

HORN OF AFRICA

The Monthly Review

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REGIONAL ISSUES

New round of diplomacy to end Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. A new round of shuttle diplomacy to end the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict began in early February with the visit to the region of EU special envoy Rino Serri. According to new reports Serri was in the Horn of Africa not to begin a new initiative but to find out where the different parties stand and to show support for the peace plan drawn up by the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Serri was given a mandate by the European Union in December to promote the Addis Ababa-based OAU's efforts to end the Horn of Africa war, which broke out in May 1998. Serri's visit was followed by the arrival of envoys from the OAU and USA, Ahmed Ouyahia and Anthony Lake. After initial visits to Asmara and Addis Ababa, on February 29 the two were back in Eritrea to present President Isaias Afewerki with Ethiopian demands for changes in the so-called "Technical Arrangements" section of the OAU Framework Agreement, already accepted by both sides to the dispute. The government in Addis Ababa had already made clear its view that the Technical Arrangements as they stand do not ensure a return to the *status quo* that prevailed prior to the outbreak of the conflict in May 1998. While the envoys were in Asmara, Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim expressed optimism over the mediation efforts telling a press conference, "The mediators will be in the area as long as it takes until the conflict is resolved." On the return of the envoys to Addis Ababa after nearly two weeks of discussions, the OAU said in a statement a consensus had been reached on some provisions of the Technical Arrangements. However "other [provisions] require additional efforts in order to secure the common acceptance of the full document by both parties." Ethiopia also indicated that "significant progress" had been made in the talks. Eritrea, however, complained that the OAU had gone back on previous public statements that the Technical Arrangements were "non-amendable". In a statement issued on March 21, the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs said, "The OAU should officially announce that the Technical Arrangements, which had been submitted as non-amendable, are now open for discussion with both sides since [the Ethiopian government] has rejected the original document." The statement also noted that Eritrea accepted "in principle the convention of proximity talks between the two parties," but said that for the talks to be productive, the issues as well as format for any meeting must be clarified in advance. Algerian President and current OAU Chairman, Abdulaziz Bouteflika, had earlier told reporters that "god willing" representatives of Eritrea and Ethiopia would convene in Algiers for proximity talks before the end of March. (AFP, February 8 & 29, March 6 & 21; PANA, February 29)

UNHCR flies Somali refugees home: The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has begun the voluntary repatriation of nearly 1,000 Somali refugees from Dadaab and Kakuma camps in northeastern and northwestern Kenya. According to a UNHCR statement released in Nairobi, the first of eight UNHCR-chartered flights left Dadaab with some 100 refugees returning to the northeastern Somali seaport of Bosasso. UNHCR hoped to complete the operation over a one week period with the remaining 900 refugees traveling to Bosasso in the northeastern Somali regional state of Puntland and to Berbera in northwest Somalia's self-declared Republic of Somaliland. The statement said that the UNHCR has worked closely with local and international aid agencies to implement projects across Somalia's northeast and northwest regions and has provided funds for the construction of wells, hospitals and health centres, among other infrastructures for the returnees. Nearly 140,000 Somali refugees, mainly from southern Somalia, remain in camps in Kenya, which currently house some 200,000 refugees also from several other countries, including Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Sudan. (UNHCR, February 16)

Sudan heading for improved ties with neighbours: According to an editorial issued by AFP, Sudan has scored a series of diplomatic points with its Arab and African neighbours since President Omar al-Beshir ousted hard-line Islamist rival Hassan al-Turabi in December. Sudan had been living a decade of isolation, mainly due to its Islamist domestic and foreign policies, since Beshir and Turabi seized power from an elected civilian government in a military coup in 1989. Both Western and neighbouring states turned against a Sudan they perceived as assuming the role of an international Islamic movement, apparently eager to export fundamentalist Islamic ideas beyond its frontiers. The removal of Turabi from power was greeted first by Egypt which announced the normalization of ties with a Turabi-free government on December 23. Turabi's ouster was also regarded by observers as having persuaded neighbouring Eritrea to normalize relations with Sudan, with the two heads of state exchanging visits and diplomatic relations restored after more than five years accusing each other of harbouring their opponents. Sudanese-Ethiopian ties, which were also damaged by the assassination attempt on Mubarak four years ago, entered a normalization phase in November and Beshir's recent Gulf tour was seen as an apparent attempt to stress the change in his government policies. The ouster of Turabi has also given opposition parties cause for hope of an end to the 17-year civil war pitting the Arab and Islamic north against the mainly Christian and animist south. (AFP, February 21)

Kenya to build road connecting Ethiopia to Mombassa port. The government of Kenya will build a highway through Eastern Province connecting neighbouring Ethiopia and the port of Mombassa. The minister for public works, Andrew Kiptoon, said the proposed shortened route from Addis Ababa to the port will run from Kibwezi through Kitui, Mwingi, Maua and Isiolo districts. Kiptoon said on completion of the highway, Ethiopia will reduce the cost of transporting goods to Mombassa through the great north road. Minister Kiptoon said this was likely to increase trade between the two countries. (BBC Monitoring Service quoting a Kenyan radio report, February 29)

Nile basin countries meet in Khartoum: Experts from the Nile basin countries have concluded a five day meeting in Khartoum with an agreement reached on the basis for cooperation among the Nile basin states. The final report of the meeting will be submitted to the meeting of the ministers of water resources from the Nile basin countries later this year. According to Sudanese officials, the project, which is financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has contributed greatly to boosting understanding and cooperation between officials working in the field of water resources in the Nile basin countries. The meeting of the experts of the Nile Basin countries, which includes Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo, was held in Khartoum for the first time. (BBC Monitoring Service quoting SUNA, March 2)

