

A Week in the Horn. 1/1/2016

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), H.E Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, on December 29 expressed satisfaction following the recent announcement by the World Health Organisation (WHO), certifying Guinea Conakry as Ebola-Free.

Burundi's president, Pierre Nkurunziza said a proposed African Union peacekeeping force for his country is unacceptable and will be fought as hostile invaders. In an address to the nation Wednesday (December 30, 2015), the President said the peacekeepers' presence in Burundi would be a violation of the country's sovereignty.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia has finalized preparations for the upcoming African Heads of state and Government Summit in January (26-30, 2016) in Addis Ababa. State Minister Ambassador Taye Atske-selasie announced during the consultative meeting that the diplomatic community should prepare themselves for the necessary logistics to take part in the successful continental event.

The 2016 US-Africa Business Summit is set to be held at the United Nations Conference Center in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from February 1-4. Concerning the US-Africa Business summit, State Minister Ambassador Taye Atske-selasie briefed diplomats that the Summits will help create business opportunities and strengthen the business ventures among participants.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn met with Sheikh Ahmed Madobe, the President of Jubaland State on Thursday (December 31, 2015). Sheikh Ahmed Madobe said the discussions with Prime Minister Hailemariam had been successful. Earlier on Wednesday ((December 30, 2015), Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adahnom met Madobe during which the discussion the two sides focused on

the peace and stability of the region, the upcoming Somalia election and implementation the Addis Ababa Agreement.

The House of Peoples' Representatives approved the new overseas employment proclamation on Tuesday (December 29). Agencies that send workers abroad are required to register more than 1 million birr capital and offer the necessary safety immunity for the workers.

The Joint Communiqué between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and The Republic of the Union of Myanmar was signed on Monday (December 28) between H.E Ambassador Gennet Zewide, Ambassador of Ethiopia to India and Mr. U Aung Khin Soe, Ambassador of Myanmar to India. During the signing ceremony, the two ambassadors expressed their keen interest to cooperate with each other.

Ethiopian Consulate UAE and Ajman Chamber of Commerce and Industry discussed ways of enhancing joint economic cooperation and investment and opening doors for business between the two sides.

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity disclosed on Monday (December 28, 2015) that water pumps powered by “Green Energy” are getting spread across Ethiopia so that rural localities, far from access to Ethiopia's national power grid would be able to receive potable water through facilities powered by renewable energy sources.

Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn answered questions from MPs on the Second Growth and Transformation Plan which was endorsed by the House of Representatives on Friday (December 24). The Prime Minister also answered questions on the drought and the efforts to resolve problems in the Oromo and Amhara Regional States (**See articles**)

The meeting of Water and Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan in Khartoum at the beginning of the week underlined the full commitment of all three countries to the Declaration of Principles signed in March, and agreed on the consultancy firms to conduct the technical studies on GERD and the timing of the studies on the dam. (**See article**)

Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros met with President Omer Al-Bashir while in Khartoum. Discussions covered issues of bilateral and common regional interests.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held a high-level policy dialogue on December 23. (**See article**)

A Conference of Border Relations' Development between Sudan and Ethiopia was held in Ad-Damazin, in Sudan last weekend under the slogan of Peace, Development, Good Neighborhood. The Wali of Sudan's Blue Nile State and the Deputy Governor of Ethiopian Amhara Region as well as other officials attended.

Eritrea

The Global Eritrean Advocacy Network (GEAN) organized an Eritrean conference in California on December 26-27, to consider the need of “political engagement of Eritrean Muslims in the Diaspora.” GEAN was created to help strengthen the weak involvement of Eritrean Diaspora Muslims in activities to help alleviate the dire situation in Eritrea.

Kenya

The Boni forest security operation against Al-Shabaab has been extended to four other areas, Bondheji, Pandanguo, Witu and Pangani in Garissa and Tana River counties.

Somalia

Ambassador Nicholas Kay, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and head of UNSOM finished his term of office on Tuesday (December 29) and left Somalia. (See article)

Minister for Internal Affairs, Abdirahman Odawa said on Tuesday, (December 29) that the forthcoming state formation convention for Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle will take place in Jowhar next week.

Somalia’s parliament passed a controversial media bill on Monday (December 28). The 42 article bill requires media outlets to register and pay annual license fees as well as allows the authorities to prosecute and arrest journalists for disseminating ‘false’ news or fine them for other infringements. It has been described as restrictive by journalists.

South Sudan

Head of SPLM-IO and South Sudan’s designated First Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar has assured the people of South Sudan that 2016 will be the year of peace. Machar said his group is working hard to make sure people get the peace they have been yearning for since the start of the civil war more than 21 months ago.

South Sudanese president, Salva Kiir, on Thursday (December 31, 2015) has called on his supporters to defend the creation of 28 states in response to criticisms that the move was a violation of the peace agreement he signed in August with the SPLM-IO to end 21 months of civil war in the country.

SPLM-IO officials have said that criticisms of President Salva Kiir ‘s swearing in of governors for the proposed 28 states unilaterally announced earlier, did not imply renegotiation of the peace agreement. The SPLM-IO remained committed to the implementation of the peace deal.

