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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The United Nations announced that the former Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, died on Tuesday (February 16) at the age of 93 years of age. Mr. Boutros-Ghali, former deputy Foreign Minister of Egypt, was chosen as the sixth secretary-general of the United Nations in January 1992, the first Arab to hold such a high position in the United Nations. During his period of office he organized the biggest United Nations relief operation in Somalia during the famine in 1992/3. He also served as the secretary-general of the International Organization of La Francophone and the Director of the Egyptian National Council for Human Rights.

The African Parliamentary Conference on Migration opened in Djibouti on Monday (February 15). The two day meeting was attended by representatives of 40 nations, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan from the Horn of Africa. The theme of the conference was "the contribution of African migrants to the development of countries of origin and destination." (See article)

Ethiopia

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom attended the Munich Security Conference in Germany held at the end of last week (February 12-14). The Conference theme was "Boundless Crises, Limited Capabilities – the Weakness of the International Order." Dr. Tedros also held a number of bilateral discussions and attended two business meetings. (See article)

Dr. Tedros held talks with representatives from Milken Institute headed by Ms. Mindy Silverstein, Managing Director of the Institute on Wednesday (February 8). The Institute is an independent economic think tank working on projects to improve Africa's image as an investment destination.

Dr. Tedros received the Foreign and Finance Committee of the Swedish parliament on Wednesday (February 17). They discussed climate change, migration and Ethiopia's role in the region; Dr. Tedros welcomed the Swedish government's contribution of food aid for people affected by the drought.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom said farewell to Ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal, South Sudan's Ambassador to Ethiopia on Tuesday (February 16) and thanked him for his efforts to improve Ethio- South Sudan relations and his role in the peace negotiations.

Dr. Tedros met with Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, President of the Interim Administration of Somalia's South-West State, on Friday (February 19). Sherif Hassan said he appreciated the support of the Ethiopian government in promotion of regional peace and security and the role of the Ethiopian military in the fight against Al-Shabaab.

Dr Tedros met with Puntland State President, Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas, on Tuesday (February 16) to discuss the modalities of Somalia's upcoming election, regional peace and stability and on tackling illegal migration.

The Head of the Government Communication Affairs Office, Minister Getachew Reda, told journalists on Friday last week (February 12) that the government was exerting every effort to mitigate the impact of the drought; he outlines the measures being taken, including the importation of cereals in bulk to provide food aid and contain inflationary pressures.(See article)

State Minister Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie received copies of the letters of credence of the newly appointed Ambassador of Chile to Ethiopia, Ambassador Jaime Chomali on Wednesday (February 17). They both agreed to look into ways to strengthening bilateral agreements on issues of mutual interest.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie met with the Portuguese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Afonso Henriques de Azzeredo Malheiro on Tuesday (February 16).

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regassa Kefale, met with the Managing Director of the Alliance for Brain-Gain and Innovative Development, Dr Tewabech Bishaw, on Tuesday (February 16). The Alliance is a pioneering Ethiopian NGO established to facilitate the effective engagement of the Diaspora with Ethiopian institutions to assist in capacity building and sustainable development.

Djibouti

Djibouti's opposition coalition, the National Salvation Union, a coalition of eight parties, on Monday (February 15) endorsed Omar Elmi Khaireh, the chairman of Center for United Democrats and the vice-chairman of NSU, as its candidate in the April 8, 2016 presidential elections to stand against President Ismail Omar Guelleh. NSU president, Ahmed Youssouf Houmed, urged opposition supporters to give full backing to their candidate.

Eritrea

The latest Global Emergency Report from the UN has identified Eritrea as one of four countries in the Horn of Africa to be in “severe humanitarian crisis”. President Isaias told the people of Eritrea on the 26th anniversary of Operation Fenkil this week that this was a year of “above normal precipitation and lush green coverage”, and the “good rains that engender hope and inspiration remind us what could have been achieved had we managed to harness the rainfall by constructing dams, diversion canals, and, by embarking on afforestation programs” **(See article)**

Eritrea’s Foreign Minister, Mr. Osman Saleh, who arrived in Cairo for a two day visit on Sunday (February 14), delivered a message from President Isaias to President El-Sisi. President Isaias’ message focused on strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries and on regional issues of mutual interest.

The Swiss State Secretariat for Migration has criticized Swiss politicians who after a visit to Eritrea called for a Swiss mission to examine the human rights situation in Eritrea and set up a permanent diplomatic representation in Asmara. The Secretariat said there was “no sufficiently strong evidence to show that the human rights situation in Eritrea had improved significantly”.

Kenya

President Kenyatta opened the Fifth National and County Government Coordinating Summit conference last week (February 10-11), bringing together members of the National Government and County Governors to discuss the progress of devolution. **(See article)**

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud went to the Hiiraan capital of Belet Weyne on Thursday (February 18) to try to reconcile clan elders from Hiiraan and Middle Shebelle regions after protests over the selection of delegates for the state formation convention which started in Jowhar in January.

Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Shamarke has vowed to do everything possible to bring to justice those responsible for the murder of former Somali Defense Minister Muhudin Mohamed who was killed in car explosion on Monday (February 15). Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the murder.

The Federal Parliament started the review process for the Somali Provisional Constitution on Monday (February 15) when the Independent Constitutional Review Commission presented 10 out of the 15 chapters of the provisional constitution to the parliament for review. Mariam Arif Qasim, chair of the Review Commission, said some sensitive chapters covering the powers of the president, resource sharing and the status of the capital would not be subjected to review at this stage.