Experts forecast below-normal rains for the Horn of Africa: "Far below normal" rainfall is forecast for the March-May season in eastern parts of the Horn of Africa, according to the Nairobi-based Drought Monitoring Centre. A statement on the findings of a forum held in Tanzania from 9-11 February said there were "enhanced probabilities" for near-normal rainfall conditions over much of the "greater" Horn of Africa. But in most of Somalia, eastern Kenya and southeastern Ethiopia, below-normal rainfall associated largely with 'La Nina' weather phenomenon was anticipated over the next three months, while normal to below-normal rainfall was most likely for northern Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti. (IRIN, March 3)

Regional conference on the proliferation of small-arms meets: Speaking at the opening session of the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa conference on proliferation of small arms and light weapons held in Nairobi, President Daniel arap Moi of Kenya expressed great concern over the proliferation of small arms and their indiscriminate use in the region, which he noted threatens the security of the people and their ability to build productive lives. He said the circulation of and trafficking in small arms undermines peace, intensifies violence and impacts on crime. Moi said the illegal accumulation and circulation of arms has not only fuelled ongoing wars, but prolonged them, resulting in immense suffering and loss of innocent lives. He observed that crime figures were on the increase posing a serious threat to democratic institutions and violating the security of the individual as well as the state. Referring to the situation in Kenya itself, President Moi blamed the proliferation of illegal arms on the lack of a central authority in Somalia. President Moi said Kenya, which shares 1,200 km border with Somalia along with other neighbours of Somalia, has had to bear the brunt of the illegal inflow of arms. The conference, jointly funded by

the Kenya government and the governments of UK, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Sweden, drew participants from Rwanda, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi and Djibouti. Representatives from the United Nations, the European Union, the Organization of African Unity and the Inter-Governmental Authority of Development, also took part in the four-day conference. At the conclusion of the conference participants called for a concerted international effort to tackle the problem of the proliferation of illicit small arms in the region. Foreign Ministers attending the conference also resolved to continue seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts in the Horn of Africa and the continent's central Great Lakes region, noting that wars had exacerbated the arms problem. (AFP March 12 & 15; PANA, March 13; BBC Monitoring Service quoting KBC radio, March 14)

ETHIOPIA

Former prime minister given 18 year jail sentence: Ethiopia's Supreme Court convicted former prime minister Tamerat Layne on three counts of corruption and abuse of power. Tamerat, was head of a transition government from May 1991 to August 1995 after the fall of the dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam. He was charged with corruption and abuse of power by involving himself in an illegal 16 million dollar deal with a business firm that sought the right to export Ethiopian textile products, half of it deposited in a Swiss bank. Ethiopia's Federal Supreme Court later passed an 18 year jail sentence on Layne, saying the onetime head of government should serve his full term "from the date of his arrest", which was three years and four months ago. The court also fined Tamerat 15,000 birr (about US \$1,800). (AFP, February 3 & March 14)

Wildfires threaten mountain forest reserves and national parks: Ethiopia has issued an urgent appeal for fire-fighting planes, equipment and experts to help control wildfires. The fires, which were spreading out of control in the southern part of the country, were said to be threatening more than 500,000 hectares of national forest reserves and the Bale National Park, home to the dozens of unique plant and animal species. According to the appeal, the fires had already destroyed 23,500 hectares of forest in about ten days. An international team of experts from Germany, South Africa and the USA was soon on the scene to give assistance and advice. Following a rapid survey of the affected areas, the team of experts also appealed for more equipment to fight the fires. It said aerial impressions collected during survey flights between 35 March confirmed that tens of thousands of hectares of natural mountain forest had been affected by fire. The team said there was no reliable monitoring system in place, and demographic and socio-economic conditions had led to an "unprecedented pressure on the remaining mountain forest ecosystems". The extended drought in the region had further aggravated the situation and an "immediate response" was required, they stressed. The initial assessment led to a coordinated effort to suppress the fires, which were found to be spread over a wide area with no easily discernable front, making fire-fighting operations difficult. Hopes that the fires could be suppressed using helicopter-mounted buckets proved illusory due to the lead time to train crews and the lack of suitable sources of water in the vicinity of the fires. Efforts were concentrated instead on the use of people on the ground, airlifted to the hot points by helicopter where feasible. At one point more than 70,000 local farmers, students and military personnel had been mobilized for the operation. According to local news reports police arrested 146 people suspected of lighting the fires. With the hot dry weather continuing, as of March 23, fires were still burning at a number of locations with new fires reported from the Nechasar and Awash national parks. (AFP, February 26 & 29, IRIN, March 8; International Fire-Fighting Team updates)

Sudan and Ethiopia pledge cooperation: Neighbours Sudan and Ethiopia have voiced determination to revive ties of cooperation at a joint ministerial commission ending some eight years of rocky relations. Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail hailed their relations as "eternal and historic" at the opening of the commission sessions, attended by 15 Ethiopian ministers including Ismail's counterpart Seyoum Mesfin. "Following a long break, we are opening today a new chapter of relations based on bilateral cooperation between two nations sharing the longest borderline," the daily Al Rai Al quoted him as saying. Seyoum said Khartoum and Addis Ababa have resources that encourage bilateral cooperation. "The two countries can play an effective role in the region," he said, calling upon Sudan to take a leading part in restoring peace and stability in Somalia by backing a Djiboutian initiative to this end. The Commission split into six

committees that began separate meetings to discuss cooperation in various spheres, including security and trade. Addis Ababa and Khartoum agreed to normalize their relations in November after years of animosity following an assassination attempt in 1995 on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in the Ethiopian capital, which was blamed on Sudan. (AFP, March 4)

