in developing nations to Somalia. Mr. Beileh proposed an extension of the GIGS program to be named Give Up Your Gun and be a Champion aimed at establishing youth clubs for sports, building stadiums and training young people in football and basketball as a means of providing them with an alternative livelihood and free leisure activities. The Real Madrid management expressed interest in this proposal and invited the government of Somalia to submit proposals. Dr. Beileh said this was an opportunity to explore for the advantage of the future of the next generation "especially if it is being delivered elsewhere around the world by such amazing people and groups like Real Madrid already." He said that approaching Real Madrid directly as he had done was an indication that his government was going to knock at every door "where there is an opportunity to create alternative livelihoods and lives for our young people to deter them from wasting their precious lives on terrorism."

Dr. Beileh also met with officials at the Spanish Ministry of Defense, including the Secretary General, Mr Alejandro Alvargonzález, senior civil servants and the head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Spanish officials confirmed Spain's continued commitment to assist the Somali government in programs in which it is already involved in , including the European Union Military Mission in Somalia (EUTM) which has been responsible for training 3,600 Somali soldiers in Uganda and in the European Union Naval Operation Atalanta which is focused on fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia. A senior official from the Spanish Ministry of Defense

also visited Mogadishu later in the week to meet with Somalia's Minister for Defense and continue discussions on extending support and exploring security collaboration in the future.

During his visit, Dr. Abdirahman Beileh also spoke at the Real Instituto Elcano, the Spanish Think Tank. He spoke on security in the Horn of Africa, the fight against terrorism and the reconstruction of Somalia. Dr. Beileh said Somalia, despite its many problems, which he described as over-reported, was on the mend and with time and continued international support, would turn the corner from a fragile to a stable state. He pointed to Somalia's past successes before the civil war as an example of the country was capable of given time and the necessary support to redevelop its institutions. This would, he said, be a challenge: "The reconstruction of Somalia, apart from inclusive politics and public empowerment, requires the nurturing of and investment in human capital, regional and global cooperation on development and, most importantly, patience. However, before all of this, Somalis must have genuine internal dialogue about how they want to govern themselves and where they want to go as a nation."

On the issue of security in the Horn of Africa, the Somali Foreign Minister made it clear that this was not just a Somali issue even if Al-Shabaab was centered on Somalia. To tackle insecurity in the Horn and to confront and defeat Al-Shabaab required government to government cooperation on a Horn of Africa-wide basis, he said. "The best way to confront such a war is for neighbors to cooperate, share intelligence and coordinate their security and military activities. Articulation of a common security policy is necessary for countries in the Horn of Africa. We recognize the need for a holistic and regional approach to such a menace and we intend to act on this," he emphasized. Dr. Beileh stressed that security, peace and development in the Horn of Africa and in particular in Somalia, would be beneficial for Spain and for other European Union member States as well as for Somalia. It would allow both areas to achieve their own individual and very different public policy goals. He also urged Spain to use its global influence to support Somalia's development and progress. Spain, he said, was once the world's most powerful and influential nation. It still enjoys great diplomatic authority and respect across the world. This influence and authority could be put to good use in assisting Somalia," he concluded.

Meanwhile, over the weekend the UN Security Council issued a press statement on Somalia after being briefed on the security situation in Mogadishu by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Nicholas Kay, on July 11. The Security Council condemned in the strongest terms the recent Al-Shabaab attacks in Mogadishu against Villa Somalia, the Parliament and members of Parliament over the previous week. The Security Council expressed its condolences to the families of the victims and wished a speedy recovery to those injured. It also paid tribute to both the African Union Mission in Somalia and to the Somali National Security Forces for their effective response to the attack against Villa Somalia. The Security Council underlined the urgent need to support the Somali National Security Forces, in order for it to be able to assume full responsibility for security in Mogadishu and beyond. It encouraged Member States to make unqualified contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund to provide support to the Somali National Army, as authorized by UN resolution 2124 (2013).

The Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivation, wherever and whenever and by

whomsoever committed. The Council reiterated its determination to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with their responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations., and underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice. It urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Somali authorities. The Council also reminded all States that they must ensure that measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law. It reiterated its resolve to continue to stand by the people and Government of Somalia in the face of these “deplorable terrorist attacks, as they seek to establish peace and prosperity across their country.”