Britain has announced an additional contribution of over \$ 4.3 million to the UN Somali National Army Trust Fund, which will help to pay for essential resources, including rations, fuel and

medical supplies. The UK Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Penny Mordaunt, made the announcement in Mogadishu after a meeting with Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke.

A delegation from the African Union's Peace Support Operations Division headed by Major General Okello was in Somalia last week to carry out an assessment on the state of the AMISOM forces, the way the new Concept of Operations was progressing and identify areas that needed urgent additional AU support.

Somali troops repelled a large-scale attack by Al-Shabaab on the agricultural town of Afgoye, the center of an important agriculture area near Mogadishu, officials said on Tuesday (February 16). The attack was the largest effort by Al-Shabaab to retake the town which they lost to AMISOM and Somali troops in 2011.

The UN Global Emergency Report earlier this month said the drought in Somaliland is currently estimated to be affecting more than 240,000 people, and that Somaliland and Puntland were two of the most affected Somali areas. **(See article)**

Puntland Petroleum and Minerals Agency has warned the Federal Government and two companies, Norway's Spectrum ASA and China's BGP Inc., conducting seismic operation activities offshore, that their activities are unconstitutional. It has told the companies to cease operations immediately and without delay.

Somaliland President Ahmed Mohamed "Silanyo" on Monday (February 15) moved Osman Abdillahi Sahardid from Aviation to Information and former Information Minister Abdillahi Mohamed Dahir "Ukuse" went to Animal Husbandry. The former Animal Husbandry minister, Omar Sheikh Mohamud went to Aviation, and Presidential Spokesperson, Hussein Adan Ige, was promoted to Minister of Commerce. There were a number of other changes of deputy ministers and ministers of state.

South Sudan

SPLM-IO leader, Riek Machar said on Saturday (February 13) that he accepted his appointment as First Vice-President announced by President Kiir a day earlier, adding that his return to Juba depended on the demilitarization of the capital and the deployment of the joint security forces in the city. **(See article)**

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission at a joint meeting with its Partners' Group said on Thursday (February 18) that President Kiir should not form a Transitional Government of National Unity without the participation of all the parties to the August 2015 peace agreement. A statement said "it is essential that all parties to the agreement participate in formation of the government." **(See article)**

Sudan

The National Dialogue Coordination Committee, 7+7, said on Wednesday (February 17) that the dialogue process, launched in October last year for three months and then extended for a month, was now to be extended for an unlimited time. It called for holdout groups to join in. Presidential assistant Ibrahim Mahmoud Hamid said "The dialogue will continue until the completion of its stages and achievement of its goals, because it is one of the largest national projects in the country since independence."

The European Commission on Wednesday (February 17) announced a 100 million euro package to support Sudan to address root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons. It also pledged to continue its humanitarian aid for Sudan. The announcement followed talks between Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini.

The Munich Security Conference debates current and future crises

The 52nd Munich Security Conference was held at the end of last week (February 12–14) in Germany, under the theme “Boundless Crises, Limited Capabilities – the Weakness of the International Order.” Among key topics covered were Europe’s response to the refugee crisis, the war in Syria, and the future of the European security order. Stability in Sub-Saharan Africa and arms control in cyber space were also on the agenda. For the first time, there was a session on the danger of epidemics on global stability and security, jointly organized with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Merck.

Ahead of the conference, it released its Munich Security Report and this year’s report, entitled "Boundless Crises, Reckless Spoilers, Helpless Guardians," presented a bleak strategic outlook: “In 2016, we are likely to witness a period of growing risks, including of military confrontation, of uncertainty and of fundamental transformation - the beginning of a more unstable international era." It allowed a few positive developments last year: less than 10% of the world's population now lives in extreme poverty; world leaders signed an international agreement to fight climate change; and there was agreement over Iran’s nuclear program. This aside the report saw many of the current conflicts as particularly dangerous because they appear increasingly boundless. In Syria for example, it suggested that the war had “turned into an unconfined regional crisis. In the medium term, it may well put into question existing state borders throughout the Middle East. Secondly, the war in Syria has been the main driver of the global refugee crisis and has made 2015 the year with the most refugees since the end of World War II." There is terrorism; and Europe’s political unity being challenged by the dramatic influx of refugees and stark disagreement over how to handle it. The report saw unwillingness or inability of key Western powers, including the US, to play a stronger international leadership role. This left a power vacuum in various conflicts and increased the potential for even more global crises.

This annual conference attracts a wide range of world leaders to discuss security issues and among those present this year were King Abdullah II of Jordan, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Polish President Andrzej Duda, Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, Russian Prime Minister

Dmitry Medvedev, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi, US Secretary of State John Kerry and his counterpart from the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, as well as Foreign Ministers of Iran and Saudi Arabia, Mohammad Javad Zarif and Adel Al-Jubeir, and Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom who participated in one of the panel discussions that focused on Africa as well as representatives of the German and other European governments. Other present included NATO General Secretary Jens Stoltenberg, the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini, and the Chairwoman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National People's Congress of China, Fu Ying.

This year the Munich Security Conference had an additional and new focus on Africa. In the past, the conference has organized core group meetings in various capitals. This year, for the first time, it is organizing such a meeting in Africa, in April in Addis Ababa, in partnership with Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa. Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros was one of the panelists on a panel discussion on "Africa: keeping peace." Other panelists included Jean-Marie Guéhenno, President and Chief Executive Officer, International Crisis Group; Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security; and the former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chairman of Tana High Level Forum, Olusegun Obasanjo.