ERITREA

Implementation of emergency activities "slow": Implementation of several emergency activities in Eritrea has been slow, while others have not taken off at all due to lack of funds, UNICEF says. In a recent donor update on Eritrea, the agency said the most affected interventions include education, where a project proposal for over US \$2.8 million prepared and submitted in June is yet to receive donor response. The other critical sector is supplementary feeding and nutritional assessment, UNICEF said. The 1999 funding was only able to meet the requirements of the children under-five, pregnant and lactating women, up to December. UNICEF says it needs over US \$8.2 million to be able to fulfill its responsibilities in Eritrea. (IRIN New Briefs, February 25)

Eritrea - Sudan discuss border fighting: Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail flew to Asmara for talks with Eritrean officials on fighting in east Sudan on their common border. According to Sudanese foreign ministry officials, Ismail was making the trip to discuss security developments following an offensive by the Sudanese opposition against government forces in Kassala State bordering Eritrea, which the armed forces said had been repelled. Asmara still hosts Sudanese opposition political parties and armed forces which Khartoum believes launched the attack from Eritrea, despite last January's establishment of full diplomatic relations between Sudan and Eritrea and border security accords. Ismail later told reporters in Asmara that Khartoum and Asmara are in contact over the incidents and that President Omar al-Beshir Monday telephoned Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki to discuss the situation. He did not directly accuse the Eritrean authorities of involvement in the offensive and said Beshir had also thanked the Eritrean government for trying to persuade Sudanese opposition factions to accept a peaceful settlement of the Sudan problems. (AFP, March 22)

Government & UNHCR dismiss "opposition" claims: The Eritrean government and UNHCR have denied accusations allegedly from the opposition Sewrawi Democratic Front for Eritrea (SDFE) that the decision to repatriate Eritrean refugees living in Sudan is "short-sighted" and does not care about the future of the returnees. "Organized or spontaneous repatriation has been going on for the past eight years in which some 160,000 people have returned to Eritrea," Eritrean government spokesman Yemane Ghebre Meskel told the UN's Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) in Nairobi. "These people are usually repatriated on a voluntary basis with the help of the government's Commission for Relief and Refugee Affairs and UNHCR," he said. "It has been established that there are about 100,000 Eritreans currently in Sudan but their return all depends on whether they want it or not," he added. UNHCR, for its part, told IRIN that it is planning to go back to the country after being expelled in 1998. "It is true recently UNHCR discussed the return of its staff to Eritrea and about the refugees in Sudan," UNHCR spokesman in Geneva Jacques Franquin told IRIN. "It is UNHCR's mandate to facilitate the return of refugees who indicate the desire to do so on voluntary basis," he said. (IRIN-CEA Weekly Round-up, February 18)

DJIBOUTI

Diplomatic relations with Eritrea to be restored On March 11 Djibouti announced it was ready to resume diplomatic relations with Eritrea, broken off in November 1998. "Thanks to the continuous mediation" of Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi, "the Djibouti government on Saturday believed conditions right and the obstacles overcome for a resumption of diplomatic ties with Eritrea," the foreign ministry said in a statement. The break-off of relations followed an accusation by Eritrea that Djibouti was supporting Ethiopia in its border conflict with Eritrea. The Djibouti government has always rejected the accusation. Djibouti in turn accused Eritrea of supporting a rebellion by the radical wing of the opposition Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), with whom the Djibouti government signed a peace deal early February. Eritrea in turn

announced it was ready to restore relations with its neighbour. "We welcome the statement from Djibouti and we are prepared to normalize diplomatic ties," Yemane Ghebremeskel, spokesman for the Eritrean government, told AFP. In a statement released by the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, acknowledgement was given to the role played by Libyan leader Colonel Muammar El Kadhafi and "other friendly governments" in facilitating an agreement between the two governments. (AFP, March 11 & 13; Eritrean MFA, March 13)

Djibouti government signs peace deal with rebels: The Djibouti government and the radical wing of the opposition Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) have signed a peace deal in Paris calling for an end to hostilities and the release of prisoners. Ali Guelleh Aboutaker, chief of staff to President Ismael Omar Guelleh, said the accord "will progressively pave the way for a long-lasting and just peace in Djibouti." FRUD leader Ahmed Dini said the deal, signed at a Paris hotel, calls for the immediate release of prisoners held by both sides. He said 10 prisoners were being held by FRUD and 47 by the government. The FRUD initiated an armed rebellion against the government in 1991, but then president Hassan Gouled Aptidon, who ruled the former French colony located at the junction of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden for 22 years, brought a major FRUD faction into a power-sharing deal in 1993. Sporadic clashes between the radical wing and the armed forces have continued since then. Of the 29 prisoners that FRUD said were eligible for release only one was initially willing to leave jail, the others insisting that they would remain until agreement was reached on the release of a further 23 opposition prisoners who belong to the Issa clan. Journalists at the scene later confirmed the 28 had left government custody in accordance with the peace deal. (AFP, February 7, 9 & 10)

SUDAN

Swiss NGO buys freedom for 4,000 Sudanese slaves: Christian Solidarity International (CSI) has said it has bought the freedom of a further 4,092 slaves in Sudan. The Zurich-based Protestant non-governmental organization said it had liberated 25,053 slaves since 1995 using the controversial method at the price of US \$50 dollars per head paid to slave traders. Most had been abducted in southwestern Bahr el Ghazal Province in raids by Muslim tribes from the north as well as by northern pro-government armed forces, the CSI claimed. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has criticized the buying-back of slaves, saying the practice did not eradicate the cause of the problem: the civil war between southern rebels who are mainly animist or Christian and the ruling north, which is Arabised and mainly Muslim. (AFP, February 1)

