

## HORN OF AFRICA The Monthly Review

---

**This update covers the period February - March 1999**

### REGIONAL ISSUES

#### *Update on the Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict.*

On January 26, the government of Eritrea formally received a response from the OAU on the clarifications it was seeking regarding the framework agreement. This was followed shortly after by the adoption of a new resolution (1226) by the UN Security Council pressing Ethiopia and Eritrea to end their border dispute, and repeating its backing for the OAU-led peace process which it called the "best hope for peace." In the resolution, the 15-member Council also threw its support behind a mission to the Horn of Africa by UN special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun.

However, in the absence of any indication from the Eritrean government that it was satisfied with the clarifications, by the beginning of February, fears were growing that hostilities would again break out along the border. In an interview with Agence France Presse, on February 2, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi warned that warfare between the two countries could resume "any day" unless Eritrea indicated its full acceptance of the OAU proposal. Meanwhile, in a press conference given in Stockholm, the Eritrean Foreign Minister, Haile Woldensae, said in regard to increasing tension along the common border, "We will never be the first to shoot," adding, "It is only Ethiopia which is beating the war drums." Woldensae also said that Ethiopia's demand for a unilateral Eritrean withdrawal from the disputed territories "has become the stumbling block to any initiative."

Then, on February 4, Ethiopia reported heavy and prolonged shelling of its positions along the Badme-Shiraro front. The following day Ethiopia accused Eritrea of launching an aerial attack on fuel storage facilities close to the northern town of Adigrat, a claim later rejected as "a complete fabrication" by Eritrea. Amidst these events, UN Secretary-General's special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun arrived in Addis Ababa for meetings with the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Seyoum Mesfin and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. Sahnoun had already spent some days in Asmara where he met with the Eritrean leadership. Despite hopes that Sahnoun's presence in the region might create space for further diplomatic efforts to avert a resumption of the conflict, on February 6 both sides confirmed the start of heavy ground fighting along the Badme-Shiraro front. According to the Ethiopian spokesperson, Eritrean forces launched the attack, but this was denied by Eritrea which said that Ethiopia had launched a "large-scale" attack against Eritrean positions in the area. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called upon both Ethiopia and Eritrea to stop fighting immediately, regardless of who initiated the latest attacks, saying, "The alternative, continued fighting, is completely unacceptable to the international community." Despite this and other international calls for an end to the hostilities, the clashes continued for at least another two days with fighting spreading to the central front around Tsorona and Zelambessa.

During the latter part of this phase of the fighting, the Ethiopian government confirmed the use of its air force saying in a statement that its fighter-bombers were supporting "extensive counter-offensives" around Badme and Tsorona. The statement was the first indication that Ethiopia was undertaking air strikes, and gave rise to claims that it was acting in violation of the US-brokered moratorium. Media reporting on the fighting was marked by claims and counter-claims on both sides, leaving the actual course of events obscure. Ethiopia said that despite heavy counter-attacks from the Eritrean side, it had retained possession of the stronghold of Geza Gerlase on the Badme front gained during the first day's fighting. Eritrea, meanwhile, said that an Ethiopian offensive along the Tsorona front had been beaten back with heavy losses.

After three or four days of heavy fighting, an uneasy stand-off appeared to return to the border although there were reports of frequent exchanges of artillery fire. During this lull, the Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin told reporters that there was "no question" of a ceasefire unless Eritrea pulled back from the disputed Badme region. "Ethiopia has no option but to fight the aggressor army, to root it out of our own territory, and Ethiopia has full confidence that it has the capacity and capability to achieve this objective," he said. Mesfin urged the international community to put pressure on Eritrea to accept the OAU's proposals. Meanwhile, following a briefing on the situation given by UN special envoy Mohamed Sahnoun the Security Council adopted a new resolution (1227) condemning "the recourse to the use of force by Ethiopia and Eritrea" and demanding "an immediate halt to the hostilities, in particular the use of air strikes." The resolution also called for a voluntary end to all sales of arms and munitions to both countries. The session was attended by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who told council members that although the United Nations was among the mediators to the conflict, the OAU should continue to take the lead in seeking a negotiated settlement to the dispute.

February 14 marked the beginning of a week characterized by a number of incidents around the eastern Bure front, close to the Eritrean Red Sea port of Assab. Although ground troops were not involved in any major action at this point, Ethiopian aircraft were used to bombard the Eritrean lines, the airport to the north of the port and a military supply depot at Harsilay, some 20 kilometers from Assab. During this period, Eritrea shot down a helicopter gunship close to the border, while Ethiopia claimed success in its bombing raids, including the destruction of a water reservoir supplying Assab and the surrounding area.

Representatives of the EU arrived in Addis Ababa on February 18 in a bid to broker a peaceful settlement to the border war. The delegation, led by German Deputy Foreign Minister Ludger Volmer, also included Austrian Secretary of State to the Foreign Ministry Benita Ferrero-Wadmer and Finland's Ambassador to Egypt Aapo Polho. They held talks with OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim and senior members of the Ethiopian government before travelling on to Asmara. The EU said the delegates would "support the OAU mediation and discuss the strategy to implement OAU Framework Agreement" as well as press for a halt in fighting. However, following discussions in Asmara, the team declared they were unable to secure an agreement for an immediate ceasefire. Ludger Volmer told a news conference, "Both sides assured us that they would be ready to agree to declare a ceasefire, but at the same time both declared that they saw themselves in a position of defending themselves."

On February 22, the United States issued a statement saying it deeply regretted the use of air power by Ethiopia in the conflict. "We urge (Ethiopia) to resume the (air power) moratorium immediately (and) also urge the Eritrean authorities to continue to uphold their commitment to the terms of the moratorium." The statement was dismissed by the Ethiopian government as being "out of sync with... reality," adding, "Rather than calling for the cessation of air power, the US and the international community at large should be calling for the cessation of the war. If outside observers truly want the fighting to cease, they should be applying all possible pressure to Eritrea to accept and implement the OAU Framework Agreement for a peaceful resolution to the conflict,"

Meanwhile, the OAU were finalizing arrangements to send a mediation committee to Asmara comprising the ambassadors to the OAU from Burkina Faso, Djibouti and Zimbabwe. The committee was tasked with seeking an "end to the war, commitment to the peace process as embodied in the OAU peace proposals (and a) response to the clarifications." The departure of the team, however, was delayed when Asmara objected to the presence of the Djiboutian emissary and then postponed in the light of fighting that later erupted on the Badme front.

