



February / March 2001

HIGHLIGHTS

Djibouti

Djibouti names a new Prime Minister.

Eritrea

The United Nations and the government of Eritrea appealed for US\$ 224 Million to assist 2 million people.

Ethiopia

Meningitis outbreak claims 141 lives.

Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau claims over 300,000 people in the Somali Region lack drinking water.

Sudan

3,200 child soldiers airlifted from the Sudanese People's Liberation Army.

Kenya

Outbreaks of malaria and Typhoid claim 100 lives.

Somalia

Somalia requests the United Nations to open an office in Mogadishu.

28,000 students rally at Mogadishu stadium in support of Somalia Government.

REGIONAL ISSUES

Ethiopia withdraws: The United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) confirmed Ethiopian troops withdrawal from Eritrea to positions held prior to May 1998. The mission, however, reported that Eritrea has not yet withdrawn from the 25 km buffer zone. UNMEE spokesman Fred Eckhard said "a significant concentration of Eritrean troops remains in all three sectors of the buffer zone". Eritrea halted the repositioning of its troops objecting to adjustments made to the original map of the zone, which was hindering UNMEE from establishing the TSZ. (*ENA, March 15 & 9; BBC news On-line, February March 8 & 24; UNMEE, February 8*)

Security Council extends UNMEE mandate: On March 15 the Security Council voted in favor of extending UNMEE's mandate by six months. This decision was in accordance with the Secretary General's recommendation following what he called a "potentially dangerous situation" created by Eritrea's decision to suspend the disengagement of its troops. (*Source same as above.*)

Peacekeeper vehicles struck mines: The United Nations Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea reported that two vehicles belonging to Canadian peacekeepers struck mines near the town of Tsorena, Eritrea. Although no casualties were reported, UNMEE Force Commander, General Patrick Cammaert stressed the necessity of receiving all relevant mine information from Ethiopia and Eritrea to protect the safety of peacekeepers and internally displaced populations as they return to their communities once the Temporary Security Zone is established. Accordingly, the Ethiopian government submitted a "Ten Dangerous Areas" survey report from areas within the Temporary Security Zone (TSZ). (*UNMEE Press Release, March 14*)

Somalia faction leaders meet in Ethiopia: More than eight Somali faction leaders, including Hussein Aideed, Osman Ali Hassan Ato and Mussa Sudi Yalahow (who joined force against the Transitional National Government of Somalia (TNG) on March 2), held talks in Ethiopia to settle their differences and establish a single administration opposed to the TNG. In reaction to the talks being held in Awassa, the Somali government accused the Ethiopian government of interfering in Somalia's national affairs and undermining the TNG's efforts to bring peace in Somalia. However Osman Ali Hassan Ato said the initiative was not an Ethiopian one, and that no Ethiopian officials had been met. He said Ethiopia was being used as a "neutral ground" for the meeting. "We are here to talk among ourselves and with other political leaders from the south currently in Addis" said Osman. Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi also noted that his country is simply mediating between the faction leaders to bring peace to Somalia. (*Addis Tribune, March 15; IRIN, March 9; PANA, March 7 & 6; HornAfrik March 6; BBC News On-line March 8 & 2*)

Last batch of refugees returned home: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), under its voluntary repatriation program, repatriated 650 Ethiopians from Sudan. The refugees are the last batch of the 57,000 Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan. They are said to have fled to Sudan during the Mengistu Haile Mariam regime. (*PANA, March 14*)

ICRC repatriations: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) repatriated 2,180 Ethiopians from Eritrea via the Mereb River on February 23 and March 16. Similarly the ICRC repatriated 220 Eritreans from Ethiopia and 690 Ethiopians from Eritrea via Rama on March 2. ICRC also repatriated 242 Eritrean Prisoners of War (POWs) from Ethiopia to their home country on March 11, bringing the total number of Eritrean POWs repatriated so far to 856. (*Visafric, March 16; ENA, March 11 & Feb. 23; Walta Information Center, March 2*)

Ethiopia starts flight to Hargeisa: Ethiopian Airlines announced that it will begin flights to Hargeisa, capital of the breakaway Somaliland as of 27 March 2001. The Airline said that the service will provide easy access from Hargeisa to different parts of the world through Addis Ababa and will facilitate flights for Somalis in the Diaspora. (*Addis Tribune, March 16*)

DJIBOUTI

Prime Minister appointed: On March 4 Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh named current ambassador to Ethiopia, Dilleita Mohamed Dilleita, as the new Prime Minister to replace Barkat Gourad Hamadou, who resigned on February 6 after holding the post for 22 uninterrupted years. (*AFP, March 4*)

