

HORN OF AFRICA *The Monthly Review*

This update covers the Month of January 1998

REGIONAL ISSUES

Kampala summit for development prioritisation: Thirteen African leaders including heads of states held a summit meeting in Kampala, Uganda, on 22/23 January. The summit, called "leaders forum", was the first in a planned series and was also attended by World Bank President James Wolfensohn. Leaders made a commitment to reverse the constraints to development through better prioritisation and meaningful partnership among the countries and the donor community. The priority development areas identified in a joint communiqué are human resources, capacity building, rural transformation, private sector development, infrastructure development, regional integration, conflict prevention, management and resolution and post conflict reconstruction, public sector reform and good governance. The participating countries were: Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Eritrea and Ethiopia. (*UN OCHA IRIN, January 23; The Monitor, February 5 and 7-8*)

Health concerns across borders: Concerns have been raised over the possibility of an epidemic of Rift Valley Fever (RVF), a haemorrhagic disease spread by mosquitoes and direct contact with infected animals, spreading into the pastoral lowlands of southern and south-eastern Ethiopia. Meanwhile, the Ethiopian Health Minister declared on 11 February in a joint statement with WHO Ethiopia, that in Ethiopia "there is not a single case that indicates the occurrence of the Rift Valley Fever that has hit neighbouring countries". The Minister added that the epidemic surfaced in areas of Somali Region was malaria. Other human health hazards identified in areas affected by floods after the untimely October/November rains included tuberculosis, measles, dysentery and malnutrition. (*The Ethiopian Herald, February 12*)

A RVF outbreak in Kenya's north-eastern Province has been confirmed and there are reports of many animal and some human deaths in Southern Somalia, although these reports are not necessarily consistent with RVF. Examination of remote sensing data by FAO has indicated that suitable conditions for the explosive multiplication of mosquito vectors persist over extensive areas of Kenya, southern Somalia, south-eastern and southern Ethiopia. The disease pattern in sheep, cattle and camels examined in north-east Kenya has been typical of RVF with fever, abortion, early neonatal death, jaundice and death, and a fall in milk production in dairy cattle. Humans have generally suffered influenza-like symptoms with few complications. An expert from FAO has recently visited the Ethiopian Somali region to consult with regional officials and advise on the possibility of an outbreak of RVF. Meanwhile, unconfirmed reports have been received indicating that Saudi Arabia may be considering a ban on the import of all livestock from the Horn of Africa due to health concerns arising from the RVF outbreak. If so, this could have serious implications for the economies of south-eastern Ethiopia and neighbouring "Somaliland". Initial suspicions of anthrax in north-eastern Kenya have not been borne out by subsequent investigations. However, the disease could still be a component of the animal mortality reported in the flood-affected areas of both Kenya and southern Somalia and,

according to FAO, further investigation is merited, especially as the dryer conditions again prevail. (*Monthly Situation Report for Ethiopia, UNDP-EUE, January 1998*)

Cholera continued to give reasons for concern in some Horn of Africa countries throughout January. In Djibouti, the epidemic has spread to southern areas of the country while it has been contained in the capital where previously a total of 45 people had died of cholera. In Uganda at least 400 people had died of cholera by late January, according to Radio Uganda. In Somalia, the number of cholera cases by the end of January as reported by WHO was 3,606 with 173 deaths. Also Kenya continued to be threatened by fresh cholera outbreaks in different areas. (*AFP, January 9; UN OCHA IRIN, January 23, February 4 and 6*)

In a related development, the European Union (EU) has banned the import of fish from four eastern African countries because of the cholera epidemic. The affected countries, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique, earned a cumulative total of \$ 10 million in 1996 in fish exports to the EU. (*The Monitor, January 13*)

More donor money needed for flood victims: The World Food Programme warned on 27 January it would halt emergency food airlifts and other vital supplies to 1,1 million people cut off by floods in Kenya and Somalia unless donors provided additional funds urgently. Estimating that it will cost \$12 million to deliver by air an additional 16,000 tons of material aid between end of January and end of March, WFP called on donors to pledge money immediately so as to avert the possible suspension of operations. Whereas donors had been quick to respond to earlier appeals of aid, more help was needed urgently because the rains continued until mid-January in Kenya and Somalia. Initial help came from the European Community Humanitarian Office, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Switzerland, Australia and the Netherlands. Meanwhile, WFP launched a formal appeal on 10 February sought \$17 million to help 657,500 Somalis through 31 July and 390,700 Kenyans until the end of February. In a separate appeal issued earlier, WFP seeks \$2,254,608 for its deliveries of food by airbridge to 125,000 refugees in the camps at Dadaab in North East Kenya. By 10 February, however, it had received only \$514,688. (*Panafrican News Agency, January 27; WFP February 11*)

IGAD meetings with recommendations: A three day IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Development) sub-regional workshop on Food Security held in Addis Ababa ended in mid-January with amendments and recommendations on the disaster preparedness strategy and food aid code of conduct. The proposals are to be submitted to IGAD member countries for approval. In a related development, an Ethiopian delegation led by Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin went to Rome for a ministerial meeting of IGAD member states. The agenda included deliberations on the development of infrastructure, food self-sufficiency and conflict resolution in the Horn of Africa region. The meeting which discussed also the Somalia peace process, was attended, besides Italy as host, by six IGAD member countries, and donor countries like the USA, Canada, France, Britain, Norway, Switzerland and the European Union. One of the agreements reached was to establish a committee to oversee the implementation of projects to be carried-out by IGAD. (*Ethiopian Herald, January 17 and 22 ; AFP January 19*)