UN human rights rapporteur arrives in Sudan: United Nations Human Rights Rapporteur Leonardo Franco arrived in Khartoum February 20 to begin a 10-day mission to study complaints that there were still threats to human rights in Sudan. The chairman of the Sudanese Group for Human Rights, Ghazi Suleiman, told AFP that his organization would tell Franco, "the situation has improved in form but not in substance." Arrests and security raids "have ceased, but this could be temporary," as restrictive laws like the national security act "are still in force, which means the authorities can still hold people in custody," Suleiman said. "Press freedom is not guaranteed as the law shackling this freedom is still effective," said the opposition lawyer, adding that the trade unionist movement is also bound by the existing 1992 law. In addition to seeing government officials concerned with human rights, the rapporteur was scheduled to visit Juba and Wau towns in south Sudan and Ad-Diain in south Darfur, southwest Sudan. Franco's visit was ignored by the official media. (AFP, February 20)

UN plane seized by Sudanese pro-government militia: Armed pro-Khartoum militiamen seized a United Nations plane with four persons on board demanding the release of colleagues allegedly held by anti-government rebels. The pro-government militiamen, whose organization was not named, seized the UN World Food Programme (WFP) aircraft in the Panjak region of southern Sudan, the government Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) said. The seizure was in reprisal for the detention of three of their leaders by their enemies in the southern Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) with the alleged help of the UN agency, an HAC statement said. The HAC charged that the detained militia leaders were flown in a WFP plane on January 28 from Lokichokio airport in north Kenya to Panjak and then to a secret destination in Unity State, on the grounds that they were being summoned by their superiors, where they were held in custody by an armed SPLA

group. When their comrades in Panjak heard the news, they held up another WFP plane and its four-person crew, vowing not to release them until the militia leaders were freed, HAC said. After being held for a week four UN workers on board the plane were released. According to a UN spokesperson the four were "okay, but exhausted." Three of them - a US national working for the UN Children's Fund UNICEF, and two Kenyan pilots - were flown aboard a UN plane to Lokichokio, in northern Kenya, where the UN-sponsored humanitarian Operation Lifeline-Sudan (OLS) is based. The fourth man, a Sudanese locally employed by UNICEF, was taken to Malakal, capital of south Sudan's Upper Nile State. The multi-agency Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) later confirmed it was investigating Khartoum's allegation that the flight had been carrying military commanders. American UN security officer Lee Peterson, among four hostages held for a week, told reporters that his captors "...accused the UN of moving some military personnel around in southern Sudan," adding, "I deny it. We did not do it." Following the conclusion of the internal investigation, UN spokesperson Fred Eckhard in New York confirmed that the plane had unwittingly carried three militia commanders, provoking the incident. (AFP, February 5, 10 & 11; UN New York, March 10)

1.7 million people in Sudan going hungry. In appealing for US \$58 million to deal with the crisis, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) says some 1.7 million people in Sudan are going hungry because of insecurity, drought, floods and bans on humanitarian flights. "Despite an overall better harvest and improvement in the nutritional situation across the country, hunger will continue to stalk about 1.7 million Sudanese people affected by war, drought and floods this year," WFP said. Insecurity has hindered cultivation in regions where rains have been adequate and a combination of insecurity and refusal by authorities to permit humanitarian flights to some of the most affected areas has prevented the WFP from delivering aid. The situation was most critical in northern Bahr el Ghazal and Western Upper Nile, the agency said. Conditions in Aweil West in northern Bahr el Ghazal were "desperate" and "rapidly worsening" due to a combination of militia raids, internal displacement and exceptional flooding in low-lying areas. Insecurity along the railway line which links the government-held garrisons of Wau and Aweil, was also plaguing people in Aweil West. Latest reports from the field indicated that up to 40,000 people had fled the region to neighbouring Bahr el Ghazal in the past few months, with many eking out a living in malarial swamps east and west of the towns of Koch and Nyal. Some 250,000 people in Western Upper Nile - half the population of the area - would need food aid this year, according to the WFP report. "While conflict continues, conditions for a return to famine remain an ever-present spectre," it added. (AFP, February 18; IRIN News Briefs, February 24)

Sudan's Machar tenders resignation: Senior pro-government south Sudanese Riek Machar - a former rebel - has resigned as assistant president as well as chairman of the governing body in south Sudan. Machar also resigned as leader of the United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF) but retained his leadership of the South Sudan Defense Forces, according to UDSF spokesman Makwac Teny Youk. Machar accused the government of having sent troops to fight his soldiers - also former rebels - in southern Unity state since September 1997, Youk said. This was a reference to fighting between the United Army militia faction of Paulino Mateb, who holds the rank of major general in the government army, and the forces loyal to Machar. Machar was previously number two in the Sudan People's Liberation Army, made up mainly of black southern animists and Christians who have been fighting for 16 years to rid the south of Arab and Islamic domination. He defected to the government side in 1997. Analysts said it was unclear whether Machar intended to throw his lot in with the rebels once again, but Youk said: "I do not think the resignation would mean that Machar will rejoin the rebellion." Beshir had not yet decided whether to accept the resignations, he added. Youk said Machar wrote that the reasons that prompted his resignation included the failure by the government to implement a peace agreement it concluded with a number of south Sudanese factions, including that of Machar, in Khartoum in April 1997, when they switched sides, and its failure to consult the Coordination Council in recently appointing new governors for the southern Sudanese states. It was later reported that after escaping death in a clash between his forces and those of his rival in Al-Wihda State Machar had gone to Kenya. News reports said that he had been flown from the battlefield where his SSDF forces were fighting a militia headed by Major General Paulino Mateb east of the state capital Bentiu. The claim was denied by SSDF official James Doyiech. "He has his own movement, he's in his region," he said speaking to reporters from Machar's residence in Kenya. (AFP, February 5 & 8)