Earlier this week, AMISOM Spokesperson Colonel Ali Aden Houmed gave an update on the security situation around the country. He noted that AMISOM continued to work closely with the Somali Security Forces in the on-going security stabilization operations in Mogadishu and elsewhere to ensure the safety of the civilians in the holy month of Ramadan. In Sector 1, he said the situation remained calm despite the “isolated cases of assassinations in Mogadishu” which he described as “a desperate attempt to divert attention from the heavy losses Al-Shabaab have incurred on the battle field.” He said Somali security forces and AMISOM had intercepted and foiled a suicide car bomb targeted at the airport. They had also launched a security crackdown in some districts of Benadir region and security operations were actively going on in Waaberi, Hodan . Somali Security forces backed by AMISOM continued to engage closely in the Joint Operations Center to enhance general security in the capital.

Colonel Houmed said the situation in Kismayo and Dhobley (Sector 2) remained calm with no major incident. The previous week, Interim Juba Administration forces supported by AMISOM had conducted a military operation in depth at an Al-Shabaab camp in Busc Busc, 115 kilometers south west of Kismayo, which had been used as a hide out for Al-Shabaab to conduct Improvised Explosive Devices training. In Sector 3 there had been no major incidents. Humanitarian aid had been provided to residents of Wajiid and Xudur following the liberation of the towns with AMISOM forces escorting 10 trucks of humanitarian aid to those towns. An Al-Shabaab attack on a Somali National Forces position in Gabarhaney in Bakool region had been quickly repulsed and a number of Al Shabaab arrested. The situation in Beled Weyne and its environs (Sector 4) also remained calm though clan militias have clashed in north Beled Weyne, with 11 people killed. The local administration and AMISOM forces have been mediating between the two clans. In Sector 5, however, there had been an increase of isolated attacks in parts of Jowhar including killings and explosions. AMISOM forces and the local administration had imposed a curfew to improve security.

Eritrean consulate in Canada receives a final warning to stop ‘extortion’

All Eritreans living abroad and members of the Eritrean Diaspora are assessed 2% of all earnings. The tax is said to be voluntary but according to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, all those who decline to pay are denied basic services, including the issue of a passport and face possible arrest or fines should they return to Eritrea, while their friends and families in Eritrea

are threatened and harassed. The collection of this tax has been linked to threats and intimidation in Canada and other countries around the world.

Foreign Minister John Baird expelled the then Eritrean consul-general in May last year after previous warnings about the collection of the 2% tax from Eritrean expatriates. Despite this, it appears that consular staff have continued to play a key role in collecting the tax. The consulate has denied soliciting for the tax or making threats, claiming it only provides information on methods to pay. However, according to Canadian newspapers Eritrean-Canadians have recorded phone calls in which consulate staff admitted they were still actively involved in the taxation program. Examples quoted in the Canadian media include a demand for \$1,200 in “back taxes” to renew a passport for a lady who wished to visit her husband in the US. The consulate instructed her to contact an agent who would arrange for her to transfer the money to Eritrea. Another man was told his wife and child would not be allowed to leave Eritrea until he paid up. A former political prisoner was told he could not have his university transcript unless he paid \$6,000 in taxes.

Now, according to the Canadian media, the Government has sent the Eritrean consulate a diplomatic note putting the Eritrean regime on notice that its Toronto consulate must stop soliciting and collecting this “Diaspora tax”. If consulate staff do anything more than refer callers to an Eritrean government website, the Canadian Government says it will close down the diplomatic post.

The diplomatic note says that “the department notes that it continues to receive serious allegations that the Consulate of Eritrea in Toronto is violating its commitment to respect Canada’s conditions regarding the solicitation and collection of tax. Specifically, the department has received information that the consulate continues to request notices of assessment of Canadian tax returns from Eritrean-Canadian citizens, is involved in the calculation and negotiation of the amount of money owing to the Eritrean government, and further relies on agents in the community to collect funds and transfer them to Eritrea. It said that these actions must be considered as “solicitation and collection of tax.” The note goes on: “Canada expects that the only action on the part of the consulate related to the 2% reconstruction and rehabilitation tax is to refer any inquiries about the tax to the government of Eritrea directly or to a government of Eritrea website.”

