



May 2001

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Djibouti

Government and FRUD sign peace accord.

### Eritrea

Eritrea signs US\$ 10 million food loan.

### Ethiopia

Russia writes off US\$ 4.8 billion debt.

Anti-corruption campaign leads to arrest of 20 Government Officials and others.

### Sudan

FAO says 2.96 million people in Sudan need food assistance.

### Kenya

Finance Minister announces programme to spend US\$ 1 billion.

### Somalia

Faction leaders meet in Kenya to discuss national reconciliation and peace.

Flood leaves 1,000 people homeless.

## REGIONAL ISSUES

**UAE lifts livestock import ban:** On May 26, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced the lifting of its ban on the import of livestock from Sudan. The ban was lifted after nine months, following reports by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that Sudan was free from Rift Valley Fever and other livestock diseases. Meanwhile, a Hargeysa based newspaper reported that the UAE has also lifted the ban from Somaliland. (*PANA, May 22; Mandeeg, Hargeysa, May 22; Quoted by BBC Monitoring*)

**Ethiopia and Sudan cancel visa requirement:** Effective from May 2, Ethiopia and Sudan have canceled visa requirements for diplomatic, service and special passport holders. An Ethiopian Foreign Ministry official said the two parties have also agreed to take necessary measures over the next three months to facilitate a speedy granting of visas to each others' nationals. (*Xinhua, May 29*)

**Sixth MCC meeting held in Nairobi:** The Sixth meeting of the Ethiopia Eritrea Military Coordination Commission (MCC) was held in Nairobi on May 21. The meeting attended by Senior member of Ethiopian and Eritrean armed forces and United Nations peacekeepers, reached an agreement to establish sector-level MCCs to address local security and military concerns. The meeting also discussed United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) efforts to compile information on landmines. (*UNMEE press release, May 22*)

**Cholera cases in Kenya and Somalia:** Cholera has been spreading in Kenya for the past one month with over 100 people infected despite efforts made by the Ministry of Health to control the outbreak. Similarly, cholera led to the death of 14 people in 48 hours, in Lower Shabelle Region of Somalia and killed 100 people throughout the south. (*East Africa web site, May 23; HornAfrik web site, May 22*)

**Repatriations of Ethiopians from Eritrea:** The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) repatriated 3008 Ethiopians voluntarily from Eritrea via the Mereb River, on May 5, 11 and 23. Upon crossing the border the returnees received support provided by the ICRC and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society. In related news, out of the 11,000 Eritreans registered to be repatriated from Sudan 1,935 returned home on May 27 and 934 on May 13 with assistance provided by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (*AFP, May 29; ICRC press release, May 11 & 5; Suna, May 13*)

**UNMEE congratulates Ethiopia and Eritrea on 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary:** The Special Representative of UN Secretary General and Head of the United Nations Mission In Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), Legwaila Joseph Legwaila congratulated the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of national independence and fall of the Dergue regime, respectively. Legwaila said peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea is starting to take root. He also

pointed out that peace-building is essential for national growth and development. (UNMEE Press release, May 25 & 24)

**UN training Somali refugees in Djibouti:** The United Nations announced on June 15 that it is training Somali refugees living in two camps (each holding approximately 11,000 refugees) in Djibouti on mine awareness and safety measures in order to reduce possible future injuries and fatalities should they encounter mines or unexploded ordnance upon their return home. The project is being carried out with logistical support from UNDP Djibouti, funding from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (UN Press release, May 15)

## DJIBOUTI

**FRUD signs peace accord:** After 15 months of negotiations the Djibouti government and the radical wing of the opposition Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) signed a peace accord on May 12. The accord ended hostilities that were launched at the start of 1990s by FRUD, a rebel movement of the Afars (second largest ethnic group in Djibouti after the Somali-speaking Issa). The government, in the agreement, promised an unrestricted multiparty system by September and rehabilitation and reconstruction of areas and population affected by the hostilities. (AFP, May 12; IRIN, May 15)