Regional efforts to combat pests: In Kenya there have been various media reports of locusts along the Kenya/Ethiopia border. An Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture team that recently visited South Omo (Southwest Ethiopia) identified the outbreak to be African Tree Locust and grass hoppers and not the more dangerous and damaging Desert Locusts. The danger of the infestation spreading is limited as well as the threat to crops in this predominately pastoral area. Due to the very unusual rains last year, however, conditions in the traditional Desert Locust breeding areas along the Red Sea coast are exceptionally favourable at present. Following the identification of a number of large hopper bands in January, aerial spraying operations are presently underway along the coast of Sudan and Eritrea. Both FAO and the Desert Locust Control Organisation (DLCO) are monitoring the situation closely. There have also been reports of some armyworm moths in Ethiopia. Although this is early in the year for armyworms, the unusual rains late last year have also created favourable conditions for breeding and the

situation will have to be monitored carefully. Although historically armyworm moths have invaded Ethiopia from breeding sites along the Tanzanian and Kenyan coasts, some experts now believe endemic populations may have become established in parts of Southern Ethiopia where they have formed a reservoir with the potential to spread quickly to other locations in the country when conditions are favourable. Although high profile migratory pests such as locusts and armyworms often receive more publicity and attention, in Ethiopia local pests such as Welo Bush Cricket, Stalk Borer, rats and baboons usually cause much more damage. The extremely damp conditions during the last quarter of 1997 are expected to favour the spread of insect and other such pests and lead to a significant increase in pre- and post-harvest losses. *(Monthly Situation Report for Ethiopia, UNDP-EUE, January 1998)*

Addis Economic Forum: An international meeting named "The Addis Forum" is scheduled to be held in the new Addis Ababa Sheraton Hotel on 8/9 March, the official Ethiopian News Agency ENA reported in late January. Eight African leaders, including Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, are expected to attend the forum which is meant to open a policy dialogue between African leaders and foreign investors. *(Seven Days Update quoting ENA, January 26: The Ethiopian Herald, January 27)*

DJIBOUTI

Meat donation for Iraq: As a "gesture of solidarity" with sanctions-hit Iraq 25 tonnes of meat were flown on 31 January from Djibouti to Baghdad. The aircraft, carrying sheep and beef, was reportedly only the second cargo plane to arrive at Baghdad airport since economic sanctions were imposed on Iraq. A Russian plane sent by ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy landed there on 25 December carrying five tons of medicine. A spokesman accompanying the Djibouti meat lift, Hashe Abdallah, called for a lifting of the "murderous sanctions" imposed on Iraq in 1990 for its invasion of Kuwait while Djibouti's President Hassan Gouled Aptidon condemned the embargo against Saddam Hussein's regime, saying that the Iraqi people were among the most "vulnerable" in the world. *(AFP February 1; The Monitor, February 3)*

FRUD members on hunger strike: Members of the "Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie" (FRUD), a political organisation opposed to the government of President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, are reportedly on the verge of death in Djibouti prisons after they were rounded-up in Ethiopia and handed over to the Djibouti authorities by the Ethiopian government. Media reports do not indicate when the prisoners started their hunger strike. In a related development, several Oromo refugees living in Djibouti were arrested in Djibouti city and handed over to Ethiopia. *(Press Digest, February 5; The Indian Ocean Newsletter, January 4)*

Clashes between army and rebels: Sources close to Ahmed Dini's FRUD report two armed incidents between rebels and the government armed forces in the northern part of the country. The first clash was apparently at Himisso on 30 January and resulted in casualties on both sides. The second was believed to have taken place on 1 February at Tewele. None of the incidents has been confirmed by Djibouti officials. *(The Indian Ocean Newsletter, February 7)*

Searching for gold: Two American mining companies will start in April prospecting for gold in seven sites scattered across Djibouti, the Ministry for Energy and Mines announced. Besides gold and silver, the companies will look for base metals such as copper, lead and zinc. *(The Monitor, February 3; Press Digest quoting International resources Crop., February 2)*

ERITREA

Support from Italy: In the course of a working visit to Italy, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki held separate talks with the Italian leadership including President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. Isaias

and Scalfaro expressed conviction in the further consolidation and expansion of Eritrean-Italian co-operation. Concluding the discussion on 28 January, an agreement on 60 million dollars in Italian aid and soft loan to Eritrea was reached. The money will be used for the development of infrastructure, implementation of the programmes of the Asmara University and the purchase of industrial machinery. *(Press Digest quoting Eritrea Profile, January 30)*

Diplomatic ties with Libya: Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki travelled to Tripoli on 31 January to begin a four-day official visit to Libya. In a joint statement issued at the end of the visit, Afewerki and Libyan leader Muammar Ghaddafi agreed to establish diplomatic relations at ambassador level between the two countries. Moreover, the establishment of an Eritrean-Libyan Bank in Asmara was announced. Before leaving Libya by road, due to the international flight ban, Isaias criticised the embargo imposed on Libya since 1994 in connection with the bombing of an American airliner over the Scottish town of Lockerbie in 1988, killing more than 270 people. The Eritrean President said the UN Security Council should know that the embargo affects not only the target country but also all states in the region, adding “the UN sanctions are compromising our co-operation efforts”. *(The Monitor, February 3 and 5)*