Japan and Djibouti sign agreement: Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono and Djibouti's Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Minister Ali Abdi Farah agreed to continue their friendly and cooperative relations on February 19. Kono pledged to keep supporting Djibouti, which is currently trying to bring peace to Somalia. Farah on the other hand asked for additional assistance claiming that Djibouti's economy is hurting due in part to its efforts for peace in Somalia. (*Kyodo News Service, February 19: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services*)

ERITREA

UN appeals for US\$ 224 million: The United Nations and the government of Eritrea have appealed for US\$ 224 Million to provide food and non-food assistance to people affected by drought and the conflict with Ethiopia. The appeal outlines requirements for food aid, shelter, health, education, water, sanitation and mine clearance to assist 2 million of the 3.1 million population of Eritrea. (*Visafric, February 22*)

MSF set up temporary dispensary: On February 27, Medecins Sans Frontieres France (MSF-F) announced the set up of a temporary dispensary in and around Senafe, southern Eritrea. MSF-France said that although the health condition in Eritrea is not alarming there are cases of tuberculosis and malnutrition. They also revealed their plan to help the Eritrean Ministry of Health to establish health services and to set up a temporary hospital in the Senafe town. (*IRIN, March 7*)

Djibouti

Japan and Djibouti
sign agreement to
continue their
cooperation.

Eritrea

UN appeals for US\$ 224
million to mitigate
consequences of
drought and war.

CAPPDE and EDP
claim that ruling
party violated
electoral laws.

ETHIOPIA

Meningitis outbreak: The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reported that 8.4 million people in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray, south Ethiopia and Gambela regions, are threatened by meningitis. Therefore, the agency has appealed for US\$ 609,000 to avert the epidemic that has already claimed 141 lives. So far 1,900 cases have been reported. (*AFP, March 8; WIC, February 27*)

Local administration election: The Ethiopian National Electoral Board (NEB) reported that the election that was carried out on February 25 for the Kebele (local administration) council in Afar, Amhara, Tigray, Oromo and Addis Ababa were peaceful and went according to plan. However, the Coalition of Alternative Force for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAPPDE) claimed to have withdrawn from the election in Siraro district saying that the ruling party, the Ethiopian Peoples Republic Democratic Front (EPRDF) harassed, intimidated, arrested and killed its members in the district. CAPPDE also accused the NEB of “turning deaf ears” on its appeal for a solution. NEB on the other hand dismissed the accusation saying that CAPFDE did participate in the election. Similarly, Ethiopia Democratic Party (EDP) rejected the outcome of the election saying that the EPRDF violated electoral laws. (*Meberk, March 8: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; Ethiopia News Agency, March 4; Walta Information Center, March 1 & February 23*)

Water shortage in Somali region: Mohamed Rashid Haji head of Somali Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (DPPB), said that over 300,000 people in Somali region lack drinking water due to insufficient rain. He said “... almost all water catchments are dry” and noted the region’s incapability in meeting the demand of the rising number of people in need of potable water. He also pointed out the need for support from the federal government and NGOs (non-governmental organizations). (*IRIN, March 7; AFP, March 6*)

The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Commission has revamped its web site. It can be accessed at the following address:

<http://www.telecom.net.et/~dppc/>

SUDAN

SPLA demobilize child soldiers: Out of an estimated 9,000 child soldiers serving in various armed groups in southern Sudan, 3,200 of them, aged between 8 and 18, have been airlifted from the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) in the Bahr el Gazal. The demobilization followed a pledge in October by SPLA leader John Garang to UNICEF Executive Director, Carol Bellamy, to demobilize all child soldiers. The ongoing operation that is being undertaken by UNICEF will rejoin the former soldiers with their families after the soldiers receive education, vocational training and trauma counseling. Children whose parents can not be traced will be placed under long-term care of local authorities. The Sudanese government, however, opposed the evacuation and sent a memorandum claiming that UNICEF did not consult the government when demobilizing and settling the soldiers in rebel control area and considered the evacuation an “...irresponsible act and a violation of all agreements signed with the UN, which require prior approval and complete transparency”. (*AFP, March 4 & March 1 & February 27; Reuters March 4 & 1 & February 27; AP February 27*)

Sudan complains to UN human rights envoy on increasing human rights abuse.

Sudan human rights group complains of abuse: Sudanese Group for Human Rights (SGHR) briefed United Nations human rights envoy Gerhart Baum on what it called increasing government human rights abuse. The group complained to Baum, who was in Sudan on a four day visit, that the government restricted its freedom of expression by introducing an act that allowed people to be detained indefinitely without charges and denied access to the judiciary. SGHR also voiced a complaint about the public order act that allows individuals to be arrested on charges such as alleged indecent behavior and punishments that included flogging. The group also protested on laws that bar women from working as a waitress. (AFP, March 11; Reuters, March 10)

US proposal for "one Sudan, two system" formula rejected by Bashir.