It also says that “if the department continues to receive allegations that the consulate continues to solicit the tax, including through provision of amounts owing, requesting notices of assessment, and/or using agents or any similar activities, Canada will withdraw its recognition of the Eritrean consular post in Toronto.” It says this will be discussed with the next head of the consulate in Toronto when she arrives. It points out that the “Diaspora tax” system has been condemned by the United Nations, which has asked member countries to end the practice. The UN has imposed sanctions on Eritrea over its clandestine backing of armed groups in the Horn of Africa, notably Al-Shabaab, and over its refusal to acknowledge its conflict with Djibouti and its failure to return Djibouti prisoners of war.

Pursuing terrorism under the guise of democracy can never be justified

Over the past two weeks, the detention and extradition of Andargachew Tsige, the Secretary General of the Ginbot 7 political party, designated as a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian House of People’s Representatives, has been headline news in local and foreign media outlets. Andargachew was apprehended through the cooperation of Ethiopian and Yemeni intelligence operatives while he was in transit in Sana’a on his way from the United Arab Emirates to Asmara in Eritrea.

A press release issued by the Joint Counter-terrorism Force of the Federal Police and National Intelligence and Security Service revealed that Andargachew was using several false names, including Tufa, Derebaba, Jean-Paul, James-Franci, Robi and wedi Harina. The statement noted that Andargachew had been based for five years in Asmara where he had been engaged in all sorts of activity in recruiting training and organizing terrorists in collaboration with the regime in Eritrea and other anti terrorist forces, with the aim of destabilizing Ethiopia and derailing its of development process. The statement recalled that a person by the name Abebe Wendmagegn, a British national of Ethiopian origin, had been trained by Andargachew and sent on a bombing mission in the Bole-Medhaniale neighborhood of Addis Ababa. He, and his collaborators, had been captured in January this year. 2They were later tried and convicted of attempting to kill innocent civilians.

Andargachew’s detention by the Yemeni authorities and his extradition invites several questions arising from the mixing of terrorist missions with peaceful acts of political struggle. Time and again, Ginbot 7 has reiterated its objective is to overturn the constitutional order of Ethiopia through violent and non-constitutional means. As part of its determination to destabilize Ethiopia, it has even gone to the extent of forming alliances with the regime in Asmara which has also made no secret of its own interest in destabilizing Ethiopia. Indeed, Ginbot 7 has formed marriages of convenience with almost all other anti-Ethiopian forces which are prepared to serve as surrogates of the Eritrean regime. Ginbot 7 leaders have repeatedly stated that they would carry out any sort of act of terror as long as it would help to move their objectives forward. The organization’s determination to kill and terrorize was clearly demonstrated in the failed attempt to carry out assassinations of government officials and stir up insurrection against the constituted government. The terrorist group’s top leadership including Andargachew Tsige, Melaku Tefera, Berhanu Nega, Eyoel and Mesfin Aman were sentenced to death in absentia in December 2009 after a fair trial in which the defendants’ rights were fully observed. 33 others including Brigadier General Tefera Mamo and Asaminew Tsige were sentenced to life imprisonment by due process of law. This was followed by a designation of Ginbot 7 as a terrorist organization by the House of People’s Representatives in 2011 along with OLF, ONLF, Al Shabaab and Al-Qaida.

The return of Andargachew to Ethiopia, an example of successful counter terrorism cooperation between Yemen and Ethiopia has been the subject of a certain amount of ill-informed criticism. There have been calls from the usual sources for the release of a person who has himself acknowledged his role in masterminding a failed attempt to overthrow the Ethiopian

government. We shouldn't need to be reminded yet again that terrorism can never be justified for any reason whatsoever as a means for a political end. Nor is there any basis, legally, morally or for any other reason, to uphold terrorist activity, particularly in a country that provides, and implements, constitutional guarantees for peaceful political dissent. It was this understanding that prompted Prime Minister Hailemariam's statement to the BBC on July 11 that there is no room for conflating terrorism with the exercise of political rights.

Ginbot 7, with its leader Andargachew, is an organization that plots to carry out acts of terror against innocent civilians and the infrastructure of the country. The struggle it always alludes to can only be understood as a struggle that aims to bring anarchy under the guise of democracy. It must be underlined loud and clear that terrorism is the antithesis of democratic values. It is a deliberate attempt to impose the will of a minority by instilling fear and insecurity among the general public. The gravity of the crimes of Ginbot 7, and of Andargachew, is particularly evident in the demonstration of its willingness to join ranks with the regime in Asmara. A group that forms an alliance with the regime in Asmara, known for supporting terrorists, and often classified as one of the most repressive in the world, cannot claim any close acquaintance with the values of democracy. Equally, in the context of Eritrea's activity towards Ethiopia, this can only be described as treasonable.

