



January 2001/February 2001

HIGHLIGHTS

Djibouti

Djibouti Prime Minister resigns after 22 years.

Eritrea

UNMEE begins radio broadcasts in Eritrea.

EU signs 76 million Euro agreement.

Ethiopia

World Bank approves US\$ 473 million loan for reconstruction and rehabilitation of war displaced, for demobilization, landmine clearing and to address HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Sudan

WFP appeals for US\$ 135 million to avert food crisis threatening 2.9 million people.

Kenya

IMF withholds US\$ 205 million in budgetary support for Kenya.

Somalia

Livestock ban brings a US\$ 2.4 million income short fall in Somalia.

Imported currency leads to market fluctuation and demonstrations.

REGIONAL ISSUES

Ethiopia begins military redeployment: Following agreement at the February 6 meeting of the Military Coordination Commission (MCC) Ethiopia began redeploying its troops from Eritrean territory. Under the agreement, Ethiopia is required to redeploy its forces to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) by February 26 after which Eritrea will realign its forces 25km from the new Ethiopian lines. The redeployment followed UNMEE Force Commander Major-General Patrick Cammaert's statement that there is a "credible force" in the mission area to carry out the peacekeeper's mandate. (*UNMEE, February 12; BBC News Online, February 12; ENA, February 10*)

Ethiopia and Eritrea appoint commissioners: On January 26, Ethiopia and Eritrea have appointed commissioners to sit on the neutral Boundary Commission and neutral Claims Commission. As agreed by both parties, the commissioners are not from their respective countries being nationals of the Netherlands, Nigeria, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. (*UNMEE, February 2*)

COMESSA summit in Sudan: A two-day summit meeting of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (COMESSA) ended on February 12. The summit was hosted in Sudan and attended by heads of states and other senior officials from Libya, Senegal, Djibouti, Togo, Eritrea, Mali, Central African Republic, Chad, Gambia, Burkina Faso, Sudan and five new members Nigeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Somalia. The leaders called for the lifting of United Nations sanctions against Libya and passed a declaration calling for efforts to resolve conflict in the region, joint economic projects and support for the Palestinian people. The leaders also witnessed Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir take oath for a second five-year term as Sudan's president and his promise to give equal share of public life and democracy for southerners. (*Reuters, February 12; AFP, February 13; DPA, February 13*)

Conference on Djibouti port: At a conference held in Addis Ababa from February 8 to February 10, Ethiopian businessmen said lack of facilities at the port of Djibouti, such as absence of customs official and clearing agents and bad roads are hindering their activities. At the opening of the conference, Djibouti Foreign Minister, Ali Abdi Farah, stressed that his country was ready to settle whatever problem may arise in its relations with Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Minister of Transport and Communications, Muhammad Dirir, on the other hand said Ethiopia was concerned with the sustainable and effective utilization of the port. The conference ended with agreement on a new and increased tariff for the importation of fertilizers, fuel and other goods. (*Addis Tribune, February 9: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; Radio Ethiopia external service, February 8: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Service*)

Ethiopia military delegation in Sudan: Following an invitation from the Sudanese government, an Ethiopian military delegation visited Sudan from February 4 to February 7. During the visit Ethiopian military Chief of Staff, General Gebre Tsadikan and Sudan Defense and Foreign Minister and other

*Sudan and Ethiopia
hold talks aimed at
strengthening ties.*

senior officials held talks aimed at strengthening ties and exchanging experiences between the armies of the two countries. The two sides also agreed to hold regular meetings. Sudanese President Omar al Bashir later made a visit to Ethiopia to attend the 26th founding anniversary of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). On the occasion he said the two governments will make efforts to strengthen cooperation in the areas of trade and road construction. (ENA, February 18; AFP, February 7 & 4)