Sudan

Sudan’s Dialogue Coordination Committee (7+7) said on Sunday (December 27) that

it had decided to extend the National Dialogue Conference indefinitely. A member of the committee told reporters that this was for logical and practical reasons, and holdout political and armed groups have expressed a desire to join the conference.

US President Barack Obama on Wednesday (December 30) congratulated the Sudanese people on the 60th anniversary of their independence and expressed the hope that 2016 would offer them an opportunity to enjoy a prosperous and peaceful future..

The House of People's Representatives endorses the Growth and Transformation Plan II

The House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) endorsed the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (2015/16 – 2019/20) on Friday (December 25) after four consecutive days of discussions. The House considered the major challenges and achievements in implementation of the First Growth and Transformation Plan I (GTP I) as well as the key features of the GTP II at length before putting up the document for endorsement. Earlier, the Council of Ministers discussed ways to implementing the new Plan in mid-November following a Consultation Forum with development partners held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in late October. Ethiopians across the country have also discussed the Plan and provided input. The Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation, Abdulaziz Mohammed, noted that Ethiopia's development partners had made an enormous contribution to the implementation and actualization of First Growth and Transformation Plan and to Ethiopia's efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Following their debate, the House of People's Representatives unanimously passed the 2008 Fiscal Year Supplementary Budget as well as the Growth and Transformation Plan II.

As well as endorsing the Growth and Development Plan II, the House also tabled questions for Prime Minister Hailemariam. In his responses, the Prime Minister noted that agriculture had significantly improved during the first GTP but not transformed as had originally been planned. As a result, the Prime Minister noted that the GTP II would address this. Its strategic direction already incorporated changing ways of agricultural production and productivity through implementation of modern scientific ways of farming and engaging youth widely in this sector to provide the way forward. The Prime Minister said that to fill the gaps observed in the export sector, boosting agricultural production and productivity would be a key task to increase both the amount and quality of the country's exports. He mentioned the importance of building the necessary infrastructure to connect the large-scale farms located in the periphery of the country to the center and underlined the need to organize graduates in agricultural science to engage actively and scientifically in the sector. He emphasized that agricultural productivity over the next five years' would be more closely attached to Ethiopia's ambitious climate resilient economic development. The Prime Minister also mentioned the failures of some of the investors engaged in the commercial agriculture sector and their failure to properly utilize loans provided for them. He said that administrative corrections need to be taken in such circumstances. The Prime Minister said the GTP II gave due emphasis for further development of pastoral areas situated in the emerging regions of the country; a corollary was that the capacity of the relevant regional states needed to be boosted.

On issues of finance, the Prime Minister stressed the need to strengthen the administration's capacity to collect domestic finance if the country was going to undertake the plans laid out in the GTP II effectively. He noted: "the share of tax to the country's GDP is projected to grow from 3% to 17.2%", adding "but the sector is faced with severe rent-seeking and corrupt trends. The reforms launched in this sector should be strengthened. We have to take examples from the experiences from countries like South Korea." The Taxpaying culture is expected to improve further in the coming years, the Prime Minister said. Referring to the need to modernize the tax collection system, Prime Minister Hailemariam said the nation would soon introduce a single window system for the Ethiopian Revenues and Customs Authority and would continue to do make every effort to improve the current low level of tax collection.

The Prime Minister noted that the GTP II had placed the issue of making youth and women beneficiaries of the economic growth of the country as a separate pillar for the Plan's development. He pointed out the Government had now identified the main bottlenecks to development and their causes in administration and in the justice sector and it was working hard to deal with mal-administration problems across the whole administration. It was doing everything in its power to overcome challenges in the manufacturing sector and boost agricultural productivity and tax collection as well as deal with other shortcomings.

Responding to questions of MPs over the problems registered in GTP I concerning manufacturing and the measures that would be taken under the GTP II to ensure that plans were implemented, the Prime Minister said the Government had given top priority to the manufacturing sector in the GTP II. It would encourage investors to engage in the sector by providing loans, creating market opportunities, offering management training and other similar benefits. The Prime Minister also went on to say that the Development Bank of Ethiopia would provide loans for manufacturers and those engaged in agro-processing businesses with a view to encouraging the transformation of the agrarian economy to an industrial-led economy.

On the issue of good governance, the Prime Minister said that this could not be left solely to the Government since officials inside the Government were also part of the problem. The public, he said, should be empowered at all levels to demand their rights and expose individuals involved in such activity.

The Prime Minister gives details of the Government response to El Niño-induced drought...

During the debate and discussions in the House of Peoples Representatives on the Second Growth and Transformation Plan on Friday (December 25), Prime Minister Hailemariam also answered questions raised by Members of Parliament on various other current issues including how the government was handling the drought caused by the failed spring and summer rains and worsened by the El Niño phenomenon.

In his responses, the Prime Minister emphasized that the Government was continuing with every effort to mitigate the effects of the El Niño phenomenon and underlined that it would continue to do everything possible to protect people from the effects of this environment-related crisis. He said the severely affected areas had been identified

and continuous efforts were being carried out to assist people in these areas. The Prime Minister said that so far close to 14 billion Birr had been allocated to avert the effects of the crisis and that even though El Niño conditions had brought Ethiopia a great challenge, the Government and the Regional States' administrations, together with Ethiopia's partners in the international community, were ready to meet the needs of the people. He emphasized the government would continue to allocate resources to meet the needs of the Ethiopian people, and a system of continuous monitoring was in place operating through local administrations to identify additional areas that needed assistance.

