

HORN OF AFRICA *The Monthly Review*

This update covers the Month of February 1998

REGIONAL ISSUES

Ethiopia to host conference on human rights: The Speaker of the Ethiopian House of Representatives, Dawit Yohannes, announced February 17 that Ethiopia would be hosting an international conference on human rights from May 18 to 22. Dawit told local reporters that foreign governments, particularly those of the European Union, and the UN have pledged a total of US \$855,000 to meet the costs of holding the meeting. The US government, meanwhile, has promised to cover all the expenses for participants coming from the USA. Invitations have been extended to nearly 170 human rights activist, ombudsmen and experts from 65 countries. All political organisations legally operating in Ethiopia will also be among those attending the preparatory meeting to be held two days before the main event. The conference is expected to discuss the establishment of human rights commissions and ombudsmen. The Ethiopian government estimates the total cost of holding the conference will be US \$6 million. (*The Ethiopian Herald, February 18; AFP, February 18*)

Rift Valley Fever leads to Saudi ban: The Saudi Government has reportedly banned the import of live animals from the Horn of Africa for fear that Rift Valley Fever (RVF) is present in livestock in the region. This ban is likely to have a very severe impact on the economy of Somaliland and the Somali region of Ethiopia. The peak export season through ports such as Berbera and Bosasso (used by most merchants exporting animals raised in eastern Ethiopia) coincides with the annual pilgrimage to Mecca which commences shortly. The possibility of instituting a system of health certification has been debated, a system that would require the recognition of the Saudi authorities and technical support. High level discussions are presently taking place between the Ethiopian Government and Saudi officials in an effort to have the ban lifted. Meanwhile, a team of experts from WHO, EPICENTER, EPIET, South Africa's National Institute of Virology, FAO and the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta are concluding a three-month field investigation into reports of haemorrhagic fever outbreaks in humans and animals in the Horn of Africa. According to UNDP Somalia, the team has found no evidence that RVF ever spread beyond the flood-affected areas in southern Somalia. The investigators found sheep and goats in both North East and North West Somalia very healthy, with most livestock owners reporting no disease problems in the last six months. The full report of the team is expected to be issued shortly. A recent study issued by the US Famine Early Warning System has highlighted the importance of the livestock export trade to livelihoods and food security in Ethiopia's Somali region. The report estimates that in the last two years more than two million sheep and goats have been exported through the port of Berbera, a high percentage of which were certainly trekked from grazing areas in the northern part of the Ethiopian Somali region. (*UNDP-EUE, March 10; FEWS Special Report, January 28*)

Locust control operations underway: The Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO) has started spraying along Eritrea's Red Sea coast against a potential threat posed by the breeding of desert locusts, which if left unchecked could lead to swarms across the region. In Kenya millions of green grasshoppers have arrived on the heels of prolonged heavy rains said to be linked to the El Niño phenomenon. These grasshoppers feed on grass and generally do not damage crops, but infestations can be locally damaging. Some experts deny a link between the El Niño and any upsurge in locust activity because the Red Sea coast

has escaped freak weather. Governments contributing to the operation of DLCO include Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania. (FAO, Reuters)

Refugees and the Horn of Africa: The crisis in the Great Lakes and the continuing unrest in a number of West African states have tended to divert international attention from the issue of forced displacement in the Horn of Africa. Yet all the Horn countries continue to be affected by some very large and long-standing refugee problems. According to a recent report prepared by UNHCR, in total, some 1.3 million refugees from the Horn of Africa are to be found within the region and in nearby states. The report goes on to say the scale and complexity of the refugee problem in the Horn has been compounded by two particular factors. First, while armed conflict and human rights violations have been the primary cause of the mass displacements, environmental and economic factors have also contributed to the problems. Second, the conventional categorisations employed by UNHCR are often not appropriate or relevant in the cultural and socio-economic context of the Horn of Africa. This latter factor has been especially true for the large proportion of the refugees who come from a pastoral or nomadic background. UNHCR's main concern now is to find lasting solutions for people who have lived in exile for many years, focussing on the region's two largest refugee populations: the Somalis in Ethiopia and the Eritreans in Sudan. (UNHCR: "Kofi Annan's view of the world's refugees" quoted in *The Reporter*, February 18)

FAO convenes 20th regional conference for Africa: Jacques Diouf, Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation opened the 20th FAO regional ministerial conference for Africa, held in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, by saying that the African continent needs to enhance its water control systems if it is to be self-sufficient in food grain production, arguing that in countries like Ethiopia the construction of small scale irrigation schemes and micro-dams will make an important contribution to long-term food security. The main issues discussed at the meeting were food production, food security and poverty alleviation. It was noted that climatic changes, including the "El-Niño" phenomenon, were having adverse effects on the food production in several countries, and the meeting recommended regional co-operation as well as the support of the international community in devising appropriate solutions. (*The Ethiopian Herald*, February 22 & 28)

President Clinton's visit to Africa: US President Bill Clinton will be visiting five African countries soon, according to a statement issued by the US Information Service. The countries are Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana and Senegal from March 22 to April 2. The groundbreaking tour will be used to highlight the growing US-Africa trade partnership and efforts to promote human rights and prevent future conflicts. The Clinton administration has been pushing to shift from aid to trade with Africa, and recently won a US \$500 million bill in Congress for the promotion of business with the continent. While in Uganda Presidents Clinton and Museveni will host a summit of 10 regional leaders. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki will be among those leaders invited. The agenda for the summit will include US-African relations and regional security. Later in March, Janet Museveni, President Yoweri Museveni's wife, called upon Kampala's one million residents to launch a huge clean-up operation ahead of President Clinton's visit, including unblocking the city's drains and repainting buildings. (PANA, February 11, USIS; *The Ethiopian Herald*, February 20; AFP, March 13)