February 23 saw the beginning of what the Ethiopian government later termed "Operation Sunset". According to media accounts, for three days Ethiopian troops supported by heavy artillery, tanks, helicopter gunships and jet aircraft mounted a major offensive against Eritrean fixed positions in the Gamharo plain on the Badme front. While the details have yet to be disclosed, it is clear that the fighting was exceptionally violent with heavy casualties suffered on both sides. Throughout the fighting both sides maintained a virtual news blackout, issuing only the occasional official statement. Neither side allowed journalists to visit the front, preventing any independent verification of claims. On the third day of fighting it was reported that Eritrea was using its airforce for the first time. The same day, it was rumoured that an Eritrean MiG 29 had been shot down close to the front lines at Badme. The following day, a statement broadcast midday on national radio in Asmara conceded that Eritrea had lost ground to numerically superior Ethiopian forces on

the 60-kilometer Badme front. "The enemy force, despite the heavy losses it has suffered, managed to capture some of our front lines this morning," the statement said. Ethiopia, meanwhile, claimed "significant victories over Eritrea's air and ground forces" in the day's fighting.

On February 27, in a letter to the President of the UN Security Council, Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki noted that his country had been seeking clarifications about the OAU peace framework, but while the clarifications were being sought Ethiopia violated the framework agreement. "The Ethiopian government now occupies by force Eritrean sovereign territory," the letter said. "Nonetheless, the government of Eritrea accepts the OAU framework agreement to pave the way for an expedited demarcation." The Eritrean move appeared to have been motivated by advances made by Ethiopian troops, who according to the Eritrean ambassador to the UN, Haile Menkerios had "advanced 10 kilometers into Eritrean territory beyond the disputed Badme sector." In a subsequent statement, the Security Council welcomed Eritrea's acceptance of the OAU framework and demanded an immediate halt to all hostilities so that the agreement could be implemented.

The next day, Ethiopia declared that, "A total victory for Ethiopian Defense Forces was achieved on Friday February 26, 1999 in the military counter offensive named Operation Sunset," adding that Eritrea had suffered "a monumental and humiliating defeat." Focusing on Ethiopia's military might and its pride in the troops who breached the main front line, an official statement added, "The defense forces of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, in spite of such a large enemy military presence, were in the space of four days able to win a total victory, destroying the enemy army and sending them into total disarray."

While Ethiopia celebrated its victory, Eritrean government officials said they were awaiting a response from Addis Ababa regarding the UN Security Council's call for an immediate ceasefire. While relative calm had descended upon the border areas during the first days of March, in its public statements, Ethiopia remained skeptical of Eritrea's acceptance of the OAU proposals. In a statement issued on March 6, Ethiopia accused the leadership in Asmara of only attempting to buy time to reorganize its forces. "They continue to occupy the Zalambesa-Aiga region, the Bada-Bure region and Egala region (near Tsorona)... the Eritrean government has shown no sign of withdrawing its army from these territories, as it is required to do by the OAU," the statement said.

With Ethiopia declaring that a peaceful settlement of its border war with Eritrea remained contingent on the withdrawal of Asmara's troops from all "occupied" Ethiopian land, on March 10 the UN Security Council met to consider what steps it might take to further facilitate a peaceful settlement to the dispute. Following the meeting, British Ambassador to the UN, Jeremy Greenstock indicated to journalists that the next steps in the implementation of the OAU agreement would not be easy because of the circumstances of the acceptances by both sides. He said progress could require negotiating efforts by the OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, and possibly UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan rather than further Security Council intervention. "We need to leap from the non-consecutive and non-compatible acceptances of those proposals to a situation where they both accept the same interpretation and same implementation programme," Greenstock said. "And that's a matter for negotiation, and not for a committee like the Council or public diplomacy to look after."

## ETHIOPIA

**WFP launches programme for Ethiopia's war displaced:** The UN World Food Programme has approved a major new emergency operation to provide nine months of basic and supplementary food rations to some 272,000 Ethiopians displaced by the recent border conflict with Eritrea. The programme, which is valued at over US \$24 million, will provide a total of 45,351 tons of food assistance, comprising cereals, vegetable oil, blended supplementary foods, sugar and iodised salt. The Letter of Understanding outlining the implementation modalities of the emergency operation, which commenced March 1<sup>st</sup>, will be signed with the government shortly. (*Addis Tribune, March 12; Reuters, March 10*)

**International NGOs sign Code of Conduct:** At a ceremony held in the presence of representatives of the Ethiopian Government, ambassadors and heads of international organisations, over 100 NGOs signed a Code of Conduct. The agreement commits the signatories to governing principles, norms and values that

will guide the actions and attitudes of NGOs involved in rehabilitation and development activities in Ethiopia. Kebede Asrat, Executive Director of the Christian Relief and Development Association, said that a major objective of the participating NGOs was to increase their "trust and credibility with development partners and the general public." The Code of Conduct, which has been printed in both Amharic and English and distributed amongst the NGO sector, represents a historic starting point for further collaborative efforts amongst NGOs working towards development in Ethiopia. It is also expected to provide basic input for the development of a legal framework for NGO operations in Ethiopia. The implementation of the agreement and its progress is to be overseen by a 7 member "Code Observance Committee" which includes 2 representatives of Ethiopia's civil society. (*CRDA News, Vol.10 No.2 February; The Monitor, March 6*)

**Development Cooperation and Support.** The Italian government has pledged a sum of at least US \$240 million for the implementation of ongoing and new development projects of the 1999 – 2001 Ethio-Italian Development Cooperation Country Programme. The pledge was made on February 25 during a visit to Ethiopia by an Italian team led by Guido Larcher, the head of the Sub-Sahara Africa Development Department in Italy's Foreign Ministry. The fund will be used for the country's food security, road, health, education, rural development and capacity building programmes. Earlier in January, the African Development Bank provided US \$255 million in long-term loans and grants to Ethiopia for development projects in agriculture, transport and public utilities. Later in February, a grant agreement worth up to US \$2.2 million was signed between the government of Ethiopia and Finland. The grant will be used to partially undertake phase two of the rural water supply and environmental programme in Amhara state. According to an agreement signed between the two governments last year, Finland has earmarked a total of US \$16.7 million for the execution of Finnish-supported projects in Ethiopia during the period 1998-2000. (*Press Digest, March 4; Ethiopian Herald, January 23; ENA, February 24; AFP, February 26*)

