

HORN OF AFRICA

The Monthly Review

This update covers the period April – May 1999

REGIONAL ISSUES

UN-ECA Ministerial Conference: The Joint Conference of African finance and economic development and planning ministers organised by the UN Economic Commission for Africa convened in Addis Ababa from 6-8 May under the theme "Challenges of Financing Development in Africa". The two-day ministerial conference brought together some 350 policy makers from 45 African countries and their development partners to make recommendations on mobilising domestic and external resources for development and poverty reduction on the continent. Their deliberations focused on strategies to increase private capital inflow and the mobilisation of domestic savings, finding solutions to the debt crisis, declining official development assistance, increased mobilization of international markets and the effects of the global financial crisis in Africa. At the end of the conference the Ministers called for wide-ranging measures to address the continent's debt burden, dwindling overseas development assistance, the need for direct foreign investment, and the scourge of capital flight. The conclusions of the meeting will be conveyed by the ECA to the development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as well as to the upcoming G-7 meeting in Cologne, Germany in June. (*Ethiopian Herald*, May 1 & 7; *PANA*, May 6; *ECA Press Release*, May 8)

COMESA 7th Inter-Governmental Committee Meeting: Nineteen heads of state and ministers from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa will meet in Nairobi to develop new trade strategies that meet the challenges posed by economic globalisation. The leaders are to discuss measures to promote a strong economic community to propel the region into the next millenium. COMESA was formed in 1994 to replace the Preferential Trade Area for Eastern and Southern Africa whose existence since 1981 failed to create greater economic and social integration in the region. The focus of the meeting is the realisation of a free trade area by October 2000. During the three-day meeting delegates will discuss such issues as tariff reduction for trade liberalisation, the common external tariff, the common investment area, financial, fiscal and monetary systems, and the transport and communications sector. The ultimate goals of the organisations 21 members include a common external tariff by 2004 and the establishment of a monetary union. The COMESA member states are Angola, Burundi, Comoros, Democratic republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. (*IPS*, May 5; *Xinhua*, May 16; *IRIN*, May 13)

Nile Council of Ministers Meeting: Ministers from 10 states with claims on Nile water have met in Addis Ababa for a two day closed-door conference. The annual meetings aim to ensure co-operation on the sustainable and equitable use of the river's water resources. The talks this year focused on shares of Nile water, ways to exploit under-utilised Nile tributaries and co-operation in joint water projects. This is the seventh meeting of the riparian states and first time that the conference has been held in Ethiopia since the forum was established in 1992. This year's meeting ended with a resolution to facilitate "the transition from the era of confrontation to co-operation among the Nile Basin countries". The participants agreed on a shared vision which aims at achieving sustainable socio-economic development through the equitable utilisation of Nile water resources. Ethiopia has argued that several ambitious Egyptian agricultural projects begun within the last few years are part of an Egyptian attempt to secure even more water and disregard the needs of other countries. Under a 1959 bilateral agreement between Egypt and Sudan, Egypt receives three times as much water as Sudan from the Nile. In recent years, the so-called riparian states, including Sudan and Ethiopia, have called for a more equitable share of the Nile waters regardless of population or agricultural needs. Nile Conference members are Burundi, Democratic

Republic of Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. (*Ethiopian Herald, May 15; DPA, May 12; PANA, May 12; IRIN, May 13*)

New airstrikes in Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict: Ethiopia said it bombed Eritrean frontline positions on the two countries' disputed border, the latest flare-up in the year-long war. "The Ethiopian air force carried out an air attack early Saturday morning [May 15] at the Zalambessa front, causing heavy damage to Eritrean logistics centres and mechanised units' positions in the area," said Ethiopian government spokeswoman Selome Tadesse. "All aircraft returned to base safely having successfully completed their mission," Selome said in a statement that more than one Mig jet bomber had been involved in the attack which struck at a military logistics headquarters and badly damaged a unit of tanks and armoured personnel carriers. The following day, Ethiopia said its air force launched a second raid, this time bombing Eritrea's naval base and oil depots near the Red Sea port of Massawa. But Eritrea, while confirming the attack, said no strategic targets had been hit. The bombings, the first in nearly a month, came at the end of a series of visits to the region by UN Special Envoy Mohamed Sahnoun who has been trying to help resolve the year-long border war between the two Horn of Africa nations. (*AFP, May 15 & 16; Reuters, May 15 & 16; AP, May 15 & 16*)

Kenya, Uganda agree to extend oil pipeline: Kenya and Uganda have agreed to jointly undertake a project to extend the Kenyan oil pipeline to Uganda. The project aims at minimising transport costs and reducing damage to the road infrastructure in both countries and also preventing the dumping of oil products meant for export into local market. The Kenyan *Daily Nation* newspaper reported that officials from the two East African countries had discussed the project which they viewed as having the potential of networking the entire regional oil industry. The oil pipeline will run from Eldoret town in western Kenya to Kampala, capital of Uganda. According to Kenya's Permanent Secretary of Energy, the project would cost about US \$80 million and was expected to be completed in four years. (*XINHUA, May 18*)