School hit in air attack Sudanese government warplane dropped a bomb on a school in a rebel-controlled area of southern Sudan, killing 13 children and wounding many others, a spokesman for the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) claimed. The bomb was dropped by an Antonov plane, fell on the school at Kaouda in the Nuba Mountains in the southern Kordofan state on February 8 according to the claim. "One of their aims (Khartoum's) is to bomb civilian targets to terrorize the population so that they move to the so-called peace camps in government-controlled areas," the spokesman said. There was no military target in the school's vicinity, he added. Khartoum later admitted that it may have inadvertently hit the school during an air strike on a rebel-held area in the central Nuba mountains. "The area in which the incident occurred is a military operations area where the rebels gather their forces," Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail told the official SUNA news agency. "If there were civilians gathered in that area it is regrettable and the government hopes it will not happen again," Osman said, adding it was not his government's policy to attack non-military positions. (AFP, February 9 & 14)

Peace talks falter: Following a last minute change of venue, peace talks aimed at ending Sudan's civil war finally got underway on February 22 in the town of Nanyuki, 153 kilometers north of the Kenyan capital Nairobi. The previous round of talks - brokered by the east African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) - ended in January in deadlock over the issue of the separation of religion and state. It was later reported that after six "very acrimonious" days the current round of talks also failed with the two sides still unable to reach agreement on the same issues. "Doctor Nafie Ali Nafie (head of the government delegation) played an instrumental role in wrecking the talks by his repeated attempts to rewrite history and distort facts," the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), said in a statement. It said the two camps' positions on the key issues of territorial delineation - notably whether the Abyei area lies in the Bahr al-Ghazal state, which the SPLA sees as part of a possible autonomous southern Sudan, or in the neighbouring Southern Kordofan, claimed by Khartoum - and of the separation of church and state, remained unbridgeable. "As far as the SPLM/SPLA is concerned the constitution shall be secular and all other legislation shall take into account the multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural character of the people of Sudan" the statement said. (AFP, February 21 & 26)

Relief organizations set to withdraw from SPLM areas: At the end of February, at least eight international NGOs were to cease all operations in areas controlled by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). They had refused to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the coordination of relief activities with the movement's humanitarian wing, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Association (SRRA). The SRRA said 26 organizations had signed the agreement ahead of the March 1 deadline. Among those who have refused to sign are some of the major players in south Sudan: World Vision and Care International, as well as Medecins sans frontieres (MSF)-Holland, Oxfam, Save the Children (SC-UK). However the single-biggest NGO operating in south Sudan, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), has signed the document. At the heart of the matter, according to humanitarian sources, is the issue of how to deliver aid into a war situation. NGOs and donors are concerned about the role of the rebels in distributing relief supplies and providing security, as well as the political independence of NGOs who sign such a "formal, legal agreement". Earlier, the United States said it deplored the decision by the rebel group to expel relief organizations from its territories if they do not sign the memorandum of understanding. State Department spokesman James Foley said in a statement that Washington has been generally supportive of the SPLA in the past and is considering direct food aid to the group. He said a decision to carry through on the expulsions would hurt those chances. Expulsion orders "would necessarily influence (Washington's) assessment of the SPLA's commitment to addressing the overall situation in southern Sudan," he said. (AFP, February 25; IRIN, February 29)

US could help end civil war: The United States could help end Sudan's 17-year civil war if it took an impartial stand and improved ties with Khartoum, Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Ismail said. "The US should be impartial if it wants to contribute to achieving peace in Sudan," Ismail told a press conference. "The US has to play a role in resolving the conflict in Sudan but cannot do so as long as the bilateral relations are strained and as long as it is not impartial," he added. Ismail also said he had conveyed the same message to visiting US presidential envoy Harry Johnston. Johnston arrived in Khartoum March 4 on what was described as a groundbreaking visit to discuss peace, rights and relief in Sudan. US officials have said Washington is trying to re-engage the

Islamist government in Khartoum, which it says is a state sponsor of terrorism and condemns for its actions in the civil war. (AFP, March 5)

NDA council meeting leads to split. Sudan's influential Umma Party has resigned from the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) following coalition talks held in the Eritrean capital, Asmara. "The Umma Party quit because we thought these people were not serious," party's general secretary, Omar Mureldayem, told AFP. "The others are against Umma because Umma is for a political settlement. The NDA is doing nothing, they are unaware of the changes in the region and they are not for negotiations," he added. The announcement came after the Umma Party of Sudan's former prime minister Sadek al-Madhi walked out of the meeting in protest at a decision to reorganize the NDA leadership. During the preceding discussions Sadek al-Madhi "called on the NDA to take note of the changes in Khartoum and move towards reconciling with the regime so they can work within the process for democracy." Seven of the NDA's eight member parties then endorsed a proposal by the Beja Congress party to suspend the NDA coalition's executive committee and replace it with an interim executive committee. On his part, Sudanese rebel leader John Garang called for a thorough shake-up of the opposition alliance which groups his southern guerrilla army with movements from the north of the country. Speaking at the meeting in Asmara, Garang said Sudan's ruling Islamic regime had been weakened by internal rivalry and was "at the crossroads." "The future of the NDA and the people of Sudan could hinge on conclusions and decisions taken in this meeting," said Garang. The SPLA is the largest of eight opposition groups in the NDA coalition. Garang said the current organization of the NDA was paralyzing its decision-making leadership council and executive committee and said the movement must "revamp and revitalize" to exploit "divisions in Khartoum." (AFP, March, 10, 14 & 16)

State of emergency extended. The Sudanese cabinet has decided to extend the state of emergency declared three months ago until the end of the year, an official said. The state of emergency was declared December 12 by President Omar al-Beshir amid a power struggle with the speaker of parliament, Hassan al-Turabi. Beshir dissolved the assembly, which was preparing to pass legislation curbing the president's powers. The cabinet considered the "reasons behind the state of emergency to be still in place," the official said on condition he not be named. Under the state of emergency, the government has greater powers to arrest people and to prevent political gatherings, although there have been no perceptible changes in daily life here. (AFP, March 12)