**Power rationing to be introduced.** The Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation announced that it would be reducing power output by 34 percent for one month commencing at the end of February. The rationing was necessary to allow essential maintenance at the Fincha hydroelectric power plant in central Ethiopia. Investors, manufacturers and business people protested the timing of the decision saying that the season was an important production period. The power cuts were expected to be implemented on a rotation basis, with a frequency of 2 to 3 times a week and the cuts extending from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. (*The Monitor, January 23-24; February 27- 28*)

**UNDP Associate Administrator visits** The newly appointed UNDP Associate Administrator, Zepherin Diabre, paid a 3 day official visit to Ethiopia starting January 28. Ethiopia was selected to be amongst the first countries he visits to get acquainted with UNDP activities. The associate administrator told reporters that UNDP has earmarked US \$120 million in support of development projects in Ethiopia over the next five years. Zepherin was previously with the government of Burkina Faso, where he served a minister of economy, finance and planning and as minister of trade, industry and mines. (*The Reporter, January 27; Ethiopian Herald, February 2*)

**Sudan - Ethiopia trade talks:** Sudan and Ethiopia have held trade talks after years of strained relations between the two countries. Ethiopian Trade and Industry Minister Kassahun Ayele and Sudan's Foreign Trade Minister Osman al-Hadi Ibrahim met mid-February to discuss reactivating a 1993 trade protocol and expanding it to include border trade and reduced customs duties. (*Reuters, February 18*)

**UNFPA announces 4<sup>th</sup> Country Programme** The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has earmarked US \$30 million for the execution of the Fourth National Population Programme that will run for the next five years. Eighty percent of this amount will be set aside for the various regional states. The new programme is aimed at supporting reproductive health care, education and communication services. The programme will also fund the local manufacture of contraceptive pills and facilitate the free distribution of the pills to low-income parents. (*Ethiopian Herald, February 21*)

**Anti-measles campaign planned.** The Ministry of Health has announced plans for the launching of a national vaccination campaign against measles later this year. A pilot immunization programme conducted three months ago in Addis Ababa, Jimma, Awassa, Mekele, Bahir Dar, Dessie, Nazereth, Dire Dawa and Harar towns produced encouraging results according to health officials. Preparations are now underway to immunize three million children between September this year and August 2000. Measles is recognized as one of the six major child killer diseases in Ethiopia. (*Ethiopian Herald, February 24*)

**Economy in good shape - minister:** Finance Minister Sufian Ahmed has reported that the country's economy is in good shape with a budget surplus recorded over the last six months. The federal government's revenue projection for the current fiscal year is Birr 8.65 billion (Birr 7.65 = US \$ 1) of which Birr 4.099 billion has been collected over the last six months. The amount collected is above target and some 15 percent above that collected in the same period last year. The country's economy is presently projected to grow by around ten percent this year, while inflation will remain low at 2-3 percent. Currently foreign aid in the form of various loans forms 37.1 percent of Ethiopia's 1998-99 budget while 22.1 percent has been in the form of grant aid. From the central budget, 87.1 percent has been allocated to the 5 main economic development activities: Road construction, transport and communications, agricultural development, education and energy. 63.8 percent alone is going into road construction and communications. (*Ethiopian Herald, February 28; Addis Tribune, February 26*)

## ERITREA

**Livestock import ban lifted:** Saudi Arabia has lifted a ban on the import of livestock from Eritrea as the kingdom prepared for the annual Moslem pilgrimage when large numbers of sheep are slaughtered to mark the end of the ritual. Saudi traders said they were informed about the lifting of the ban on importing sheep and camels from Eritrea in a circular from the chamber of commerce in Riyadh. Saudi Arabia banned livestock imports in February last year from Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Kenya because of fears that an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever in Kenya could spread to the kingdom. Last year, Saudi Arabia said some 700,000 sheep and over 20,000 cattle and camels were slaughtered at the end of the Haj for two million pilgrims performing the ritual. (*Reuters, March 9*)

**Eritrea to become active within COMESA:** Eritrean plans to set up a representative office in the Common Market for the East and Southern Africa (COMESA). Bereket-ab Habtemariam, head of the Foreign Trade Division of the Eritrean Ministry of Trade and Industry, said that his country plans to open a representative office in Kenyan capital Nairobi, or Zambian capital Lusaka or Uganda capital Kampala later this year or next year so that Eritrea could be more active in the COMESA area. Eritrea became a member of the COMESA in 1994. At present, it only exports sea salt to other COMESA member states, Habtemariam said. He added Eritrea has more to sell to the east and southern African markets, such as leather products, shoes, garments, sweaters and various fish. Under a transport facility agreement, vehicles with yellow plates of the COMESA states can pass freely in the region, he said. But the border dispute between the two Horn of Africa neighbours has blocked the Eritrean trucks from going to other COMESA countries via Ethiopia, the official said. He also said that his country is considering arrangements for its goods to go by sea through Kenya's Mombasa port to reach other countries. (*Xinhua, March 10*)

## DJIBOUTI

**President to step down:** Hassan Gouled Aptidon, Djibouti's President for twenty-two years since its independence from France announced that he would step down from power at age eighty-three. The President addressed the extraordinary congress of the ruling Popular Rally for Congress in a speech and said that he would not contest the presidential elections due to be held in April and named the Chief of Staff Ismael Omar Guelleh as the party's official candidate. Ismael Omar who is now 52 speaks French, English, Arabic, Amharic and Somali and was born in Ethiopia. Aptidon suffered from bronchitis recently and needs to rest often. Meanwhile, several opposition candidates have lined up for the elections including Abdillahi Hamareiteh of the Democratic Renewal, Aden Robleh Awalleh of the National Democrats, and Abatte Ebou Adou as an independent. (*AFP, February 2 & 4; The Monitor, February 6*)

