

HORN OF AFRICA *The Monthly Review*

This update covers the period March-April 1998

REGIONAL ISSUES

Addis Forum: On March 8, a two-day international forum for dialogue on trade and investment in Africa was held at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in opening the forum congratulated all sponsors for making the event possible, especially Mohammed al-Amoudin, Chairman of MIDROC-Ethiopia and the main sponsor of the Forum. Prime Minister Meles pointed out that Ethiopia regards foreign investors as partners in development, he also added that investment is critical if Africa is to attain fast economic growth and alleviate the burden of its extreme poverty. The Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni said the viable and sustainable way of co-operation between Africa and the rest of the world is not aid but investment. Museveni also blamed the IMF and the World Bank for trying to impose their "superficial" policies upon poorer countries. World Bank representative William Ryrle said that the Bank forecasts a growth rate in Africa of over 4 per cent a year for the next decade, compared with 2 per cent for the past decade. The Addis Forum wound up March 9 with a call for a stronger partnership between the private sector and governments and for the creation of a more favorable investment. More than 400 African and international financiers took part meeting. In addition to President Museveni of Uganda and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, among the keynote speakers were Joseph C. Wilson of the US National Security Council, and Cyril Ramaphosa, executive deputy chairman of South Africa's "New African Investments" company. (*The Monitor*, March 7-8; *Press Digest*, March 12; *Seven Date Update*, March 16)

Transport of petroleum products by road banned In a bid to curb tax evasion by fuel handlers, the Kenyan government has banned the road transport of petroleum products to Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan. All fuel is to be transported by sea from the Kenyan oil refinery in the city of Mombasa, the energy minister Chrisantus Okemo told reporters. Only licensed fuel traders will be allowed to transship petroleum products by road to Tanzania and Uganda. (*UN IRIN*, March 17)

IGAD holds regional summit: The 6th IGAD Summit of Heads of State and Government, was held in Djibouti on 16 March. In a final communiqué issued by the summit, regional leaders reaffirmed the need to continue to assist Somalia in finding a peaceful solution and stressed that the ultimate responsibility for achieving peace rests with the Somali people. The statement also stressed the need to channel all assistance provided to the peace process through the IGAD mechanism, noting that the proliferation of parallel initiatives can only undermine the objective of accelerating progress towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. The summit had followed a March 14-15 IGAD Council of Ministers, during which Ethiopia had described the peace process in Somalia as being in disarray. (*Ethiopian Herald*, March 17; *UN IRIN*, March 24)

EU fish import ban attacked The UN food and agricultural organization (FAO) has criticized an EU ban on fish imports from East African countries affected by cholera. FAO said a better response would be to support improvements in hygiene, safe water supply, fish processing and storage. The statement stressed the risk of transmission from contaminated fish was negligible. Import restrictions will disturb international trade and may encourage illegal trade. The countries affected by the ban are Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Mozambique. (*UN IRIN*, March 26)

Entebbe summit: US president Bill Clinton took part in a "Peace and Prosperity" summit with seven African leaders comprising: Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, OAU Secretary-General and the finance minister of Zimbabwe. The leaders issued the "Entebbe declaration of Principals", which outlined steps to launch "a process of defining and building a US -

Africa partnership for the 21st century. The declaration acknowledged that in Africa, "There is no fixed model for democratic institutions or transformation", and included a commitment that the US would begin exploring with regional countries, within one month, the creation of an international coalition against genocide. The declaration also says that the leaders would seek to define strategies to integrate Africa into the world economy; strengthen and sustain regional security and African peacekeeping capacity; continue co-operate efforts to resist all forms of cross-border terrorism directed against civilians; pursue dialogue on democratisation. The participants also agreed to work to prevent any new act of genocide in Africa. (AFP, March 20-24 & 25; Addis Tribune, March 27)

Ethiopian foreign minister attends Franco-African conference: Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin has returned to Addis Ababa after taking part in the Franco-African meeting held on March 24 in Ougadougou, Burkina Faso. More than 30 African countries took part dealt at length with security and crises issues in Africa. The meeting emphasised that sub-regional organizations like IGAD and COMESA need assistance in building their capacity if they are too understand and respond to conflicts and crises in Africa. He added that the meeting also mentioned the importance of the co-operation on the part of the UN Security Council with regional and sub-regional organizations. Both France and the African countries have accepted the necessity to revise the Lome Convention signed between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries and the European Union to make it compatible to the existing international trade and economic relations. (The Ethiopian Herald, March 27)

5th OAU/ICRC seminar on humanitarian law held: On March 30 at the UN Conference Center in Addis Ababa a two-day joint OAU/ICRC seminar was convened to consider the "Implementation of International Humanitarian Law in the Context of Anarchic Conflicts". Ethiopian Deputy Foreign Minister Tekeda Alemu opened the meeting by slamming the international community for not doing more to support the peace process in Somalia. The meeting, seen as a forum where African ambassadors accredited to the OAU could participate in discussions on the application of humanitarian law in conflicts, ended having considered the relations between the different humanitarian actors, the challenges to humanitarian action in conflict situations in Africa, the role of African NGOs and the trial of war criminals. (ICRC/OAU, March 31; Press Digest, April 2)

DJIBOUTI

Japan's aid: Japan has granted US \$2 million dollars in aid to Djibouti to buy fire engines, rescue vehicles and ambulances. (AFP, March 2)

Ethio-Djibouti air transport bill: The Ethiopian Council of Ministers recently discussed and referred to the House of People's representatives a bill providing for the ratification of the Djibouti air transport accord. The bill mentions the 1997 agreement on the basis of which air transport services were so far conducted between the two countries. The agreement paves the way for freight transport between the capital and Djibouti avoiding the restriction of the services to Dire Dawa alone. (Press Digest, March 19)