SOMALIA

Ethiopia blamed for attacks in southern Somalia: One of the main armed groups in Somalia has accused a rival movement of attacking areas it controls with the backing of Ethiopian troops, an allegation Addis Ababa denies. Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) "militiamen with uniforms from neighbouring Ethiopia are provoking the security of Alafuto, Dhcaraha, Warbo, Bananey villages in the Lower Shabelle region after massive looting," Abdullahi Halane Dhuhulow, a senior associate of warlord Hussein Mohamed Aideed told AFP. Dhuhulow said that during attacks the RRA fighters were wearing Ethiopian uniforms and that Ethiopian troops, who did not speak Somali, were also present. An Ethiopian official in Nairobi denied the claims. "Ethiopia is not arming one faction against the other, the allegations are outrageous," counselor Mengistu Ayalew told AFP. Later in March, Moqdishu warlord Hussein Aideed publically accused Ethiopia of annexing part of southern Somalia and promoting factional hostilities there. Speaking to reporters, Aideed also charged that Ethiopia had planted landmines, which he said, were killing and maiming civilians in the agriculturally fertile Lower Shabelle region. "Ethiopian soldiers who have occupied the towns of Luq, Dollow, Bulohawo in Gedo region have brought their children and imposed taxation. No patriotic Somali will accept the seizure of land by Ethiopia" said Aideed. His Somali National Front faction, which controls the Gedo region, has in the past accused Ethiopian troops of levying taxes on goods mainly imported from neighbouring Kenya. Gedo borders on Kenya. Meanwhile, as fighting intensified in the southern Lower Shebelle region, media reports indicated a growing number of killed and wounded. Moqdishu newspapers reported that the fighting involved some 30 battle wagons. "We killed 20 militiamen of warlord Hussein Mohamed Aideed, supported by religious groups, while we lost three of our own fighters and 10 wounded," RRA-appointed Bay regional governor Mohamed Aden Ali Qalinle told AFP by telephone from south-central town of Baidoa. Meanwhile it was reported that the splinter Rahanwein Salvation Army (RSA) had taken

control of Burhakaba, about 190 kilometres west of Moqdishu. The RRA had controlled the town since June last year when it drove out militiamen loyal to south Moqdishu warlord Hussein Mohamed Aideed. (AFP, February 2, 5 & 9, March 21)

Aid body warns unrest may prevent the delivery of relief. Militia and factional rivalries are preventing delivery of humanitarian assistance to thousands of people in desperate need in many parts of southern Somalia, aid officials in Nairobi warn. A statement from the multi-agency Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB) said that the prospect of escalating conflict among contending militia forces in some regions in the south could lead to even greater suffering amongst civilian populations and compound the considerable difficulties humanitarian workers already face. "We are extremely concerned about the increasing number of attacks upon humanitarian workers and convoys carrying relief assistance," SACB's executive committee, which comprises UN agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations, warned. "These attacks have already prevented considerable assistance from arriving at needy villages, as the normally used corridors for delivery are being shut down," the statement added. The statement appealed to those who claim to hold authority in troubled regions to meet obligations to ensure that humanitarian organizations were given full and unencumbered access to populations in need of life-saving assistance. (AFP, February 8)

Djiboutian peace plan revealed: President Ismael Omar Guelleh of Djibouti has put forward a peace plan for Somalia which calls for the creation of a transitional assembly that would then elect a president and a prime minister. The prime minister would in turn form a cabinet, according to a draft of the plan seen by AFP. The process leading to the Somalia National Peace Conference, which is expected to be held in Djibouti in April, "shall be led and driven by the Somali civil society," the document said. The proposed transitional assembly would meet in May in Moqdishu to elect a president. The peace conference will follow civil society symposiums and a ministerial meeting of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The document forewarns that the plan will need both political and financial support from the international community. "During the transitional period, which may last up to two years, there will be real need for an urgent provision of funds". Guelleh's plan also includes provision for the total disarmament of all militias in Somalia and new measures to punish clan chiefs who break the accords. - Ministers at an Organization of African Unity conference in Addis Ababa unanimously approved Djibouti's peace plan for Somalia. The plan already has the approval of the UN Security Council and IGAD. It was later revealed that three prominent Somali leaders had gone to Libya for talks ahead of the proposed reunification conference in Djibouti. All the three leaders, Moqdishu warlord, Hussein Aideed, President Egal of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland and leader of the north-eastern autonomous regional administration of Puntland, Abdullahi Yusuf, were thought to be opposed to the Djibouti initiative. In later news stories it was reported that Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi had informed Djibouti of his intention to revive the resolutions of the Cairo peace conference which called for the formation of a national government. According to a report in the Moqdishu "Ayaamaha" newspaper, Libya had accordingly told Djibouti to stop organizing the Somali national conference. A Somali faction leader was quoted as saying that Libya had pledged to pay the salaries of Djibouti government employees and army for two years if it dropped its plans to hold the conference. The paper reported Libyan government officials as saying the initiative had the support of Egypt, Italy, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia. (AFP, February 7 & March 10: *The Monitor*, March 13; BBC Monitoring Service quoting 'Ayaamaha', March 18)