67th OAU Ordinary Council of Ministers meets: Salim Ahmed Salim, Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) appealed for closer cooperation between Africa and the international community to resolve conflicts in the continent. Addressing the opening session of the 67th OAU Ordinary Council of Ministers meeting, held in Addis Ababa, Salim said the attainment of peace, security and stability will remain the main preoccupation of the OAU "...as long as our continent is torn apart by devastating conflicts with the immense suffering they inflict upon our people". Salim also announced that a protocol on relations between the OAU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), had been signed marking a clear step in the implementation of the Abuja Treaty to establish the African Economic Community. (*The Ethiopian Herald*, February 28; AFP, February 25)

Boutros-Ghali on Francophonie: Former UN Secretary General and now "Francophonie" Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, at a meeting with Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, said the organisation of French speaking countries was willing to cooperate with bodies such as the Addis Ababa based Organization of African Unity (OAU) and UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to help promote peace and contribute to economic and social development. Seyoum in reply expressed the wish that African Francophonie members "Carry Africa's message to the rest of the world." Boutros-Ghali told reporters the 52 member states of the international organisation of Francophonie wanted to contribute to peace, economic development and cultural diversity. He also added that globalisation of the economy should not be at the expense of Africa. Boutros-Ghali later delivered a key-note address at the opening session of the 67th OAU Council of Ministers in Addis Ababa. (*The Monitor February, 21-22, The Ethiopian Herald February, 27, AFP 23 February*)

Addis Forum on Trade and Investment: From March 8-9 African leaders met with a host of international entrepreneurs, investors and bankers to attend the Addis Ababa Forum on Trade and Investment in Africa. The aim was to promote increased investment in the continent. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, and Joseph Wilson of the US National Security Council were among the keynote speakers opening the conference. The overall objective of the forum was to promote a higher level dialogue between the international investment community and African governments, following the theme of "How to Attract Investment to Africa". (*The Ethiopian Herald February, 20; The Monitor, March 7-8*)

IGAD leaders meet in Djibouti: Regional heads of state met in Djibouti March 15-16 under the umbrella of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in a summit devoted mainly to the civil war in south Sudan and factional strife in Somalia. The role of regional states regarding the proliferation of peace processes in Somalia became the major preoccupation of the gathering. On the last day of the meeting, IGAD foreign ministers issued a statement that indirectly but strongly criticised Egypt's role in Somalia. In a move to provide a focus for peace in the war-torn country, the ministers said IGAD was open to receiving contributions from other countries for the Somalia peace process "on condition that they abstain from launching parallel initiatives". The IGAD foreign ministers also decided to approach the UN Secretary-General and the Security Council to request the setting-up of a "fund for the support of peace in Somalia". Following the final communiqué, Egypt expressed its willingness to cooperate with IGAD to solve the crisis in Somalia. "Egypt is ready for total cooperation and co-ordination with IGAD in order to guarantee the interests of Somalia and preserve the unity of its territory and achieve national reconciliation", Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa told reporters. Meanwhile, Mohammed Ibrahim Egal, President of the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland was in Djibouti to lobby leaders on the issue of recognition, a matter that some regional states (Ethiopia and Eritrea particularly) are beginning to warm to. (*AFP, March 15-17*)

DJIBOUTI

Further government sweeps against rebels: Speaking in Paris, Ahmed Dini Ahmed, leader of the radical faction of the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), has confirmed government forces were leading a major sweep on rebel bases in the north of the country. Another opposition group based in Paris, the Association for Democracy and Development (ADD), has denounced what it described as the "blind and brutal repression" of civilians allegedly carried out by the army deployed for the sweep. Twelve rebels were killed and 29 others injured in an assault early in the month. Djibouti television broadcast footage showing the prisoners and a number of weapons captured in the attack. The French army has denied taking part in the evacuation of soldiers wounded in the action. Later, on February 25, a representative of ICRC went to Djibouti to visit 5 wounded persons belonging to FRUD. The ICRC was alerted to the condition of wounded fighters, who were subsequently transferred from

a military to a civilian hospital, by a communiqué from the Front Uni de l'Opposition Djiboutienne (FUOD). (AFP, February 7 & 19; ION, February 28)

ERITREA

Isaias visits Cairo: Following his four-day visit to Tripoli, which began on January 31, Eritrean president, Isaias Afeworki, stopped in Egypt while on his way home. In Cairo, Isaias met with Egyptian President Mubarak where the two discussed the crisis in Somalia. Isaias stressed that a lasting settlement in Somalia is basically up to the people involved in the country itself. (Press Digest quoting Eritrea Profile of February 7)

Five-year project to recruit/train managers: To address a shortage of middle managers and qualified staff in the ministries and training centres of the country, the Eritrean government has received a credit line of US \$66 million from the International Development Association (World Bank concessional lending affiliate). The five-year project aims at employing 500 international experts to hold directional posts in the ministries and training centres, most of whom are expected to be recruited from the Indian sub-continent. In parallel to this, 500 hundred Eritrean civil servants will be trained abroad to replace the experts once they return home. As well as cutting costs, sending the trainees to countries such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka should diminish the risks of brain-drain, the project planners say. (ION, February, 21)

ETHIOPIA

NGOs deliberate on Code of Conduct: Representatives of local and international NGOs met on 11 February to deliberate on a Code of Conduct which will contribute to a stronger voluntary sector and enhance partnership with Government. The draft code aims to establish minimal core standards for transparency, accountability and administration. In his keynote address to the meeting, Haji Said Ahmed Nur, Secretary of the Legal Affairs Standing Committee of the House of Representatives, cautioned that whatever code was agreed by the NGO community it would not supplant the right of Government to ensure that the work of NGOs is consistent with the laws, objectives and interests of the country. (CRDA Newsletter, February; The Ethiopian Herald, February 12)