**Djibouti and Iran sign communiqué:** Djibouti and the Islamic Republic of Iran issued a joint communiqué on May 1. The communiqué, signed by Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi and Djibouti Foreign Minister Ali Abdi Farah, stressed the expansion of bilateral relations including the formation of committees to promote political, economical, commercial and industrial cooperation. The communiqué also envisages the continuation of deliberations between the two countries in international organizations and fora, particularly the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). (AFP, April 28; IRNA news agency, May 2: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

## ERITREA

**PFDJ and government members break ranks:** 15 senior members of the ruling People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) have accused President Issaias Afewerki of using power illegally and unconstitutionally. The members broke ranks on May 30, and sent a letter to the country's diplomats and published it on the internet saying that Issaias refuses to consult other government member on decision making. It said weaknesses in the PFDJ and the government had resulted in the crisis that Eritrea is in. (AFP, May 30; BBC on line, May 31)

**World Bank visit:** On May 22, a seven-man delegation from the World Bank concluded a five-day visit to Eritrea. The delegation was to assess the economic and development activities in Eritrea especially after the signing of the peace agreement with Ethiopia and to exchange views with the government and private sector. The delegation met with Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki and other government officials to stress the importance of a lasting peace to secure rapid economic and social development. (Voice of the Broad Masses of Eritrea, May 22 : Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

**Eritrea signs a US\$ 10 million food loan:** The US and Eritrea signed a loan agreement, on May 16, for US\$ 10 million to purchase approximately 81,000 metric tons of wheat and sorghum. The loan is issued with one per cent

Djibouti

*Djibouti and Iran issue  
a joint communiqué or  
expanding bilatera  
relations*

Eritrea

interest rate and a repayment period of 30 years. (*Visafric news agency web site, May 16*)

*WFP appeals for US\$ 44 million to feed one million Eritreans displaced by war and affected by drought.*

**WFP appeals for US\$ 44 million:** WFP has appealed for US\$ 44 million to provide emergency relief food to over one million Eritreans. The fund is to be used from May 2001 to February 2002 to assist displaced people (because of the war with Ethiopia) and people affected by prolonged drought. WFP Country Director, Patrick Buckley said "If people are not back in their villages at the latest in one month's time, they will not be able to take advantage of the rains to start cultivating and planting." The process of returning the internally displaced to their villages was delayed as a result of the delay in the creation of the Temporary Security Zone that covers a large part of the agriculturally productive area, and risks associated with movement and cultivation in heavily mined areas. (*WFP News release, May 23*)

## Ethiopia

*Federal high court says trials of ex-Dergue officials will end by 2004.*

### ETHIOPIA

**Anti-corruption campaign underway:** At the start of a government sponsored anti-corruption campaign about 20 senior officials and managers of government enterprises and private companies were arrested on May 29. Following this first round of arrests the Ethiopian Federal Police asked the general public to give additional information on suspected cases of corruption. (*Walta Information Center, May 29; ENA, May 29; AFP, May 30*)

**Russia cancel US\$ 4.8 billion debt:** The government of Russia has agreed to write off debts of US\$ 4.8 billion, bringing the total debt cancelled by Russia to 80%. The remaining 20 % of the loan has been included in the debt reduction and rescheduling programme of the Paris Club countries of which Russia is a member. (*ENA, May 29; AFP May 30*)

**Dergue trials to end by 2004:** The sixth criminal chamber of Ethiopia's federal high court announced, on May 11, that by the year 2004, all trials of officials and soldiers associated with Mengistu Haile Mariam regime's and convicted for genocide and crimes against humanity, will be completed. The court said it has passed verdicts on 1,181 of 6,180 genocide cases, of which 11 are the death sentence and seven for life imprisonment. 274 are declared not guilty and one is release on parole. A human rights group, however, has called for stiffer sentences against the guilty. The trials have been stepped up in recent months in response to criticism over the slow rate of progress. (*Radio Ethiopia, May 11: Quoted by BBC Monitoring; AFP 2,8 & 11*)