Those who have criticized Andargachew's detention need to be reminded that the call they are making for his release is based on a wrong understanding of the case. Calling for release in such a situation can only be equated with endorsing, even supporting, terrorism as a tactic of struggle as well as becoming a stooge of an Eritrean government, widely branded as a 'spoiler' in the region. Equally, calls for his release on the basis that the person holds a foreign passport and that this should exonerate them from detention and legal liability, also demonstrates a simplistic understanding of the case. Citizenship under Ethiopian law has never given immunity to one's liability for grave criminal offences like terrorism. Andargachew's detention and extradition was carried out on the basis of the bilateral treaty between Yemen and Ethiopia which allows for extradition of wanted criminals.

Another issue that it is important to raise here is that of the double standards that still continue to prevail globally as far as designating terrorist organizations are concerned. While almost all nations agree that terrorism is a global menace that continues to be a real challenge to international peace and security, on a practical level cooperation in counter terrorism leaves a lot to be desired. Organizations like Oromo Liberation Front, the Ogaden National Liberation Front and Ginbot 7, all of which have been involved in extensive killing of innocent civilians and other terrorist activities, are allowed to roam freely around the world despite the fact that the Ethiopian parliament has designated them as terrorist organizations. Despite the fact that other countries have cooperated with Ethiopia in the fight against international jihadists like Al Qaeda and Al-Shabaab, the threat emerging from Ginbot 7 and other Ethiopian terrorist organizations operating in Ethiopia has not given the consideration and cooperation it deserves despite the overwhelming evidence of their terrorist activity. The Ethiopian Government believes that whoever might commit terrorist acts, or wherever they are carried out, the battle against terrorism is the same, and all should cooperate in a genuine spirit irrespective of whether an organization is designated in Ethiopia or in other country. If nothing else, the emerging trend of cooperation among terror

groups across the globe should set off warning signals of the need for greater cooperation among the nation of the world.

Indeed, the extradition of Andargachew, the Secretary-General of Ginbot 7, should be seen as an impressive example of a successful counter-terrorism carried out by Yemen and Ethiopia. Calls for his release are no more than an endorsement of terrorist activities long ignored by outsiders. Ethiopia is a multi-party democracy and provides constitutional guarantees to democracy, the free operation of dozens of political parties, and to the rule of law. Any attempt to portray Ginbot 7 and Andargachew as fighting for democracy has no validity as their own repeated assertions make very clear. We should not have to remind the defenders of Ginbot 7 that a democratic culture can only flourish under a political dispensation that respects democratic institutions. Here, important strides have been made in building the institutions of democracy including home-grown civil society organizations and mass organizations and a free press. Those who claim the contrary have clearly bothered to read what is actually published in Addis Ababa. Indulging in terrorist plots is not the way to nurture any democracy, young or old. This can only be done through pursuing political goals within the bounds of the law. Even more, mixing terrorism with claims of democratic struggle is no justification for treason or as the Prime Minister said, serving as a Trojan horse for the regime in Asmara. The detention of Andargachew is, in fact, an act that in the circumstances should be seen as contributing to democracy in upholding the rule of law, respect for the constitutionalism and the rights of peaceful struggle.

Finally, it is pertinent to refer to the international consensus that has developed over the past two decades on the issue of combating terrorism. The UN Security Council in Resolution 1373 (2001) reaffirmed that “such acts, like any act of international terrorism, constitute a threat to international peace and security”. It calls on all states to “(f) Take appropriate measures in conformity with the relevant provisions of national and international law, including international standards of human rights, before granting refugee status, for the purpose of ensuring that the asylum-seeker has not planned, facilitated or participated in the commission of terrorist acts: (g) Ensure, in conformity with international law, that refugee status is not abused by the perpetrators, organizers or facilitators of terrorist acts, and that claims of political motivation are not recognized as grounds for refusing requests for the extradition of alleged terrorists.”

The UN General Assembly passed Resolution 49/60 in December 1994, the Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism. This notes (Section 3): Criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the consideration of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other nature that may be invoked to justify them.” The General Assembly in its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (Resolution 60/288 of September 8, 2006) reiterates “its strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed by whomever, wherever and for whatever purpose, as it constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.” Earlier, the Organization of African Union in its Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (July 14, 1999) states that “terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances and, consequently, should be combated in all its forms and manifestations, including those in which states are involved directly or indirectly, without regard to its origins, causes and objectives.”