UNICEF Executive Director visits Ethiopia: Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of UNICEF, paid an official visit Ethiopia from 7 to 10 February. During her stay, she traveled to UNICEF project sites in Oromiya region and met with senior Government officials. During talks, Bellamy said that UNICEF increase its participation in education, health and other social sectors in Ethiopia over the coming programme cycle, seeking especially to make a tangible contribution to the training of manpower. Ethiopia ranks next to India and Bangladesh as the greatest beneficiary of UNICEF assistance. (The Ethiopian Herald, February 10, 10, 11 & 22)

Textile factory for Gondar: A delegation from the Italian textile enterprise MCM announced the forthcoming construction of a textile factory in the zone of Gondar (Amhara Regional State), costing US \$30 million. Like a number of investment projects in Ethiopia, the MCM project will be carried through in partnership with an Ethiopian para-governmental company. A joint venture will be formed with the Amhara regional state organisation for rehabilitation and development "Endeavour", managed by ex-finance minister Wondwossen Kebede. Endeavour is also a shareholder of Wegagen Bank Share Company. The new plant is expected to process up to 84,000 tons per year, acting as an incentive to the Amhara government in Bahir Dar to raise cotton production in the region from the present level of around 30,000 tons. (ION, February 14)

Ethiopia rescinds visa rule for foreign journalists: On February 20, the Information Minister, Wolde Michael Chamo, announced in a statement faxed to the Foreign Correspondents Association of East Africa (FCA) that the Ethiopian government had reversed the requirement that all foreign journalists apply for visas 15 days before coming to visit the country. The

restriction created a furore when first announced on January 22. The new rules also required journalists to specify in advance the purpose and itinerary of their visit and to state which government officials they wished to meet. The FCA, which represents 200 journalists based in Nairobi and elsewhere in the region, welcomed the rescinding of the rule. (*Addis Tribune February, 20; The Monitor, February, 24*)

ONLF/ESDL merger on-track: The first phase of the long-awaited merger between the Ethiopian Somali Democratic League (ESDL) and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) has been completed according to Government officials close to the process. The efforts by the two parties to set up a stable administration for the Somali region has fared well and appears to have been achieved with the full approval of the regional council based in Jigjiga, the administrative capital of the Somali region. Talks concerning the merger have been off and on again for more than two years with transport and telecommunications minister, Abdul Majiid, playing a crucial role as interlocutor between the various parties. (*The Ethiopian Herald, February 18 and other sources*)

Chat trade: Finance officials in the Ethiopian Somali National Regional State say close to 80 tons of chat (*qaat*), a mildly narcotic plant, is illegally shipped out to neighbouring Somalia daily. The two border towns of Teferi Ber and Hartisheik (which are also home to thousands of refugees from Somaliland) also serve as jumping-off points for illegally exported cattle, vegetables and fruits. Despite the almost 2,000 kilometer long border with Kenya, Somalia and Djibouti, the Somali region has only two functioning customs checkpoints, making the collection of revenue and control of the contraband trade almost impossible. (*Ethiopian Herald, February 18*)

Ethiopia signs grant agreements with Germany and Sweden: A US \$35.2 million agreement has been signed between Ethiopia and Germany at the Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation (MeDAC). The grant will be used for the implementation of the Addis-Gideon road rehabilitation and construction project. In a similar development, a US \$6.3 million grant agreement has been signed between the Ethiopian government and Sweden. The grant will be used to support the Ethiopian government's food security policy in general and carry out a project to locally procure food grain and to implement employment generating schemes in particular. The agreement is also expected to encourage Ethiopian farmers to produce more food grains in addition to promoting the development of the local market economy. (*The Ethiopian Herald, February 20*)

Sound measures taken to ensure food self-sufficiency and food security: The President of Ethiopia, Negasso Gidada, said in a public statement on February 19 that Ethiopia has taken a series of measures designed to ensure food self-sufficiency and food security at the national level. He added that the country has devised an economic policy based on "Agricultural Development-led Industrialisation Strategy". The bedrock of this strategy is achieving accelerated growth in the agricultural sector and enhancing productivity in small holdings and encouraging large-scale farms where suitable. In the implementation of this strategy, as a result, agricultural production of small holder farmers participating in the packages has increased two-to-three fold compared with those using traditional farming practices. Meanwhile, the head of economic affairs in the Prime Minister's office has said the Ethiopian agricultural extension programme should be expanded with respect to the government's strategy for export promotion. He said a bridge has been created between government and exporters to facilitate problems associated with bank credit, information flow, and skilled labour and land availability. (*The Ethiopian Herald, February 20; Addis Tribune, February 20*)

Director General of FAO in Addis Ababa: Jacques Diouf, Director General of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation said during talks with Ethiopian President, Negasso Gidada, that FAO was taking vital steps to help Ethiopia realise its goal of food security for all. He added FAO has helped design food security strategies for 150 countries and has started a special food self-sufficiency and production programme in 30 food deficient countries. Diouf also said that the African continent needs to enhance its water control systems if it is to be self-sufficient in food grain production, arguing that in countries like Ethiopia the construction of small scale irrigation

schemes and micro-dams will make an important contribution to long-term food security. Diouf was in Addis Ababa to attend FAO's 20th regional ministerial conference for Africa which opened in the capital on February 19. The main issues discussed at the meeting were food production, food security and poverty alleviation. Describing the situation in Ethiopia, the Minister of Agriculture, Seifu Ketema, said food production grew at a very low rate of 0.5 percent per annum while population grew at high rate of 3 percent. According to a 1990 IGAD study about 70.6 percent (38 million) of the rural population are food insecure while 39 percent of the urban population were below 2200 kilo calories per day per person. Average land holdings per household have declined between 1988/89 from 1.27 to 0.78 hectares. (*Ethiopian Herald*, February 18-28; *Addis Tribune*, February 20)