*April food rations for 2 million people delayed*

**Food aid distributions delayed:** More than 2 million people in Amhara state are reported to be waiting for the delivery of food aid. The Amhara Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau (DPPB) stated that due to delays in the delivery of rations for April people have started selling their cattle at prices well below the usual price. The bureau reported that a request for 36,000 mts of food aid to the federal DPPC, had not yet been sent to the state. It also reported that the situation might get worse if the food was not dispatched before the beginning of the rainy season. Food aid has also not been distributed to close to 130,000 people in eastern and southern Tigray for the months of March and April. (*Walta Information Centre web site, May 4 & 11*)

**Intelligence chief shot:** Ethiopian chief of intelligence and security, Kinfe Gebremedhin, was shot dead on May 12. The alleged assassin Major Tsehaye Wlodeselassie, an army procurement officer within the Ministry of Defense, was detained at the scene and is awaiting sentence. Kinfe's funeral was attended by President Negaso Gidada, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Cabinet Ministers and senior army officers. (*Panafrican News Agency, May 12 ; Addis Tribune, May 18*)

The Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Committee has revamped their web site. Their web site covers the can be accessed at the following address:  
<http://www.telecom.net.et/~dppc/>

## SUDAN

**Summit ends with no cease-fire agreement:** A one-day summit called by the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held on June 2 in Kenya between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLA) failed to reach a cease-fire agreement. SPLA leader John Garang said a cease-fire could only be negotiated when the government stops the activities of oil companies which he says is leading to the eviction of thousands of civilians. Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and SPLA leader John Garang however agreed to work towards a cease-fire. The meeting was attended by representatives from Kenya, Djibouti, Uganda and Ethiopia. (AFP, June 2; Reuters, June 2; Xinhua, June 2)

**Sudan announces halt on air strikes:** On May 25, the Sudanese government announced that it had halted air strikes against the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in an effort to reach a cease-fire. United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan welcomed the announcement calling it a positive move conducive for peace. The United States also welcomed the halt and said it will spend US\$ 3 million on teaching the opposition National Democratic Alliance negotiation skills. The Sudanese government opposes the aid to NDA saying that it runs contrary to all efforts to achieve a just and peaceful solution and will only contribute to more bloodshed and killing. Subsequent to the announced halt on air strikes, the SPLA accused the government of burning 14 villages. (Reuters, May 24; AP, May 25 & 24; Xinhua May 25; AFP, May 25; The Washington times, May 30)

**Merger of major parties denied:** Reports late in May suggested that the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had been reunited with the Sudan People's Defense Forces (SPDF), both from the mainly animist and Christian south. The development was said to have taken place to strengthen the two groups after 18 years of civil war against the Islamic government in Khartoum. However, a senior official of the SPDF denied the merger saying that the declaration was premature and the members who signed were not authorized by the leadership. The two parties have been fighting against each other since SPDF split from the mainstream of SPLA in 1991, and against the Khartoum government. The Sudanese government says that the parties have always coordinated their operations and said the agreement was signed as a result of pressure exerted by foreign forces. (Reuters, May 28; AFP, May 29; IRIN, May 29)

**US to send food aid:** To meet emergency food needs in north and south Sudan, caused as a result of a two year drought, the United States has pledged to send 40,000 mts of food. Despite Washington's tense relations with Khartoum, US officials decided to send the aid following a meeting with officials of humanitarian organizations working in Sudan. In related news US Secretary of State Colin Powell promised greater involvement in ending 18 years of civil war in Sudan, which was welcome by Sudanese authorities as long as the US is neutral in the conflict. (AFP, May 27; Reuters, May 28; AP, May 28)

US to send 40,000 mts  
of food to meet  
emergency needs.

FAO say it is short of  
157,000 tones of food  
aid appealed to feed  
2.96 million people.

**Sudan army claims successes:** In a statement issued on May 25, the Sudanese armed forces claimed it had retaken nine localities in the Nuba Mountains (central Sudan) from the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The statement said troops freed civilians who were being used as human shields and seized large quantities of weapons and ammunition. In related news, southern rebels claims to have captured the town of Deim Zoubeir in west Bahr al-Ghazal province. The Sudanese army however has denied the claim, saying that its forces are still occupying the area. (*SUNA, May 26; AFP, May 27 & 30*)