The Horn of Africa is suffering its worst drought in more than a decade, a condition aggravated by El Niño, the water-warming phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean that has affected weather patterns and reduced rainfall levels across Africa. The El Niño phenomenon disrupts the powerful Pacific trade winds that flow from east to west and feed moisture to the tropical islands of Indonesia. This makes the archipelago cooler and drier than usual and in turn disrupts normal seasonal wind and current patterns in the Indian Ocean, and indeed more widely. Since May, the impact of the El Niño climatic event has manifested itself primarily in persistent drought conditions, most acutely in parts of Ethiopia and Sudan, and in parts of Eritrea, Greater Upper Nile region of South Sudan, parts of northern Uganda and parts of Somaliland and Puntland, in Somalia. Currently it's estimated that close to 18.5 million people are food insecure as of December 2015. The effects are also being felt in Southern Africa where millions more are also affected by drought this year.

The Prime Minister, who has visited some of the worst-hit areas, noted that the most affected parts of the country include southern Tigray, eastern Amhara and Afar Regional States, the Siti zone of the Somali Regional State, the eastern areas of the Southern Nations Regional State, and East and West Hararge, Arsi and West Arsi, and the lower Bale zones of Oromia Regional State. The latest joint assessment by partners and the Government of the impact and effect of the drought, made last month, showed that 10.2 million people were in need of food aid. The number can be expected to rise, and the Prime Minister said the problem would persist over the next few months. He said the Government would continue to work with and collaborate with people to prevent the drought from causing serious damage to human and animal life.

The country has also called for international assistance to help feed the 10.2 million people affected after the failure of the rains had a considerable impact on crop yields. Humanitarian organizations and the Government have been reaching out to donors, several of which have already made significant contributions to help avert the impact of the crisis. One recent example has been the Joint Appeal by the Government and more than 65 humanitarian organizations, launched on December 11. This calls for US\$1.4 billion dollars to help scale up assistance and support as well as help find sustainable solutions to the challenge of recurring drought.

The Prime Minister underlined that the Government of Ethiopia has been working intensively and would continue to do so to ensure that no lives are lost because of the drought. It is also continuing to expand and enhance its efforts to develop underground water resources and develop irrigation mechanisms to minimize the impact of drought in the future, so people will no longer be so dependent upon the

vagaries of the weather in the future. If necessary, the Prime Minister said, the Government would, of course, be prepared to shift funds from other projects to provide food assistance and fund other support.

Oromia and Amhara Regional States in a state of normalcy as discussions are well underway

A series of peaceful protests and demonstrations in different parts of Oromia and in Amhara Regional States in the past couple of weeks, expressing legitimate concerns over different issues, were deliberately stirred up, manipulated and exacerbated by false propaganda. The efforts of opposition parties and destabilizing agents from abroad encouraged people to switch their legitimate efforts to express concern towards violence, leading to clashes with security forces and, most regrettably, loss of life as well as destruction of property as a number of demonstrations turned violent in the past few weeks. The situation has already returned to normalcy with investigations into what happened and discussions on the way the problems were manipulated by outside interests. A series of public discussion and awareness fora have been launched to make sure this doesn't happen again. Everyone would extend their condolences to the families and friends of the deceased and emphasize that working within the framework of the Constitution all stakeholders need to open and continue a dialogue and refrain from recourse to violence and inflammatory statements.

In the Oromia Regional State, the issue that initially led to protests was the absence of clarity over the status of the draft Joint “Integrated Master Plan” of Addis Ababa and the Oromia Special Zone. The public consultations on the draft plan proceeded slowly and there were of course delays. The public demanded clarity on the status of the draft and it became apparent that there was a need for further clarification. The Government, both at Federal and Regional levels, welcomed the requests for further clarification of the details and the aims of the draft. Both federal and regional authorities said on several occasions that there should be no difficulties in raising any questions on the Draft Plan. They underlined that there were no problems if people wanted to organize demonstrations and lawful protests about the Master Plan for Addis Ababa, or indeed on any other subject. The Federal Government also made it repeatedly clear, in a number of different ways and on different occasions, that the Master Plan would only be implemented after participatory discussions and after consensus had been reached, as is the case with other development projects. Indeed, all such development projects are subject to discussion and enquiries to ensure all necessary precautions.

In this case, the delays unfortunately allowed some elements, both in Ethiopia and outside, to seize the opportunity to take control of peoples' legitimate concerns. The result was public confusion, leading regrettably to loss of life and the destruction of property. In the Amhara Regional State, the outbreak of violence appeared to have a number of different causes but there was considerable similarity in the way outside forces manipulated and exacerbated local problems that led to violence. In fact, the request of the Qemant community of North Gonder for self-administration was on the table for quite a long time. In accordance with the Constitution, the process went before the House of Federation for consideration in 2013/14, and the House of Federation agreed to the request. Following this decision, the Amhara National Regional State Council accepted the Qemant community's constitutional right of self-

administration and set about implementation. This part of the process led to some disagreements on the way to carry out the decision of the House of Federation, and this allowed opposition and dissident elements to try and take advantage to encourage violence and the unrest that broke out in the area over the past few weeks. The Regional Government, with Federal Government encouragement, moved quickly to damp down violence, organizing a series of consecutive peace and development conferences, public fora and public discussions and briefings in different places. These have brought all the relevant issues to the fore and allowed for concerns at all levels to be addressed over the past couple of weeks.