Armyworm threat: Experts have warned that an invasion of armyworms in various parts of East Africa is threatening to ravage vast areas of crops in the region. Press reports noted that the armyworms (more precisely, the caterpillar stage of the night flying moth, *Spodoptera exempta*) have already invaded and destroyed crops in northern Tanzania and predicted the invasion of Kenya by the second week of May as the caterpillars reach the secondary stage of infestation. Since these reports, most parts of Kenya have been invaded by the Armyworms which, according to the Ministry of Agriculture, are devastating thousands of hectares of farmland and pasture. The Kenyan Times reported that farmers were losing their crops due to inadequate pesticides to contain the spread. The area hardest hit is the Rift Valley Province in western Kenya and several parts of Central Province have also been invaded. From Kenya, has since spread with the prevailing winds into Somalia and Ethiopia. (*IRIN, April 24; XINHUA, May 19*)

ETHIOPIA

Failure of short rains causes food crisis: The 1999 *belg* agricultural season is likely to be a complete failure, seriously impacting food availability for hundreds of thousands of people in parts of Tigray, Welo, Shewa and Hararghe. Local officials estimate more than a million people might be affected by the failure of the short rains, many of whom would now require urgent relief support, at least until the main *meher* season in November/December. In parts of Welo, where famine conditions are reported to be emerging, household food reserves are exhausted and people are leaving their homes in search of relief aid. Failure of the *belg* rains is also expected to cause food shortages in the Western Hararghe Zone of Oromia State. According to the international NGO, CARE, more than 110,000 people in this region of western Ethiopia are likely to face food shortages induced by rain failure. (*IRIN, May 1-7; The Monitor, May 11*)

EU and WFP pledge more food aid: The European Union has announced that it will be providing 30,000 metric tonnes of food to help 2.9 million people in Ethiopia affected by drought and another 400,000 people displaced by the border war with Eritrea. It said it also had another 20,000 metric tonnes available to be distributed according to needs. WFP, meanwhile, announced that it had signed an agreement with the federal Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission and the Relief Society of Tigray for the provision of 45,351 metric tonnes of food aid valued at US \$24.3 million to people in the Tigray region who have been affected by the war. The vast majority of the displaced are subsistence

farmers practicing rain-fed agriculture in drought prone areas and many of these were not able to harvest their *mehercrop* in 1998 because of war. (*IRIN, April 23 & May 5; REST Press Release, April 16*)

Human rights consultations: National and international experts met in the resort town of Sodere mid-May to discuss the establishment of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and Office of the Ombudsman. Based on the suggestions put forward, a draft proclamation establishing the Commission and Ombudsman is to be formulated and presented to the House of Peoples' Representatives for approval later this year. The two institutions are to be officially inaugurated early next Ethiopian year which begins on September 11. In secondary deliberations, delegates agreed that members of the police, security and army should be held accountable for any alleged acts of injustice, however, the Commission would be expected to take into account matters of national interest in carrying out its work. Attending the conference was Brian Burdekin, a special adviser representing the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. He said that both the UN High Commission and the international community attach great significance to Ethiopia's initiatives to establish the Human Rights Commission and the Ombudsman. (*Walta Information Centre, May 18; ENA, May 21*)

Musical concert for the war effort: According to the official Ethiopian Herald newspaper, an audience of nearly 100,000 Ethiopians thronged an open-air musical concert in the capital organised to raise funds for the country's war with Eritrea. The eight-hour performance included artists and vocalists such as Tilahun Gesesse and Mohamed Ahmed, two of the nation's most popular singers. The concert had the theme "Honour to Ethiopia" and those who attended paid the fee of five Birr (US \$0.63 cents) levied to fund the army. The artists, who performed free of charge, also made financial contributions to the war effort. The performers will now be taking the show on the road, travelling to major cities of the country and outside Ethiopia. (*Ethiopian Herald, May 16; Reuters, May 9*)

Missing link: A new species of human ancestor and the earliest traces of animal butchery have been discovered in Ethiopia. The fossils, which date back 2.5 million years, belong to a new hominid species that could be a direct ancestor of present-day humans, an international team of scientists said. Butchered animal remains found at the same geological layer suggest that early humans, possibly the same species, used tools to extract meat from large mammals much earlier than previously believed. The scientists said the species, with human-like leg proportions "may be a direct human ancestor and an evolutionary link between the ape-man, *Australopithecus*, and the genus *Homo*." The scientists also said the species is a descendant of the more primitive *Australopithecus afarensis* and have named the new discovery *Australopithecus Garhi*, from the local Afar word meaning "surprise". The team of international scientists had been looking for an ape-man species that could be an immediate human forebear. What they found instead were hominid remains possessing intermediate evolutionary characteristics. The scientists examined cranial, tooth and limb remains found between 1996 and 1998 near the village Bouri in the Middle Awash desert region, 250 kilometers northeast of Addis Ababa. (*Kyodo, April 23; Ethiopian Herald, April 22*)