WFP Executive Director visits Ethiopia: The Executive Director of the UN World Food Program, Catherine Bertini, arrived in Ethiopia on February 13 for a one-week official visit. She toured several WFP-assisted projects throughout the country and held talks with the Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, and Simon Mechale, Commissioner of the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC). Bertini in her meeting with Prime Minister Meles said that WFP was committed to the success of Ethiopia's food security programme. She added that WFP plans to expand the supply of food to students coming from low-income families. Prime Minister Meles on his part said although WFP's initiative to supply food to students in some states was acceptable in principle, WFP should redirect much of its attention to regions reeling under poverty. Bertini said that WFP will go on helping famine victims in several regions of Ethiopia and will be supporting the total involvement of women in the country's socio-economic endeavours. Ethiopia is one of the four leading beneficiaries of WFP assistance globally, having received food and other assistance through WFP worth more than one billion US dollars in the past few years. (*The Ethiopian Herald*: February, 20 & 22; *AFP*: February 20)

Road construction agreements signed: A 6.3 million Birr (approximately \$925,000) agreement has been signed between the Transport and Construction Design Enterprise (TCDE) and the Federal Government and the Oromiya State Rural Road Executive enabling it to provide engineering services to eight road projects. 4.3 million birr will be utilised for maintenance works on Jimma-Mizan, Bedelle, Metu, Awassa-Agremariam asphalt roads as well as the Wolkite-Hossana gravel road. The remaining 2 million birr will be used for the construction of a new gravel road in East and West Wollega, Illubabor and East Hararghe zones. (*The Ethiopian Herald*, February 24)

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata in Addis Ababa: After visiting eight African countries Sadako Ogata arrived in Ethiopia on February 22 to meet the Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin, OAU Secretary-General and UNECA Executive Secretary. In her meeting with the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, they spoke about repatriation of 24,000 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan scheduled to end in May this year. Meanwhile, Sadako and OAU Secretary-General, Salim A. Salim, agreed to convene a ministerial conference to examine the implementation of humanitarian laws. The conference, to be hosted by President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, is expected to deal with various issues including refugee protection, security, asylum, repatriation and rehabilitation. (*The Ethiopian Herald*, February 22; *The Monitor*, February 26)

Sheik al-Moudin oversees opening of Sheraton Hotel: On February 28 Ethiopia's latest and grandest hotel was inaugurated in the presence of some 5,000 guests, including government officials, members of diplomatic corps and international organisations. Sheik Mohammed al-moudin, who is part-Ethiopian and owns the hotel and the construction company that built it, said that the hotel would figure among the best in the world. The ITT Sheraton Addis Ababa has 295 rooms, 33 suites, 10 self-contained villas, and a business center. Estimates of the total cost of building the hotel range from US \$143 million to \$400 million. The opening extravaganza was attended by 4,000 guests who dined on caviar and were entertained by singer Dee Dee Bridgewater and the 1970's chart-topping band Kool and the Gang, both specially flown-in from the USA with their equipment for the occasion. The evening was topped-off with a spectacular display of fireworks. Billed as one of the top ten hotels in the world, Ethiopian Trade and Tourism

Minister Kassahun Ayle commented that the opening marked "a new start" for the capital, and how with additional foreign investment Addis Ababa could lift its profile as an international tourist destination. (AFP, March 1; The Monitor, March, 5; other sources)

SOMALIA

Re-activated Islamic court bans arms in North Moqdishu: Sheik Musa Agaweine, chairman of North Moqdishu's re-activated Islamic courts, banned all technicals and the carrying of arms by individuals in areas under its jurisdiction, an order that would be enforced by Sharia court militiamen. North Moqdishu strongman, Ali Mahdi Mohammed, said that differences between the courts and politicians "have been sorted out and no one can sabotage our harmonious relationship." The Islamic courts were first established in 1994 but lost power in October 1996, after its former powerful chairman clashed with Ali Mahdi. (AFP, February 3)

USAID/UNICEF bring water to Hargeisa: The water system for Hargeisa, capital of "Somaliland", was largely destroyed in the fighting of 1988-91. Originally installed by the Chinese government in the 1970's and 1980's at a cost of US \$80 million, the system could pump and deliver up to 60,000 litres an hour. Rehabilitation of the system began in 1991 at a cost of US \$1 million. With funds provided by USAID and technical works undertaken by UNICEF the system was again supplying limited clean water to several thousands of people by 1994. Six wells have been rehabilitated and pumps and turbines installed to deliver the water to five public water points on a north-south line through the city. Much of the water is bought by donkey-cart owners or tanker operators for retailing throughout the city. At a cost of US \$300,000 a further 20 water points are now under construction with the expectation that when completed the entire population, estimated to be presently half the pre-war figure of 600,000, will have access to clean water. (The Reporter/UNICEF, February 4)

Somaliland accuses Egypt, looks for partial recognition: The government of Egypt has denied accusations by the president of "Somaliland", Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, that Cairo is intending to arm southern factions planning to undertake military operations against the break-away republic. Egal has also criticised Egypt's sponsorship of the Cairo peace talks, accusing the Egyptian Government of interference in Somalia's internal affairs. Egal has recently returned from a diplomatic tour that took him to Ethiopia, Italy and France. While in Paris he told reporters "We still want full international recognition (of Somaliland) but we will be content provisionally with recognised autonomy similar to the Palestinian Authority". While in Italy, the Somaliland delegations had lively discussions with the Italian foreign minister, Rino Serri, and Italy's representative in Moqdishu, Giuseppe Cassini, regarding the Cairo accord and Baidoa reconciliation conference in which Somaliland refuses to participate. According to a report in the Indian Ocean Newsletter, Cassini argued strongly for Somaliland's support of both the Sodere and Cairo processes. It is now expected that he will be re-assigned to Beirut and the Italians have since indicated that they would be willing to back a proposal with the European Union for "semi-diplomatic recognition". Meanwhile, Egal is likely to be granted "observer" status with both the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and United Nations. Somaliland unilaterally declared independence following the overthrow of Siad Barre in 1991. (AFP, February 6 & 12; ION, February 14)