**Sentencing of human rights lawyer:** Aref Mohamed Aref, a human rights activists and leading lawyer has been sentenced to a six months prison term and an eighteen months suspended sentence. Aref, who was arrested at the Djibouti airport in December, was found guilty of attempted fraud and breach of trust concerning the sale of a shipment of flour. In May 1994, Aref represented London insurers, shipping agents from the US and Cyprus, and a Danish trading company but betrayed them to earn a third party's retainer. The shipment of flour, which was supposed to be offloaded at Aden, was redirected to Djibouti due to the civil war there at the time. However, Aref helped a third party acquire the shipment of 13,233 tons of flour for

US \$200,000 less than the US \$1.5 million reserve price. Aref's French lawyers were not present at the trial because they were unable to get the necessary visas in time. (AFP, February 15)

**Djibouti to avoid Ethiopian air space:** Due to the current border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Djibouti has been advised to avoid using Ethiopian airspace and to instead use the airspace over the self-proclaimed Somaliland republic in Northern Somalia. Meanwhile, French troops in Djibouti have been "at ready" since the resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea on February 6<sup>th</sup>. (AP, January 23; AFP, February 11)

## SUDAN

**Peace efforts:** The Sudanese foreign minister, Mustafa Ismail met with SPLA leader John Garang at talks held in Libya aimed at seeking an end to the sixteen year civil war. Another party to the talks was top presidential aide Riek Machar, head of the South Sudan Defense Force (SSDF), a breakaway southern faction, which signed a peace deal with Khartoum in 1997. A second meeting is scheduled to take place before the next round of peace negotiations being convened by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Meanwhile, there has been an extension of the cease-fire, which ended January 15, between the SPLA and the Sudanese government in the Bahr el-Ghazal region for three more months. The cease-fire is meant to allow aid agencies to deliver aid to people ravaged by famine and war in that region. However, the foreign minister said that this would be the last extension of the cease-fire since there has been no progress towards peace during the last two cease-fire periods of three months each. Efforts to extend the cease-fire to other regions were rejected by the SPLA, which claims that such a settlement could only be reached after political issues are settled. (AFP, January 15, 16 & 26, February 2; The Monitor, January 28)

**Sudan Appeals for UN Demining Assistance:** At a press conference in Khartoum on March 1, Sudanese minister of state, Ali Abdel Rehman al Nimeiri called for UN support in the removal of landmines from battlegrounds in the south and east of the country. Nimeiri estimated that up to two million mines were buried in an area of more than 25 million acres in southern and eastern Sudan. He said Sudan was doing its best to remove them adding that his government hoped the UN would support its efforts. (AFP, March 1)

**IGAD peace initiatives for Sudan:** A one-day meeting organized by the IGAD Partners Group was held in Oslo Norway to discuss international support for ongoing efforts to resolve Sudan's 16-year civil war. The consultations were held on March 10 and attended by about 50 delegates representing donor nations who discussed the possibility of establishing a new secretariat and support system for the Sudan peace process. The meeting builds on continuing efforts by IGAD to bring the Sudanese government and SPLA militia to the negotiating table. In late January, the organization had fielded a three-day mission by the partners of IGAD, for talks with Sudanese foreign minister Mustafa Osman Ismail. The minister, who agreed to a third partial cease-fire in order to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Southern Sudan. Mission members Helda Johnson, (Norway's State Minister for international cooperation and human rights), and Italy's State Foreign Minister Rino Siri, went on to Nairobi to discuss the proposal for a comprehensive cease-fire with SPLA officials. (AP, March 10, AFP, February 25)

**Meningitis Epidemic:** The International Federation of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies (IFRC/IRCS) reports that there have been two hundred and twenty eight cases of meningitis recorded in the western state of North Darfur since December. The Sudanese Red Crescent supported by IFRC/IRCS was reported to have provided 100,000 doses of vaccine already and expected to deliver 150,000 more doses in an effort to contain the epidemic. A similar outbreak affected 45,000 people and killed 7,500 people in 1988/89. Meanwhile, a conference to control the spread of the epidemic in Sudan was held in Khartoum and included participants from WHO, UNICEF and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). According to Sudanese health officials the outbreak is currently claiming 30 lives a day in Khartoum while unconfirmed reports say there have been more than 1,000 deaths from meningitis since the epidemic began a month ago. The World Health Organization has warned that the meningitis epidemic in Sudan could spread to Ethiopia and Eritrea. The outbreak, which spread from West Africa via Chad, has already hit 14 of Sudan's 26 states. Sudanese authorities have initiated a number of containment measures and an appeal for funds to fight the disease is to be launched in cooperation with UNICEF, ICRC, Red Crescent and MSF. (AFP, January 28, March 9; IPS, March 2)

**Fighting with rebels:** The Sudanese government has said that its war with the Southern rebels takes up half of the state's budget every year. Meanwhile, the Sudanese army claimed that it was able to capture the Southern Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA) base of Bonj in the south-east, close to the Ethiopian border, after two days of heavy fighting. In related news, twenty-five rebels raided a government tax office in the Shajareb locality near Kassala in east Sudan and abducted three guards and four employees and took them into Eritrean territory. The rebels also took a lorry and a land-cruiser. (AFP, January 16 & 27; The Monitor, February 7)

**Sudan's Dinar Replaces Pound:** In a process which has taken seven years, the Sudanese government has formally replaced its currency, the Sudanese pound, with the Dinar, which divides into 100 piasters. The pound had been in use in the Sudan since 1899 and was introduced by the British. The shift to Dinars began in 1992 and currently 160 Dinar will fetch one US dollar in the official market and 220 in the parallel market. (PANA, March 2)

**Clashes:** Two groups in the pro-government Southern Sudan Defense Forces (SSDF) were ordered out of Juba in the wake of an armed clash that erupted between them. The two rival factions are part of the seven that broke away to form the SPLA and signed a peace pact with the Khartoum government in 1997. Meanwhile, a clash between Arab and non-Arab tribes in western Sudan has resulted in the deaths of 131 people, 85 people wounded and 53 villages burned to the ground. Some 7,000 people have fled to neighboring Chad and about 115,000 have left their homes for the two major towns in the province, Ginaina and Ardemetah. (AFP, January 15 & February 13)