Members of Parliament raised the issue of the protests and the causes of the clashes in both Amhara and Oromia Regional States when Parliament discussed and endorsed the Growth and Development Plan II, and the Prime Minister answered a series of the questions from MPs on what had been happening and why. The Prime Minister told MPs that the unrest had been largely instigated by a few individuals and said the Government would take tough measures against these people and their collaborators. They would be held accountable for loss of human lives and property damage, he said.

Overall, the Prime Minister said there were two aspects to the issue and the problem could be handled in two ways. With regard to the Draft Addis Ababa “Integrated Master Plan”, formulated to integrate the development of Addis Ababa and the surrounding region, many people raised concerns because they had been misinformed by others about the aims and objectives of the plan and wanted further clarification. That, said the Prime Minister, was very right and proper. As is the case whenever the government plans some developments, people can raise questions and demand explanations. This is fully in accord with the Constitution and it remains the right for anybody and it will continue as it has been in the past. Prime Minister Hailemariam said though the case has been on the agenda and discussed in various ways in 2006, the current protests showed the Government should have provided further explanations and given further clarification.

The Prime Minister pointed out that acceptance of this failure should now be followed by a substantial response involving the organization of public fora and awareness-creation conferences to provide full explanation of the Plan’s aims and objectives. This should be the Government’s immediate focus. Secondly, he stressed, it had become clear that many of the youth were discontented with the levels of job creation and capacity building work available. This must be expanded and improved in order to allow youth to participate and to benefit from the growth of the country. The Prime Minister said it was no surprise that rural people had concerns or that they demanded improvement of the guidance provided by the Government.

The prime focus of the Government was on development programs for rural areas, a central part of the ‘war on poverty’ but it was imperative that the Government made sure these developments were properly explained and presented effectively. At the same time, the Prime Minister firmly underlined that questions and concerns must be presented in a peaceful and democratic way, within the framework of the Constitution.

The Prime Minister also emphasized that the Government always implemented development projects through consensus and with the willing support of the people involved. He said there at no time whatever were development plans enforced on people and they never would be. In any case, the Constitution protects people from that sort of behavior. He said the stories that up to 150 Kms of land would be taken away from people were far from the truth. The Prime Minister said these allegations on social and other media were spread by elements trying to destabilize the country. He said people deliberately fanning unrest and working with terrorist organizations including some supported by the Eritrean Government were propagating these allegations.

The Speaker of the House, Abadula Gameda, also noted that after a short period of absence some destabilizing elements have reappeared. The Speaker said they had woken from the political slumber that had enmeshed them for a while and leapt back into their usual business, this time using the opportunity of the Draft “Integrated Master Plan”. They had, unfortunately, encouraged certain interests to misinform and instigate innocent people on several issues. They had mainly focused on students who, the Speaker said, “often become involved in something they lack the experience to handle properly.” He said these interests also try to take advantage of disoriented individuals who lack sufficient understanding of their insidious political motives. Equally, the Speaker acknowledged that the Government had failed to organize sufficient public meetings or fora to explain the details and allow people to get clarifications of their concerns about the Draft before the issue was twisted and used for propaganda by other opposition elements. Similarly, in the Amhara Regional State, some ‘anti-peace’ elements had been able to work to stir up disagreements and create discord between the Qemant communities and Amhara community members living close by. The result was violent clashes, leading to some loss of life and destruction of property. The Amhara Regional State authorities and the Regional President were quick to deplore the violence and take steps to prevent it. The President, who firmly stressed that the Qemant community’s demands for implementation of the decision of the House of Federation was legitimate, also stressed that the regional authorities were ready for an open dialogue on any and all of the issues in dispute. As a result the situation has returned to normalcy and discussions at different levels are well underway.

Ethiopia committed to the implementation of the Declaration of Principles

The Ministers of Water, Irrigation and Electricity and Foreign Affairs of Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia reached at a consensus on Tuesday (December 29) regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. They reached a consensus and signed a minute at finalizing the two firms tasked with carrying out studies on the potential impact of GERD, setting the period of time for the companies to carry out their studies, and agreed to hold a new round of talks in the first week of February to complete confidence building between the three countries. In a joint press conference with Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, the Foreign Minister of Sudan, Ibrahim Ghandour, said that the ministers had chosen the French firm Artelia to carry out the agreed further technical studies on the Dam, together with the previously agreed BRL group. The three countries had decided that Artelia, a consultancy firm known for its work in

engineering and project management, should take over from the previously selected Dutch company, Deltares, which had withdrawn from the process a few months ago.