Former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in an opening statement, noted that Africa was actually doing much better than commonly perceived, and the main reason was the end of the series of wars that erupted at the end of the Cold War. "Today, despite a few egregious exceptions, armed conflict is actually a smaller risk to most Africans than traffic accidents," and this improvement of the security situation has set the stage for rapid economic growth of 5-6% per year for the last fifteen years. Extreme poverty had fallen by 40% since 1990 and economic growth was continuing. Africa was home to six of the ten fastest-growing economies in the world. Inflows of private investment now dwarfed international aid. Overall Africa was heading in the right direction even if progress remained uneven. Equally, it faced challenges from terrorism. Mr. Anan warned that care should be taken to identifying terrorism from other insurgencies which had more genuine cause. He stressed peace and security cannot be achieved without inclusive development, the rule of law and the respect for human rights. Those, he said, were the three pillars of all successful societies. While the fight against violent rebel movements was necessary, and required intra-African as well as international cooperation, the real challenge of security in Africa was primarily a challenge of leadership. He said leaders who hung on to power indefinitely, suppressing criticism and opposition were sowing the seeds of violence and instability.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia said many Al-Shabaab fighters were there not for ideological but for economic reasons. In Somalia, there were now no ungoverned territories that provided free recruitment for terrorists. This was the result of the much-appreciated assistance of the African Union and the international community. He noted that without stability in Somalia the Horn of Africa region as well as the continent would remain unstable, and he emphasized the need for coordinated and organized response to terrorists.

Dr. Tedros said the biggest threats to Africa were poverty and the lack of democracy, good governance and related issues. The response must be to speed up development and consolidate

democracy. If countries progressed in these areas internal vulnerabilities would be minimized, although other challenges such as terrorism and climate change would still have to be dealt with. As regards strengthening democracy in Africa, it was also important that it emanated from within and that the country owned the process. Internal dynamism should be allowed for democracy to take its natural course. One of the concerns raised during the panel discussion was the issue of youth and how one could encourage efforts to keep pace with demographic change. Dr. Tedros emphasized the importance of aiming high, of having ambitious plans to address real development issues and strengthen democracy. The issue of unemployment would be addressed when equitable and sustainable development was registered.

On the issue of impunity and African Union's decision on the International Criminal Court in relation to Kenya, Dr. Tedros said Africa's argument was: Kenya has moved a lot since the last election and the justice issue should support the political process. Hence, Africa's request was only in line with promoting justice and reconciliation and contributing to the advancement of peace and stability in the continent, and was to allow for a National Mechanism to investigate and prosecute the cases under the reformed Judiciary provided for in the new constitutional dispensation Dr. Tedros said.

Another issue raised was the question of the International Criminal Court. Dr. Tedros said Africa believed that ICC's decisions undermined the ability of Kenyan leaders to discharge their constitutional and elected responsibilities as well as posing significant threats against the peace and stability of the region. He said the search for justice should be pursued in a way that does not impede or jeopardize efforts aimed at promoting lasting peace. There were a number of successful experiences in Africa which could provide for the inspiration for home-grown solutions to the problems. A comprehensive approach with more focus on the political element of the solution was the answer. Africa had demonstrated unwavering commitment to fight impunity and promoting democracy, rule of law and good governance as shown in the Constitutive Act of the Union. It had also taken concrete actions to uphold these values. Democratic governance had expanded throughout the continent over the last decade, although Dr. Tedros also noted that it was still work in progress.

During the Conference, Dr. Tedros had meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Norway and UK, the Vice Foreign Minister of Japan and the Chief Prosecutor of the ICC. He discussed the outcome of the recent Tripartite Technical Committee meeting in Khartoum with Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry. They agreed to continue working closely and assist the technical committee's efforts to complete its work. Discussions with Norway's Foreign Minister, Borge Brende, focused on the drought situation in Ethiopia and the government's effort to distribute humanitarian assistance. Mr. Brende said Norway would continue its partnership with Ethiopia and would be announcing additional funding for the drought very soon. Dr. Tedros also discussed bilateral issues with UK Foreign Minister Philip Hammond and Japan's Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hitoshi Kikawada. In his meeting with the Chief prosecutor of the ICC, Fatou Bensouda, Dr. Tedros explained Africa's position on the ICC and the unwavering commitment of African states in fighting impunity. He stressed that justice in Kenya must be done on Kenyan soil as this would be an important symbol as well as having political implications for Kenya as well as for Africa.

Meanwhile, during his time in Munich, Dr. Tedros also held two meetings with German business communities, one with German companies already operating in Ethiopia in agro-processing, construction equipment production, petro-chemicals and other areas. Among those present were representatives from Topso, Herwkiresh and Siemens. Dr. Tedros briefed the meetings on policy issues and clarified various issues. He highlighted the favorable investment conditions in Ethiopia, explaining the government's commitment to support businesses, the stable macro-economic condition, the strategic location and the huge market, infrastructure development, the excellent and improving investment climate, the trainable work force and the peace and stability of the country. He acknowledged that there were issues and perceptions that needed to be corrected: investment flows should focus on manufacturing not extractive industries; investment must no longer be seen as a charity – it was a win-win prospect for both parties; and investment in Africa was no longer high risk.

Drought developments in Ethiopia....

The Head of the Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO), Minister Getachew Reda, emphasized to journalists on Friday last week (February 12) that the government was exerting every effort to mitigate the impact of the drought. He gave an account of the measures being taken, including the importation of cereals in bulk to provide for food aid and to help contain any inflationary pressure. More than 2,000 hectares of land were being prepared were under preparation to produce animal fodder through irrigation in Afar and Ethiopian Somali Regional States. It was successfully providing support for children facing shortages of food, malnutrition and access to water. The efforts included water-truck deliveries to some areas of Afar and Somalia regions.