Arbitration on Hanish Islands: Another round of arbitration hearings to resolve the dispute between Eritrea and Yemen over the ownership of the Red Sea Hanish islands took place in London in late January. The two claimants signed an accord in Paris to set up the international five judge arbitration court in London. A final ruling is expected later this year. It is said that there will be no appeal following the decision of this court as the leaders of Eritrea and Yemen had earlier pledged to accept its rulings. In a related development Yemen has warned Eritrea not to undertake any oil exploration at the Red Sea coast. *(The Ethiopian Herald, January 24; Press Digest quoting Seife Nebelbal, January 23; Seven Days Update quoting the Reporter, February 2)*

Higher consumer prices: Prices of various consumer items in Eritrea are said to be rising fast since Ethiopia and Eritrea decided to conduct their business transactions in hard currency and since strict border controls have been implemented. At the end of January, 100 kg of teff, a staple food grain mostly grown in Ethiopia, fetched a retail price of around 600 Nakfa in Asmara which is about twice as expensive as compared to the time before currency separation. While the official exchange rate of one US Dollar to the Nakfa is 7.20, the current rate between Nakfa and Birr, initially one to one, remains unclear, pending further clarifications on the small scale border trade allowance of 2000 Birr, unilaterally declared by Ethiopia. Besides teff, also Ethiopian commodities like coffee, *berebe* (chilli pepper) *gesho* (hop-like leaves used to brew local beer) and others saw significant price increases. Other reports say that officials are urging their compatriots to change their food habits, to “hunt for Italian pasta instead of the Ethiopian teff”. *(Press Diges quoting Agere, January 30 and other sources)*

ETHIOPIA

EPRDF Congress decides on major changes: The ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) concluded its third party congress in Jimma on 10 January with a pledge to achieve in the near future an annual grain surplus production of one million tons and to generally boost the agricultural and economic development of the country. The four day congress, attended by 1,000 delegates, also elected Prime Minister Meles Zenawi as the Front's secretary for a third five-year term. The congress confirmed as well new policies to allow limited participation of foreign investors in the telecommunications, hydroelectric power and defence industry sectors. No timetable for the implementation of the reforms was given. *(The Ethiopian Herald, January 10 and 11; The Monitor, 10-11 and January 13)*

Call for equitable share of Nile waters: Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin underlined the need to set up a forum to devise mechanisms for the equitable sharing of the waters of the Nile among all riparian countries. In a press interview the minister said Egypt has been

preoccupied with projects from which it would be the sole beneficiary - impeding the realisation of an agreement that paves the way for a just utilisation of the water by all Nile basin countries. Ethiopia, a country affected by recurrent droughts, should make use of its water resources in a bid to achieve food self-sufficiency as it would be rather difficult to bring about sustainable agricultural development relying on rain-fed farming alone, the minister said. According to the minister, the issue of the Nile water is a key to any form of co-operation between Ethiopia and Egypt. (*The Ethiopian Herald and The Monitor, January 13; Addis Tribune, January 30*)

Sudanese nationals rounded up in Addis: Ethiopian police shot dead a Sudanese refugee and wounded another during a bid to round up and move a group of refugees to a camp outside the capital. Refugees, unwilling to be shifted, stoned police officers and injured two of them during the operation on 9 January in Addis Ababa. The spokesman for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Nairobi, Peter Kessler, quoted by AFP news agency, declared that "the UNHCR is very disturbed and concerned about the way the round-up was conducted", adding, "we deplore the violence." 1,700 to 2,000 people were concerned in a transfer to Shirkole in Benishangul-Gumuz Region, where about 20,000 other refugees are already based. Meanwhile, David Lambo, Representative of the Regional Liaison Office of UNHCR in Addis Ababa, said that his agency, together with the government of Ethiopia, is screening all the Sudanese involved in the round-up and trying to find "individual solutions to individual problems". In a related development, the Sudanese government criticised the Ethiopian authorities' movement of Sudanese to the joint border area and hinted it could take retribution on Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. (*AFP, January 13; The Monitor, January 29; The Reporter, February 11*)

DPPC post-harvest assessment: The Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission announced on 27 January, that for the first time a federal level post-harvest assessment mission will be undertaken. It is felt that the unseasonable rains in October and November throughout much of the country might have changed the overall food availability picture. In some areas these unusual rains were very beneficial to late planted crops but in other areas they delayed harvesting and caused additional pre- and post-harvest losses. For the lowlands and other areas where livestock had been affected by the poor meher (main season) rains, these late rains were critical to the replenishment of pasture and ground water resources. This special assessment, with participation of international agencies on five teams, will only cover selected zones within Tigray, Amhara, Oromiya and the Southern Region (SNNPRS) and will be limited to about two weeks. (*Monthly Situation Report for Ethiopia, UNDP-EUE, January 1998*)