US evacuation order rescinded: The US State Department has lifted an evacuation order for non-essential US government employees in Ethiopia. A US diplomat in Addis Ababa confirmed that employees of the embassy, Peace Corps and USAID, who were ordered out of Ethiopia in February as a result of the border war with Eritrea, were free to return. He said the situation in Eritrea would be reassessed in a month. An Eritrean foreign ministry official criticised Washington for the continued ban on US diplomatic presence in Eritrea. (*AFP, April 22*)

Stolen Ethiopian cross found in Belgium: A 13th century gold cross stolen from the ancient rock-hewn church of St. George in Northern Ethiopia has been found in Belgium and has been returned to Ethiopia soon. Richard Pankhurst from the University of Addis Ababa said the cross was taken from one of the 10 main churches of Lalibela last year but had turned up in Europe after a Belgian collector discovered the relic in a local antiques shop. Pankhurst said Ethiopia's Ministry of Culture agreed to buy back the cross which cost the Belgian collector US \$25,000. The theft of the so-called Lalibela cross led to a considerable national outcry and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church leaders demanded greater watchfulness on the part of clerics in the region. The thieves are currently behind bars. (*Ethiopian Herald, May 16; Reuters, May 7; AFP May 6*)

ERITREA

Humanitarian assistance for the displaced: The UN World Food Programme has announced that it will begin providing emergency food aid to Eritreans affected by the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia. UN Spokesman Ekhard told a press conference in New York that the WFP was responding to a request from the Eritrean government and that the UN agency was launching the US \$15.4 million-dollar operation to feed about 268,000 displaced Eritreans in three southern provinces. According to the Eritrean Relief and Refugee Commission (ERREC), a total of 450,000 Eritreans have been affected by the war. ERREC has also organised a joint assessment visit to the southern border areas in conjunction with Oxfam International and Save the Children Fund in order to see what the relief needs of the displaced population are. The 10-day mission with the international NGOs marks a change in Eritrean policy towards the operations of foreign humanitarian organisations in Eritrea. Oxfam International withdrew its operational presence in the country more than a year ago, though it retained a funding presence. (*Xinhua, April 21; AP, April 21; IRIN, April 29*)

The right to mine in Eritrea: Rift Resources Limited, a Toronto-based mineral exploration and development company with exploration interests in Eritrea and Ethiopia has received approval for the acquisition of 100 percent of the Adi Nefas concession. The approval of the regulatory authorities and the Eritrean Mines Ministry gives the company an option to acquire the Adi Nefase sulphide polymetallic and gold deposits from La Source Developpement (SAS). The Adi Nefas concession contains two partially defined deposits with the Adi Nefas polymetallic volcanogenic massive sulphide deposit and the adjacent Adi Nefas Doop gold deposit. A two-phase drilling programme is scheduled to begin in June 1999, preparations for which have commenced with the mobilisation of a diamond drill to Eritrea. The first phase of the work will include 1,560 metres of diamond drilling in 10 holes of which 1,260 metres (7 holes) will be directed to the Adi Nefas polymetallic deposit and 300 metres (3 holes) to the Adi Nefas Doop gold deposit. (*Canadian Corporation News, May 13*)

Eritrea-Sudan sign Doha agreement: On May 2, the presidents of Sudan and Eritrea signed a reconciliation accord in the Qatari capital of Doha. The Qatari Emir, Sheik Hanad ibn Khalifa al-Thani attended the signing of the accord. Qatar has been mediating for several months between Eritrea and Sudan, which severed relations in December 1994. The two sides have agreed to restore diplomatic ties after a 5-year break, halt military operations and media campaigns and resolve their disputes through negotiation. The two sides also agreed to set up a joint commission to oversee the implementation of the clauses of the agreement, including the exchange of ambassadors. The Sudanese and Eritrean foreign ministers first signed a memorandum of understanding in Doha in November 1998 but Sudan in December accused Eritrea of shelling several Sudanese villages and in January of this year Sudan accused Eritrea of massing troops on the border in preparation of attack. (*Reuters, May 2; AFP, May 2; IRIN, May 9*)

Sudanese opposition in Eritrea: Conflicting reports have been received concerning Sudanese opposition elements currently occupying the former Sudanese embassy in Asmara. An independent daily in Khartoum reported the evacuation of the embassy compound, which has been used to accommodate representatives of a number of Sudanese opposition groups operating under the umbrella National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The move, apparently instigated by the Eritrean government, was reportedly initiated "as an important step for ending the state of enmity and for the return of relations to their normal situation". Eritrea first repossessed the embassy building after the Sudan and Eritrea severed diplomatic ties in December 1994. Contradicting reports from Khartoum, in an interview with AFP, Omar Nur el-Daim, a member of the NDA leadership council, said that the embassy was still the NDA headquarters and their had been no interruption to their work in Asmara. He added that Asmara would be hosting an NDA conference in early June. (*AP, May 16; IRIN, May 16; AFP, May 16*)