Port traffic increasing: Only four years ago the port of Djibouti offered no reliable alternative to the Eritrean port of Assab for Ethiopia's outgoing and incoming goods. At the time of Haile Selassie, more than 75 per cent of Ethiopia's goods transited through Djibouti. Though it may take some time before this figure could again be restored, the last few years has seen a significant increase in the volume of traffic handled by the port. The establishment in Addis Ababa of the port's representative office, Port Autonomy International de Djibouti, has contributed towards assisting those who wish to make use of the facilities available. The port has fast shipping connections with Europe and the Far East and has the capacity to handle a million tons of cargo through 15 berths and 9 loading/unloading grounds for containers and trucks. (Addis Tribune, March 20)

Refugee camp to close: Authorities in Djibouti have asked the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to close a camp in the west of the country after a series of fatal land mine explosions, including a recent incident when a truck carrying 42 refugees from Assamo camp for medical treatment in Djibouti city hit a land mine. UNHCR will start to transfer the 5,500 Somali and Ethiopian refugees to other camps for security reasons. While it is not known who laid the mines, in the past such incidents have been blamed on the rebel Afar group, Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD). (AFP, March 26)

ERITREA

Afeworki meets the public: In his sixth public question and answer session at the Assembly Hall of Asmara Municipality, President Isaias Afeworki gave replies to questions covering the prevailing political, economic and social situation in the country and Eritrea's relations with neighbouring states. The president said that a constitutional government will be set up following the holding of elections to be held after the committee entrusted with formulating electoral laws has finalised its work. Legal provisions will be enacted with a view to ensuring that the anticipated political organisations are set up within a constructive framework. Afeworki also said that the establishment of a constitutional government should not be viewed only with the existence of political pluralism. Regarding the operations of non-governmental organisations, Isaias said only those NGOs that, among other things, are prepared to conduct their activities within the framework and in accordance with the development strategy formulated by government would be allowed to operate in the country. On the Government's pursuit of good neighbourliness, the President reaffirmed the country's commitment towards consolidating regional peace, security and stability. (*Press Digest/Eritrea Profile, March 5*)

Eritrea-Ethiopia: The Eritrea President, Isaias Afeworki, has said that Ethiopia and Eritrea are now pursuing different economic policies as two independent nations do. He added that Eritrea should make efforts to find markets for its products elsewhere as Ethiopia is not interested in buying Eritrea products. The president stated that his government did not accept the proposal made by the Ethiopian government to make transactions through the "letter of credit" mechanism as it goes against Eritrea policy. The two countries have agreed to trade on commodities whose value do not exceed Birr 2,000 birr (around US \$300), along their borders without restriction. In a related development, a committee composed of Ethiopians and Eritreans will shortly meet to demarcate the exact boundaries between the two states. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 8; Seven Date Update, March 16*)

ETHIOPIA

Meles Zenawi speaks with Financial Times: In an extensive interview with the London-based Financial Times newspaper, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi explained the basis for the economic reforms now taking place in the country. He said that market driven, private-sector economies are the only viable means of creating wealth for a country like Ethiopia. Regarding foreign investment, not privatising telecommunications and the suspension of Ethiopia's agreement with IMF, Meles said that his government brings reforms in its own way and pace. He added, however, that the new amendments to the Investment Code will allow foreign investment in telecommunications, power, and defense industries. The airline industry, however, will remain closed. Regarding businesses associated with the ruling EPRDF party, the Prime Minister said that while their initial capital had been contributed by the EPRDF, these companies now operate independently and are helping to create a dynamic private sector. (*The Addis Tribune, March 6*)

Ethiopia and South Africa sign wildlife management accord: The Foreign Minister of South Africa Alfred Nzo, and his Ethiopian counterpart Seyoum Mesfin, signed a declaration of intent on March 6 covering co-operation in wildlife management. The two officials also met to finalise agreements on various other areas of collaboration. The Ethiopian minister said that the economic and trade co-operation and interactions of the business community with South Africa is at very encouraging stage. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 8*)

Tea and coffee export brings hard currency: Tea development activity in Ethiopia is contributing to the overall efforts in the country to increasing foreign currency earnings, the Coffee and Tea Authority has announced. In the last six months over 100 tons of tea have been exported for over US \$200,000. The coffee trade has generated foreign currency earnings of US \$31.6 million for a total of 59,680 tons exported. Compared to the same time last year, the hard currency earnings from coffee exports has shown a 34 per cent increase. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 4; The reporter, March 25*)

Housing problems in Addis Ababa: The population of Addis Ababa is presently estimated at 3 million with an annual growth rate of 4 per cent. Competing for a total of 280,000 residential housing units in the city are an estimated 600,000 families. According to some studies, over 50 per cent of the residents in Addis Ababa are effectively homeless or living in conditions of extreme hardship. The shortage of housing is especially acute for several thousands of low-income and middle-income families even though many households not having dependable jobs rent their houses to generate income. The shortage of housing and the rising demand in Addis Ababa is also leading to an expansion in the number of illegally built squatter settlements on the outskirts of the city. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 13*)

International Monetary Fund consultations: A two-week-long consultative meeting in February between the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Ethiopian government ended without any agreement being reached. Items discussed included the additional reform measures which the IMF would like to see the government put in place and on which the resumption of the 3-year ESAF (Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility) arrangement is conditional. The measures include further financial sector reform, foreign exchange market and interest rate liberalisation, acceleration of the privatisation programme, future customs and tax reform and investment liberalisation. The two sides have agreed to meet again in May. However, the World Bank has recently approved a US \$509 million credit package for Ethiopia despite the IMF decision to delay resumption of the ESAF. In an interview with Reuters, Prime Minister Meles said that the IMF wanted to see progress in the liberalisation of capital accounts and foreign exchange controls. Meles said Ethiopia had very limited capacity to regulate banks and financial transactions, and added that the government was trying to avoid the pitfalls Asian countries have been through. Other issues on the agenda at the consultations were: the development of a free market for land; return of nationalised properties to their previous owners; the laying down of minimum professional qualifications required for key posts in government ministries; and, providing technical assistance to the independent private press. (*Addis Tribune, March 13; The Monitor, March 14 & 15*)