**Human rights questions:** A United Nations special envoy, Leonardo Franco, paid a ten-day visit to Sudan to investigate human rights violations, including slavery. The envoy was supposed to meet with several government officials, representatives of non-government organizations, tour camps of displaced people and travel to southern Sudan. The visit came after the government asked the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) to conduct an investigation into claims that slavery existed in Sudan after repeatedly denying such claims. The Sudanese government has also urged the population to report cases of slavery to the prosecutors' offices across the country. Meanwhile, a Swiss aid agency, Christian Solidarity International (CSI), had announced earlier that it had "bought back" a total of 5,066 slaves in Sudan over the past four years and repeated an appeal for action by the United Nations. According to the Swiss agency, pro-government militias are responsible for abducting thousands of people during raids in the south and selling them in the north. The special envoy will report to the annual session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva in March. (AFP, January 28 & 31, February 5, 11, 14 & 15)

**Foreign aid agencies:** The Alwan newspaper announced that a US agency operating within a UN sponsored maternity health center has been ordered to stop family planning activities because family planning operations are banned in the state. The state Health Minister, Abdel Chuol, accused the agency of not being legally registered, not having papers showing that it was related to the UN Population Fund Centre, of distributing contraceptives illegally and having staff that don't have the proper status because they came into the state as tourists. Meanwhile, the international medical organization Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) complained that its expatriate staff in Southern Sudan had been displaced 12 times because of insecurity. MSF disclosed that it does not have access to populations that are vulnerable in some areas due to insecurity. (AFP, February 12, 15 & 16)

**Foreign relations:** Assistant President Riek Machar said that Ethiopia and Sudan are normalizing relations. He noted that Sudanese delegates were travelling to Ethiopia shortly to complete the normalization process and to discuss the voluntary repatriation of Sudanese refugees estimated to number about 76,000. Relations between the two countries had deteriorated after Sudan refused to extradite three Egyptian Islamic extremists who were implicated in the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosri Mubarak in Ethiopia in 1995. Meanwhile, Arab League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid was scheduled to pay a three-day visit to Sudan at the invitation of the Sudanese Foreign Minister to demonstrate "the solidarity of the Arab world with Sudan". The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) President Laurent Kabila also paid a surprise visit to Khartoum and held discussions with President Omar el-Beshir. Details of the discussions were not available. Finally, the Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said al-Sahhaf completed a two day visit to Sudan, as part of a tour of Arab nations, where he delivered a message from Saddam Hussein to Omar el-Beshir outlining Baghdad's position following the meeting of

Arab Foreign Minister in Cairo the previous month. Foreign Minister Shaff reiterated his country's position that the UN Security Council should lift the economic embargo placed on Iraq and called its decision to set up a disarmament panel for Iraq "unjustifiable". (AFP, January 31; February 9, 13, 15 & 16)

**New parties:** Pro-government south Sudanese factions have applied to form a new political party under new legislation that allows for the formation of political associations. The leader of the new party, called United Democratic Salvation Party (UDSFP), is the Assistant President Riek Machar who has resigned from the ruling National Congress (NC) Party. He has been joined by governors of southern states, ministers and members of the South Sudan Coordination Council. The new party is comprised of five of the seven factions that signed a peace deal with the Karthoum government in 1997 and is allied to the National Congress. Meanwhile, Riek Machar has refused to resign from his government posts even though a top NC member stated that he and other former NC members who were forming the new party should resign because their action implies "lack of trust in the NC leadership". Machar was a former ally of the SPLA leader John Garang. Another party called the Nile Valley Unity Party that calls for the unity of northern and southern Sudan and the Nile valley (Sudan and Egypt) has applied for registration. (AFP, January 23, 24 & 28, February 5)

**Kidnapped ICRC workers released:** The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has released two International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegates in southern Sudan after holding them since February 18, the ICRC announced in Nairobi. The delegates were flown to Yirol, in Bahr-el-Ghazal state, from Bentiu, in Western Upper Nile state, aboard a non-ICRC plane, a statement said adding, "Their health condition is satisfactory". The statement said one Sudanese Red Crescent worker had been held along with the two Swiss - the SPLA said earlier that it was holding two Sudanese Red Crescent workers - but their status was unclear. The SPLA also captured three Sudanese who it said were Khartoum government employees, and announced on March 6 that it was holding them for further interrogation. (AFP, March 6 & 12)

## SOMALIA

**IGAD fact-finding mission:** The International Committee for Somalia, an offshoot of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), met in Addis Ababa where they discussed the importance of maintaining a United Nations arms embargo against Somalia in order to promote peace in the country and agreed to send representatives of Libya, Egypt Sudan and Ethiopia on another fact-finding mission to Moqdishu. The committee is chaired by Ethiopia and comprises seventeen countries and international organisations, including the USA, Japan, Britain, France, Italy and Norway. The proposed mission later received a setback when warlords Ali Mahdi and Hussein Aideed demanded the expulsion of the Ethiopian representative. The warlords said that Ethiopia was not neutral because it was supplying weapons to particular groups in Somalia. Aideed accuses Ethiopia of supplying the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) and his rival Mohamed Said Hirsi "Morgan". Meanwhile, their arch rival Musa Sudi Yalahow also issued a statement saying the mission was a dangerous security threat to Somalia and that none of the members were welcome, *except* Ethiopia. The EU Somalia section head, Duarte Decarvalho later traveled to Moqdishu in an effort to resolve the impasse. In related news, Ambassador Francesco Sciortino, the Italian special envoy to Somalia arrived in Moqdishu on February 11 and met with the co-chairmen of the Banadir region administration, Ali Mahdi Mohammad and Hussein Aideed. In their briefings to the ambassador both leaders called on Italy to help in the preservation of Somali unity. (AFP, January 29, February 10 & 15, March 5)