DJIBOUTI

Mine blast kills two children: Radio Djibouti has reported that two girls aged about 12 years were killed in a land mine blast, which wounded seven other people. The explosion occurred in Tajourah District near Adailou some 235 kilometers north of Djibouti City. The blast was the fifth of its kind since mid March bringing the total number of land mine related deaths to 15. The Afar rebel Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy, claimed responsibility for previous attacks. (AFP, May 6)

Human rights in Djibouti: The European Parliament has condemned alleged human rights violations in Djibouti and called on the government to take steps to end them. The resolution passed by the organisation on May 6 singled out the treatment of detainees in Garode prison and called for the release of political prisoners. Within days of this resolution a presidential decree broadcast on Djibouti radio announced the order for the release of about 40 political prisoners. Among those listed to be released were Mohammed Aref, a prominent activist and lawyer as well as a group of prisoners extradited from Ethiopia on suspicion of belonging to the ethnic Afar rebel movement FRUD. (AFP, May 6)

New President names cabinet: On May 8, newly elected President Ismael Omar Guelleh was sworn in as Head of State of Djibouti at a ceremony attended by leaders from Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia. Omar Guelleh, 52, was elected on April 9. After his decision to retain Barakat Gourad Hamadou as Prime Minister (a portfolio he has held since 1978), the President accepted the Prime Minister's proposed new cabinet. The new cabinet is made up of 17 ministers and 3 deputy ministers of whom only four are new appointees. The new Defense Minister is Ougreh Kifleh Ahmed who was once Secretary General of the Afar rebel movement, Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD). The new Foreign Minister, Ali Abdi Farah, replaces Mohamed Moussa Chehem who was not included in the cabinet. (AFP, May 8 & 13; IRIN, May 11)

SUDAN

Post Doha agreement attack: Just three days after the signing of the Doha Peace agreement with Eritrea, Sudan accused rebel groups of using the territory of Eritrea as a sanctuary to launch cross border attacks. Spokesman of the Sudanese armed forces General Mohammed Osman Yassin reported on national TV that an attack was launched in the Rassay region by "the forces of rebellion and mercenaries". The National Democratic Alliance claimed responsibility for the attack according to Egypt's Middle East News Agency, which reported that the rebel forces had captured the Army garrison in Rassay. Yassin did not confirm this report but said the attack was an attempt to cut all pipelines and the highway linking Khartoum with Port Sudan. The official newspaper, Al-Ana blamed "troops of the Eritrean Popular Front regime" for the attack saying it was an attempt to sabotage the reconciliation efforts being implemented by Sudan and Eritrea. Another Sudanese paper, the Al Ra'y has quoted Kassala State Governor as saying that following the Doha accord, Sudanese opposition troops had surrendered, along with their arms to the authorities in Kassala state. Following the attacks, a Sudanese mission, the first of its kind since diplomatic ties were severed in 1994, arrived in the Eritrean capital of Asmara aboard a private plane. According to AFP the mission was invited by President Isaias Afewerki to verify that Eritrea did not take part in the attack on Sudan. (AFP, May 16; The Monitor, May 8 & 9; AP, May 5; IRIN, May 5)

President cancels talks with NDA: President el-Beshir cancelled a planned meeting in Cairo between his top deputy, First Vice-President Ali Osman Mohamed Taha and Mohamed Osman Al-Mirghani, chairman of the opposition National Democratic Alliance and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, the second largest political party in Sudan. While the government claimed that its disclosure by the media led to the decision to cancel the talks, DUP leaders claimed no knowledge of any plans to hold meetings with the government. The party rejected any move towards reconciliation and called for the Khartoum government to step down. Meanwhile, in early May, Sudan's National Assembly speaker, Hassan al-Turabi had held a secret meeting with key opposition leader Sadek al-Mahdi. Al-Mahdi is a former prime minister who heads the northern Umma party that is affiliated to the National Democratic Alliance. In a press interview, which he gave after his meeting in Cairo with the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mahdi said that the Sudanese opposition would continue its armed struggle against the Islamic-led government in Khartoum despite the start of a dialogue with the authorities. Mahdi also announced that NDA opposition leaders would be meeting in Asmara. The Southern rebels of the Sudan

People's Liberation Army have been fighting the government since 1983. The northern opposition joined them in the NDA in 1995 and launched military operations of their own in 1997. According to Reuters, diplomats have linked the Khartoum Government's recent diplomatic drive to an attempt to safeguard oil exports due to start next month and a desire to strengthen its hand in any future peace talks with south Sudan rebels. (*IRIN, May 12; AFP, May 13; Reuters, May 15*)