Coal deposits discovered: Geological experts have said significant deposits of coal, which could be used for the manufacture of fertilisers, power generation and as a substitute for fuel wood, have been found in various parts of Ethiopia. Reserves of up to 60.3 million tons have been found at the Moye, Delel, Chilga and Mush localities in the north and west of the country. The effective exploitation of the deposits, discovered following a study that took 12 years, hinges on the availability of investment capital. Currently, studies have shown that about 75 per cent of Ethiopians depend on the forest for fuel. (*The Reporter, March 18; The Ethiopian Herald, March 13*)

Prime Minister gives semi-annual report to the Parliament: Meles Zenawi has made an extensive review of the performance of his government during the last six months. Presenting it to the 21st regular session of the Ethiopian Parliament on March 5, Meles admitted that because of the failure to renegotiate an agreement with the IMF, the Fund's balance-of-payments support to Ethiopia has been discontinued, adversely affecting the country's public finances. The Prime Minister said the loss of revenue could be tackled by revising the government budget expenditure downwards in order to take into account the reduced foreign assistance. Some other issues were: exports have grown by 24 per cent over the last six months; the rate of inflation has been 0.25 per cent; government revenue totaled Birr 3,438 billion, whereas the state expenditure over the same period was Birr 3,227 billion. (*Addis Tribune, March 13; Press Digest, March 19*)

HIV/AIDS: An AIDS expert has said that HIV/AIDS is being "severely under-reported" in Ethiopia. The official figure for reported AIDS cases stood at 21,569 by the end of 1996 with around 100,000 people thought to have died as a result of the infection. Observers now say at least 2 million people in the country are infected with the HIV virus. Official figures are said to be inconclusive because AIDS/HIV reporting from health institutions across the country are irregular. The Ministry of Health presently has no AIDS figures for 1997 and 1998. About 93 per cent of AIDS affected Ethiopians are found in the sexually active 15 to 49 age groups. (*The Monitor, March 19*)

The potential for food self-sufficiency: In an editorial, the official newspaper, the Ethiopian Herald, focussed on the potential for irrigated agriculture to contribute to ensuring food security in the country. According to some studies, out of the total land suitable for agricultural and animal pasture, less than 20 per cent is actually under production at present. Official sources also show that out of an estimated potential of 3.5 million hectares of land suitable for irrigation development, only 5 per cent has so far been utilised. Fisheries is another sector with considerable scope for growth. Ethiopia has the

potential to produce 2.6 million tons fishery resources every year, while so far the country has managed to tap only 200,000 tons per year due to poor fishing techniques and equipment. In the livestock sector, Ethiopia stands first in Africa and tenth in the world in terms of total livestock population. However, despite the large numbers of cattle, sheep and goats, the livestock sector still remains under-developed. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 19*)

Ethio-Yugoslav hydro plant: The construction of the 80-megawatt hydro plant, Tis Abay II, is in progress through a joint venture between Ethiopian and Yugoslav construction companies. About twenty years ago, the Yugoslavs built Tis Abay I. The new project sees the Yugoslavians engaged in constructing the civil works while Chinese contractors are expected to supply the turbine generators for the main power plant now in the foundation stage. Ethiopia's installed capacity for power generation is in the range of 400 megawatts of electricity, too low for its current development needs. (*Press Digest, March 19*)

Red Terror trials go to the provinces: The Ethiopian news agency (ENA) said that the first provincial trials of suspects accused of taking part in the bloody "Red Terror" campaign under the former regime of Mengistu Haile Mariam have begun in the eastern city of Harar. A former district military chief and eight others are accused of illegally detaining eight people and murdering one. They are also connected with the disappearance of two suspected rebels. In all, Ethiopian courts are due to try 5,198 former soldiers and political activists, of whom around 2,200 are presently behind bars. (*AFP, March, 25*)

European parliamentary delegation in Addis: On March 24 a delegation of British members of the European Parliament arrived on a five-day working visit in Addis Ababa. The mission aimed to obtain at first hand information on the socio-political conditions prevailing in Ethiopia. The head of the parliamentary delegation expressed the wish of the European parliament to continue with the Lome Convention which has been the basis for partnership between EU and ACP countries for a number of years. (*The Ethiopian Herald, March 25; Seven Days Update, March 30*)

SOMALIA

Somaliland newspaper Jamhuriya attacks the government: The editorial board of Somaliland's daily newspaper, *Jamhuriya*, in a letter sent to AFP accused Somaliland's government of attempting to prevent the press from criticising Somaliland's political leadership. The editorial was reacting to a letter to *Jamhuriya* in which the Attorney general Hassan Hirsi warned them against critiquing the national leadership and discrediting Somaliland's image. *Jamhuriya* has accused Hirsi of "undermining democracy". *Jamhuriya* is the only daily newspaper in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. The exchanges were soon followed by the arrest of Hassan Said Yusuf, the chief editor of *Jamhuriya*, and Yassin Ismail, a senior editor with *The Republican*, an English-language weekly. (*AFP, March 3*)