Somali warlord returns to Moqdishu after 10-month absence: Somali warlord Ali Mahdi Mohamed has returned to Somalia after a 10-month absence to the jubilation of the residents of his north Moqdishu strongholds, witnesses said. Thousands of people filled the dusty airstrip in north Moqdishu carrying placards to welcome their faction leader, who since April last year has been in Egypt, from where he paid visits to Saudi Arabia and Djibouti. Dozens of battlegroups belonging to all of Moqdishu's factions except those of rival warlord Musa Sudi Yalahow took positions at north Moqdishu's Aisaley airport and roads leading to it, with gunmen searching vehicles to and from north Moqdishu. "The Somali people are running out of time, they need to seize the opportunity and join the peace proposals by Djiboutian President Ismael Omar Guelleh," Ali Mahdi told his supporters on arrival. (AFP, February 18)

KENYA

Moi reaffirms intention to step down in 2002: Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi has reaffirmed his stated intention to step down when his mandate runs out in 2002. At his first press conference in nearly two years, Moi, who has been in power since 1978, said, "In the year 2002 I will retire but I want to leave Kenyans united." The president, whose age is given officially as 75, was reelected in December 1997 for a five-year term and is constitutionally barred from seeking another term. Moves to revise the constitution were begun in 1997 with the aim of limiting presidential powers, but were dropped. Moi also reaffirmed his desire to "eradicate corruption," a chief concern of the International Monetary Fund, which has a team of experts currently in the east African country to study progress since aid was suspended in mid-1997. (AFP, February 3)

Moi denounces arms sales to Horn of Africa: Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi denounced arms sales to conflict zones in the neighboring Horn of Africa, warning of worsening instability. "I would like to register Kenya's strong opposition to the shipment of arms to various theatres of conflicts or any other forms of external intervention in the Horn," Moi told reporters in Nairobi. The Horn of Africa is beset with three conflicts: the border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea that ignited in May 1998; Sudan's 17-year-old civil war, and inter-clan warfare that has raged in Somalia since 1991. Moi charged that unnamed countries outside Africa were planning to send arms to the region. "I hope Europe and the US will take action," he said. "It would be inadvisable for extraneous influences to enter our region, as this will only complicate an already difficult situation," Moi said, adding: "All those interfering in the area should respect the peoples and leaders in the region." (AFP, February 3)

New census figures less than predicted According to a Kenya television report provisional figures from the 1999 census indicate there are 28.6 million people in Kenya. The figures released by the government indicate that the population is two million less than anticipated, thought to be due to effective family planning strategies and a rising child death rate. Rift Valley Province is most populated with 6.9 million followed by Eastern Province with 4.6 million and Nyanza Province 4.3 million. Central Province comes third with 3.7 million, closely followed by Western Province. There are 2.1 million people in Nairobi. The government released preliminary figures of the 1999 population and housing census, six months after the exercise. The population has risen by 2.9 per cent per year since the last census in 1989 to stand currently at 28.6 million. According to a government spokesperson, the average number of children born to each woman during her reproduction period has declined from seven in 1989 to about five in 1998, and this continued to decline due to concerted efforts the government and other stakeholders have taken, to encourage people to have the number of children they can economically support. Another contributory factor has been the increase in death rate, particularly children mortality, which has been documented by data collected in recent demographic and health surveys. (BBC Monitoring Service quoting KTN TV, February 29)

US grants food relief. The US Government has donated 33,400 metric tonnes of relief food to Kenya to tackle problems in drought-hit areas of the country. The aid was promised by USAID Assistant Administrator for Humanitarian Aid, Hugh Parmer, who was visiting Kenya as part of a five nation tour of the Horn of Africa to assess the drought situation. Parmer said that he was encouraged by the recent announcement by the Kenyan authorities that the government would now leave food aid distributions to NGOs and foreign donors. "Government involvement is usually motivated by politics, where everybody is given as everyone votes," he said. He added that short term funding to organizations will be linked to longer-term development projects for sustainability. Parmer appealed to the European Union, Japan and other donor countries to join the US in helping to alleviate famine in the Horn. (PANA, March 18)