ICRC aid repatriations: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), repatriated 550 Ethiopians from Eritrea on February 1 and 873 on February 3 via the Mereb river border crossing. A press release from ICRC on February 3 said that following the 12 December 2000 peace agreement signed between Ethiopia and Eritrea a total of 4,455 Ethiopian and Eritrean civilians had been repatriated under its auspices. ICRC also repatriated 631 Ethiopian refugees from Sudan on February 8 via Metema to the town of Gondar. Earlier, on January 20, 50 Ethiopian prisoners of war were repatriated from Eritrea also under the auspices of the ICRC. (Radio Ethiopia External Service, February 9: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; PANA, February 4; Ethiopian news Agency, January 20)

Eritrea Djibouti

DJIBOUTI

Prime Minister resigns: Djibouti Prime Minister Barkad Gourad Hamadou, appointed in October 1978, has resigned after 22 uninterrupted years in the post. His resignation has been accepted by President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who asked the government to continue to manage the affairs of state until a new Prime Minister is found. (AFP, February 6)

ERITREA

Eritrean President on visit to Algiers: Upon the invitation of Algiers President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki visited Algiers for two days. The visit ended with a joint statement in which the two sides agreed to make efforts to continue their consultation on the means to boost bilateral cooperation. In this respect, they agreed to arrange a meeting of the joint cooperation committee in Asmara to draw up plans to liaise in the sectors of interest to both countries. On international issues they restated their commitment to the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) and the United Nations which they believe provide a suitable framework for boosting peace, solidarity and cooperation between states. (Algerian radio, February 15: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; PANA, February 14)

UNMEE broadcasts to Eritrea: UNMEE's Public Information Office launched, on January 16, its first radio programme in Eritrea produced in English, Tigrinya and Arabic. UNMEE noted that the programme will feature news on developments concerning the peacekeeping mission, on the peace process, on humanitarian issues and also on mine awareness and demining programmes. Once the Ethiopia Ministry of Foreign Affairs gives it its approval UNMEE will also broadcast a parallel programme in Ethiopia. (UNMEE Press Release, January 17)

*Isayas and Abdelaziz
sign a joint statement for
cooperation.*

*Eritrea National
Assembly to
consider draft law to
govern political
parties.*

Eritrea and EU sign 76m euro agreement: The Eritrean government and the European Union (EU) signed an agreement, on February 2, providing 56 million euro in grants to be disbursed within three years and 12m euro loan with low interest rate for development activities. The EU also signed a 20m

UN country team for
Ethiopia appeals for
food and non-food
assistance to
support transition
from relief to
recovery.

Ethiopia and Yemen
sign memorandum
of understanding or
cooperation.

euro grant agreement on January 18 for the installation and rehabilitation of power lines in Massawa. (*Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, February 2: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Service; Visafric news agency web site, January 1: Quoted BBC Monitoring Service*)

Draft law for political parties: A committee working on a law that will govern political parties in Eritrea completed the first draft. The draft will be debated by the public before being submitted to the Eritrean National Assembly for ratification. The committee was appointed by the 13th regular session of Eritrean National Assembly. (*Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, January 26: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

ETHIOPIA

World Bank approves new loans: The Ethiopian Ministry of Finance announced on February 14 that the World Bank had approved US\$ 473 million in loans for postwar reconstruction programmes and rehabilitation efforts. Of the total US\$ 234 million is to be used for the reconstruction of infrastructure destroyed by the war with Eritrea and for the rehabilitation of war displaced people. US\$ 174 million will be used to demobilize members of the army and for landmine clearing action. The remaining US\$ 65 million is to be used for HIV/AIDS and for women and development programmes. The loans will be provided by the International Development Association (IDA), World Bank's lending arm. (*ENA, February 13; Reuters, February 14*)

UN consolidated humanitarian appeal launched: The United Nations Country team for Ethiopia in consultation with the government of Ethiopia has appealed for US\$ 203 Million to assist 6.24 million drought affected and 400,000 war displaced people. The major priority of the appeal is to maintain an adequate level of both food and non-food assistance and to support a transition from relief to recovery by shifting from general assistance to targeted assistance in health, water, sanitation, nutrition, education and agriculture. (*Ethiopian Herald, February 9; AP, February 8: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