The Ministers, in their meeting, also agreed over a number of other steps including regular meetings to enhance cooperation among the three countries to underline the ability of the Tripartite Agreement on the GERD to provide maximum benefit from the dam. Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros, reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to work with both Sudan and Egypt and stressed the importance of promoting partnership and building trust. Dr. Tedros said "We see the decision over these companies as progress and look forward to actualizing the interests of the three countries. We believe the dam will be useful to the three countries." He extended invitations to the Water and Foreign Ministers of Sudan and Egypt to visit the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, said the countries' decision to select the French company to finalize the GERD's technical studies shows their solid commitment to the Declaration of Principles signed by the countries' leaders. Sudan's Water Resources, Irrigation, and Electricity Minister, Moataz Mousa, said the technical studies would start in February, when the six ministers are due to meet again, and would take between six and 15 months. Egypt's Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, expressed his belief in the importance of the meeting saying, "it reflects the three countries' shared willingness to overcome all barriers." He said after the meeting: "We are satisfied with the results of this meeting and look forward to achieving a strategic partnership."

It was in March 2015 that the Heads of State and Government of Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia signed a Declaration of Principles on the dam project, recognizing Ethiopia's right to construct the dam and calling for further technical studies on its effect on the three riparian states. The Principles endorsed in the Declaration were: the Principle of Cooperation; the Principle of Development, Regional Integration and Sustainability; the Principle of Equitable and Reasonable Utilization; the Principle of Not to Cause Significant Harm; the Principle to Cooperate on the First Filling and Operation of the Dam; the Principle of Confidence Building; the Principle of Exchange of Information and Data; the Principle of Dam Safety; the Principle of Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity; and the Principle of Peaceful Settlement of Disputes. The three countries also agreed to cooperate on applying the recommendations of the international technical experts committee and the results of the final report of the Tripartite National Technical Committee during the different stages of the project.

Egypt's President, Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, said on Wednesday that Egyptians should not worry about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. "Matters are fine" in that regard, he said, adding "I totally understand the concern of Egyptians as water is a matter of life or death." The President who was speaking at Farafra oasis during the inauguration of the first phase of a national project to expand the country's farmland said: "We already agree with our brothers [the Ethiopians] that they want to live as we want to live", stressing that the Egyptian and Ethiopian peoples should achieve their common interests. The President said: "I have not led you astray before and I will not lead you astray now," telling the Egyptian people not to lose confidence in him in this matter.

Ethiopia has made a number of efforts to reassure Sudan and Egypt that the construction of the dam follows the results of studies on an objectively and scientifically studied environmental impact assessment and dam security. Prior to the signing of Declaration of Principles Ethiopia had already agreed with Egypt and Sudan to carry out further studies regarding the dam; one on the effect of the dam on the water quota of Sudan and Egypt, and the second one to examine the ecological, economic and social impact of the dam on Sudan and Egypt. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn stressed at the signing ceremony that GERD would not cause significant harm to the downstream countries, Sudan and Egypt. He underlined that Ethiopia was committed to cooperate with all the Nile Basin countries, emphasizing that Sudan and Egypt would also benefit significantly from GERD.

The Ethiopian Government started the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam almost 5 years ago. Some 50% of the construction of the dam has so far been completed. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is a national symbol and as the Government has repeatedly underlined it is also indispensable to the national development plan. Ethiopia has been experiencing severe shortages of power and energy and needs a significant boost to its energy output to cope with huge demand needed for a rapidly growing economy. The Renaissance Dam is one of the major projects devoted to addressing this problem. At the same time, the construction of GERD serves a workable platform for regional economic integration. As the Government has repeatedly underlined, GERD will be used to produce electricity and will not significantly affect the flow of water. Rather, it will have a major impact in regulating the flow of water, decreasing siltation and flooding as well as providing a number of other benefits to downstream countries.

UNCTAD high-level policy dialogue on leveraging Ethiopia's Diaspora resources

The role of migration in economic development has been receiving greater attention from international institutions as they have come to realize the impact of human and labor mobility on economic and social change. Increasingly, policy practitioners and development experts have begun to consider how to incorporate economic migration into development plans. There has been growing understanding of the need for well-managed Diaspora engagement in home-country development covering a broad range of areas - poverty reduction, economic growth, investment and trade. The concept is gaining heightened importance in national, regional and global discourse on socio-economic development. Indeed, the evidence from both developing and emerging economies show that remittances and direct investments by Diaspora members in their country of origin can play an important and prominent role in poverty alleviation, economic growth and overall development. Equally, the contributions of the Diaspora do not need to be confined to financial flows alone. They can also incorporate such areas as knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship and serving as important agents of trade between the country of origin and the country of destination. As a result, governments and international organizations are now looking for ways and means to enhance the participation of the Diaspora in socio-economic advancement of home countries, especially developing countries. This calls for consistent efforts not only for mobilization of and collaboration with Diaspora communities in order to maximize their potential impact but also the need to perfect

pro-Diaspora policies and to create institutional and legal frameworks that can facilitate and encourage the contribution of the Diaspora to their home countries.

The Ethiopian Diaspora, an extensive mix of native and foreign-born Ethiopians living outside the country, is an excellent example of the potential importance of migration for economic development. It is estimated that there are between 2.5 and 3 million members of the Ethiopian Diaspora living and working abroad, many of whom send money, consume home-country goods, participate in philanthropic activities, invest, and support and enjoy the cultural values of their homeland. Such a community has emerged as a significant player in development with its activities contributing to building up assets and improving productivity in the local economy.