Cholera update: WHO reported the number of cholera cases in southern Somalia had risen to over 5,000 by the first week of February with 224 deaths (with a fatality rate of around 4 percent). Though most cases are from Moqdishu, cholera has also been reported from Baidoa, Belet Weyne and Luuq. By the end of the month the total number of recorded cases had risen to 6,557 with 269 deaths and new reports of cases in Kismayo and Garbahare. By this time, however, there were indications that the rate of infection was generally beginning to decline. In the meantime, WHO have confirmed that all human blood samples from Erigavo in the northeast taken earlier in January have tested negative for Rift Valley Fever (RVF) and the joint UN team investigating reports of haemorrhagic infections in Somalia have reported that conditions for the breeding of *aedes* mosquitoes (the prime vector implicated in the

transmission of RVF) in the northeast are not favourable. (UNCT Humanitarian Update, February 10 & 16, March 3)

WFP warn of further heavy rain: The WFP said further heavy rain expected locally and in the Ethiopian highlands in March could severely set back the little progress some farmers have made in the areas where flood waters have receded and planting had begun. A spokesperson for WFP warned that if there is another storm surge, "with rivers already full, embankments broken and surrounding ground saturated, there will be no outlet for the extra rain water and not enough dry areas available for cultivation". The agency said that thousands of farmers have already lost most of their January harvest and some 200,000 people in the riverine areas could be devastated by further flooding. Since the beginning of the emergency operation last November, WFP has delivered some 5,377 tons of food aid to 450,000 people in Somalia's flood-affected areas. (AFP, February 14; WFP, February 16)

Taiwanese fishing captain faces Islamic court: The prosecutor in an Islamic court in north-eastern Somalia has demanded that the captain of a Taiwanese trawler accused of poaching in Somali waters have his right hand and left foot amputated. He also demanded that the vessel's 27 crewmen each pay a fine of US \$10,000. The court is also pursuing charges against the Shu Hen Bin fishing company, said to own the vessel impounded and more than three other trawlers that escaped. The district commissioner for the local ruling Somali Salvation Democratic Front, Abdi Said Al-Surian, said that he hoped that the court would strictly apply the full force of the law. (AFP, February 16)

Somalis show solidarity with Iraq: A big demonstration was organized in Mogdishu by the radical Moslem group Al-Itihad Al-Islam, to denounce the United States and show their support for Iraq. Most of the demonstrators were supporters of south Mogdishu warlord Hussein Aideed, an American citizen and former US marine reservist corporal. The demonstrators, who included several well-known Islamic clergymen, set the American flag and portraits of US President Bill Clinton on fire as they shouted anti-US slogans. (AFP, February 20)

Baidoa conference postponed indefinitely: Hopes for a quick peace in Somalia were dashed with the announcement from Mogdishu that the long-awaited national reconciliation conference in the southern town of Baidoa had again been postponed "for logistical reasons". First slated for February 15 and then postponed to March 31. No new date has yet been set following the latest postponement. Baidoa, situated 250 km north-west of Mogdishu, had been identified as the location for the conference in the December Cairo Agreement. Some observers see the cancellation as a serious setback to the Somali peace process; for others, however, the Baidoa conference is considered as a mechanism solely for the reconciliation of the Hawiye clan and the establishment of their economic and political hegemony. The Cairo Agreement has had the effect of bringing together clans in the Darod family (Harti, Majerteine, Marehan and Ogaden) who closed ranks against the Hawiye "allies" Osman Ato, Ali Mahdi and Hussein Aideed. Moreover, Baidoa has been the scene of violent armed fighting, with supporters of Aideed continuing to occupy the town in contravention to calls to withdraw ahead of the conference. Aideed pointed out that the Cairo accord did not ask factions to stop claiming to be a government before a new national government is formed at the national peace conference. Aideed pledged to withdraw his forces from Baidoa 10 days before the conference but said he was waiting for a "national co-ordination team" to organize the terms of the pullout. Also, on February 15 and 16 in Mogdishu, serious disputes broke out between Saleban and Ayr factions of Ali Mahdi's Habr Gediir sub-clan leading to the death of twelve people. Meanwhile, the Arab League has recalled its special envoy to Somalia, Samir Husni, for consultations over the political setbacks delaying the Baidoa conference. He will also explain the position of the self-declared "Republic of Somaliland" which has refused to take part in the conference but has said it will open talks when the south has a viable government. According to Husni, Arab League member states should be ready to come to the rescue of the conference if the real problem is "logistics" as some factions have consistently claimed. (ION, February 21 and 28; AFP February 12, 18-23 and 25; Economist, February 14)

Rahanwein continue to fight: Fighting between the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) and forces loyal to Hussein Aideed on and about February 25 left 37 people dead and 54 wounded. The clashes took place in Baidoa and Xudur, close to the Ethiopian border. A spokesman said that the RRA is now in full control of Xudur after several months of sporadic fighting. The RRA appeared to have fared less well in Baidoa where their militiamen were forced to withdraw to a position 5 kilometers south of the town after several hours of skirmishes. Aideed has pledged to withdraw his forces from the town 10 days before the planned national reconciliation conference but the Rahanwein have no faith in this claim. The RRA have stated repeatedly it would boycott the conference, vowing to win back the town from Aideed by force. (AFP, February 25)

SUDAN

Sudan-Eritrea border: According to the Akhbar al Youm newspaper, the authorities in the eastern state of Kassala are moving to firmly close the border with Eritrea to prevent infiltration by anti-government forces and the planting of mines on the main roads. It was earlier reported that Sudanese and Eritrean forces were in positions just 800 metres apart across the common border. The move follows reports at the beginning of the month of an escalation of tension and fighting along the border and claims from Khartoum that Eritrea was directly backing Sudanese rebels in the north. (AFP, February 2 & 9)