**Arms for Somalia** - Despite the 1992 arms embargo placed on Somalia and the pledge to honour it made by the OAU's Horn of Africa Standing Committee on Somalia, an influx of arms into the country has been reported during February. These include the arrival of armoured personnel carriers, an assortment of artillery and anti-aircraft weaponry said to have been offloaded in southern Somalia's beach port of Merca and delivered by airplane at Balidogle airport, both of which are controlled by Aideed's forces. The Moqdishu governor told journalists he was not aware of the arrival of new arms through Merca but confirmed that new weapons had been acquired. He declined to name the source of the weapons although different reports have claimed Libya and/or Eritrea as the origin of the new arms. Earlier in the year, the Xogoogal Daily reported that Somali warlord Hussein Aideed had received a plane load of weapons from Yemen. According to the paper, the munitions were transported to Moqdishu and more were expected to arrive. Yemen, however, denied the reports and affirmed its support for peace in Somalia through its foreign ministry spokesperson. The shipment of weapons by air to Aideed has also been claimed by the Rahanwein Resistance Army



(RRA) and the Digil Salvation Army (DSA), who are fighting against Aideed's militiamen in south-eastern Somalia. The RRA spokesman, Mohamed Aden Qalinle, said that Eritrea wanted Aideed to help arm Ethiopian dissidents in the Ogaden region of eastern Ethiopia. Mohamed charged that Aideed was instead using the weapons for his own purposes. Ethiopia has accused Eritrea of rearming the Ogaden National Liberation Front, the Oromo Liberation Front and the Al-Itihad al-Islam group. Aideed has denied the reports as propaganda while Eritrean officials were unavailable to comment. Aideed's Nairobi representative said that his earlier visit to Eritrea had nothing to do with such reports and was simply for consultations with the Eritrean leaders just as his visits to other countries. (AFP, January 16, 26 & 27, AFP, February 24, March 1; XINHUA, February 10)

**Deyr harvest fails, humanitarian crisis continues:** The United Nations Country Team for Somalia has warned of an emerging crisis in central and southern Somali. Calling the situation in Southern Somalia "very worrying", the UNCT reports the failure of the February secondary harvest and a widespread lack of water for human consumption. WHO's figures in the report show an increase in cholera cases and the organization has warned that if the epidemic continues more supplies may be required. The outbreak has so far claimed the lives of thirty people and more than three-hundred cases have been reported in the Bardera district of southern Somalia. Aid agencies had earlier withdrawn from Gedo region, where Bardera is located, after a Somali gunman killed a Kenyan aid worker. Meanwhile, the UN World Food Programme said that herdsmen had started migrating from Bay and Bakool regions together with their families in search of food and water. Pastoral families face hardship because the prices of cereals are unusually high and livestock prices very low. The situation in some areas has deteriorated to the point that families have begun selling their breeding livestock. WFP indicated that it was necessary for agencies to come to the aid of the people with food, water and medical supplies. A US-based international NGO active in Somalia, Refugees International, urged donors to make funds available for the purchase and distribution of seeds. It said that while the Somalia Aid Coordination Body's (SACB) November 1998 appeal for food aid was good, a large scale emergency food assistance programme and seed distribution effort would be needed to enable planting in March and prevent widespread starvation. In other news, the "president" of the Puntland Administration, Colonel Abdullahi Yousuf has warned relief agencies not to distribute relief aid without prior clearance. The administration also requires all expatriates who wish to work in Puntland to obtain entry visas from the immigration and for the agencies to submit their budgets to the governments before February 15. (The Monitor, January 21; Addis Tribune, January 22; AFP, January 19 & 21, February 5; IRIN, March 9)

**No need for clashes:** Warlord Mohamed Hussein Aideed has tried to counter rumours of imminent war between those that support the Moqdishu joint administration and those opposed to it. Radio Moqdishu, controlled by Aideed, voiced this concern and the administration's commitment to resolving differences in a peaceful manner. Aideed said that the administration would hold talks with rival warlords, Musa Sudi, Haji Bod and Ali "Ato", to speed up the opening of the city's main air and sea ports. Meanwhile, a cease-fire agreement was signed between the Moalim-Weyen and Galadle sub-clans of larger Rahanwein group in famine stricken Sakow in the Middle Juba region of southern Somalia. Similarly, another cease-fire agreement was signed between two Abgal sub-clans, Weli-Omer and Abdala-Arone, in northern Somalia. A total of 41 people were killed in the latest round of fighting. (AFP, January 19, February 2 & 12)

**No arms through Berbera:** President of the self-proclaimed Republic of Somaliland, Mohamed Ibrahim Egal, has announced that Ethiopia and Eritrea will not be allowed to use the port of Berbera to import war materials. Meanwhile, three officials of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) were kidnapped by Somali gunmen in Moqdishu and later handed over to the Ethiopian authorities at the border village of Fer Fer. Hamud Mohamed, the Moqdishu based spokesman of the OLF has called on international human rights groups to work for their release and appealed to the Somali people to condemn the act. He also warned that there would be retaliation for such "Ethiopian-sponsored terrorism". (AFP, February 4 & 11)

## KENYA

**Border Incursion in North East Province:** Kenya's Chief of Police, Commissioner Philemon Abong'o, has confirmed a border incursion and attack on a Kenyan village by 50 armed uniformed men who crossed into Kenya from Ethiopia on March 10. The Commissioner did not clarify the identity of the attacker and reported that the gun battle between Kenyan security forces and the unidentified forces lasted several hours, leaving

three Ethiopians dead. Earlier in the year, a high-level security meeting concerning recent border clash between Ethiopia and Kenya which occurred in January, collapsed after the Ethiopian delegation accused the Kenyan delegation of supporting the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The OLF had attacked two garrisons in Ethiopia in January before fleeing into Kenyan territory where the Ethiopian troops followed in hot pursuit. Four Kenyans lost their lives as a result of the fighting that ensued. The Kenyans demanded that Ethiopia stop violating the common border and that it free the three Kenyans that it allegedly kidnapped, while Ethiopia demanded that Kenya stop allowing the OLF free movement and turning a blind eye to its activities against Ethiopia. The Kenyan delegation was led by the Moyale District Commissioner Stephen Kipkibut while the Ethiopian delegation was led by the southern military commander Gebre Medina. The OLF are believed to have a base at Sololo, Kenya and to enjoy support from the Kenyan Boran community, which was the area where the fighting took place. (*The East African, January 28; AP, March 10*)