The Government had recently released a National Emergency Operational Plan for drought response in 2016, outlining the sector plans to be identified in the 2016 Humanitarian Requirements Document. The plan detailed the specific roles and responsibilities of the government, the UN and NGOs. It demonstrated the Government's readiness and commitment to respond swiftly to the crisis on the ground. The Minister said the Government had so far provided emergency aid worth US\$387 million from its own resources for drought affected areas and the House of Representatives had now endorsed a supplementary budget of 14.7 billion birr to help fight the drought. The Minister said that claims by NGOs that the effects of the drought might get out of control were exaggerated. Certainly, however, the situation remained serious. Overall, as the Minister emphasized, a total of US\$1.4 billion was needed for the emergency and some US\$680 million had been raised so far. There was still very real need for additional funding.

The National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee which has oversight of the relief effort, is chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, with Mitiku Kassa, National Disaster Response Commissioner, as Secretary. The NDPPC decided at the end of January that that 12,000tn of wheat should be transported daily. A technical committee, with representatives

from the transport, health, education, and agriculture sectors, meets twice a week and reports every week to the NDPPC. It has the responsibility of streamlining food aid disbursement. The food is moved in the first instance to the warehouses of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, at Komobolcha, Dire Dawa and Adama; Strategic Grain Reserve Agency warehouses in Sodo, Shashemene, Shenele, Adama, Wereta, Kombolcha and Mekelle. The Ethiopian Grain Trade Enterprise also has two warehouses at Adama. Trains are being used, and the committee has now asked Derba MIDROC and the Ministry National Defense to help with transportation, adding to the thousands of trucks already being used.

The flow of aid has been meeting some problems with delays beginning at the Port of Djibouti, where the anchorage and berths are congested by arriving vessels, carrying cargo for government and aid agencies. Grain Trade Enterprise, World Food Program and the NDRMC all are importing food for emergency aid, and the Port has made available four extra berths to ease congestion. In addition to those currently unloading with 144,000 tn of wheat, there are another ten vessels at anchorage with 418,038 tn of sorghum, wheat and fertilizer ordered by various agencies involved in the relief efforts. Another three ships with 82,000 tn of wheat and sorghum ordered by WFP, Catholic Relief Service and USAID are expected by the end of the month.

The latest Global Emergency Report from the UN was issued last week, updated to February 9. Quoting from UN agencies, OCHA, UNICEF and UNHCR as well as other organizations, the report's overview identified the key priority as to provide food assistance to over ten million people, of whom 5.7 were children under 18. It said "consecutive, below-average rainy seasons have caused severe drought across northern, eastern, and central Ethiopia. This is leading to high levels of food insecurity, particularly in Afar, in Shinile zone of Somali region, and parts of Amhara, Oromia, and SNNPR. 10.2 million people are estimated to be in need of food assistance as of December 2015." The report also noted that malnutrition has increased significantly with an estimated 435,000 children forecast to suffer from severe acute malnutrition in 2016, a rise of 85,000 over 2015.

The report noted that the El Niño phenomenon had affected a much greater geographic area and larger population in the northern and central highlands than the 2011 drought. Rainfall in 2015 had been far below average during both the March–May and July–September rainy seasons. Very low rainfall and high temperatures had resulted in very low soil moisture and water availability and meant the worst-affected areas were suffering water and pasture shortages. Livestock deaths have been reported across north-central and eastern areas, and water levels had fallen at several hydroelectric dams, reducing power-generating capacity. However, the report also noted that "preliminary forecasting indicates potential above-average rains for the *Belg*-producing area, during February to May."

Drought effects are not limited to the severe impact on agriculture and on livestock, forcing people to be dependent on food aid. Inevitably, prices of staple foods increase and livestock prices fall. Smaller planted area and poor crop performance result in decreased demand for agricultural labor. The increase in malnutrition, particularly among children, has also led to an increase in health problems. In fact, the Ministry of Health has identified 429 priority *woredas* for nutritional intervention, including 186 'priority one' *woredas*. An outbreak of acute watery

diarrhea, for example, in parts of Oromia and Somali regions had to be controlled by disinfection of wells and rainwater harvesting sites. Another effect of the drought has been on the wildlife in the national parks, both in the supplies of water in the parks and on the grass for grazing. It will be a very difficult year for the wildlife.

El Niño, of course, not only causes drought; in some areas it has also produced heavy rainfall, causing floods in Mustahil, Kelafo, and East Imy in the Shabelle zone of Somali region in late October. 102,000 people were affected, and more than 46,500 displaced. The floods affected health clinics, water pumps, and wells, destroyed farmland, and forced schools to close. More floods in these areas are forecast for the first months of 2016.

The UN report noted the impact on refugees. Ethiopia now hosts over 733,000 refugees from neighboring countries, and the majority of the refugee camps are reaching full capacity. There is, therefore some concern over overcrowding, malnutrition, and possible shortfalls in humanitarian aid. The latest figures for refugees include 282,000 South Sudanese refugees, 227,000 entering Ethiopia since December 2013; and 251,797 Somali refugees, most in the Dolo Ado camps in the Somali region. The figure for Eritrea refugees at the end of November last year was 152,555, mainly settled in four camps in the northern Tigray and the Afar region. There are also 38,228 Sudanese refugees and over 5,000 Yemeni refugees.