Vice President Saleh killed in air crash: An Antonov AN-26 aircraft crashed into the Sobat river at Nasir, in Sudan's Upper Nile Province, on February 12 as the pilot attempted to land. The authorities later confirmed that 26 of the 57 persons aboard had died. Among them First Vice President General Al Zubair Mohammed Saleh and many other government officials and notables. Though presented by the government as an accident, responsibility for the crash was initially claimed by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), a statement that was later withdrawn. An official television report stated that the accident was caused by bad weather and poor visibility. The plane skidded off the runway before plunging into the Sobat river. Most of those who died drowned while trying to escape the aircraft. The delegation had been on their way to Wau to meet with military officials and to confirm that the town was once again fully under government control. Five days after the crash, President Omar el-Beshir named Sudan's former foreign minister, Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, as the new first vice president. (ION, February 21; AFP, February 12, 13 & 17)

Iraq-Sudan: According to a draft US congressional report leaked to US-based *News and World Report* magazine, Iraq has smuggled weapons of mass destruction to Sudan and Libya for safekeeping. The Iraqi Justice Minister, Shebib al-Maliky, who was visiting Sudan as part of a tour to brief Arab countries on the stand-off between Iraq and UN weapons inspectors has denied the accusation saying that the country has just one working port which is constantly monitored by the international community. "Every ship going out of that port is halted several times for thorough inspection, we are blocked from all directions" Maliky told a press conference in Khartoum. (AFP, February 15)

German junior foreign minister meets el-Beshir: After briefly meeting representatives of the Sudanese opposition in Cairo, German junior foreign minister Helmut Schaefer continued to Khartoum for the first official German visit to Sudan in 10 years. On February 17, Schaefer met with President el-Beshir and discussed developments in the political and peace processes in Sudan. Schaefer said he was visiting also in the context of missions by officials and parliamentarians from the European Union. Germany has made the resumption of its development aid to Sudan conditional on the government's efforts to find a peaceful solution to the war in the south and an "internal opening" in the north where political parties are banned. In his earlier meeting with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Cairo and, later, with representatives of the SPLA in Nairobi, Schaefer told reporters that he wanted to have "his own impression of what was happening". Sudanese government leaders told Schaefer that the proposed new constitution would guarantee democracy, freedom of political association and individual liberties, but in the context of a federal government system. (AFP, February 17-19 and 20)

Guidelines for new constitution endorsed: Sudan's National Congress, the country's only officially recognised political organisation, has endorsed the guidelines established for a draft constitution. The guidelines were approved after a debate where most delegates said they opposed a return of multi-party politics, although the draft reportedly provides for freedom of association. In presenting the guidelines, national assembly speaker, Hassan al-Turabi, declared there would be "no return to partisanship and sectarianism" adding that the new constitution would take effect on June 30 following endorsement by the national assembly and in a referendum. Later, officials said the government would be seeking the support of the Cairo-based opposition for the draft constitution. Sudan's ambassador to Egypt, Ahmad Abdel Halim, said "the president welcomes participation by all opponents in finalising the draft constitution". (AFP, February 18 & 22)

Food aid in southern Sudan: On February 25, the UN World Food Programme confirmed it had resumed airdrops of food to thousands of starving people in the state of Bahr el-Ghazal after a 21-day suspension of flights by the government in Khartoum. The government authorised aid agencies to fly to six locations in the state under the auspices of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS). The flight ban was imposed by Khartoum after fighting escalated between Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) rebels and government troops around the strategically important town of Wau, capital of Bahr el-Ghazal state. Earlier in the month, the New York based UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs said that the ban was putting the lives of thousands of vulnerable civilians at risk, many of which had been displaced by the fighting and forced to walk several days without food and with little water. Bahr el-Ghazal was said to be one of the most deprived areas in South Sudan and already experiencing a severe food deficit even before the current crisis. With the lifting of the ban, WFP confirmed flights would be scheduled to deliver food stockpiled in the northern Kenyan town of Lokichokio to Akuem, Adet, Ajiep, Pakor, Wau and Arwil, where about 60,000 people are facing starvation. Meanwhile, for the first time in many months a WFP truck convoy from neighbouring Uganda successfully delivered 120 tons of sorghum to the northern part of Bahr el-Ghazal, enough to feed 50,000 people. Relief agencies estimate that four million people straddling the border between northern Kenya and southern Sudan will need emergency food assistance and have appealed for US \$109 million for the purpose. (AFP, February 22 and 26; The Ethiopian Herald, February 28; The Reporter, February 25; IRIN Update, February 19)

Khartoum invites new Kenyan foreign minister for talks: The Sudanese government says it has invited new Kenyan Foreign Minister Bonaya Godana to visit ahead of a planned new round of talks between the government and southern rebels to be held in Kenya in April. Kenya currently presides over the sub-regional body, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which is sponsoring peace negotiations between the Sudanese government and rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The IGAD mediation committee includes Ethiopia, Eritrea and Uganda. (AFP, February 25; IRIN Update, February 26)

KENYA

Moi blames opposition for violence: Kenyan President, Daniel arap Moi, issued a strong statement blaming opposition groups for inciting three weeks of violence in Rift Valley province which led to the deaths of more than a hundred people since January 11. Moi singled out Democratic Party leader, Mwai Kibaki, of inciting his (Kikuyu) community to violence. Moi contradicted earlier police reports by saying the unrest was politically motivated and not the result of ethnic tensions. In Laikipia, where the violence began, church leaders and community groups claim to have uncovered evidence of a backlash against the Kikuyu who are largely seen by the Kalenjin as having voted against Moi, himself a Kalenjin, in the December presidential poll. Meanwhile, the opening of Kenya's new parliament was delayed when opposition members staged a noisy protest against what they see as government complicity in the violence against the Kikuyu. The December elections left KANU with a four-seat majority in the 222-seat assembly and returned Moi for a fifth term as president. In responding to critics who said he was

not doing enough to contain the unrest, Moi toured the worst affected areas in Nakuru district on February 11 while the Government announced the establishment of a commission of enquiry into the troubles. "No one has a right to the life of another person. Anyone found breaking the law must be apprehended and charged in court", Moi said adding that he would "saturate" the area with security personnel to stamp out the violence. In another development, Kenya's central bank governor said that the Rift Valley violence was scaring potential foreign investors and inflicting further damage on the economy. (*Reuters, February 2; Guardian Weekly, February 4: The Monitor, February 5; PANA, February 12*)