Ethiopia has had the potential for setting out norms for relations with the Diaspora at the national level since its institutionalization of the Diaspora Engagement Affairs Directorate-General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2002. A major step forward came in 2013 when the Government formalized its engagement with the Diaspora with the issue of a 'Diaspora policy.' This was set up within the context of a growing understanding of the Diaspora's capacity to contribute to Ethiopia's development and the desire by both the Government and the Diaspora to use this to leverage Ethiopia's development.

Engaging Diaspora at the national level allows the authorities to determine the relative importance and/or the ability of the Diaspora to contribute to development in specific sectors. At the same time, the Diaspora is also able to articulate the type of engagement in each sector that is most attuned to Diaspora interests and capacity. As a result, in terms of enabling policy for maximizing Diaspora capital investment and wealth generation, Ethiopia now has a number of clear, well-founded priorities including the registration of the Diaspora and of Diaspora businesses to allow for the most effective level of input.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) held a high-level policy dialogue on December 23. The aim was to improve the leveraging for Diaspora resources to assist the growth and structural transformation of the Ethiopian economy. Government officials, members of UNCTAD and representatives of the Diaspora Coordination Offices from Ethiopia's regional states, attended.

Ambassador Mulie Tarekegn, Chief of the Cabinet of the Ministry, on behalf of Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros, extended his warm appreciation of UNCTAD research on the topic of "Leveraging Diaspora Resources for Growth and Structural Transformation of the Ethiopian Economy." He noted that the organization had the objective of supporting developing countries assist them to integrate beneficially into the global economic environment and system. Ambassador Mulie welcomed participants and underlined that the Ethiopian Diaspora has the potential to contribute to nation-building in general and socio-economic development in particular by engaging in various developmental sectors. He stressed the Government's actions giving due attention to enhance the Diaspora participation in various development endeavors and noted its efforts towards engagement of the Diaspora in the transformation of the country that had started in 2000 when the first structural arrangements were setup and legal frameworks were put in place. Ambassador Mulie

said the Government had the mandate to protect the rights and interests of its Diaspora living abroad, and it had established the Ethiopian Expatriates-Affairs Directorate-General, known as the Diaspora Engagement-Affairs Directorate-General, in the Foreign Ministry in 2002. This directorate was charged with expanding and organizing Diaspora engagement and related activities, focusing on mobilization and organization of the Ethiopian community abroad for sustained and organized development and other things.

During the dialogue, a study by UNCTAD on leveraging Diaspora resources for growth and for the structural transformation of the Ethiopian economy recommended 3 major components: norms, enabling environments, and best practice operations for the Diaspora policy compass. These are distinct components but the study suggested all three were necessary and would have the impact of mutually reinforcing each other in maximizing Diaspora engagement in the home country's development. Together, they also constituted a basis for Government accountability to the Diaspora. The study underlined that the best elements to scale up the benefits of the country from the Diaspora were an enabling environment with strong institutions, increasing the trust of the Diaspora, facilitating the formal flow of remittances, coordinating and institutionalizing the transfer of Diaspora knowledge and effective and efficient operational policies. The UNCTAD study stated that the pathway to accelerated and sustained growth and development was through productive capacity building and movement up the value, technology and productivity ladder through structural transformation. These were all areas in which the UNCTAD could play a critical role through remittances and the Diaspora knowledge-transfer network.

Tesfachew Tafere, UNCTAD's Director, Division of Africa, LDCs and Special Programs, presented a study on the role of Diaspora in fostering productive capacities and structural economic transformation, and on the policy implications of the Ethiopian GTPII. He noted the essential role that the Diaspora could play in the implementation of the GTP and underlined the importance of having a unified and comprehensive data of Diaspora in order to properly evaluate the potential of the Diaspora. The UNCTAD Director called on the Government to work more closely with the Diaspora to boost the level of Foreign Direct Investment, remittance and Official Development Assistance inflow into the country. He said the Government had made considerable efforts to shape its relations with the Diaspora and encourage Diaspora engagement in various developmental sectors over the last decade. There was still room for improvement, however. During the dialogue there were other presentations by participants including those from Ethiopia's Regional States, focusing on ways to enhance participation of the Diaspora in the states as well as in the country's overall development.

European Commission announces a £145m aid package for Eritrea

Europe is experiencing one of the most significant influxes of migrants and refugees in its history. Pushed by dictatorship, civil war and terror and pulled by the promise of a better life, hundreds of thousands of people have fled from the Middle East and from Africa in general and from Eritrea in particular, risking their lives along the way. The scale of the crisis has put huge pressures on the destination countries. The number of illegal border-crossing detections in the EU started to grow and the most recent surge is attributed to the growing numbers of Syrian, Afghan, and Eritrean

migrants and refugees. The International Office of Migration (IOM) estimates that more than 464,000 migrants crossed into Europe by sea in the first nine months of 2015. Syrians fleeing from the country's civil war made up the largest group (39%); Afghans escaping from the war with the Taliban provided 11%; and Eritreans fleeing from forced labor and indefinite national service made up 7%.

For the European Commission and for EU members states to distinguish economic migrants from asylum seekers and refugees is not always an easy process, but it is important as these groups are entitled to different levels of assistance and protection under international law. "Migrant" is used as an umbrella term for all three groups and, of course, there is some overlap not least because economic migrants and asylum seekers travel together.