UGANDA

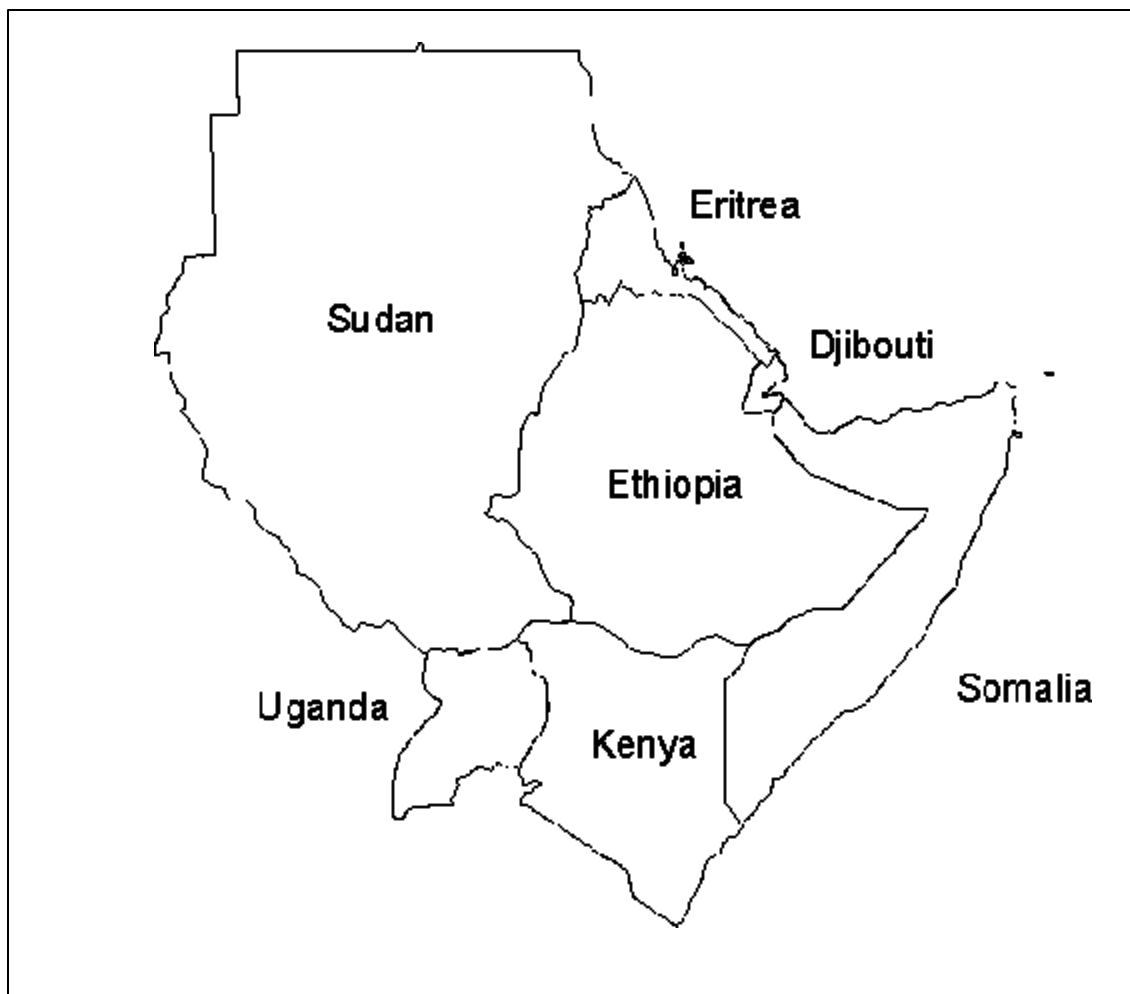
Museveni unhappy with Uganda-Sudan peace agreement Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has thrown cold water over a rapprochement deal he signed in Nairobi in December with his Sudanese counterpart Omar al-Beshir. Museveni told a news conference he had no faith in the agreement and described himself as a "doubting Thomas waiting to be convinced." "When we met in Nairobi, Beshir wanted us to restore diplomatic relations. I said yes, but on condition that Sudan brought back all the kidnapped children and then disarmed, disbanded and relocated all bandits operating against Uganda from Sudan," Museveni said. "They have not done that. Why should I have faith in this agreement? I am a doubting Thomas waiting to be convinced," Museveni told the press conference, adding: "We are still in the agreement, but we are not satisfied with the implementation." In the deal signed December 8, Museveni and Beshir pledged to work towards restoring diplomatic relations, which were broken off in 1995. They also pledged to stop supporting and harbouring each other's rebels and to return prisoners of war, which in the case of Sudan meant returning children and adults abducted by rebels of Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Meanwhile, the Sudanese As-Sahafi ad-Dawli daily quoted Sudan's Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail as saying his government would abide by a provision of the agreement banning exchanges of accusations by the two governments. "The sponsor of the agreement [former US president Jimmy Carter] has asked us not to respond to the accusation by the Ugandan president and has told us he is aware that the Sudan is carrying out its part of the agreement," Ismail was quoted by the daily as saying. "In spite of the attack by Museveni, we will never breach the agreement even if it is violated by the other party," he added, stressing that his government "will fulfill its obligations as stipulated in the agreement". (AFP, February 1 & 3)

Cattle rustlers kill Karamojong Cattle rustlers from Kenya and Sudan killed at least 40 members of the Ugandan Karamojong tribe during a recent cross-border raid, a local newspaper reported. The state-owned New Vision daily said 43 members of the Karamojong tribe were killed, and 3,000 head of cattle stolen in the attacks by Turkana tribesmen from Kenya and Toposa from Sudan. About 100 Karamojong were wounded during the attacks. "It was major attack. The raiders were over 1,000. They battled for three days and drove the animals to Kenya," a local official, who was wounded in the attack, told the newspaper. Local security officials were quoted as saying that most of the victims were women and children. The Turkana are said to have launched the attack in retaliation for a Karamojong cattle raid last November in which 1,500 livestock were stolen. Cattle rustling is a way of life for the herder communities living in northwestern Kenya, northeastern Uganda and parts of southern Sudan. (AFP, February 7)

More people flee as rebel attacks intensify Escalating attacks by rebels in northern Uganda has forced more than 100,000 people to flee their homes over the last six weeks, according to the World Food Programme (WFP). The number of displaced people in the most affected regions of Kitgum and Gulu could be up to 435,000, according to WFP estimations. They have moved towards camps, which already host 300,000 Ugandans who have fled previous attacks. A period of relative peace in 1999 encouraged thousands of displaced families in camps in the two areas to return home, WFP spokeswoman Christiane Berthiaume said, adding the agency was helping those on the ground by giving food in return for work. Thousands of Ugandans are involved in reconstruction projects. Lacking security means WFP staff cannot closely gauge how many people are affected, and precise figures are not available, Berthiaume said. (AFP, February 8)

Call to postpone vote on "no-party" system: An umbrella group campaigning for an end to Uganda's "no-party" system of government has called for a referendum on the issue to be delayed because of lack of funds. "We want the referendum to be delayed by six months because the process of facilitating the committee has already been delayed by six months. This facilitation is needed to help mass mobilization," Nelson Ochege, chairman of the Multi-Party National Referendum Committee, told AFP. Ugandans are due to vote in the middle of this year to decide whether to return to political pluralism or to retain the current "Movement" system of government - described by supporters as an alternative form of democracy and by detractors as a disguised one-party state. Parliament last year approved 360 million Ugandan shillings (US \$235,000) to fund campaigns on both sides. (AFP, February 10)

THE HORN OF AFRICA



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SOURCES:

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

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