Harvest devastated by floods: The UN World Food Programme harvest assessment conducted in southern Somalia reports that people in areas hit by heavy rain in the Juba and Shebelle river valleys from mid-October to January, inundating 60,000 hectares of farmland, will need food assistance until at least June when the next harvest starts to come in. Maize production has fallen to just 11 per cent of last year's harvest; the sorghum crop dropped by half. WFP fears that more heavy rain in the March to May period could further threaten recovery of the flood-affected farmers. WFP also announced that in response to appeals made last month for \$12.8 million for the emergency flood operation in southern Somalia, the United States has donated 3,620 tons of cereals including a contribution to cover the transport. Other countries have donated a total of \$5.9 million for air operations. The new injection of funds will allow WFP to operate aircraft until the end of March. WFP has supplied a total of 6,933 tons of relief food to the most vulnerable people in central and southern Somalia between January and March 15. (*AFP, March 3 & 27; UN IRIN, March 3*)

Islamic law in the north of Moqdishu: Faction leader Ali Mahdi Mohammed has defended the enforcement of strict Islamic law in his zone of influence, claiming people had suffered since the power of the Sharia courts was curtailed more than a year ago. Ali Mahdi said armed men had shamefully attacked and killed civilians and looted their meager belongings. This led to his decision last month to reactivate the courts whose activities would be applied "without mercy", while also holding discussions with rival leader Hussein Mohammed Aideed, in South Moqdishu, the

establishment of a joint authority for the capital. However, the parts of Moqdishu ruled by Aideed have refused to accept Islamic courts. Observers commented that the Sharia courts rarely punish militiamen, but are active when dealing with minorities. (AFP, March 6)

Al-Itahad captures El Wak The Islamic fundamentalist group, Al-Itahad al-Islam, has captured the Somali border town of El Wak from a rival faction following two days of heavy fighting. 23 people were killed in the fighting together with an unknown number of wounded. General Omar Haji Mohammed, chairman of the Marehan Somali National Front (SNF) said his forces had made a "tactical withdrawal after inflicting heavy damages" and were now regrouping prior to launching an offensive to recapturing the town. Medical workers on the Kenyan side of El Wak were said to be treating the wounded. (Reuters/AFP, March 19)

Rift Valley Fever: UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Dominik Lagenbacher, announced that the outbreak of Rift Valley Fever in Southern Somalia was over following evidence collected by scientists showing that the epidemic had burnt out. The statement went on to say that there was no evidence at all that Rift Valley Fever ever spread beyond the flood affected riverine areas in the south. The investigatory team from WHO, EPICENTER, EPIET, the South African National Institute of Virology, CDC and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, found that the flood-stricken south had suffered a loss of livestock but that the majority of animals died directly and indirectly from the effects of flooding (stress, infections, pneumonia etc.) rather than RVF. (UNCT, March 19)

UN suspends airlift: The United Nations has suspended its relief effort for flood victims in part of southern Somalia after one of its aircraft was attacked by gunmen. The UN has been making more than twenty flights a week into southern Somalia following the flooding, which affected an estimated half-a-million people. WFP reported that, in the first half of March, it supplied just under 2,100 Mt of relief food benefiting 298,000 people in central and southern Somalia. The attack took place at Sakoweyne, in the Lower Juba valley, and was the second such incident since the UN began flying relief supplies in mid-December to assist flood victims. The aircraft involved was able to return to Nairobi safely. (Reuters, March 15; Press Digest, March 19; UN IRIN, March 24)

Baidoa conference rescheduled for May: Somali factions have postponed a planned national reconciliation conference in the disputed south-central town of Baidoa to May 15. The meeting aimed at setting up a federal state and installing a provisional government, had originally been scheduled for February 15, then March 30. Some groups, including the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) in the northeast, the local Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) in Bay region and the authorities in the breakaway Republic of Somaliland in the northwest, have consistently rejected the Baidoa venue and accused Egypt of manipulating the peace process in favour of Hawiye warlords Hussein Mohammed Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohammed. Meanwhile, Somali factions say US \$4.5 million is needed to host the conference (roughly translating to \$10,000 per participant) and that so far the Arab League had managed to raise only \$500,000 from Kuwait and Qatar. (AFP, March 18, 24 & 30)

Heavy fighting in Kismayo In the southern Somali port town of Kismayo fierce fighting between the rival clans left 33 people dead and 100 wounded. Most of the fatalities were the gunmen of the Marehan and Majertien clans firing heavy machine-guns and anti-tank rockets. The Marehan forces in the region are under the command of General Omar Haji Mohamed, while General Mohamed Said Hirsi leads those of the Majertien. Reliable sources said that the town remained under Majertien control. The fighting in Kismayo is expected to further destabilise the neighbouring Juba valley, considered to be Somalia's breadbasket. (AFP, March 30)

Cholera update: Improved case management, continued disinfection of water sources with chlorine, increased community awareness and social mobilisation has led to a decline in the number of cholera cases in Moqdishu and Merca has declined, but both cities still continue to receive cholera patients from outlying areas. Cholera has been bacteriologically confirmed in Bardera, Awdhegle, Belet Weyne, Baidoa, Luuq, Garbahare, Kismayo, Berbera and Jamame. Overall, the outbreak is much larger than that of last year. WHO reports that the total number of cases reported by international organizations and local authorities rose to 8,786 cases with 365 deaths up to 26 March. An intensified vaccination program has been adopted and is under implementation. (UNCT, March 9 & 19; UN IRIN, March, 31)

Somali refugees repatriate from Kenya: UNHCR announced that 700 Somali refugees would be flown from the camps in Dadaab to the northeastern Somali town of Bosasso. The six-day operation will see a UNHCR-hired Hercules C-130 fly the returnees home from the camps where they have been sheltered for the last seven years. Each person will receive a three-month food ration and another \$40 to purchase an additional three months of food on the local market. UNHCR staff based in Bosasso have been overseeing the implementation of "quick impact" projects across the region, including funding for wells, as well as schools, hospitals and income-generating projects. An estimated 134,000 Somalis still live in camps of Dadaab and Kakuma in Kenya. (UNHCR, March 21; AFP, March 19 & 23)