Nimeiri's return: Khartoum launched a controversial plan to welcome home former president Gaafar Nimeiri after 14 years' exile. President Omar el-Beshir earlier in May decreed the formation of a high-level committee to make contacts and arrangements for the return of Marshal Nimeiri. Nimeiri's supporters have obtained a license for forming a political party under the name of the People's Working Forces Alliance, and are awaiting him to come back home and lead it. Nimeiri has lived in exile in Cairo since his overthrow in a popular uprising in 1985. Beshir's political and legal adviser, Abdel Basir Aabdrat is due to complete arrangements for the return of the former ruler to Sudan. The Ansari religious sect, close to Sudan's ousted premier Sadek al-Mahdi has slammed Khartoum's plan to welcome home the former leader. A cousin of al-Mahdi, Wali Eddin, accused Nimeiri of killing 12,000 Sudanese people during Ansari resistance to Nimeiri's leadership. He said the Ansari's planned to file a lawsuit against Nimeiri, and if the authorities did not comply, they would "not guarantee the safety" of the former ruler. A widow of the late Communist Party secretary has threatened to sue Nimeiri for assassinating her husband, Abdel Mhalek Mahgoub in 1971, along with other communist leaders. (*AFP, May 16; Reuters, May 15*)

Displaced people at Sudan/Eritrea border: The UN World Food Programme is planning to provide food relief to about 6,000 people displaced by insecurity near the Eritrean border. A recent WFP/government registration exercise recorded 8,300 war-affected persons in need of relief food in the central Jonglei region. Inter-factional fighting, rebel activity and conflict along Sudan's border with Eritrea have caused further population movements in various parts of the country according to humanitarian sources. Humanitarian agencies have warned of a possible influx of people from northern Bahr al Ghazal to the Safaha area. In Upper Nile province, there is an influx of displaced people arriving in Nasir, Adong and Gelacel as a result of inter-factional fighting. Meanwhile, in a recent situation report WFP has warned that with the level of funding currently available, the "pipeline" of food aid in Sudan will dry up substantially in August, at the peak of the hunger gap when supplies of locally produced foods are unavailable. (*IRIN, April 22 & 23, May 14*)

Meningitis outbreak: A meningitis outbreak is sweeping through several parts of Sudan, with the reported death toll up to 1,400 persons by middle of May. According to the UN Operation Lifeline Sudan, the worst hit areas are South, North and West Darfur, Sennar and Kordofan. WHO, meanwhile, has reported that 18 out of 26 states are affected. "The epidemic is expected to last until the end of June-July, depending on the geographical location of the states affected," a WHO report said. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said that the meningitis outbreak in Sudan had outstripped all previous epidemics and called for donors to provide more vaccine. More than a million people are at risk and National Health agencies are carrying out vaccination campaigns in the affected areas. The Sudanese Ministry of Health has requested the continued closure of schools in the country in a bid to prevent further infections amid dry weather conditions where temperatures have shot up to between 45 – 47 degrees Celsius in most parts of the country. Health authorities said that 5,000 new cases of meningitis have been reported in recent weeks raising the total to 22,000 who have been infected since the disease broke out in December 1998. (*IRIN, April 23 & May 1-7; PANA, May 12*)

SOMALIA

Somali Conference - Addis Ababa: Some ten faction leaders considered to be rivals of Hussein Aidiid's United Somali Congress faction are attending a conference in Addis Ababa. Musa Sudi Yalahow, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmad, the leader of the autonomous "Puntland" region in the north-east, and eight other factional representatives are meeting in the Ethiopian capital to discuss the Somali situation and Eritrea's alleged arming and training of Ethiopian rebel groups. Ethiopia and Somali factions friendly to it have accused Eritrea of offering training to the Oromo Liberation Front, an Ethiopian

rebel group present in southern Somalia. Ethiopia is also rumored to be planning a raid on alleged OLF training centers in the Qoryooley district of the southern lower Shabelle region. Aidiid accuses Ethiopia of arming the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) among other factions. Meanwhile, a number of Somali groups issued a joint communiqué calling on the UN Security Council, OAU, EU, IGAD, The Arab League and Organisation of the Islamic Conference to tighten the arms embargo on Somalia. The politicians said some Somali groups allied to the Eritrean government were a stumbling block to the restoration of peace and the formation of broad-based government in Somalia. They condemned Eritrea for openly violating the existence and dignity of the Somali people by shipping in arms. (AFP, May 16; Ethiopia Herald, May 21; other sources)

12 killed in SNF factional fighting in Buur Dhuubo: Two factions of the Somali National Front based in Southwestern Somalia's Gedo Region have reportedly clashed in Buur Dhubbo town with 12 people killed and 20 others injured. The two groups are Ahmed Sheikh Buraleh's militia (allegedly supported by the Ethiopian army) and militia loyal to Isa Ugas. Reports say Ahmed Sheikh Buraleh's militia, which attacked the Ugas's militia, provoked the fighting. Buraleh's attack was thought to be in revenge for the killing of several Marehan leaders near the Kenyan border earlier this month, widely blamed on the Marehan subclan led by General Omar Haji Masaleh. More fighting broke out in the region when militiamen loyal to General Haji Masaleh fought with forces supporting Ahmed Sheikh Buraleh, for the control of Luuq town also in Gedo region. General Umar Haji Masaleh's forces are reported to have captured the town during gun-battles, which left 10 people dead and more than a dozen wounded. Ahmed Sheikh Buraleh declared himself SNF chairman recently and is accused by his detractors of usurping the leadership of General Omer Haji Mohamed. (AFP, May 12; Reuters, 22 April; other sources)