... impact of drought in Somaliland and Puntland

One of the areas most affected by the drought, and by the effects of El Niño is Somaliland where the rains have failed again. The UN says “Erratic rains during the 2015 *Gu* (April to June) and the *Karan* (August to September) seasons in Somaliland, and in Puntland resulted in a near-total failure of cereal production, 87% cent below the five-year average. The 2015 *Deyr* rains (October to December) were also below average in these areas, putting pressure on pasture and livestock and leading to the migration of 60-70% per cent of households along with their animals to areas with better pasture and water”.

A recent assessment for Somaliland from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization’s Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit, in collaboration with the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), said the current dry conditions are likely to persist until at least the start of this year’s main *Gu* rains. Mohamed Muse Awale, Director of Somaliland’s National Environment Research and Disaster Preparedness and Management Authority says “people have lost 80% of their animals” and 150,000 households are facing a food crisis. For pastoralists in Somaliland the problem is compounded by the fact that as the sale price of their animals is falling and, following the 15% devaluation of the Somaliland shilling against the US dollar last month, their purchasing power has deteriorated. Many items, including food are priced in dollars while animals are sold in shillings. Many people are moving off the land and into towns. The NER Authority believes that about 20% of drought-affected people have moved into urban centers.

The UN Global Emergency Report earlier this month says the drought in Somaliland is currently estimated to be affecting more than 240,000 people, many from the pastoral and agro-pastoral

regions of Maroodi-Jeh and Gabiley, which are considered the food basket of the country. The failure of the rains for two consecutive *Gu* seasons has resulted in an acute shortage of water for farming, livestock and human consumption. This in turn has triggered shortages of food and fodder, of water and of pasture. Malnutrition has increased among infants, children, elderly persons, women- especially pregnant and lactating mothers. The Government of Somaliland declared a drought in August last year and appealed to other governments and NGOs for support to assist with food aid, water and health services. Now President Silanyo has issued a decree appointing a National Committee for Drought Relief in Somaliland. The committee is headed by Vice President Abdirahman Zaylici and includes the Ministers of Religious Endowment, Finance, Trade and International Investment, Defense, the Cabinet Secretary and the Chairman of Chamber of Commerce. The committee is tasked with providing strategies for relieving the drought which has affected most regions in Somaliland. Somaliland is receiving some aid, but it certainly feels international aid agencies have not been responding sufficiently to its worst drought in decades.

The UN report says that across all the northern Somali speaking areas there has been a “sharp increase in debt levels among poor households”, while people are also selling off what animals they can to make ends meet. This includes Puntland State in Somalia, and Abdullahi Abdirahman Ahmed, head of the Puntland’s Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Agency says Puntland authorities estimate that 220,000 people already require assistance in their region. “Quick action is needed now before the situation gets worse,” he says. On January 21, Puntland authorities issued an appeal for assistance for the most drought-affected areas, the regions of Bari and Nugaal.

The worst-affected areas of the country are parts of Puntland State and the self-declared republic of Somaliland. Both fall within Somalia for the UN’s emergency aid coordination body, OCHA. At the end of last year OCHA estimated 4.7 million people, nearly 40% of the Somali population, is in need of humanitarian assistance. More than two thirds of these are people who have been made homeless by conflict and past droughts. Peter de Clercq, the UN’s humanitarian coordinator for Somalia says OCHA is “deeply concerned that the proportion of severely food insecure people remains alarmingly high, especially people who are unable to meet their daily food needs.” He says “Some 3.7 million people will be acutely food insecure through mid-2016. With severe drought conditions intensifying in Puntland and Somaliland, many more people risk relapsing into crisis.”

The UN Global Emergency figures earlier this month suggests the figures are rising. It quotes OCHA as saying 4.9 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, and 3.2 million need emergency health care. As of early November over a million people were facing crisis and emergency food security situations. At the end of January OCHA said 380,000 people faced acute water and pasture shortages in drought-affected parts of Puntland and Somaliland. There are also an estimated 893,000 internally displaced people in the south-central region, of whom 369,000 live in makeshift camps in Mogadishu. There are another 129,000 in Puntland, and 84,000 in Somaliland.

While El Niño has produced drought in Somaliland, it has led to heavy rains in other parts of the country. In Southern Somalia an estimated 145,200 people have been affected by floods and tropical cyclones since mid-October, with some 60,000 people displaced by flooding. In parts of Lower Shabelle region, moderate rains have led to river floods and flash floods with 28,000 in areas along the river, in Balcad, Mahaday, and Jowhar. The flooding has led to outbreaks of acute watery diarrhea and cholera, and loss of crops and property.

The recently launched 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Somalia appeals for 885 million U.S. dollars to address the most urgent needs across the country. Like other areas Somalia is, however, faced with competition from other humanitarian problems in the region and more widely. In addition, humanitarian access remains a challenge due to security problems. Restricted humanitarian access continues to affect aid delivery to affected populations in south-central Somalia. OCHA notes that even in areas where there is no active conflict, illegal checkpoints, banditry, and demands for bribes are common. Road access remains severely constrained in many districts in south-central Somalia as well as Buhoodle district in Somaliland. Last year, attacks and threats against humanitarian organizations also increased. OCHA reported more than 140 violent incidents directly impacting humanitarian organizations, including 17 deaths, 18 injuries, 11 abductions, and 38 arrests.