**FAO says 2.96 million need food aid:** The United Nations Food and Agriculture organization (FAO) report that 2.96 million people in Sudan need food assistance as a result of two years of successive crop failure and 18 years of civil war. FAO appealed to the international community for urgent food aid saying that the situation is expected to get worse in the coming months as a result of the lean season now starting and the sparse food aid received and pledged. 55,000 food aid has been promised leaving 157,000 mts covered. (*FAO special report, May 14*)

## KENYA

**In the fight against AIDS:** The Finance Minister of Kenya has announced government plans to spend over US\$ 1 billion, on AIDS control. The money, the minister said, will be channeled through the private sector. In related news United States Secretary of State Colin Powell stated his country's intention to give more than US\$ 7 million to the fight against AIDS in Kenya. The British government also confirmed plans to give over US\$ 20 million to this end. (*East African Standard web site, May 13; KTN TV, May 27: Quoted by BBC Monitoring*)

**US Secretary of State visit:** The United States Secretary of State, Colin Powell held discussions with Kenyan President Danial arap Moi during his two day official visit that started on May 26. In the discussion Powell said his government wants to see greater commitment to political and economic reforms in Kenya. He also made it clear that the US government will continue supporting the Kenyan economic programme. The two also discussed relations between their countries as well as regional issues. (*Kenyan radio May 26: Quoted by BBC Monitoring services*)

## SOMALIA

**WFP warns of low harvests:** The United Nations World Food program warned that inadequate rainfall in south-central Somalia threatens the main grain harvest. WFP reported that it only expects an estimate of only 30 to 40 per cent of the normal harvest following the Gu rains, which normally run from early April to mid-June. The report also said that even if the rains improve in the next few weeks, it is already too late for most crops to recover. Kevin Farrell, WFP country representative for Somalia said "The first signs of hardship have already appeared, with some poorer families barely able to afford one meal a day." WFP says tens of thousands of people in the region are facing increased food insecurity as a result of poor rains. (*UN Press release, June 4*)

**Serious fighting reported:** 18 people were killed and several wounded when militiamen loyal to Somalia's Transitional National Government (TNG) clashed with force of the RRA (Rahanwein Resistant Army), opposed to the TNG. The TNG accused the Ethiopian government of supporting the RRA



and said it will not tolerate attacks waged by a foreign-manipulated organizations. In related news, at least 28 people died and 30 were wounded in interclan fighting between two warring factions belonging to the Abgal clan (dominant in north Mogadishu and the neighboring regions) at a village south of Mogadishu on May 29. The fighting was triggered by a grazing land dispute in Adale district between the Abdulle Galmah and the Kabalo subclans. The TNG reportedly had sent a group of armed militiamen from clans not involved in the conflict to try to stop the fighting. (AFP, May 23, 27 & 29)

**Faction leaders meet in Kenya:** Faction leaders from the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC) met in Kenya, on May 25, at the invitation of Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi. The faction leaders and Moi held lengthy discussions on ways to facilitate national reconciliation and peace in Somalia. The 21 faction leaders who attended the meeting oppose the TNG claiming that it took power illegally. Moi had sent a letter to Somalia interim president, Abdiqassim Salad Hassan inviting him to join the meeting however he turned down the invitation saying that he was too busy to attend. (East African Standard web site, May 26)

*Journalist exercising  
freedom of speech  
sentenced to six month  
imprisonment.*

**Journalist imprisoned:** Bashir Muhammad Abdi, a freelance journalist, detained by the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA), has been sentenced to six months of imprisonment. RRA officials accuse Abdi of sending information to local newspapers and radios without their knowledge. However, Abdi claims that he was only exercising his freedom of speech and practicing ethical journalism. (HornAfrik, May 21: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

**Floods affect 1,000 people:** Over 1,000 people in southern Somalia were made homeless when the Shabelle river burst its banks and flooded. The flood has affected areas in north Mogadishu. (Radio Banaadir, May 16: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

**Airport officially handed over:** On May 29, over 150 soldiers of the Transitional national Government officially took over the Ballidoogle airport from a group of militiamen. The militiamen had announced the hand-over several months ago but had not acted on their promise. (Ayaamaha web site, May 30: Quoted by BBC Monitoring Services)

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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 UN-EUE as to the accuracy of these reports.

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