**US trade office:** The United States has set up a trade office in Nairobi as part of congress' initiative to increase American investment in Africa. The trade office is one of two hundred and forty other offices worldwide of which one hundred are in the US and will coordinate activities in the region to increase the trade volume between East Africa and the US. The countries that will benefit from the initiative are Uganda, Tanzania, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Rwanda among other regional countries. The US Assistant Secretary and Director General, commercial Services, Ms Awilda Marquez disclosed that the US plans to add two more commercial offices in the region this year to make information available to both sides. (*The Nation, February 9*)

**Bloody conflict over a forest:** Kenyan students protesting the development of the Karura forest located at Nairobi's edge clashed with riot police for three days. The students threw stones, smashed windows of cars and shops, smashed traffic lights, torched tires, destroyed roadside curbs, robbed motorists and passers-by for the "cause", roughed up the Japanese and Ugandan ambassadors and torched a United Nations vehicle. The riot police and the General Service Unit (GSU) used tear gas, wooden clubs, rifle butts and whips to beat any student they came across and broke into dormitories and stole students' belongings. According to opposition members of parliament and local environmental groups, the conflict stemmed from the issue of the government's willful and illegal hand over of forestland to supporters of Moi's ruling Kenya African National Union Party. The leader of the Greenbelt environmental movement, Wangari Maathai, who spearheaded the opposition against the construction of housing at Karura forest, was hospitalized after being beaten by private guards at the construction site. However, things got out of hand when two thousand students from the Nairobi and Kenyatta Universities decided to join the cause. Four hundred students stormed their way into the forest with a commandeered tractor and were attacked by the riot police. An estimated three hundred students also blocked the main Trans-Africa highway through central Nairobi with rocks, tree trunks and burning tires and clashed with the riot police who were trying to open the road to traffic. Reports indicate that thirty students were injured in the clash and two were admitted into a hospital with serious injuries. Authorities of the 19,000 large Nairobi University forced the students to leave by shutting off power, water and other facilities. The riots took place at an unfortunate time when the United Nations Environmental Programme's governing council was beginning a meeting in Nairobi shortly afterwards. The UNEP's headquarter is also next to the forest. (*The Monitor, February 2 & 4*)

**Kenya, a target?:** Kenya has closed all of its thirty-four embassies worldwide in order to prevent further attacks by Kurdish protestors protesting the capture of Kurdish guerrilla leader Abdullah Ocalan by Turkey officials. Soon after the capture of the Kurdish guerrilla leader, two Kenyan embassies in Europe were stormed by his supporters and two staff members in Bonn taken hostage. Ocalan was reportedly staying at the residence of the Greek ambassador in Nairobi until the Kenyan authorities found out and demanded that he leave the country for security reasons. Kenya blames Greece for putting it in such a difficult situation and claims that it had no idea that Ocalan was going to be handed over to Turkey. The Kenyan authorities have since demanded for the ambassador's immediate recall to Athens. Greek officials in turn say that they handed over Ocalan to Kenyan authorities. (*The Monitor, February 18*)

## UGANDA

**Corruption probe:** The Ugandan Parliament's Public Accounts Committee has called for a corruption probe into the irregular loss of US \$7.29 million by State House Officials. The PAC has discovered that a transport officer at State House is unable to account for US \$2.6 million worth of fuel between 1996-97 and that the President's chief pilot of has been diverting state funds into a personal account in the US. The PAC

made a statement saying that the Criminal Investigation Department should conduct an investigation and all found guilty to be penalized and the money recovered from their salaries where possible. In related news, Major General Salim Saleh, brother of Yoweri Museveni and one charged with financial impropriety has disclosed that he is divesting his stake from at least twenty enterprises to form an organization to fight poverty. He disclosed that the organization, Divinity Union Ltd. would fund charities including the army's department of education, a development fund and the Salim Saleh Foundation for Humanity, a cultural development and empowerment society. Meanwhile, President Yoweri Museveni removed his son Muhozi Keineruga from the management of companies owned by Salim Saleh. Museveni also told Saleh that he needs to repay his US \$1.7 million debt to the troubled Uganda Commercial Bank. (AFP, January 21, February 5, 7 & 11)

**Rebel activities:** Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels have started a recruitment campaign offering money to idlers to join up. The rebel agents allegedly tell people that they are offering people up to US \$145 a month to work as shop attendants or laborers along the frontier with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) but instead take them to rebel bases in the mountains. Meanwhile, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda accused President Laurent Kabila of the DRC of arming ADF rebels using rear bases in the former Zaire. In related news, a DRC general, Kpama Baramoto, has joined the fight together with other DRC rebels to overthrow President Laurent Kabila. The regional East African newspaper reported that Baramoto and General Etienne Nzimbi paid a secret visit to Kampala as part of "a campaign by certain Ugandan military officers to push them into a coalition with rebels fighting President Laurent Kabila's government." Finally, there have been reports that the ADF rebels attacked a displaced people's camp in Uganda's western Bundibugyo district killing five people including a four year old girl and a pregnant woman and seriously wounding two others. Earlier, the ADF had carried out a similar attack on the Harguli camp in Bundibugyo district killing five, seriously wounding seven and abducted five. (AFP, January 25 & 27, February 2, 3 & 17)

**Bomb blasts:** Two bomb blasts in one of Kampala's crowded nightclub districts called the Kabalagala have resulted in five fatalities and thirty-five injured. The fatalities include one Ethiopian man, three Ugandan men and one Ugandan woman. The blasts went off five minutes apart at the 'Telex bar' and the 'Family Shop' where couples were celebrating valentine's day. Although no group has claimed responsibility, the chief suspects are the urban-wing of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) who were also blamed for similar bomb attacks in bars and restaurants between March and July of 1998. The police arrested nine people in connection with the blast but said that they would release all but one Ethiopian man. The bombs were homemade pipe bombs. (AFP, February 15 & 17)