...and the UN says Eritrea is in “severe humanitarian crisis”

Last month, in an interview with Eritrea’s official media, President Isaias was asked about Eritrea’s relationship to the “chronic lack of food supply” following “the unsatisfactory rainy season in the region”. President Isaias responded that “it may sound an exaggeration, but in reality we do not have such a problem.” He said that some countries have a ten year food reserve and that while Eritrea hadn’t reached that stage it was important for Eritrea to proactively increase food reserves to provide from one to two years. That was helpful when a crisis happened, he said, adding “that in our case, even when there is a budget deficit, food security will remain an absolute priority.” The president said there had been an “unsatisfactory rainy season in 2015”; however the government’s proactive measures had been “useful for offsetting the undesirable effects.” It had apparently been able to use the surplus of the satisfactory harvest in some regions in 2014.

However, a few weeks later, speaking on the occasion of the anniversary of Operation Fenkil, a major victory against Ethiopian forces in 1990, he said the occasion was being celebrated “in a year of above normal precipitation and lush green coverage of the entire area from Ras Kiesar to Damera.” He added that “the good rains that engender hope and inspiration remind us what could have been achieved, beyond temporary delight, had we managed to harness the rainfall by constructing dams, diversion canals, and, by embarking on forestation programs throughout the Northern Red Sea and Southern Red Sea Regions.”

In fact, despite President Isaias’ latest comments and his earlier somewhat cavalier dismissal of the “unsatisfactory” rainy season, or of any food security crisis in Eritrea, the latest UN reports classify Eritrea as being in “severe humanitarian crisis”. The latest Global Emergency Report from the UN, issued last week and updated to February 9, identifies four countries in the Horn of

Africa as in “severe humanitarian crisis”. These are Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. Among neighbors, the report also includes Yemen. Another three countries in the region are identified as being in “humanitarian crisis”. They are Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya.

For Eritrea, the UN’s Global Emergency Report of February quotes the Food and Agricultural Organization in reporting that “coastal areas of Foro, Gel’alo and Massawa had almost no rain in June and July, and that rainfall throughout the country was 30-35% below average.” Indeed, the UN report notes that according to “satellite-based monitoring, there are significant soil moisture deficits in most eastern coastal areas [of Eritrea], impacting food security and livelihoods”. It added that El Niño weather patterns in Eritrea are contributing to drought conditions. It said that monitoring suggests that “much of the country is affected by drought”, pointing out that since the government of Eritrea has not released data on food security for the year and restricted access, it is difficult to know the full impact and scope of the drought.

In fact, the UN estimates in Eritrea there are 1.5 million people, including 725,000 children, affected. It noted that World Food Program reported that over 60% of the Eritrean population was under-nourished between 2011 and 2013. It says that “it is estimated that Eritrea produces only 60% of the food it needs, and markets appear to be dysfunctional [and] the food security situation is compounded by the fact that farmers are routinely absent during harvest periods due to mandatory national service”. It suggests that, in addition, local food and fuel prices are likely to be high, putting more severe pressure on household coping mechanisms.

The report also notes that the number of UNHCR-registered Eritrean refugees in Sudan and Ethiopia amounts to 320,000. As of the end of November, the UNHCR says there were 152,000 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. The report underlines that the majority of Eritrean asylum seekers cite mandatory indefinite military conscription as the primary reason for fleeing, adding that the “high proportion of unaccompanied minors who cross from Eritrea to Ethiopia is a priority concern” for the UNHCR. The report notes that grave human rights violations are widespread in Eritrea, and that Eritreans are deprived of fundamental freedoms by the authorities, routinely and arbitrarily arrested, detained, and tortured. Disappearances or extrajudicial executions were also reported, it says, and Eritreans were subject to systems of mandatory national service and forced labor in which individuals are effectively detained indefinitely. The report accepts that since late 2014, Eritrean government officials have asserted mandatory service would be limited to 18 months. However, it also makes it clear that, as of last December, “researchers have found no discernible change in practice”. It adds that Eritrea has the highest number of imprisoned journalists in Africa, 22 known cases. Quoting the International Office of Migration, it says Eritreans constitute the biggest group of migrants arriving in Italy by boat. “From January to October 2015, more than 39,000 Eritrean refugees sought refuge in Europe, the vast majority arriving by boat across the Mediterranean.

Drought does not stop at a border and questions were being raised last year about the impact of the drought in eastern Africa and the Horn. With Kenya, South Sudan, Somalia and Somaliland, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Yemen all affected, it seemed surprising that Eritrea had escaped. Equally, as the UN noted, in Eritrea, unlike all other countries in the region there was “no official national or UN El Nino contingency plan.”

The UN says that the unwillingness of the authorities to even begin to discuss any possible problem was compounded by the lack of other sources of information. NGOs have been steadily restricted in their operations. In 2005 when a quarter of the Eritrean population were dependent upon food aid, the government introduced taxes on all NGO imports, including food and medicine. In February 2006, six Italian aid agencies were asked to leave the country and others told to close down shortly afterwards. UN agencies have found their work curtailed and been unable to operate on any substantial scale. Refugees over the last few years have consistently reported that food is hard to come by in the cities and prices have been high. Essentials, subsidized by the government, are difficult to find and carefully rationed. Some refugees have also reported that food vouchers are denied to those who have relatives who have fled the country to escape conscription.

The JMEC in South Sudan calls on both sides to honor their commitments

The SPLM-IO leader, Dr. Riek Machar, said on Saturday (February 13) he would return to Juba, to take up the post as First Vice-President. President Kiir reappointed Mr. Machar to this position two days earlier. Mr. Machar, speaking at a news conference in Addis Ababa after a visit to Cairo last week, said he had accepted his appointment and would return to the capital, Juba, once the required security arrangements were in place. Mr. Machar did not set an exact date for his arrival in Juba but said this depended on the government's commitment to allow the demilitarization of the capital and the transfer of nearly 3000 opposition forces to Juba to guarantee security for his return. Under the peace agreement Juba is to be demilitarized and a joint police and security force of 8,000, drawn from the two sides, will be deployed in the capital.