Dangerous toxic waste: A senior pesticides expert has disclosed that 1,500 tons of expired toxic pesticides are stored in 256 stations across Ethiopia. Speaking on a two day workshop on pesticides at the Ministry of Agriculture, the expert said that the safe disposal of the waste, which has the potential to pollute the environment and endanger human health, requires an outlay of 30 million Birr (US \$4.4 million). The chemicals, reportedly the largest quantity of expired pesticides in any African country, were originally imported into Ethiopia 30 years ago at a cost of six million dollars. The expert added that now the government is seeking external assistance since it could not bear the disposal costs. While fund soliciting has already begun, Ethiopia is due to take part in an international conference of the WHO where pesticide producers and users are to meet in Rome. (*The Monitor, January 15; The Ethiopian Herald, February 10*)

World Bank President Wolfensohn brings \$509 million soft loan: World Bank President James Wolfensohn paid a four day official visit to Ethiopia in late January during which a US \$509 million soft loan agreement with Ethiopia was signed. Of the total, \$309 million was earmarked for the road sector programme with the balance going to the Gilgel Gibe Hydro Power Project. The Ethiopian Roads Authority later announced, that the road sector loan will be used for "gravel road asphaltting" and "asphalt road rehabilitating" projects along four main roads in the country. Included in the upgrading and asphaltting programmes are the Debre Markos – Gonder and the Awash – Harar highways. Ethiopia has the lowest road density in Africa,

presenting a major obstacle to her endeavours to develop the agricultural based economic strategy. During his visit Mr. Wolfensohn also announced a further loan of US \$91 million for Ethiopia, to be approved later this year and earmarked for health and education. (*The Ethiopian Herald, January 29 and February 3*)

Prominent UN visitors: Following the visit of James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, in January, Ethiopia is receiving visits from a number of senior UN officials. The visitors include Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF; Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the WFP; Jacques Diouf, Director General of FAO; and Sadako Ogata, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Meanwhile, the UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, is slated to visit Addis Ababa in late April. (*Monthly Situation Report for Ethiopia, UNDP-EUE, January 1998*)

Salt Price to be stabilised: According to a report broadcasted by Radio Ethiopia on 28 January, the Ministry of Trade and Industry announced that the price of table salt will soon stabilise after increased supplies come into the country. The National Bank of Ethiopia has put at the disposal of 40 salt merchants a sum of more than two million dollars for salt imports which are expected to reach 60,000 tons in the near future. Salt imports, traditionally coming from Ethiopia's northern neighbour, became rather scarce and expensive since Eritrea introduced its own new currency, the Nakfa, and since subsequently new trade arrangements involving hard currency transactions between the two countries became effective. During January, in Addis Ababa retail prices for salt soared to up to 6 Birr per kilogramme whereas normally it costs about one Birr and 50 cents. (*Seven Days Update quoting Radio Ethiopia, January 28, The Ethiopian Herald, February 10*)

SOMALIA

Torture witness arrested on suspicion of murder: A member of a group of Somalis invited to Italy to testify before a commission looking into allegations that Italian soldiers tortured civilians during the UNOSOM operation was arrested on arrival in Rome. Hashi Omar Hassan is suspected of involvement in the March 1994 killing in Moqdishu of an Italian TV news crew. The Italian authorities claim that Hassan was part of a seven man squad involved in the murder. Before leaving Somalia, Hassan had declared he would seek damages for the torture he suffered at the hands of Italian soldiers in 1993. "They tied my hands and feet and threw me into the sea," he told the commission shortly before his arrest. In Moqdishu, Somalia's biggest human rights group, Doctor Ismail's Centre for Human Rights (DICHR), urged that the case of Hashi Omar Hassan "must be investigated by a neutral body, not Italy." (*AFP, January 13/14*)

Sodere-Cairo-Baidoa-?: Following their early January meeting in Addis Ababa, Somali factions under the umbrella National Salvation Council (NSC) said they were considering amendments to the Cairo peace accord to allow wider participation in the proposed National Reconciliation Conference to be held in Baidoa. The proposals - to base the criteria for participation in the conference on tribal rather than political affiliation and for the withdrawal of faction leader Hussein Aideed's militia from Baidoa by 15 January - were almost immediately rejected by Aideed whose spokesman claimed "no one has the legal right to amend unilaterally agreements signed by different groups, but each side can propose new ideas to enrich the Cairo accord without giving preconditions". Aideed himself returned to Somalia on January 28 to oversee preparations for the Baidoa conference, then scheduled for February 15. He flew in from Cairo in an Egyptian military plane and landed at Balidogle airfield, some 90 kilometers west of Moqdishu. Representatives of the Arab League and Egyptian diplomats were among those who arrived at Balidogle with Aideed. The following day, amidst reports that fighting had broken out around Baidoa between Aideed's militia and Rahanweyne forces, Somaliland President, Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, accused Egypt of interfering in the internal affairs of Somalia by hijacking the country's peace process. In a radio broadcast, Egal claimed "Egypt is making the Horn of Africa ungovernable...". Egal then offered to host the National Reconciliation Conference

in Somaliland, pledging his government as an honest broker in the peace process but stressing nonetheless that his country was no longer part of Somalia since declaring independence in 1991. Finally, and not unexpectedly, on February 14 Aideed and rival faction leader Ali Mahdi told reporters in North Moqdishu that the Baidoa conference had been postponed due to "logistical problems". "No serious political setback delayed the conference," stressed Ali Mahdi, who is a key member of the five-man presidential council of the NSC. The Deputy Secretary General of the Arab League, Ahmed Ben Helle, later went on record to say that the conference would be held "before March 31". (AFP, various dates)