An economic migrant is a person whose major reason for leaving their home country is economic gain and is not entitled to the same levels of international protection. An asylum seeker, that is a person fleeing persecution or conflict, is entitled to seek international protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention on the Status of Refugees. A refugee, technically, is an asylum seeker whose claim has been approved but the UN considers migrants fleeing war or persecution to be refugees, even before they are officially recognized for asylum. This is particularly relevant to Syrians and Eritreans who are fleeing in such large numbers, if from rather different circumstances – violent civil war and conflict with extremists, and persecution by a particularly repressive government.

Tens of thousands of Eritreans have arrived at Europe's shores in recent years seeking asylum. They make up a significant share of the unprecedented stream of migrants and refugees making their way to the European Union, undertaking dangerous and often fatal journeys and challenging the EU to find a collective response consistent with refugee law and international humanitarian response. In addition to migrating to Europe tens of thousands of Eritreans also now reside in neighboring Ethiopia and Sudan, bringing the country's refugee population to well over half a million, and making the country whose population is usually estimated at around 5 million people "one of the world's fastest-emptying nations," according to the Wall Street Journal. In fact, the numbers of refugees may be rather higher as an Eritrean Government minister recently referred to the country's population as between "two and a half to three million". Certainly the tyranny of the government has encouraged the scale of the migration to increase steadily over the last few years.

Over the last few months, the EU Commission has been considering ways to try and discourage the flight of refugees from Eritrea. It has now decided to provide Eritrea with an £145m aid package after months of talks. These funds are supposed in particular to support development endeavors in the energy sector and improve governance, and Neven Mimica, the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development said the package would help to tackle the root causes of migration from Eritrea. He said this year alone the number of Eritrean asylum seekers arriving on Europe's southern shores has exceeded 40,000, and this was without taking into account the numbers who had died attempting to cross the desert or the Mediterranean. This does not include the huge numbers arriving in Ethiopia and Sudan.

One cannot dispute the value of aid to a country as impoverished as Eritrea, but whether the conditions attached to aid for Eritrea will be kept is a question that will remain unanswered for the moment. The Eritrean Government has a long record of diversion of funds for purposes unintended by the donors as the EU has seen earlier and it is far from clear how the EU plans to ensure the aid goes to the intended usage. Any analysis of the root causes of migration in Eritrea makes it clear that the vast majority of Eritrean refugees are not economic migrants who flee the country because of poverty and unemployment, but that they are rather refugees from the persistent challenges of repeated and on-going human rights violations. The large migration of youth, and more recently even unaccompanied children, is the clearest sign of extreme domestic discontent and concern with the government of Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki and the indefinite conscription.

According to the reports of the United Nations Monitoring Group and the UN Human Rights Commission of Inquiry into Human Rights Violations in Eritrea, the Eritrean Government's systematic use of extrajudicial killing, torture, rape, indefinite national service and forced labor may amount to crimes against humanity and migration. The UN Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry established in June 2014 conducted over 500 interviews and found that "systemic, widespread and gross human rights violations persist" and that it is "not law that rules Eritreans but fear." International and Eritrean human rights and NGOs have provided a wealth of evidence concurring with the Commission of Inquiry's conclusion that there has been no improvement in Eritrea's human rights practices.

The Commission's report provides substantial and detailed evidence of longstanding patterns of human rights violations in Eritrea, concluding that abuses remain pervasive, systemic, and the product of deliberate government policy. The report says that arbitrary arrests are rampant, detainees are rarely charged or brought to trial, and scores of people have been victims of enforced disappearances. The commission said that prisoners are kept in "extremely harsh" conditions of confinement; some are held incommunicado indefinitely. People practicing any religion other than the four approved by the government are subject to arrest, harassment, and mistreatment in detention. Citizens are subject to constant surveillance and violations of privacy. Freedom of movement is restricted, with permits required for movement beyond the community where a person works or lives. Political parties are prohibited, there is no independent media, and Eritrea has not held an election since independence and there is no constitution developed to administer the socio, economic and political undertakings.

In addition to its persistent record of repeated human rights violations, Eritrea has also continuously attempted to destabilize the Horn of Africa region in general and Ethiopia in particular. In 2009 UN Security Council has imposed sanctions on Eritrea due to the country's activity threatening international peace. The whole range of the sanctions, including an arms embargo, the freezing of assets and a travel ban on selected individuals, were imposed on Eritrea for its support to the Al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist organization, Al Shabaab, and other armed groups. The UN Security Council hardened the sanctions against Eritrea in December 2011 over its alleged support for Islamist militant groups such as Somalia's al-Shabaab. In addition, Eritrea was also sanctioned for its border dispute with Djibouti and its total rejection of all calls for negotiation over its unprovoked attack and invasion of Djibouti

territory. In fact, despite this, Eritrea's main regional destabilization activities have most consistently been aimed at Ethiopia either directly or indirectly. Eritrea has continuously attempted to support a number of Ethiopian opposition groups which have repeatedly, and publicly, underlined they are involved in armed struggle to try to overthrow the Government of Ethiopia. These groups include the Oromo Liberation Front and Ginbot 7 among others, and both of these and others are now openly based in Asmara, in recipient of arms, finance and logistical support from the Eritrean Government. It is under these circumstances that consideration of lifting sanctions becomes hardly sensible.