Women's Peace Initiative: At a UN sponsored workshop, entitled "African Women's Conference on a Culture for Peace", the chairwoman of the Voice of Somalia Women for Peace has decried international support for peace initiatives that were "fruitless exercises" in which "women's voices were not considered." She said that women had been marginalised in the search for peace in Somalia and that most of the conflict resolution by the international community and the UN intervention were merely "focused towards men's issues." Ms. Hassan unveiled plans by Somali women's groups to hold a series of meetings in Toronto, London, Nairobi, Dar Es Salaam and Minneapolis in an effort to widen international involvement and women's participation in the push for peace in Somalia. More than 300 African women attended the five-day "African Women's Conference on a Culture for Peace" held in Zanzibar, Tanzania. (AFP, May 19)

Somali boat people: The Australian High Commission in Nairobi has received reports of a boat carrying 2000 people, preparing to leave the Somali port of El Ma'an and planning to enter Australia illegally. It said that the ship's agents were asking people to pay more than US \$2,000 each to board the vessel. The High Commission has released a statement warning "people who try to enter Australia illegally are caught and detained and if they have no right to stay in Australia, are sent home. They lose their money and can face going to jail". Meanwhile the population of the small port to El Ma'an, 35 kilometers north of Moqdishu has swelled as hundreds of potential travelers arrive, some accompanied by relatives coming to see them off. Unidentified gunmen who fired at the ship caused the vessel to move further from the shore and the scheduled departure has been delayed. The boat was due to set sail for Bossasso and then on to Australia but the delay has caused the more than 1,000 passengers who paid the fare to demand a refund from the ships agents. (AFP, May 22)

Armyworm potential threat to Gu crop: Outbreaks of African armyworm in Somalia have been reported from the Jamame and Kismayo districts of the Lower Juba region. Heavy incidence on maize and sorghum has also been reported in Middle Juba, Lower Shabelle, Bakool and Hiran regions. In Afgoi and Qoryoley districts, considered the maize basket of Somalia, sever outbreaks of armyworms have devastated entire fields of maize seedlings. Regular outbreaks of African armyworm have been recorded in Somalia during the *Gu* season, from April to June, as well as during the *deyr* season from November to December, virtually every year. Depending on the prevailing conditions, crop type and crop growth stage, the outbreak is sometimes devastating and sometimes light. There is a high probability the outbreaks will occur further north during the coming weeks and reports of armyworm sightings have already been received from Somaliland (west of Gabiley). Should a serious outbreak occur in Somalia, given the absence of a central government, there would be no time available for the international community to organise and launch interventions before irrevocable damage, potentially of a very large scale, occurs to the 1999 *Gu* season crops. (Food Security Assessment Unit, 19 May)

KENYA

Somali refugees: UNHCR is to look at the possibility of assisting the voluntary return of Somali refugees from camps in Kenya to parts of their own country considered to be safe. Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi has claimed that the refugees were contributing to rising crime and insecurity in the country and has urged the UN to help repatriate them. Ethnic Somali parliamentarians in Kenya have also urged the government to relocate the refugees to other parts of Kenya. Kenya is hosting 108,000 Somali refugees in three camps in the north-east (*AFP, April 4; IRIN, May 7*)

South Africa accused of dumping: One of the issues expected to come up in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) ministerial meeting being held in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, is South Africa's alleged unfair practices in its trade with COMESA member states. Kenyan businessmen, manufacturers and government officials have lambasted South Africa, accusing it of dumping its highly subsidised goods on regional markets while keeping its own markets shut to goods from other African countries. South Africa exports goods worth US \$294 million to Kenya annually while importing only US \$14.7 million worth of goods from Kenya according to Kenyan Trade Minister Joseph Kamotho. (*AFP, May 18 & 19*)

Landmine victims and insecurity in Northeast Province: A senior Kenyan government official was killed and two of his colleagues seriously injured when their vehicle hit landmines near Moyale town, close to the border with Ethiopia. The Moyale deputy district commissioner said an investigation was being conducted to determine whether bandits from within or outside Kenya planted the landmines. This is the second landmine incident in the area following mine explosion earlier in May that injured 12 passengers and blew up a lorry. Kenya has sent explosives experts to the area to remove landmines and security forces were looking for alleged Ethiopian rebels suspected of planting the mines on the road linking Marsabit town to Moyale near the Ethiopian border. Security around the border town was beefed up with a combined force of regular and administration policemen and police reservists after clashes in January of this year between the Ethiopian army and rebels of the Oromo Liberation Front left 18 people dead. At the time, Kenya protested Ethiopian troops crossing her border in pursuit of members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), who seek asylum among Kenya's Boran and Gabbra communities that have close ethnic links with the Oromo and inhabit the border area. Police said that in March, Kenyan troops had killed three and wounded one of 50 armed Ethiopians who crossed the border and opened fire on a village near Moyale. Following the incidents, the *Daily Nation* newspaper reported that Kenya had deployed more troops, tanks and reconnaissance aircraft in Moyale to strengthen an army battalion stationed there. (*PANA, May 10; AFP, May 18*)