US proposes new policy: In an effort to solve 18 years of civil war in Sudan, the United States (US) new administration led by George W. Bush proposed a new policy that called for a "one Sudan, two system" formula, to allow significant autonomy in the south while preserving the country as a single state. The US also called for an international coalition to facilitate a civil war negotiation settlement. Sudanese President Omar el Bashir rejected the proposal. Bashir said the proposal was unofficial and that it was not issued by the American Administration.

In related news Umma leader Sadiq el-Mahdi accepted a US invitation to discuss Sudan's civil war with officials in Washington. Similarly, Sudan's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) also welcomed US interest in solving the civil war but urged the US not to simplify Sudan's problem as only between the north and the south. NDA spokesman Hatim al-Sir Ali expressed his hope that the US proposal on peace would be in harmony with an existing peace initiative by Egypt and Libya and another by the African Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). (AP, March 18; AP, March 18; Suna news agency, 14 March 14: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; AFP March 12 & 11 & 9 ; Reuters March 9)

KENYA

Kenya

Malaria and Typhoid kill 100 people: Since early January outbreaks of Malaria and Typhoid have claimed 100 lives to date with 755 patients reported in hospitals in Kenya. A team of top health officials who visited affected towns associated the death caused by typhoid to persistent sewer bursts and serious waste disposal problems due to sewer pipe blockages. A national investigation on the other hand coincided the outbreak of typhoid with a shortage of water treatment chemicals caused by a tender dispute. In response to the shortage, the Kenya Ministry of Environment said that it dispersed emergency funds to purchase the required chemicals to Embu, where 60 people died as a result of the outbreak. (Daily Nation web site, March 12: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; KTN TV, March 8 & 7: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; East African Standard web site, March 7: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

UN appeals for 9.5 billion shilling to assist 4 million people.

UN appeals for 9.5 billion shilling : The United Nations and the government of Kenya have appealed for 9.5bn shilling to assist over 4 million drought affected people in 20 districts. To provide food assistance, livestock development, vaccinations, social programmes and security. This assistance will lay a foundation for recovery after the drought and for sustainable recovery as well as strengthen and support early warning systems for drought and other natural disasters. (East Africa standard web cit, March 9: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

*Veterinarians from
United Arab Emirates
say Somalia's
livestock are free of
Rift Valley Fever.*

*Mohamed Qauyareh,
main faction leader,
joins the Transitional
Government.*

SOMALIA

Somalia requests UN office in Mogadishu: Somalia's Prime Minister Ali Khalif Galaydh, asked the United Nations to open an office in Mogadishu as part of a "peace-building mission" to monitor the situation in Somalia. Galaydh put the request to the UN envoy to Somalia, David Stephen, during talks on March 16. (AFP, March 16)

Somalia livestock free of Rift Valley Fever: In a bid to restore Somalia's livestock trade with the Persian Gulf region, the United Nations Development Program, FAO and UNCTAD sponsored a visit by a team of veterinarians from the United Arab Emirates to check the health of livestock in Hargeysa, Burco, Berbera, Galkacyo and Mogadishu. The team reported that Somalia's livestock are free of the Rift Valley Fever that led to the ban in September 2000. As a result, there are some expectations that the ban could be lifted soon. On the contrary, a report from HornAfrica on February 20 stated that Somali business already exported hundreds of heads of goats and camels at Bossaso Port for the first time since the ban was imposed. (Xog-Ogaal, March 11: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services; Panafrican News Agency, March 7; HornAfrica, February 20)

Polio immunization campaign: WHO and the UNICEF sponsored a polio immunization campaign in Somalia on March 12 and 13. The campaign was reported to have been relatively successful except for some militiamen who hampered immunization activities in certain areas of Mogadishu. (HornAfrica, March 13)

Students rally in support of government: More than 28,000 students from different schools and universities rallied at Mogadishu stadium in support of the Transitional Government on February 26. The rally was attended by interim President Abdulkassim Salaad Hassan, who addressed the students and pledged to encourage education and recognize the education institutions as soon as possible. (HornAfrica, February 26; BBC On-Line, February 26)

Faction leader supports government: Somalia interim government declared on February 19 that one of Somalia's main opposition faction leaders Mohamed Qauyareh Afrah, has fully joined the Transitional Government. A BBC correspondent said Qauyareh signed an accord with the Transitional Government in return for a ministerial post he occupied on February 26. The reconciliation is predicted to give leverage to the government and ease the demands of remaining faction leaders. (HornAfrica, February 19; BBC On-line, February 26 & 16)

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SOURCES:

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

March 21, 2001

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
www.telecom.net.et/~undp-eue/