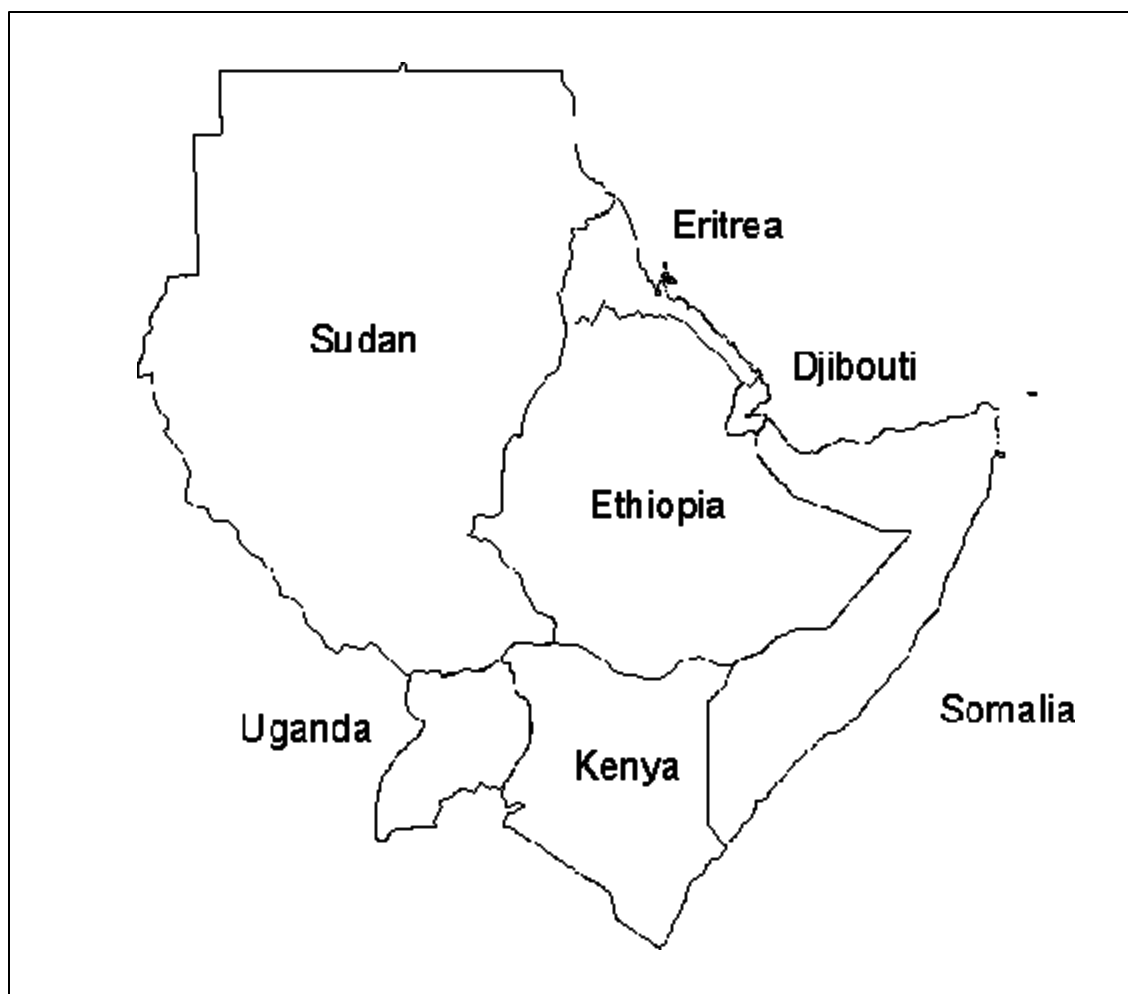
**HIV vaccine trials:** Uganda has begun the first HIV vaccine trials in Africa. The vaccine has been tested on 800 humans in the USA and France and is based on the B type virus, which is prevalent in Europe and the USA. The test is sponsored by the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and is being carried out at the Joint Clinical Research Center and the Uganda Virus Research Institute in Uganda. Uganda has one of the highest levels of HIV infection in the world. (AFP, February 7)

**IMF getting tough:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that Uganda might not get more donor funds this fiscal year unless it complies with requirements before May, when an IMF team returns to review progress. "Until the team returns to Uganda in May to assess the progress on IMF's demands to the government to keep expenditure within the budget and to bring the privatisation process back on track, the IMF will not release the second tranche of its 140-million-dollar Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF)," IMF resident representative Zia Ebrahim Zadeh told AFP. This is the first time in seven years that the IMF has taken such a tough stand against Uganda. Uganda was scheduled to receive about US \$18 million under the three-year ESAF programme. Zadeh pointed out that the over-expenditure, especially in the defence ministry, was a setback to Uganda's economic achievements. Uganda's defence expenditure currently represents 1.9 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), which is slightly below six billion dollars. (AFP, March 9 & 12)

**Tourists murdered:** A gang of more than 100 Hutus - renegades from their own country's civil war of 1994 - kidnapped 14 safari tourists at the Buhoma camp in the remote Bwindi forest reserve on Uganda's southwest border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on March 1. They later murdered four Britons, two Americans and two New Zealanders as well as four Ugandan guides, while six of the abducted foreigners survived. In the aftermath, the Ugandan government delivered condolence messages to the British High Commissioner, Michael Cook, and his US counterpart, Nancy Powell. "It is with regret and deep

sorrow that I write to inform you of the tragic incident in Bwindi National Park," the message from Ugandan Foreign Minister Eriya Kategaya, said. "I extend to you on my own behalf and that of the government and the people of Uganda our sincere and heartfelt condolences. The criminal Interahamwe are part of the same group that massacred over one million people in Rwanda five years ago. Kategaya later called for an international conference on insecurity in Africa's Great Lakes region. "(If we) have an effective administration in the DRC, and have a government that believes there is an Interehamwe which is dangerous to the region and then that problem will be solved," said Kategaya. *(AFP, March 4 & 5)*

## THE HORN OF AFRICA



### DISCLAIMER

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this document do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

### 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.

16 March, 1999

**UNDP-EUE**  
PO Box 5580,  
Addis Ababa  
Ethiopia

Tel.: (251) (1) 51-10-28/29  
Fax: (251) (1) 51-12-92  
e-mail: [undp-eue@telecom.net.et](mailto:undp-eue@telecom.net.et)