The Government has ordered its forces to move out of Juba and speaking to soldiers leaving military headquarters on Thursday, Defense Minister, Kuol Manyak Juuk, said the exercise was meant to speed up implementation of the peace deal. He said Dr. Machar said "he needed a place for his guards, and we showed him his place." The Defense Minister said troops of the opposition will be stationed behind Jebel Korok [Kujur], south-west of Juba. Opposition commanders, together with members of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and military officials from government this week assessed two areas provided and agreed them although there was a lack of facilities.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), the body overseeing the peace implementation, said transporting Machar's troops to Juba and completion of the demilitarization exercise in Juba could take at least one more month. Speaking to reporters after attending a meeting with members of civil society groups in Juba on Thursday, Bill Harmon, the security and military advisor for JMEC, said preparations and sources of funding are delaying the process. He said it would take "several weeks to provide resources for the movement of the opposition forces back to Juba. So the timeline, if we don't have any more setbacks, then we

could see the movement of those forces complete within four to six weeks.” This, he said, could mean delaying the formation of Transitional Government of National Unity.

There were reports this week that President Salva Kiir had completed his consultations with the stakeholders and was ready to announce names for a transitional government, and that he was only waiting for a list of cabinet nominees from the SPLM-IO to be appointed to their quota of ten ministerial positions. A Government spokesperson said any further delay was now due to Riek. The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission said on Thursday (February 18) that President Kiir should not form a Transitional Government of National Unity without the participation of all the parties to the August 2015 peace agreement.

The Partners Group of the JMEC which includes representatives of Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Sudan, Somalia, Chad, China, Norway, the United Kingdom, the United States, the African Union Commission, the European Union, the IGAD Partners Forum and the United Nations, held a joint meeting on Thursday in Nairobi, to discuss implementation of all aspects of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. A statement said “it is essential that all parties to the agreement participate in formation of the government; proceeding unilaterally would undermine the letter and spirit of the peace agreement.” The JMEC emphasized that Juba should be demilitarized first and the forces of the SPLM-IO transported to Juba before the government can be formed. It urged these commitments be carried out expeditiously. It called on all parties to honor their commitment to a permanent ceasefire and to granting unfettered access for members of the Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) monitors and humanitarian assistance.

The statement also said that “The JMEC Partners Group will remain in close contact with our representatives in Juba, and will together remain vigilant in supporting JMEC and the South Sudanese parties to ensure all elements of the agreement are implemented in good faith.” The partners group is scheduled to meet again in April in Addis Ababa to further support South Sudan and the implementation of the Agreement.

The African Parliamentary Conference on Migration in Djibouti

The African Parliamentary Conference on Migration opened in Djibouti on Monday (February 15). The two day meeting whose theme was “the Contribution of African migrants to the development of countries of origin and destination,” was attended by representatives of 40 nations, including Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan from the Horn of Africa. The conference was a follow-up to an earlier meeting in Rabat when the theme was “Africa and migration: Challenges and Solutions”.

The objective of this conference was to mobilize parliamentarians, as actors in the development of essential policies connected with migration, which in addition to being a source of opportunities for the countries of destination and countries of origin, is currently a major challenge for policy makers in Africa and globally. Other issues being discussed included the

development perspective of migration and Agenda 2030 for the sustainable development of the legal framework and of international policies for migration, correlations between migration and development, human rights and strengthening of international cooperation on security. The parliamentarians also drew up an inventory of migration from the Horn of Africa, the regions of transit and those of destination for migrants and refugees, and considered proposed solutions for the migration issue.

The opening session put migration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into perspective with a presentation designed to focus the conference discussions on the issues at hand and enable participants to formulate and include their contributions in the general context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These, adopted in September last year, includes migration and human mobility in four of the 17 goals, and recognizes the positive contributions of migrants and the decisive role they play in sustainable development. This was followed by sessions to inform participants of the most recent data on inter-and intra-African migration and the new challenges, and consider legal frameworks and international policies governing migration. This helped participants assess the relevance of these policies in the face of the new dynamics of migration. It also dealt with the human rights dimension of migration and encouraged participants to take this into account when drafting or reformulating policies or laws that should meet international standards and harmonizing strategies as implemented.

The third part of the conference discussed the links between migration and development, the factors of migration and the often unknown or underestimated contribution of migrants in their countries of origin and destination. It looked at measures to maximize this contribution. A case study illustrated measures taken to support the contribution of migrants. The final session considered the importance of strengthening international cooperation to contain insecurity, one of the new migration challenges. Some say migration has become a means used by terrorists and organized crime to facilitate movements and circumvent the authorities. This situation calls for stepping up international cooperation and engaging in concerted action to identify and arrest criminals.

Overall, the discussions focused on the links between migration and development, factors of migration and of the contribution, often misunderstood and sometimes undervalued, of migrants in both their countries of origin and of destination. There were many interventions from experts from the International Organization for Migration to help contextualize the often dramatic dimensions of these human movements, including the shipwrecks that have caused the death of thousands of Eritreans, Somalis and others near the shores of southern Europe in 2015.