Belgian military abuses: Four more Belgium paratroopers accused of abusing Somali children during the 1993 UN peacekeeping missions in southern Somalia face court-martial. Their trial follows two of their comrades. One of them is being tried for assault and for the first time in a military court, under anti-racism legislation. A paratrooper was later given a three-month suspended sentence for forcing an under-age Somali girl to strip and have sexual relations with a colleague. (AFP, March 25 & 30)

The Somaliland President slams IGAD: Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal of Somaliland has addressed residents of Hargeisa in Khayria Square on issues regarding his foreign policy. He strongly criticized IGAD's policy towards Somaliland saying he is planning to establish closer relations with Gulf countries rather than IGAD and East African countries. The remarks follow an IGAD council of ministers meeting and heads of states summit held in Djibouti from 14-15 March where Egal and a delegation from Somaliland had expected to be given observer status. Prevented from giving a prepared statement, Egal returned to Hargeisa feeling he had been snubbed by the Horn of Africa organisation. (UN IRIN, March 31 and other sources)

Somalia peace efforts lack international support: An Ethiopian official criticised the international community for not effectively supporting peace efforts in Somalia. "There is little doubt that one of the key elements so far missing in the search for a solution to the conflict in Somalia has been the lack of effective support for the peace effort on the part of the international community" said Tekeda Alemu, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Tekeda made the remark at the opening session of the 5th OAU/ICRC Seminar on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law in the Context of Anarchic Conflict, held at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa. Presenting Somalia as a typical example of an anarchic state, Tekeda said that Africa has no monopoly over failed states and the challenges of anarchic conflicts are universal in nature and adding it was "difficult and complex to reconstitute states once they have fallen apart". Meanwhile, according to some analysts, Ethiopia and Egypt have become locked in an intense rivalry for control over the Somali peace process, pointing to conflicting geopolitical agendas. Ethiopia accuses Egypt of sabotaging its efforts, while Egypt maintains that the peace process can follow more than one track and has pledged to cooperate with the six-nation regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to forge a lasting peace in Somalia. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa has criticised Ethiopia saying, "Solving the Somali problem has several aspects: Arab, African and Islamic. Consequently no one can monopolise dealing with the situation in Somalia". In the Ethiopian weekly *Efoytia*, Mussa expanded on this point by saying that the Egyptian role in Somalia was entirely in accordance with the OAU charter and based on fundamental and historical ties that go back thousands of years. The ultimate aim of Egyptian policies are to achieve the realisation of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. In Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian foreign ministry hosted a meeting of the Joint IGAD Partners Forum on March 25. The meeting co-chairman, the Ambassador of Italy, announced that Italy would be calling a meeting of the Partners on the Somalia question in Rome on May 4 to which Egypt would also be invited. (AFP, March 18; *The Monitor*, March 31; *Efoytia*; UNCT Somalia Monitor, March 31)

SUDAN

Oil pipeline project Work on a 1,600-kilometer oil pipeline project to carry crude from central Sudan Hijleij in west Kordofan to a new Red Sea port Bashair harbour south of Port Sudan is due to commence following the signing of four key contracts, Chinese, Argentinian and British companies. The pipeline will deliver 65,000 barrels a day to the new El Obeid and the Al Jaily refineries before continuing on to the harbour at Bashair with 150,000 barrels a day. The pipeline project is expected to be completed in July 1999. (AFP, March 1)

Kerubino escapes assassination: A Khartoum paper reports that the South Sudanese rebel leader Kerubino Kuanyen has escaped an assassination attempt by one of his aides in Warab state. An explosive device planned at Kerubino's residence had gone off minutes before he entered. (AFP, March 3)

IMF to reopen office in Khartoum: The Sudanese Minister of State for Finance has announced after a fund meeting in Washington that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will suspend a decision to expel Sudan from the financial body, because it was satisfied with the country's economic and financial performance during 1997 and its plan for this year. (AFP, March 5)

Yei hospital bombed: On March 5 the southern town of Yei was bombarded by an Antonov plane which destroyed Yei hospital's operating theatre. It was later confirmed that seven people were killed in the attack and 47 injured. The deaths included a nurse and a child. Yei was last bombed 15 of February. (UN IRIN, March 5; AFP, March 5; The Monitor/Reuters, March 7-8)

Sudan-US relationship: The Sudanese Foreign Ministry official said that Sudan and United States should work on improving diplomatic relations and their development in all fields. The private newspaper *Al Ral Al Aam* said it was not clear whether any steps would be taken to start talks. (The Ethiopian Herald, March 10)

Opposition claims military gains: The armed SAF wing of Sudan's northern opposition, the National Democratic Opposition (NDA) claimed in a statement to have seized three districts: Gezirat, Al Fazra and Karima a few dozen kilometers from the Ethiopian border, in February and March. (AFP, March 17)

Sudan to return confiscated Egyptian property: Sudanese President Omar el-Beshir has directed that all Egyptian institutions nationalised by the state in the 1990's should be returned to pave the way for the normalisation of relations. In 1993, Sudan took over the Khartoum branch of Cairo University which was built and administered by Egypt since 1956. Several Egyptian schools around the country as well as other properties owned by the Egyptian Irrigation Ministry in Khartoum and Malakal, were also taken over by the government. (PANA, March 16; The Reporter, March 18)