...peace breaks out in Moqdishu? Soon after arriving back in Somalia, Hussein Aideed met with his rival Moqdishu warlords, Ali Mahdi and Osman Hassan Ali "Atto". The meeting ended with a pledge to reopen the port and airport, closed in March 1995 after the three disagreed on sharing revenue generated by the facilities, and to dismantle the "green line" dividing the war-torn city. Opposing militiamen would be taken to camps and a joint force deployed to ensure security. The meeting was attended by a large Egyptian delegation led by the Ambassador to Somalia as well as Arab League observers. A few days after the peace deal, the three men addressed a large public rally at the biggest stadium in South Moqdishu. In his address, Aideed urged Somalis to fight all bandits who are against peace and promised the port and airport would open soon, but did not specify when. To attend the gathering, supporters of Ali Mahdi had crossed freely to the south of the city, passing the green line which had been abandoned by the militias guarding it. Later a spokesman for Aideed said a joint committee will operate the port and airport with "...the help of friendly countries." The spokesman added that "Not only the armed factions will have a say in the operation of the two institutions, but also all inhabitants of Moqdishu, who will have the chance to get employed there." (AFP, Reuters, The Monitor, various dates)

Egal undertakes foreign tour: The President of self-proclaimed "Somaliland", Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, recently kicked off a diplomatic tour of a number of foreign countries with a visit to Addis Ababa. After Ethiopia, Egal was scheduled to visit Italy before going to France. While in Addis Ababa Egal exchanged views with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on the peace process in Somalia. According to the Somaliland Foreign Minister, Mahamud Salah Fagadeh Noor, while in France Egal's delegation met with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, parliamentarians and business people where issues of peace, security and trade were discussed. Before returning to Hargeisa, Egal and his Foreign Minister will visit Eritrea at the invitation of President Isaias Afewerki. Mahamud Fagadeh is a long-standing friend of Afewerki whom he had received on many occasions in Moqdishu when the Eritrean leader was still heading the EPLF fight against the regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam. (ION No. 797, January 31; The Ethiopian Herald, January 31 and other sources)

Floods subside but need for rehabilitation remains: Though the real death toll from the floods of October/November last year will never be known, the official figure at the end of February stood just at a little over 2,000 with upwards of one million people still at risk from hunger and disease. While the floods have subsided, for people along the Juba and Shebelle rivers the struggle to survive continues. Severe diarrhoea, malaria, and respiratory infections are rife while outbreaks of cholera have occurred in Moqdishu, Merca, Kismayo and Belet Weyne. In Moqdishu alone, around 3,600 cases of cholera had been reported in January, although by the end of the month the number of new admissions appeared to be on the decline. Meanwhile, Rift Valley Fever, a haemorrhagic fever widespread in animals but also affecting humans, has been reported from southern Somalia where data indicates that upwards of 80 people may have died from the disease. However, WHO, while describing the health situation in Southern Somalia as "grave", have emphasised that RVF is certainly not the only cause of disease being observed in this outbreak. Together with other members of a regional health task force, WHO are seeking support for a comprehensive and well-designed study of the situation. The health situation is worsened by the fact that the water and sanitation system has completely collapsed in most areas. An estimated 31,000 tons of stored grain has been lost to the flooding while the upcoming *deyr* (short rains) harvest will be down by at least 35,000 tons from the initial projections of 95,000 tons. WFP reports that levels of malnutrition are rising particularly in Bay and Bakool

regions where the next harvest will not begin until March. Relief operations, which had successfully distributed some 5,000 tons of food to 400,000 people to the end of January, was under threat due to a shortage of funds. In a statement issued 10 February, WFP appealed for an additional US \$17 million to maintain deliveries of food and other vital supplies to more than one million flood victims in Somalia and Kenya. The appeal is meant to assist 650,000 Somalis up to July 31. (AFP, WHO, UNCT and other sources: various dates)

UNDP launches three-year project: The United Nations Development Programme has inaugurated a three-year, \$1.2 million project in support of demining, re-integration of ex-military and strengthening of law enforcement in Somalia. The project, which is already being implemented in north-east Somalia, is aimed at establishing a secure and stable environment for the country's social and economic recovery. (PANA, January 14)

SUDAN

Government says no to UN Human Rights Office: Sudan has rejected a UN request to open a human rights office in the country. In an article, the local newspaper, *Akhbar al-Youm*, said the government had turned down the request made by the newly appointed UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, "for political reasons that have no relation to human rights". (*The Monitor*, January 6)

Surprise attack repelled: According to the state-owned newspaper, *Al Anbaa*, troops of the Sudanese army and popular defence forces repelled a surprise attack by Eritrean soldiers on a Sudanese border post early in January. Khartoum has recently accused Eritrea of actively assisting Sudanese opposition forces and of amassing troops along the common border between the two countries. (AFP, January 9)

ICRC operations in Sudan to resume: Following a visit to Geneva by Sudanese Minister for External Relations, Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, the President of ICRC, Cornelio Sommaruga, welcomed the decision of Sudan to lift the accusations levelled at the organisation regarding a November 1996 incident involving an ICRC plane. Both sides have since agreed that ICRC field activities should resume as soon as possible for the benefit of victims of the conflict in the Sudan. The two sides have confirmed that their mutual co-operation will be conducted with transparency and full respect for national sovereignty. (ICRC Press Release, January 22)