Merger of Kenya Co-operative Creameries: Parmalat of South Africa is set to merge with Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC) in the first phase of its long term investment plan that will use Kenya as a central point for the expansion of its operations to Tanzania, Uganda and Ethiopia. The merger, which has yet to be effected, will see Parmalat take 67 percent of the KCC shares with members of the co-operative retaining 33 percent. Parmalat will inject 1.5 billion Kenyan Shillings into the organisation to pay off farmers' debts and creditors in order to revitalise the organisation. The 67 percent stake will be security for Parmalats investment. According to the KCC chairman, the merger was the only way to save the creamery from collapse and that government officials against the deal were those who wanted the organisation to collapse so that it could later be sold at a throw away price. He said that KCC was viable and had assets amounting to 6 billion shillings. Mismanagement of the government parastatal had led to massive debts and KCC has been unable to pay farmers for the last 11 months due to lack of funds. The merger was endorsed by farmers at special general meeting in April and a 90 day period for an agreement of understanding to be signed expires end of May when the South African company is expected to take over the running of KCC. (*Daily Nation, May 13*)

UGANDA

Converting debt relief into education: Uganda has raised enrollment of school-age children from 54 percent in 1997 to 90 percent in 1999. The country's educational gains were made possible by the debt relief granted to Uganda under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) program of the World Bank and IMF. The Government used the HIPC proceeds along with bilateral aid from Britain and the World Bank to create a Poverty Action Fund in 1997, aimed at improving the education system. Uganda is the only African country so far to have received debt relief under the HIPC programme, launched three years ago by the Bank and IMF. A downside to the success of doubling primary school enrollment in Uganda is the problem of overcrowding in Uganda's schools. In addition, despite the HIPC debt relief, Uganda's budget deficit has reverted back to its pre-1997 level – prior to the HIPC programme – as a result of the plunging price of coffee on world markets. Oxfam recently recognised Uganda's achievements in the education sector by awarding it the Pencil Award from Oxfam's Education Now program. (AFP, April 27; IRIN, April 28)

Rebel threats: Diplomatic missions and humanitarian agencies in Uganda have confirmed they had received threats from a rebel group based in western Uganda. The National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), based in Kisinga in Kasese district has circulated a letter dated 4 April, warning Canadian, European and US nationals that it would "shoot and kill" them. Top of the list were British, North American, Scandinavian and German nationals because their countries "are supporting the current dictatorial militaristic, despotic, corrupt and undemocratic regime," the letter reportedly said. NALU is the organisation that claimed responsibility for the March 1 killings of 10 foreign tourists and four Ugandans at southwest Uganda's Bwindi National Park. The survivors of the massacre and local residents have denied this claim, saying the attackers spoke French and identified themselves as Rwandan Hutu rebels. Since the threat was issued, the government has launched a massive mopping up exercise to flush out rebels in the Bundibugyo district. (AFP, April 23; IRIN, April 22 & May 12)