Sudan-Eritrea border fighting: The Sudanese government in a statement accused Eritrea forces of cross-border attacks and of shelling the villages of Awad, Gulsah and Hudrah in Kassala state. It was reported the attack caused casualties among some unarmed civilians though the number was not specified. Meanwhile, the rebel National Democratic Alliance (NDA) based in Asmara has claimed it killed 80 government soldiers and took 15 captive in an attack in an area 46 miles southeast of Kassala. The statement said forces of the Umma party staged the successful attack. In an interview with the arabic-language daily, *Al-Hayat*, Eritrean president Isaias Afewerki accused Sudan of continuing to infiltrate armed agents into his country. Asmara broke diplomatic relations with Sudan in December 1994. (AFP, March 5; The Reporter/Reuters, March 4; AFP, March 25)

Food security collapse in Bahr el-Ghazal: A senior aid agency official has said that the food security situation in northern and central Bahr el-Ghazal is collapsing. According to the UN World Food Programme, around 350,000 people are at risk and in need of food assistance. This figure includes 248,000 people who faced two consecutive years of low crop yields and need support until the coming harvest. Another 100,000 people arrived from fighting in government-held areas. WFP is asking the authorities in Khartoum for access to 21 locations in the Bahr el-Ghazal region, instead of the 6 sites currently being reached. In a related statement, the director of the NGO *World Vision* in Sudan called for full access to the Bahr el-Ghazal and clearance for aid agencies to operate unhindered. In the statement, *World Vision* called for access to 41 sites for a population of 1.2 million people. Surveys in Tonj and Pacor counties in Bahr el-Ghazal indicated that an average of 50-60 per cent of children under age five were suffering from malnutrition. (UN IRIN, March 20 & 24; AFP, March 25)

Talks between Egyptian and Sudanese ministers: Speaking during a meeting of parliament's foreign affairs committee, the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Amr Mussa, has said his country will soon take action to set up a comprehensive basis for a solution of all Sudan's problems. Mussa said there would be contacts with the Sudanese government, the northern opposition and the southern guerrillas. Egyptian Interior Minister, Habib al-Adli, has met with the new Sudanese Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail, to discuss security issues. Over the past few months ties between Sudan and Egypt have improved. Ismail arrived in Cairo on 23 March for a meeting of Arab League foreign ministers; he also met the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and the Foreign Minister Amr Mussa. At

the latter meeting it was announced that the Sudanese President will visit Cairo in April. (AFP, March 2 & 26; UN IRIN, March 30)

Sudan-Egypt to settle Halaib dispute: Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail has announced Sudan is close to agreement on how to settle the dispute over the northern Halaib territory. The dispute over 17,000 square kilometer triangle of land on the Red Sea intensified in 1992 after Sudan guaranteed a Canadian oil company a concession there. Egypt reacted with a series of measures to strengthen its presence in the area. Cairo says the international border is on the 22nd parallel according to an 1899 Anglo-Egyptian treaty drawn-up during their condominium in Sudan. Halaib is north of the 22nd parallel. However, Sudan says 1902 and 1907 amendments to the treaty created an administrative border farther north, placing the area under Sudanese administration because of ethnic similarities. (AFP, March 20)

Ruling body set up in Juba: It is reported that the interim body set up by Khartoum to rule south Sudan for the next four years has chosen the town of Juba as its headquarters. An official of the South Sudan Coordination Council (SSCC) said that operations would be set up in Juba shortly to oversee the transition period leading to a referendum on the future of south Sudan. (UN IRIN, March 25)

Beshir changes cabinet The Sudanese President el-Beshir unveiled a major cabinet reshuffle, with 12 new faces changing defense and interior ministers and bringing a number of former opposition members in the government team. Former southern rebel, Lam Akol, has entered the government as Transport Minister. Observers in Khartoum say the re-shuffle seems to be aimed at continuing moves towards national reconciliation. However, opposition leader, Sadiq al-Mahdi, dismissed the moves as meaningless gestures offered by a repressive and undemocratic government. South Sudanese politicians now hold the office of second vice-president together with three lesser government posts, but in a memorandum to Hassan al-Turabi, speaker of the national assembly, have demanded further senior posts in exchange for their support for national unity. (AFP, March 9-23 & 24; The Reporter, March 11)

Government claims successes in east: The Sudanese army has claimed major gains over rebels in the eastern Blue Nile state. A "devastating victory" was announced following the recapture of Abigo in Kurmuk province. According to a military spokesman, "This victory is the beginning of a task for liberating Kurmuk and Qeissan and other occupied territories". Kurmuk and Qeissan towns have been in rebel hands since January last year. Parliamentary representatives from further north meanwhile reported that shelling from neighbouring Eritrea had led to more than 150,000 fleeing their homes in the Red Sea and Kassala states. Many were said to be sheltering in temporary camps in the forests and were receiving no aid. (AFP, March 26)

IGAD envoy visits ahead of April talks: The Sudanese president Beshir has met with a delegation from the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), where discussions focussed on the next round of peace negotiations scheduled to take place in Nairobi in April. The IGAD delegation, led by Kenyan presidential envoy Symbeyo Lazaro Kipkurui, arrived in Khartoum 26 March. Beshir was quoted as telling Symbeyo that Sudan remains committed to the IGAD initiative. The delegation was expected to continue on to Nairobi where meetings with representatives of the southern rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had been scheduled. (AFP, March 28)

Malaria epidemic in east Sudan: Authorities in the east Sudanese Red Sea state have called for emergency measures and for immediate medical aid over a malaria epidemic which has claimed 109 lives. 3,000 people are afflicted with the disease in the Dordib district of the state's Sinkat province and new infections are spreading rapidly. (AFP, March 28)