IGAD to promote mediation efforts: At the first meeting of the joint IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority for Development) partners' forum at the ministerial level held in Rome on January 19-20, participants backed the prospect of new negotiations in Nairobi in April on the conflict in Southern Sudan. While the "Friends of IGAD" group have pressed the regime in Khartoum to allow the inclusion of the National Democratic Alliance in the mediation of IGAD, which until now has focussed almost exclusively on the conflict in the south, this was not mentioned in the Rome communiqué as the position of IGAD member states on any enlargement of the peace process to include northern opposition groups is still awaited. Meanwhile, the partners' forum pledged financial and political support to IGAD members in their efforts to bring forward the peace process in Sudan, and declared their readiness to support the "shuttle diplomacy" under the auspices of the Kenyan chairmanship in preparation for the next session of the peace talks. (ION No. 797, January 31; IGAD communiqué)

Battle for Wau. According to the *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, the recent battle for Wau demonstrates clearly the fragility of the Sudanese government's control over this, one of the three regional centres in South Sudan (the other two being Juba and Malakal). The combined forces of John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and former Khartoum ally, major Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, managed to occupy Wau on January 29 and hold the town for five days before being forced to withdraw from the airport and garrison following a government counter-attack which used artillery and armour. The situation remains critical for the government

commander, however, as Gogrial (260 kms north of Wau) is under the control of Kerubino while Aweil, 150 kms to the north-west was captured by the SPLA early in January. But the most surprising element of these events has been Kerubino's sudden turn-about, which goes to prove how little the regime in Khartoum can rely on its newly-won southern allies. It now appears that as early as December Garang had agreed with Kerubino to move 2,000 men to a small village 30 kms from Wau. These were shown off as SPLA deserters by Kerubino who at the same time refused to allow the army to disarm the group (the April 1997 agreement provided for the maintenance of armed Southern units during the transition period). The rebel attack finally came after Kerubino learnt in mid-January that Khartoum was sending regular troops to disarm the southerners. Kerubino's disaffection with Khartoum may have begun with the appointment of his rival, renegade commander Riek Machar, as chairperson of the South Sudanese Co-ordination Council and initial refusal of the government to appoint him as Machar's deputy. Meanwhile, (ION, No. 798, February 7; Sudan Democratic Gazette, February, 1)

UN starts airdrop to 150,000 displaced Sudanese: On February 3, the UN World Food Programme began air-dropping emergency food supplies for up to 150,000 people displaced by the fighting around Wau. Two days later, however, the Sudanese banned the operation on security grounds but, according to a statement released by WFP, would consider specific requests for drops in areas of acute human need "on a case-by-case basis," requests that the agency were in the process of formulating. (*The Monitor*, February 5; *The Ethiopian Herald*, February 6)

Former premier ready to talk: Sadiq al-Mahdi, the former premier who has been described by Sudanese Islamic leader Hassan Abdallah al-Turabi as "a pacifist who dislikes violence, fighting and war", indicated at the end of December that he was ready for talks with the Khartoum government. Madhi made the statement while in Cairo but said the talks could proceed only on certain conditions which included the trial of suspects of human rights violations, respect of pluralism and an end to the repressive behaviour of the security forces. Al Mahdi's remarks are seen by some observers as the outcome of Egyptian efforts to establish a tactical rapprochement with Khartoum to counterbalance pressure from countries such as Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda which are perceived as seeking to install a pro-African regime in Sudan. Lacking a positive response from Khartoum, Al Mahdi met with the Egyptian minister of foreign affairs on January 3 who, according to the *Indian Ocean Newsletter*, subsequently authorised the holding in Cairo of a meeting of the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA), to counter rumours of a possible reconciliation with Khartoum. (AFP January 10, ION No. 794, January 10)

Khartoum says Sudan-Egypt relations "progressing": In Khartoum, the government is anxious to demonstrate progress in the restoration of relations with Egypt. Visiting Cairo, the Sudanese Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Mustafa Osman Ismail, told reporters "Sudan is deploying intense efforts to achieve total normalisation. We are heading in the right direction," and reiterated that President Omar el-Beshir would also visit Egypt on a date yet to be disclosed. Ismail's visit was followed by a Sudanese trade delegation aimed at restoring commercial co-operation disrupted by the suspension in 1993 of a trade protocol signed between the two countries the year before. One concrete sign of the improving relations between Cairo and Khartoum was the resumption on February 14 of maritime traffic between Egypt and Sudan along the Nile after a break of more than three years. (AFP: January 12, 14 & February 14)

Oil contracts worth \$1.2 billion awarded: The Sudanese government has signed contracts worth US \$1.2 billion to implement a large project to extract and export oil from two oil fields. The contracts, awarded to companies from China, Argentina and the United Kingdom, represent the last phase of a project that started with the construction of an oil pipeline, loading port and storage facilities for oil extracted from the Magaly and Al Wehda fields. (*Press Digest* quoting the *Arabic News*, January 18)