Increase in Malaria: The recent exceptionally wet weather, blamed on the El Niño phenomenon, has led to a dramatic increase in malaria cases, according to Kenya's ministry of health. In a statement issued on February 23, the Minister of Health, Jackson Kalweo, acknowledged 35,000 people had contracted the disease in several parts of the country, the worst affected districts being Nyanza, Wajir, Garissa, Mandera, Marsabit, Samburu, Lamu and Tana river as well as the western and north eastern provinces. The outbreak in Wajir, northeastern Kenya, is claimed to have killed more than 1,500 in just two weeks. Due to the increase in resistance to chloroquine, the health ministry is using sulphur-based drugs as the first-line treatment of cases. Supplies are being airlifted to the worst-affected districts by the airforce together with military medical teams. According to the Government's National Disaster Operational Centre in Nairobi, mobility of the medical teams is essential to combat the epidemic which is hitting nomadic populations especially in the inaccessible and insecure north-eastern province adjacent to Somalia and Ethiopia. (*The Monitor, February 12-19 & 26; PANA, Reuters, February 12*)

DDT threatens wildlife reserve: Samples from Lake Nakuru, in the Rift Valley, have shown the presence of dichlorodiphenyl trichloroethane, a toxic insecticide known as DDT which was banned by the Government a decade ago. Conservationist say the survival of the lake, an important wildlife reserve and tourist attraction, is being threatened by the encroachment of farmers who use chemical fertilisers and pesticides that finally end up in the lake which has no outlet. (*The Monitor/PANA, February 17*)

Anti-corruption measures: The governor of the Kenyan Central Bank has called upon employer federations to take concrete steps against corruption, asking them to adopt a code of conduct against corruption which binds all members. This anti-corruption initiative came on the eve of World Bank and International Monetary Fund missions to Nairobi. A US dollar 205 million three-year aid package under the IMF enhanced structural adjustment facility remains suspended since last July because the organisation is not fully satisfied about anti-corruption measures. "They have made major progress in all four areas (of governance), but none has been dealt with 100 percent" said Reimer Carstens, the IMF resident representative in Kenya. The government has set up an anti-corruption authority, strengthened management at the Kenya Revenue Authority, renegotiated power supply contracts and established an independent regulator for the energy sector but critics say these efforts are inadequately financed and do not go far enough. (*Reuters, February 19; Indian Ocean Newsletter, February 21*)

Who will be Vice President?: The Indian Ocean Newsletter argues that the number two job in the Kenyan government could be taken by agriculture minister Musalia Mudavadi, who is believed to be backed by a Kalenjin group close to Mark arap Too (chairman of Lonrho East Africa and unofficial adviser to arap Moi), and Joshua Kulei (a businessman close to Phillip Moi, one of arap Moi's sons). After the bitterly fought and narrowly-won elections in December, the group seems to be developing a different strategy to defend its political and economic interests in the run-up to the 2002 poll when a successor to Moi will be chosen. It could be betting on a presidential candidate who is neither a Kikuyu nor a Kalenjin but who would get the backing of Kenya African National Union (KANU, the ruling party). Other favoured candidates are ex-vice president, George Saitoti, and Simeon Nyachae, a senior civil servant who came to politics late and who presently holds the finance portfolio. Mudavadi is seen as holding several strong cards: he has credibility among international diplomats and in business circles, he is a Luyia, and he is related to Moi's family. (*ION, February 21*)

Foreign minister on first overseas tour: Kenya's new minister for foreign affairs and international development, Bonaya Adhi Godana, will be touring a number of European countries from March 2 to 4. In London, he plans to meet with Robin Cook, his opposite number in the British Government, and Clare Short, Minister for Overseas Development. From there he will be going to France, Germany and Belgium. For Godana this is a "meet me" tour where he shall have the opportunity to outline his country's political scenery following the general election, and the outlook for parliamentary debate on a possible constitutional amendment, a development which might lead to creating a post for a prime minister. (ION, February 28)

UGANDA

War and children: UNICEF in a statement have said that up to 10,000 children and teenagers have been kidnapped by guerrillas operating in northern Uganda, 2,600 of whom were abducted in the past two years and taken to southern Sudan where they were used to fight on the military frontlines or forced to become sex slaves. The children are usually taken from their home, school or while playing in the open with friends. Anupama Rao Singh, the UN Children's Fund representative in Uganda, said that, on average, up to three children are kidnapped every day. In the district of Gulu alone, 12 children have been abducted since January 12. In an attempt to prevent captive children from being taken into southern Sudan, the Ugandan government has recently increased the number of troops deployed to the border region and stepped-up armed patrols. (AFP, February 10 & 12; UNICEF)

Rebel activity stepped-up: Early in the month, rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) killed eight people in an ambush 22 kilometers west of the main northern town of Gulu. Another rebel group, the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) have stepped up attacks on villages in the western district of Bunyangabo since the Ugandan army and troops from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) joined forces in an operation against them. In an attack towards the end of the month the ADF killed 11 villagers five of whom were found beheaded. In a separate incident, the ADF succeeded in abducting 30 schoolgirls from a boarding school in Kabarole district - a practice normally associated with the LRA (see "War and children" below). On February 25 a force of some 150 rebels from the LRA attacked the strategically sensitive northern town of Kitgum. There were no deaths and observers have suggested this was a diversionary move to draw government forces into the town while the main group of rebels crossed back to Sudan with a number of abductees. Following the attack, flights to Kitgum in northern Uganda were temporarily suspended on the orders of the military. Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF), the only aircraft operator to fly regularly to the region, confirmed that the ban was due to "insecurity". (AFP, February, 9, 12 & 25; UN-IRIN Update, February 25)