Sudanese draft constitution: The Parliament on 23 March voted down a proposed amendment to the draft constitution, which would have provided for the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Sudan. Instead of the amendment, the assembly endorsed each of the 140 articles of the draft and chose, by 120 votes to 80, to retain an ambiguous provision allowing for some political association. A delegation of deputies handed the draft over to President el-Beshir. He will sign it on June 30 ahead of a referendum on the document expected in July ahead of the rainy season. According to some opposition leaders, however, the efforts of the government in Khartoum to secure endorsement for the new constitution is nothing more than "a cynical quest for democratic credentials". (The Monitor, March 10; AFP, March 23 & 28; UN IRIN, March 30 & 31)

Khartoum sends troops west: Sudanese President el-Beshir is sending troops to western Sudan to maintain order following tribal clashes. Arab tribes had launched assaults on the homes of Mesaleit tribes, another non-Arab Avinga community, killing some people and burning 53 villages in western Darfur. The Governor of Darfur said that the security situation has been restored to normal, thanks to efforts by the central and state authorities. (*AFP, March 31*)

Sudan-inflation: The director of the central statistics department said in a statement that the rate of inflation in Sudan had fallen to a low of 13.7 per cent by the end of March compared to the high of 166.5 per cent registered in June 1996. (*AFP, April 1*)

KENYA

IMF paints bleak economic picture: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) have painted a bleak picture of the Kenyan economy—budget deficit ballooning, GDP growth declining, shilling currency declining, interest rates climbing and inflation rising well beyond initial projections. Central Bank of Kenya Governor Micah Cheserem attempted to put a positive spin on the situation by saying Kenya had faced economic problems despite progress in the last five years in which macroeconomic stability had been restored, economic controls removed and debt service obligations honoured. The IMF set no date for resuming talks on a US \$205 million loan under its soft-terms Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility (ESAF) suspended last July to reinforce their concerns over corruption and poor governance in Kenya. (*The Monitor/Reuters, March 3*)

Banks reopen after threatening strikers: Kenyan banks threatened to sack thousands of workers who were striking in protest against a tax increase on soft loans. Earlier the Central Organisation of Trade Unions (COTU) had threatened to call a general strike in support of the bank workers. Forty-two out of fifty three Kenyan commercial banks reopened after reaching an agreement with the staff which included the unconditional withdrawal of the dismissal threat. Finance minister Simeon Nyachae suspended the tax increases on the soft loans pending a parliamentary review. (*The Monitor/Reuters, March 5; The Ethiopian Herald, March 8*)

Food supply problems for refugees: International aid organization have expressed concern for more than 100,000 refugees in Kenya, who are on half rations because of problems of getting supplies into their camps. Heavy rains cut roads of three northeastern camps, housing mainly Somali refugees. After WFP appealed for two million dollars urgently, the United States have provided two military aircraft to help the relief effort, which are also being used to supply local Kenyan communities affected by the floods. Some 200,000 tons of relief food imported by NGOs has been held up at Mombasa port following the lifting of import duty waivers. The Finance Minister Simeon Nyachae announced the new measure earlier this month, leaving the NGOs with insufficient time to plan accordingly. Most of the food is destined for flood-hit northeastern Kenya where an estimated 515,000 people are still cut off after torrential rains in the past four months destroyed roads and bridges making it impossible to reach large areas by road. (*The Monitor/Reuters, March 3; Press Digest, March 19; UN IRIN, March 23*)

Student riots: Kenyan police fired tear gas at hundreds of university students protesting the falling value of educational loans. Police also fired live rounds into the air in an effort to disperse students who had earlier seized control of roads leading to the city-centre Nairobi University campus. The students aired a variety of grievances from the loans, which they said were unfairly distributed along tribal lines, so more global concerns. "We are starting a student revolution," said one rioter. "We want to start behaving like the Chinese. We want to start behaving like the Koreans. We want to force our way into Moi's office". (*The Monitor/Reuters, March 24*)

Humanitarian crisis: In a recent report UNICEF said waterborne diseases, malnutrition and malaria are rife in parts of northeast Kenya hit by months of flooding. Up to 50 per cent of children under five were suffering from malnutrition and malaria was killing five to 10 people a month, and 15-20 a week in Mandera district. The report was based on field trips to Marsabit, Moyale, Tana River, Garissa, Isiolo, Wajir, Busia and Mandera. (*UN IRIN, March 27*)

UGANDA

Cabinet minister censured for corruption. Uganda's parliament has censured Primary Education Minister Jim Muhwenzi for abuse of office, influence-peddling and corruption. Muhwenzi, who is said to be close to President Yoweri Museveni, has given no indication of wishing to resign his post following the vote, which came after four months of heated political debate that split parliament and dominated the newspapers. Some observers see the vote as a blow against high-level corruption and vindication of Museveni's "no-party" system. With Muhwenzi taking his case to a constitutional court, Museveni has said he will take no action against the minister until the outcome is known. (AFP, March 4 & 18)

Museveni offers swap: The Ugandan President has said that Khartoum must release 21 schoolgirls abducted by Sudanese-backed rebels before Uganda frees 114 Sudanese prisoners of war. The Sudanese prisoners were captured in April 1997 during an attack on a rear base of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army inside Sudan. Meanwhile, rebel deserters maintain that all but one of the girls, shot while attempting to escape, were still being held in LRA camps behind Sudanese army lines inside Sudan. (AFP, March 18; UN IRIN, March 19)