Mine awareness launched: A mine awareness campaign launched by the Rehabilitation and Development Organization (RaDO) with the financial and technical support of UNICEF has reached more than 15,000 people in northern Ethiopia. Over the past three months RaDO also has formed clubs in 30 schools to carry out mine awareness and has used churches and public meetings for mine awareness programmes. (*Walta Information Centre, February 6; IRIN, February 8*)

Women demand their rights: A rally organized by the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (WLA), governmental and non-governmental organizations took place in Addis Ababa, on February 10. The protestors, around 1,000 Ethiopian women, denounced daily acts of violence committed against them. The women marched to both the parliament and the offices of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and delivered their demands including the rejection of sexual harassment, kidnapping and forced marriages. (*AFP, February 10*)

Ethiopia and Yemen sign agreement: The Ethio-Yemen Joint commission Meeting (JCM) ended on February 1 with the signing of agreements on what it called executive programmes that included education, agriculture, industry, tourism, mining and energy, culture, export promotion, double taxation and news agencies cooperation. They also signed a memorandum of understanding on enhancement of mutual cooperation in housing, urban and municipal development. (*Walta Information Centre, February 2*)

UMMA decide not to
take part in the new
government while DUF
affirms cooperation.

SUDAN

WFP appeals for US 135 million: On February 12 the UN World Food Program (WFP) launched an international appeal for US\$ 135 million to avert a food crisis in Sudan. Masood Hyder, WFP's Sudan representative, said if the call for aid is not answered with immediate effect the food and Water shortage could deteriorate. (*Reuters, February 13*)

Criminals have limbs amputated: Human rights groups and diplomats in Sudan on February 14 reported that five Sudanese had their right hand and left foot amputated as a punishment for armed robbery on January 25 and 27. The report further said another 19 prisoners were awaiting the same fate. Subsequently, the London-based Sudan Victims of Torture Group (SVTG) appealed to governments and the international community to press Sudan to stop amputations and observe the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. (*AFP, February 14*)

Sudan removes grain tax: In a bid to increase food supplies that have been affected by the poor harvest of last year, Sudan's government removed all taxes on grain imports starting from January 15 until the beginning of the next harvest season in September. (*PANA, January 16*)

No UMMA participation in new government: On January 22 UMMA's leader Sadeq al-Mahdi told reporters his party "... will not continue to negotiate with the government indefinitely, and ... have decided irrevocably not to take part in this totalitarian government." Al-Mahdi said until a political agreement is reached his party will not take part in the new government. On the other hand Dr. Ahmad Bilal member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) affirmed his party's participation in the next government. Dr. Ahmad pointed out that his party is in full agreement with the ruling party. However, he said the details of his party's participation and its nature have not yet been discussed. (*Suna news agency, January 23: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; Reuters, January 22*)

Government orders return of weapons: Registered opposition political parties have been ordered to turn in unlicensed weapons. The government claimed that possession of such armament violates the Weapons and Ammunition Act and the Political Parties and Organization Act, which ban military or paramilitary organizations and the use or manifestation of force of arms. (*AFP, February 1*)

KENYA

Kenya and Ethiopia hold talks: A high-level Ethiopian delegation led by Ethiopian Defense force Chief of Staff General Tsadkan Gebre-Tensay made a visit to Kenya from February 12 to February 14. Kenya claims that the talks followed alleged border incursions that claimed more than 160 Kenyan lives. The delegation held talks with Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi, Foreign Minister Bonaya Godana and the minister in charge of internal security Marsden Madoka. Madoka on the talks said "besides respecting each other's boundaries, we should also be holding regular joint border meetings." On their return, the Ethiopian delegation said that they held "extremely fruitful talks and consultations with a number of high-level Kenyan official " and have reached agreement to strengthen their bilateral relations by removing existing obstacles. (*ENA, February 16; AFP, February 15; Daily Nation web site, February 15: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

IMF withholds US\$
205 million but
government says it
does not amount to aid
suspension