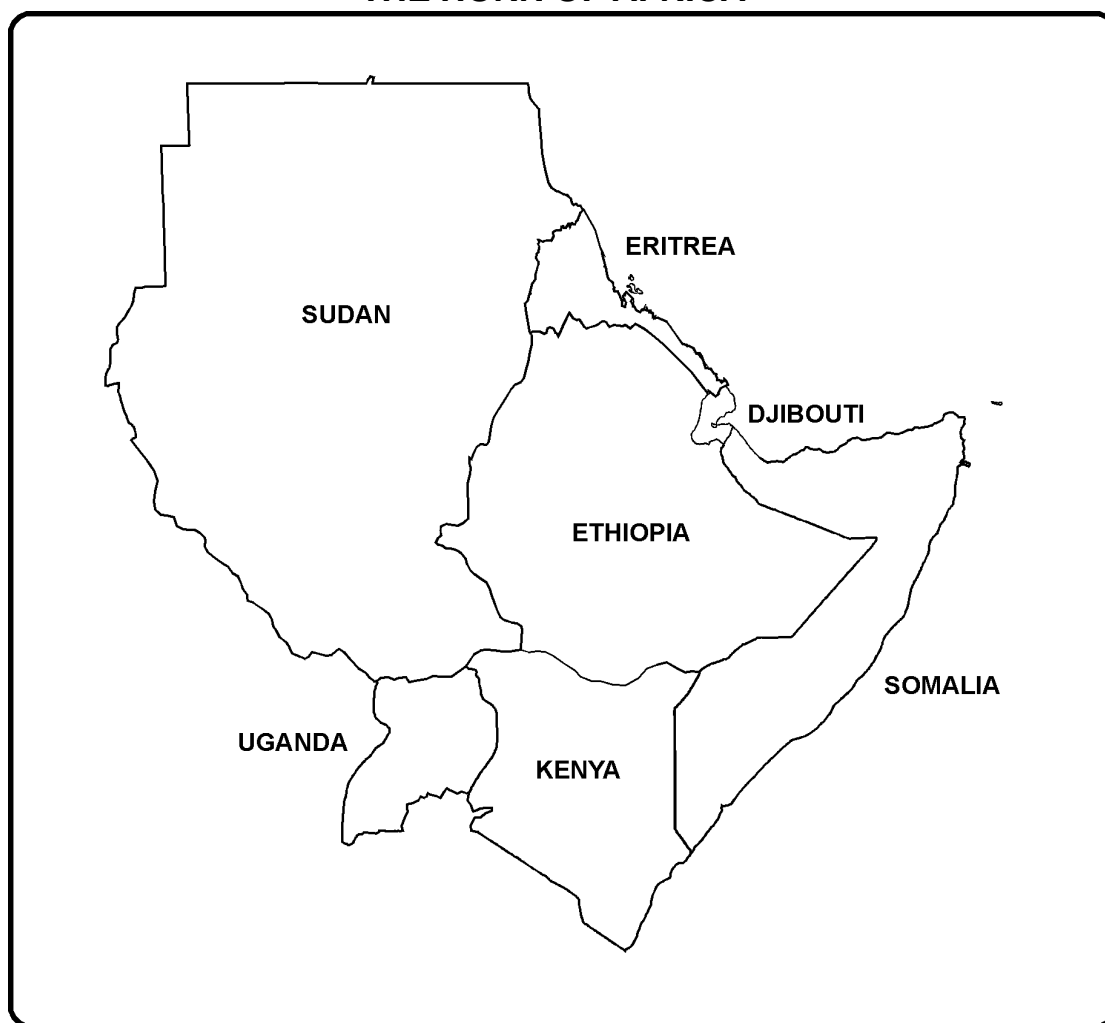
Increased revenues from power exports: The Ugandan Electricity Board (UEB) has said the country earned US \$10 million in revenue from power it sold to neighbouring Kenya in 1997, up from the \$2.1 million earned in the previous year. Last year Museveni insisted that the decades-old agreement under which Uganda sold hydro-electric power to Kenya be rescinded. This agreement had been made by the British colonial authorities to run for 90 years at a fixed tariff, automatically making Uganda the loser. With the new agreement in place, the Ugandan government plans to increase exports and include other neighbouring countries once extension work is completed on the Owen Falls dam. Another hydro-electric plant is due to be constructed at the popular tourist attraction of the Bujagali Falls at a cost of about US \$500 million. Four similar projects are also planned for various locations on the Nile river. (AFP, February 18)

UNHCR chief visits: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, visited Uganda as part of a three-week, nine-nation African tour. She met with President Museveni, described as a "model" in his attitude to refugees, and also traveled to the Oruchinga settlement camp in the western district of Mbarara. (AFP, February 18)

Malaria drugs in short supply: The "New Vision" newspaper reported that in the east and west of Uganda stocks of anti-malaria drugs are in short supply. Teams carrying supplies from Kampala have been sent to the affected districts. Meanwhile, the director of Uganda's blood transfusion services has said epidemics induced by the recent heavy rains and localised flooding had trebled national demand for blood. (*UN-IRIN Update, February 25*)

Museveni hosts regional summit: On February 21 during a regional summit for heads of states organised in Kampala, President Museveni acted to prevent sanctions against Burundi from being lifted. According to sources close to the summit, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Zambia, Zimbabwe and the OAU all came out during the meeting in favour of lifting the sanctions, imposed after the 1996 coup d'état in Bujambura. But the common front put up by Tanzania and Uganda successfully forced through an extension ("unanimously" according to the final communiqué). (*ION, February 28*)

THE HORN OF AFRICA



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SOURCES:

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