There can be little doubt that while the people of Eritrea need all the aid they can get, that donors should make every effort to be as vigilant as possible about the management of any aid package, since on past record most of the money might well be used to procure weapons for various Eritrean-backed armed opposition and terrorists groups which the government supports in the region. Aid, if delivered, must be given with strict obligations attached. There may be no easy solution for Eritrea's domestic situation, but at the least the European Commission should recognize the undisputed fact that the Eritrean government is a totalitarian state the vast majority of whose migrants are real refugees are not in search of work but who are fleeing from the very real terror of over twenty years of repression and human rights violation.

SRSK Kay leaves Somalia after more than two years in office

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, officially left Somalia on Tuesday (December 29) bringing to an end to a two year residence in Somalia. Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdusalam Hadliye Omar, who described Nicholas Kay as a true friend of the Somali people, and one whose efforts had left an indelible mark in the history of the country saw Ambassador Kay off at the airport in Mogadishu. He said: "The UN Mission in Somalia is crucial to Somalia's future and during his tenure as a leader, Nick worked with the government of the Federal Republic of Somalia to help shape a new vision for a better Somalia and its people." Ambassador Kay told the gathering he was leaving Somalia with fond memories and full of optimism about the future of the country: "Today is a happy and positive day as well. Happy because as Minister Abdusalam Omar said there is now in Somalia an unstoppable momentum to peace, stability prosperity and democracy. This unstoppable momentum was not here three years ago. It is here now and it is thanks to the Somalis themselves, international partners and to the UN colleagues I had the privilege to work with." He stressed that he will forever remember the brightness of the smiles of the Somalis, the sharpness of their arguments in negotiations and their resilience to make Somalia a better country.

The President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, paid tribute to Ambassador Kay for his contribution in supporting Somalia's stabilization and political processes. Speaking at a farewell lunch, President Hassan Sheikh said Nicholas Kay had worked closely and tirelessly with the Federal Government in rebuilding Somalia. He praised him for being instrumental in changing the perception of the international community about Somalia. He said "I salute Ambassador Nicholas Kay for his braveness in convincing the UN to shift the offices and start operating in Somalia, making them accessible to the citizens."

In a farewell interview with Voice of America, Ambassador Kay said the country now had an “unstoppable momentum” toward being a stable and secure country. He said Somalia has managed to convert a dream of being a federal Somalia into reality with its five interim regional administrations and federal member states, bringing government and accountability closer to the people. Ambassador Kay said: “I arrived full of hope, and I’m leaving not just with hope but with a very firm conviction that Somalia is now a fragile but recovering country and no longer a failed state.” He said he had been delighted to have worked in a country where every single Somali that he met was “deeply political.”

Ambassador Kay said the country had made "reasonable progress" in fighting Al-Shabaab militants, recovering up to 14 towns and districts during his two and a half years in office. Al-Shabaab, Kay said was now territorially in a “much weaker position” and was suffering from infighting between factions that support the so-called Islamic State and those still loyal to al-Qaeda. However he added: “Clearly, it would be a concern if they were to consolidate an ISIL/Daesh presence in Somalia and it resulted in extra resources or manpower for the organization. That would be a concern.” He also said Al-Shabaab itself still posed a terrorist threat and did “terrible things” in terms of suicide bombings and targeted assassinations. But he insisted it was now an organization that no longer posed an “existential or strategic threat” to Somalia.

At the same time, he spoke of the need for a concerted effort to continue to develop Somali national security forces, both police and army. He said the number of African Union troops in the country would go down when Somali troops became capable but added: “the time scale for that is clearly impossible to fix rigidly but it will be reviewed again at the end of 2016; I think there is an expectation that AMISOM numbers will start to fall after then.”

Ambassador Kay praised the U.N. role in Somalia and the expansion of its operations outside Mogadishu. He said his greatest disappointment was the death of U.N. colleagues at the hands of terrorists in Somalia. He paid tribute to those eight colleagues who had been killed in the period in which he had been in office. He praised the resilience of Somalis who in the face of deadly Al-Shabaab attacks managed to bounce back quickly. He said: “Watching hotels get bombed in Mogadishu and then seeing the very next day the work starting on rebuilding them, and then the next week or month reopening for business is very, very inspirational.”

In another interview with the Kenyan newspaper, the Nation, Ambassador Kay said there had been less progress on the economic recovery side, he said, “and as we go into 2016, the focus should be more on job creating opportunities.” There were, he said, 70 % of Somalis under the age of 35 years, and 80% unemployed. The high number of unemployed youth, he said, was a ticking time bomb, as this provided fertile ground for Al-Shabaab recruitment, hence the urgency to build infrastructure and create jobs. What was needed for economic growth was assurance that peace was sustained. Much of the economic activity, he said, was private sector based, such as the growth in the agricultural sector, which contributed to exports of about 5 million livestock last year. The lack of roads and of power among other infrastructure meant that a lot more had still to be done to improve the economy. For this to be achieved, Ambassador Kay said development efforts by international partners including the US,

UK, the European Union and the African Union must be strengthened over the next year.

Ambassador Kay is being replaced by another British diplomat, Michael Keating, next month as the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General.