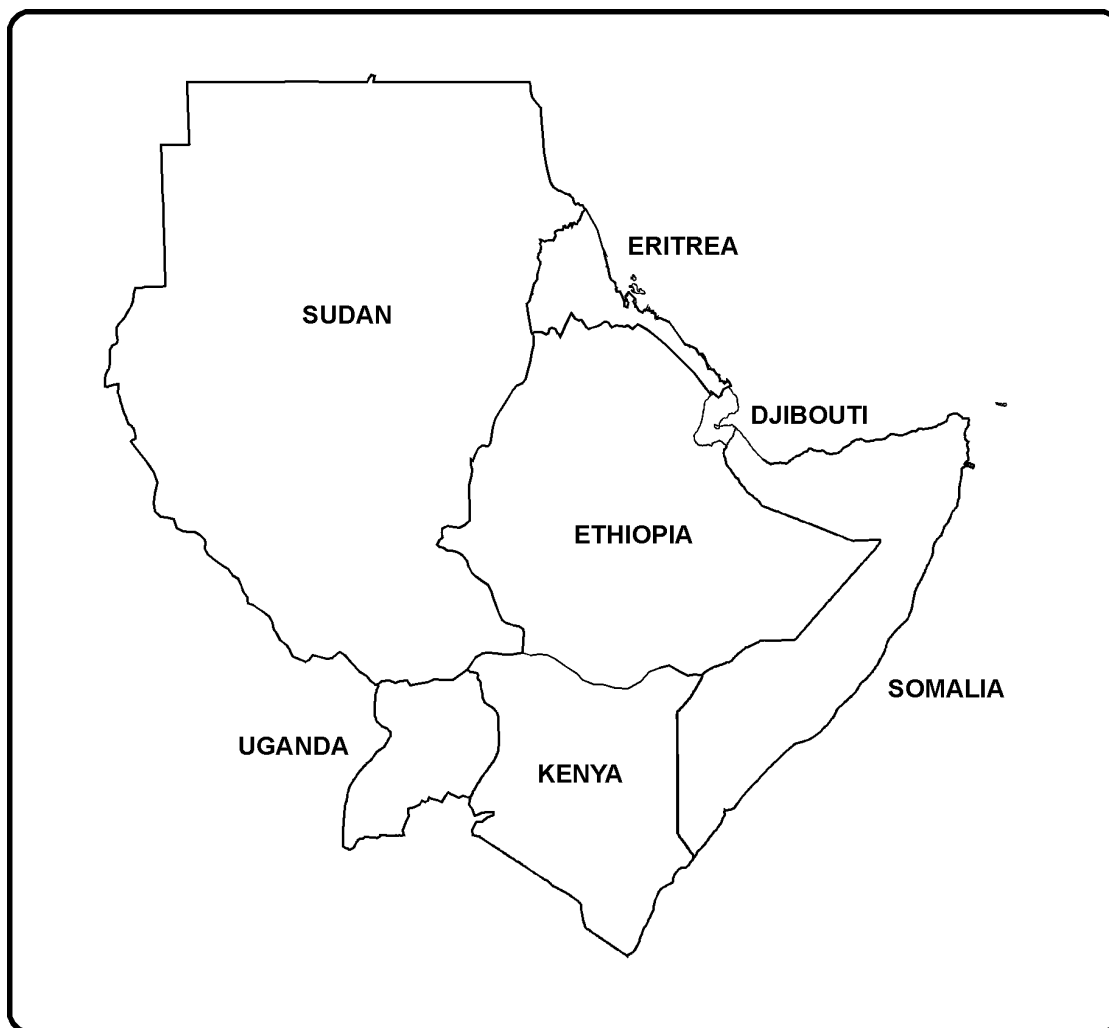
Tea production continues to show recovery. Despite the unusually heavy rains, tea production in 1997 showed a dramatic increase of almost 33 per cent over the previous year and maintaining the steady recovery after years of decline. However, output has yet to return to levels recorded before 1972, when then-dictator Idi Amin expelled Asians who controlled most of the tea plantations in the country. While a total of 210,000 tons of tea was produced in 1997, the potential capacity of Uganda's estates is estimated at 450,000 tons. Around 80 per cent of the tea produced is sold for export. (The Monitor/Reuters, March 19)

Rebel activity: Ugandan President Museveni has said that activities by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels in northern Uganda have decreased considerably following successful army operations over the past two years. Museveni said in an interview with AFP that the government had developed an anti-mine capacity and that the rebels were no longer able to ambush vehicles on the road. The years of conflict have devastated northern Uganda, forcing some 200,000 people to live in "protected villages" created by the army as part of a comprehensive counter-insurgency strategy. But Museveni says "there are still some weaknesses" before the war can be brought to an end. These include poor roads, which impede the army's mobility, and the Ugandan-Sudan border was still patrolled by too few soldiers. The rebel LRA operates out of government-controlled areas of southern Sudan and cross the border on abduction raids. Many believe that the war will not end as long as Sudan continues to support the LRA and Uganda in turn backs the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). (AFP, March 20)

Clinton's visit to Uganda: The US president's visit from March 23 to 24 helped underscore the close ties between Uganda and the United States, which are both opposed to the Islamic military regime in Sudan. Clinton had an hour-long meeting with the Ugandan President. At the same time, several US officials were meeting members of the Ugandan opposition, who were not identified. The two leaders talked about Museveni's system of no party politics, with its focus on local participation. But human rights groups wanted Clinton to urge the Ugandan leader to make the political system, officially a "non-party democracy", more open. The US President Clinton gave a keynote speech at a primary school in Mukono, 15 km east of Kampala. Here he presented an initiative, dubbed "Education for Democracy and Good Government" aimed at providing basic schooling. The White House asked congress to put aside \$26 million for the programme in its budget submitted in February. Clinton also visited a project at Wanyange village, close to Jinja town, where US interests provide loans to women of up to \$150 each to start a small business. (AFP, March 22, 24 & 25)

Cholera spreads to the east: The BBC report that the Ugandan government has warned an outbreak of cholera is spreading fast in the east, with more than 100 new cases. According to the authorities, 130 people have died since December in Mbale district, where some 4,600 cases have been reported so far. (UN IRIN, March 27)

THE HORN OF AFRICA



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SOURCES:

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8 April, 1998

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