KENYA

Social unrest and killings in the Rift Valley: As violent clashes continued to claim lives in the Rift Valley province, diplomatic missions in Nairobi called on the government to take “prompt, effective action” to end the unrest. In a press release issued on 28 January, 21 missions expressed deep concern over ethnic clashes in the province which have caused since 11 January at least 70 deaths (while the unofficial figure was more than 100 at the end of January). The violence invoked memories of the “politically motivated ethnic clashes of the early 1990s and more recent attacks at the Coast”, the release said. Kenya needed stability to meet the challenges “in revitalising an economy suffering from a variety of natural and manmade problems”. Meanwhile, President Daniel arap Moi called for an end to the hostilities and accused the opposition of making “inflammatory remarks” which fuelled the conflict. Inter-tribal cattle-rustling has long been a source of tension in the area, but the conflict has escalated in recent months, creating a situation which forced thousands of people to flee their homes. The Kenya Red Cross Society, with support of the ICRC, started relief operations by the end of January distributing some 90 tons of food to 1,300 displaced persons in Pokot and 900 in Marakwet. (UN OCHA IRIN, January 29; Press Digest, February 12)

Declining crop production because of floods: The Ministry of Agriculture expects Kenya’s sugar and coffee production to fall this year due to poor weather and a collapsing infrastructure. Sugar production is estimated at 350,000 tons, down from 390,000 tons last year due mainly to the fact cane had not been collected owing to the poor state of roads. National annual consumption is estimated at 560,000 tons. The 1996/97 coffee production fell sharply to 68,000 tons against a prior Coffee Board of Kenya projection of 82,902 tons and against the 97,575 tons produced in 1995/96. Adverse weather conditions could lead also to massive losses in food crop production. Shortfalls of maize are estimated at 630,000 tons, of beans at 297,000 tons and of wheat at 90,000 tons. Over 300,000 families countrywide had been affected by floods which washed away homes and destroyed crops. Agriculture Minister Musalia Mudavadi added there had been an abnormally high incidence of livestock diseases as a result of the weather. The European Union has provided more than 3.5 million dollars to assist victims of flooding and disease. (The Ethiopian Herald January, 21 and 24; UN OCHA IRIN, January 29)

Economic growth rate slowing down: Kenya’s economy grew 3.2 per cent in 1997, considerably slower than the 4.6 per cent recorded in 1996, according to data released by the Central Bank of Kenya. The bank blamed the slower growth on political uncertainty in an election year and unfavourable weather conditions affecting agriculture. Among other factors, also bad publicity abroad leading to a decline in tourism earnings was mentioned. (The Monitor, January 15)

Nairobi-Mombassa road washed away: The main Nairobi-Mombasa road, a lifeline for regional transport, was temporarily impassable in mid-January as rains washed away a crucial bridge. According to Kenyan press reports, a 30 kilometre traffic jam built up on both sides of the bridge and hundreds of trucks bringing goods to and from Zambia, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda were bogged down in mud. Two days later, the highway was partially reopened after engineers repaired a section of the affected area. On 31 January the highway had to be closed again after another bridge, near Kibwezi, collapsed due to heavy floods. (UN OCHA IRIN, January 23; Press Digest quoting BBC News, February 1)

New cabinet sworn in: Kenya's 22-member cabinet was sworn in on 14 January in Nairobi following President Daniel arap Moi's election victory of late December. The cabinet has only one woman, Mwalele Mwachai, an assistant minister of the newly created ministry of women and youths affairs. The swearing-in ceremony took place amid mounting suspense following the surprise omission by Moi to re-appoint George Saitoti as his vice-president. However, Saitoti was appointed minister of planning and national development. Bonaya Godana, the new man is at the helm of Kenya's Foreign Ministry, is the first minister to originate from Moyale, a district on the border with Ethiopia. (AFP, January 9; Panafrikan News Agency, January 14)