Somalia

IMF holding back US\$ 205 million: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is holding back more than US\$ 205 million in budgetary support for Kenya. Treasury Permanent Secretary, Martin Oduor-Otieno, pointed out that the withholding of the funds does not amount to aid suspension. He said the government had agreed to sort out pending issues as soon as possible to enable the IMF release the funds. (KTN TV, January 19: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

SOMALIA

Livestock ban affecting Somalia: As a result of the ban imposed by Gulf states on livestock imports from the Horn of Africa last year, the self-declared state of Somaliland is faced with a shortfall in export earnings of US\$ 2.4 million. A report from the Food Security Assessment Unit (FASU) stated that the ban has brought loss of income at macro and household level especially for the urban poor and internally displaced. In related news, Somaliland Ministry of Finance appealed to international organizations and donors to assist in supporting Somalia in the construction of Berbera International Airport, regional animal husbandry offices, orphanages, veterans centers, government buildings, school rehabilitation, and the reconstruction of Hargeisa power station. The government also said the weakening of their economy is affecting the government abilities to maintain law and order in the country. (IRIN, February 12 & 5)

New banknotes lead to protests: Newly printed banknotes, imported by Somalia businessmen on February 7, led to a demonstration near Bakara market where residents stoned businessmen suspected to be linked in importing the currency. The Transitional Government (TNG) condemning the importation saying that it will buy the 60 million shillings imported in a bid to control the impact of the currency. According to Abdirahman Muhamad Diinaari, TNG Director of Information, Somalia has approached international financial institutions and friendly governments to assist in setting up mechanisms to control the printing of currency. The Prime Minister's Office has also said that the government will soon create a central bank to regulate the financial situation in the country. Meanwhile, the Somali Trader's Union of Banaadir Region (STUBR) issued a statement condemning and distancing itself from those who printed the money. (Qaran web site, February 12: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; Xog-Ogaal, Mogadishu, February 14: Quoted by BBC Monitoring)

Thousands protest against oil agreement: Thousands of protestors gathered in Baidoa to condemn the agreement signed on February 3 between Somalia and France allowing oil exploration for a 12 month period in the south of the country. Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) faction deputy commander Ibrahim Habsade accused the French oil group of signing an agreement with a government that does not represent Somalis. Somali warlord Osman Hassan Ali "Ato" noted that the new government cannot guarantee security for the oil companies as it has no control over the areas exploration. (AFP, February 5 & 3)

Protestors against oil
agreement claim
government has no
control over oil field.

TNG regains control of Gabahaarey: The TNG said it had regained control of Garbahaarey District (southwestern Somalia) after it was captured by the Somali National Front (SNF) faction led by Colonel Abdirizal Isaq Bihi. The TNG said the SNF withdrew as a result of the pressure exerted on them by the local population. The Transitional Government promised to send forces to all Somali territories occupied by foreign forces and their Somalia allies if they refuse to withdraw peacefully. (Xog-ogaal, February 4: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

*Opposition leaders
object to UN peace-
building operations
claiming that there is
no legitimate authority
in Somalia.*

Opposition leaders object to UN operations: Five opposition leaders in Somalia sent a joint letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and representative of UN offices to Somalia, objecting to proposed UN peace-building operations in Somalia. The leader's, Mohamed Kayare Afrah, Haji Musse Sudi Yalahow, Mowlid Ma'an Mohamoud, Hussein Mohamed Aydid and Osman Hassan Ali "Ato" claimed that there is no legitimate authority in Somalia and the interim government has not yet established itself in the capital. (*IRIN, January 25*)

Fishermen to be prosecuted for illegal fishing: A Mogadishu official, on February 10, said 151 Djibouti and Yemen fishermen were to appear in court for illegally fishing in the territorial waters of the Somaliland republic. The official from the Somaliland port city of Berbera said the prosecution has drafted charges, including confiscation of all marine products from the fishermen. (*AFP, February 10*)

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SOURCES:

Information in this update has been obtained from official and private media reports, U.N. agencies and NGO sources. No claims are made by the UNDP-EUE as to the accuracy of these reports.

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