Ethiopian Diaspora: engaged in development

The African Diaspora has, for years, been instrumental in helping family and friends at home get by as the huge annual remittance flows demonstrate, but their contributions are not confined to family remittances. They can have a significant and positive impact on development. According to the World Bank, African Diaspora savings, at US\$53 billion every year, exceed annual remittances to the continent. They are, however, still mostly invested abroad. Many Africans living abroad certainly feel a strong sense of connection to their places of origin, and want to contribute to development at home. Among professionals in the Diaspora there is a real and growing desire to use their expertise and skills to make a difference in the home countries. Currently, through entrepreneurship, skills and technology exchange, increased trade links, philanthropic foundations, investment, and heritage and tourism links, Diaspora groups, individuals and networks are giving back in various ways.

Although Ethiopia, in comparison to other Sub-Saharan African countries, has a low emigration rate at 0.4%, due to its sheer population size of an estimated 90 million people, in absolute numbers it has a large Diaspora community. The Government of Ethiopia has formally acknowledged the importance of the Diaspora and the valuable contribution that Ethiopians abroad can make to the country's development. This has led to the decision to create a single Diaspora policy that will span all governmental institutions and levels. The policy acknowledges the paramount importance of the Ethiopian Diaspora communities and their ability to contribute their share in the fight against poverty. It is in this regard that various measures to expedite close engagement of the Diaspora in the overall development projects of the nation have been taken. As part of this and in order to activate maximum use of Diaspora resources, the Government has realized the need for the relationship to be institutionalized. It has, therefore, established formal mechanisms to encourage and facilitate Diaspora engagement, setting up a specific department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mandated to assist and cooperate with the Diaspora.

The aim of the General Directorate for Diaspora Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to ensure that Diaspora issues are considered in the nation building process; to disseminate accurate information to the Ethiopian community abroad through various media outlets; and to keep them informed of issues relevant to them. It also serves as a liaison between different federal Ministries, Regional State Diaspora Coordinating Offices and Ethiopians in the Diaspora; encourages the active involvement of Ethiopians in Diaspora in socio-economic activities in the country; and works to mobilize Ethiopian communities abroad for sustained and organized image building.

As part of the government's effort to facilitate involvement of members of the Diaspora, the Foreign Ministry recently tabled a draft framework for discussion to set up an internship program that will enable Ethiopian nationals and foreign citizens of Ethiopian origin to work at the Ministry and Ethiopian missions abroad. This framework is thought to be an effective tool to familiarize the members of Diaspora with the country's current state's of affairs. Moreover, the program will shed light on the country's policies, strategies and its development directions.

It has been in recognition of the need to involve the federal states fully in Diaspora activities, the Government has also encouraged replication of the federal level initiatives and systems at regional level. Each Regional State has created an office specifically to deal with Diaspora activities and encourage the Diaspora to engage at regional as well as national development level. These efforts, accompanied by a range of policy reforms and other measures to facilitate Diaspora participation, have been widely welcomed by the Diaspora.

Ethiopia is also making progress in reaching out to its expatriates through targeted campaigns seeking investment in development projects in the home country, through its formal Diaspora policies, and its efforts in supporting global Diaspora networks to forge strong connections between those at home and their foreign-born populations. The Ethiopian Diaspora Directorate-General now has a web portal (<http://www.ethdiaspora.org.et>) to provide with information for the Diaspora on investment and trade opportunities in Ethiopia, details of development projects, details of the Government's Diaspora policy and of the support services are available in Ethiopia. Foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin can apply for a "yellow card", allowing them virtually all the rights and privileges of a citizen including entering the country without a visa and employment without a work permit.

State-level Diaspora engagement policies have also gained in popularity over the last decade as the regional states increasingly seek to capitalize on the resources that migrants can offer their country and their state of origin. It has become widely accepted that Diaspora members can offer significant value to their countries of origin and help in economic and social development. In the past, the greatest focus has perhaps been on international remittance flows, but now there is also general recognition that knowledge transfer programs and a more general Diaspora investment is of equal or greater value. Just as the African Union has recognized the African Diaspora as the sixth region of the continent, countries, including Ethiopia, have realized the importance and the value of the Diaspora.