UGANDA

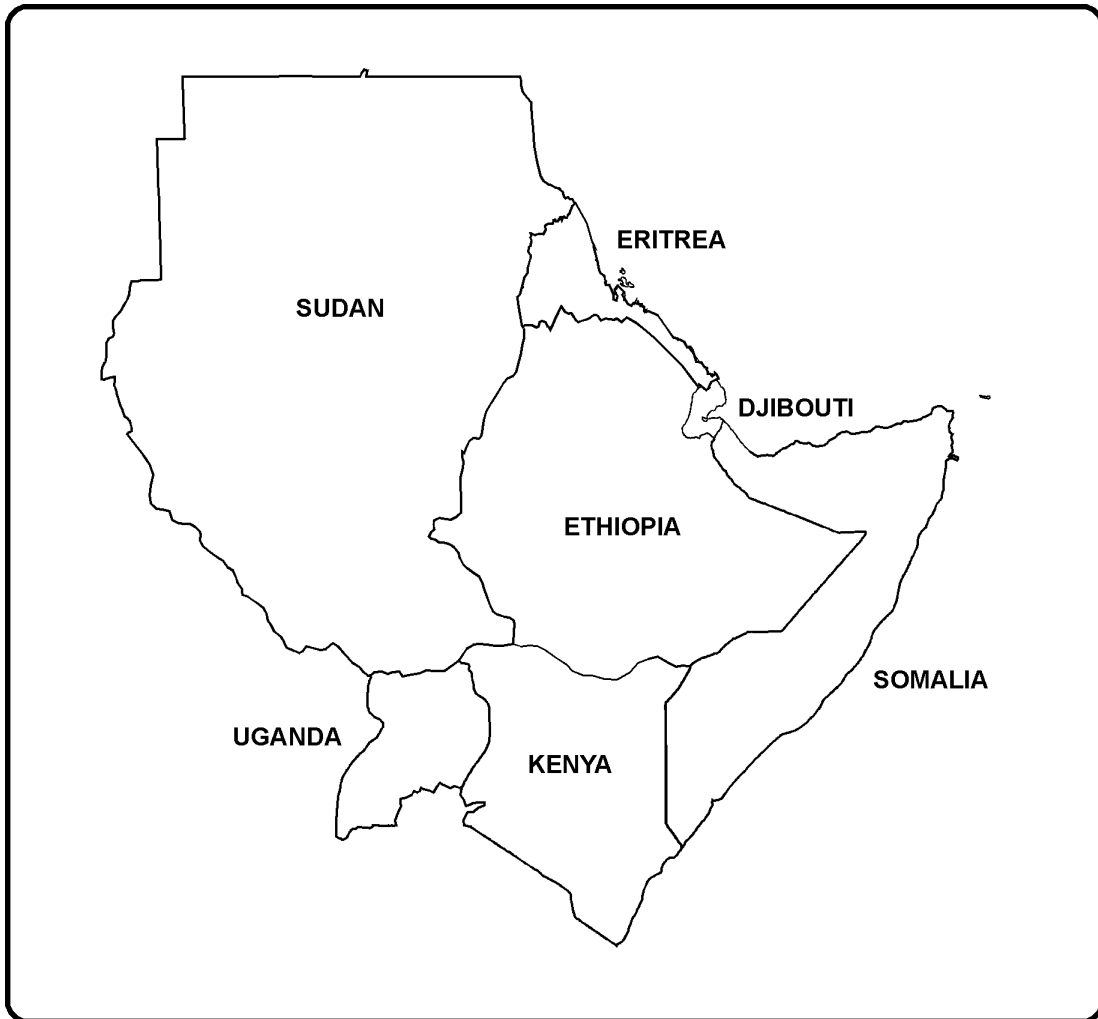
Army top brass changes: President Yoweri Museveni changed the top leadership of the Ugandan army in a move to modernise the armed forces, cut military spending and focus operations on fighting rebel insurgencies in the north and the west of the country. Museveni reportedly also appointed his brother, Major Salim Saleh, as the country's acting defence minister. Saleh was previously Museveni's adviser on military affairs in the north. He replaced Amama Mbabazi who was transferred to the president's office. Later on, Museveni played down his brother's political role stating that he was "an assistant, not a minister" in the Ministry of Defence. The Ugandan constitution does not allow for a minister or acting minister to be appointed without parliament's consent. (The Monitor, January 8; UN OCHA IRIN, January 9)

Twelve year jubilee: South African President Nelson Mandela called in Kampala on 26 January for political and economic freedoms for all Africans, saying millions were effectively disenfranchised. He was speaking at a parade marking the 12th anniversary of the storming of the Ugandan capital by the guerrilla army of the National Resistance Movement of President Yoweri Museveni. His army captured Kampala in a few hours from the forces of then president Tito Okello on 26 January 1986 after a five-year bush war. Museveni began as a Marxist, but became a devout free-marketer, and his country is considered one of the economic success stories of Africa. Speaking at a ceremony to mark his twelve years in power, Museveni defended his non-party system of government, pointing out the danger of multi-partyism being "hijacked by tribalism". (AFP, January 26; UN OCHA IRIN, January 27)

Rebel activities continue: There has been a flare up of rebel activity in northern Uganda since 4 January when rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) crossed into Kitgum district from their bases in southern Sudan. A LRA attack on the Acholi refugee camp in the northern Kitgum district reportedly took place in mid-January, occurring after two groups of rebels entered the area and began looting shops and abducted 30 people. The increased rebel activity in the Kitgum district is seriously hampering humanitarian activities. UNHCR confirmed the attack on the camp which houses some 18,000 Sudanese refugees and described the incident, during which three people were wounded, as "unacceptable". In a related development, the state owned "New Vision" reported on 26 January that a group of LRA rebels had crossed into Gulu from bases in Sudan. According to the newspaper, the incursion followed reports that LRA leader Joseph Kony had ordered the fresh abduction of youths from the Acholi and Lang'o areas of the district. The LRA has been fighting for over a decade in an attempt to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni and put in its place a system of rule based on the biblical Ten Commandments. The main method of recruitment used by the LRA is the abduction of young people and children who are used as soldiers and concubines. (UN OCHA IRIN, January 23 and 27; AFP January 29)

Refugee influx from Congo: UNHCR reported an influx of refugees from the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo into Uganda via Kisoro. It said a group of 314 mostly Tutsi Congolese had arrived during late December and early January and had been transferred to the Nakivale camp. Another group of 200 was about to be transferred. The refugees said they were fleeing insecurity in North Kivu. UNHCR said there were a total of 27,600 registered Rwandan and Congolese refugees in the area, plus a further 3,000 "unofficial" refugees whom it was assisting on a humanitarian basis. (UN OCHA IRIN, January 7 and 23)

THE HORN OF AFRICA



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SOURCES:

Information in this update has been obtained from UN, NGO and media reports; reference is made to sources as appropriate. No claims are made by the UNDP-EUE as to the accuracy of these reports.

16 February, 1998

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