In an opening speech, the Chairman of the Djibouti National Assembly, Houmed Mohamed Ali, stressed that the conference should be “an example of effective international cooperation whose concern is to make relevant proposals. It will be a forum for exchange of experience, exchange views, and be the basis of a true reflection on the topic.” He further requested that participants should not lose sight of the international dimension of the phenomenon. The Secretary General of the African Parliamentary Union, Koffi Nzi, said that the APU was working to mobilize parliamentarians, as major players, to provide policies around the issues related to migration. He

stressed however that the causes of migration still remained as “issues of youth unemployment and poverty, armed conflict and our global governance systems.” The final declaration adopted at the end of the conference proposed institutionalization of the African Parliamentary Conference on Migration.

Kenya’s government devolution conference

Kenya has been a foreign policy priority of Ethiopia for a long time and for many excellent reasons. The long and warm historic connections, cross-border ties and increasingly close cooperation provide the basis for the relationship. Ethiopia and Kenya have common positions on cross-border terrorism, piracy, and on regional integration under the umbrella of IGAD. The two countries support each other in many international fora to secure support for their policies and collaborate on peace and security issues, demonstrating their common interest through IGAD, the AU and other organizations. Obviously changes in the system of government can have implications for the region as well as for Ethio-Kenya relations.

In 2010, Kenya introduced a new Constitution, marking an important turning point in Kenya’s history by introducing devolution as a central element in a new system of governance. By voting for a devolved system of government, Kenyans sought to shift some power, resources and responsibility away from the center and closer to the people. The new governance system was seen as providing for the opportunity to spur socio-economic development, ensure resources could be shared more equitably and to promote better governance. The drafters of the constitution envisioned a three-year transition period during which the National Government, through the Transition Authority, would devolve functions to the County governments.

The Fifth National and County Government Coordinating Summit conference, opened by President Kenyatta, was held last week (February 10-11) at State Lodge, Sagan. It brought members of the National Government and County Governors, and was attended by Deputy President William Ruto, Cabinet Secretaries, principal secretaries, senior advisors and 31 of the Country Governors. Progress achieved under the devolved system of government with special focus on various reports by the Intergovernmental Budget and Economic Council, the Intergovernmental Relations Technical Committee and on Public Finance Management was discussed. President Kenyatta said at the outset: “The truth is that we now live in a new era. In the past, development came from the national government alone. Now, we have devolution, so that each of us, however far from the capital, Nairobi, we may live, has a say in development”. The chair of the Council of Governors, Governor Munya, added the conference would also discuss road projects and finance including conditional grants such as funding for the national government’s free maternity programs. The conference was also seen as a preparation for the Third Annual Devolution Conference due in a couple of months.

The Council of Governors together with the Ministry of Devolution and Planning in collaboration with other stakeholders has organized the annual devolution conference since 2013. The First Annual Devolution Conference was held in Kwale County in April 2014, the Second Annual in Kisumu in April 2015 and the Third Annual Devolution Conference will be hosted by

Meru County in April this year. Conference participants include representatives from both levels of government, independent commissions, academia, policy practitioners, civil society and the media. The Third Annual Devolution Conference will focus on enhancing the understanding and appreciation of the transition period and look at what has been achieved so far. It will also be a forum to celebrate and share in the discussions of emerging issues, look at lessons and best practices by both levels of government, national and county level, and at the approaches that were used to empower citizens while delivering the devolution promise. The conference will also share experiences, challenges and solutions from other countries that have a similar or near similar model of devolution, including those that may be considering such a policy or which have experience with other forms of decentralization such as devolution or federalism.

Infrastructure development and energy sector development are priorities for Kenya's national economic development and achievement of its Vision 2030. Kenya has made significant capital investments in infrastructure, and given the scope of these investments, greater collaboration between the National Government and the Counties, and, indeed, among the Counties is necessary. Kenya, of course, has potential for substantial growth in geothermal, wind, solar, gas, oil and biomass energy. This presents opportunities for both the National and County governments. At the same time, the need to develop a national legal framework and align the disparate county legal and regulatory frameworks for development and management of infrastructure is also part of the process of devolution of government. Developing the appropriate legal frameworks to facilitate the financing of infrastructure projects by counties will allow County Governments to mobilize funding independently. In this context, Public-Private Partnerships are an important way of raising income and generating partnerships. This raises the possibility of changes in cross-border development projects with Ethiopia and with other countries. The Nairobi-Addis Ababa road, for example, is set to be completed within six months when the construction of the 121km section from Merille to Marsabit and the 122km stretch from Turbi to Moyale will be completed. The road connects Mombasa Port to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The project is funded by Africa Development Bank and the European Union. The project is a key element in the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor. Devolution of government will help to address local issues that are related to the development of the LAPSSET project.

Kenya's plans to buy power from Ethiopia are also at an advanced stage and the construction of high voltage transmission lines covering the 612 kilometres to the border at Moyale will begin in May. The project is based on mutual benefit for both countries and advances the development plans and interests of both nations. The proposed line will also provide for the possibility of a major link south to Tanzania and further. The project is also helping Ethiopia mobilize the necessary financial resources to exploit its enormous hydro-energy resources more fully and thereby improving its economic growth and the livelihood of people. Kenya too will benefit from increasing the level of its power interconnections and address the energy demands of the counties. The project will also help Kenya to achieve mid-level industrialized status in line with its Vision 2030 Strategy.

Ethio-Kenya relation will certainly benefit from these developments, and both countries are working for increased decentralization, and expanding the involvement of actors at local level.

These energy and road sector projects can be expected to generate increased investment opportunities in other related industries. Kenya's process of devolution of government, like Ethiopia's, will involve many additional stakeholders in cross-border development projects and cooperation on both sides of the border. All this will also help local administrators to address local issues in border areas and to resolve cross-border differences when these occur.