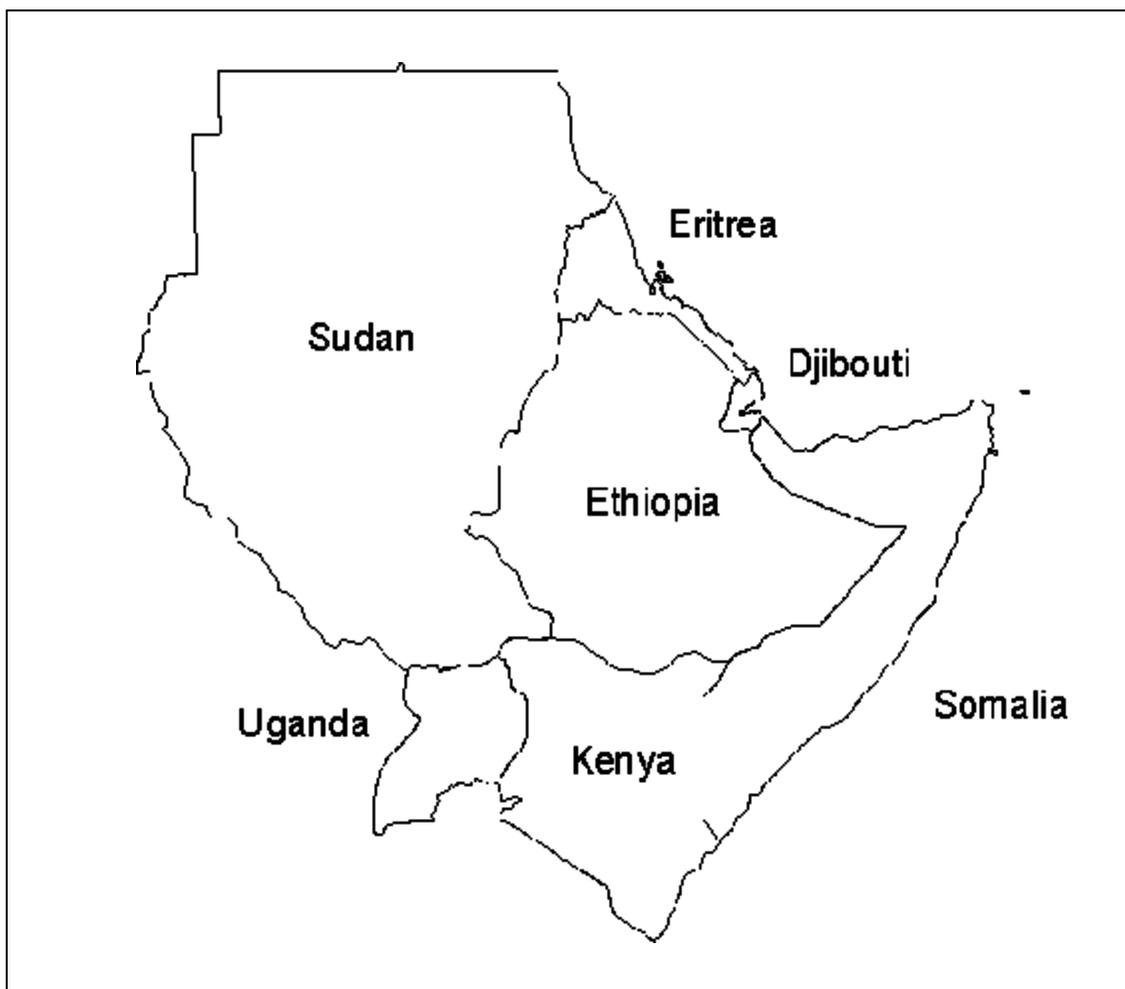
Kampala Bomb Blasts: A Ugandan rebel group, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), has claimed responsibility for the spate of bomb and hand-grenade explosions that has hit Kampala, killing dozens of people and spreading fear in places ranging from bars to taxi ranks, the terrorists' favorite targets. Remnants of the supposedly defunct NALU are believed to have joined forces with the rebel group Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) to perpetrate the attacks. NALU was an active rebel group up until 1992 when its leader was killed in exile in Uganda. The organisation was revived in 1996 after its alliance with the ADF. ADF is a small group dominated by the Islamic fundamentalist Tabliq Islamic sect. Fighting mainly in western Uganda against the government of President Yoweri Museveni, they are believed to be aided by ex-government soldiers from Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 1997, 46 people have been killed and 176 injured as a result of bomb explosions in Uganda and nearly 90 percent of the terrorist-related blasts have occurred in Kampala alone. (IRIN, April 26; AFP, May 15, 23 & 26 April)

Museveni offers amnesty to rebels: Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has offered amnesty to rebel leaders fighting his government, including Joseph Kony, the head of the Lords Resistance Army according to a statement issued by Museveni's press secretary. The LRA has waged war against Museveni's government in northern Uganda since 1988. It says it wants to replace Museveni's administration with one based on the biblical Ten Commandments. Uganda accuses Sudan of backing of the LRA, which is said to have rear bases in government-held areas of southern Sudan. (IRIN, May 14; AFP, May 14)

Uganda-IMF: A seven-member team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) arrived in Uganda mid-May to assess Uganda's progress toward balancing its budget before the institution releases more aid. The IMF is said to have been unhappy with Uganda's privatisation process, which has been criticised in parliament for its slow pace and lack of transparency. The IMF withheld an US \$18 million tranche of an enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility worth US \$140 million to Uganda in March amid concerns that the country's defense spending was rising at an alarming rate. Kampala's war against domestic insurgent groups and its military involvement in the Democratic Republic of Congo are believed to have resulted in an increase in defense spending from US \$150 million in 1997-98 to US \$350 million during the current fiscal year. (AFP, May 12; AP, May 12; IRIN, May 13)

Co-operative Bank closed: Uganda's central bank has frozen the operations of the Co-operative Bank Limited and placed it under statutory management after it ran into severe cash flow problems. According to a statement made by the government of Uganda's central bank, the Co-operative Bank is insolvent by more than 2.1 million dollars. The bank had been notified of its insolvency in November 1998 and although the warning called for 5.4 billion shilling injection to boost the bank's capital by December, the insolvency had worsened. The banks closure follows the collapse of the giant Greenland Bank which lost millions of dollars due to reckless lending. Last year, the government closed down the International Credit Bank and also temporarily shut down Trans-Africa Bank and Trust Bank. *(AFP, 20 May)*

THE HORN OF AFRICA



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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.

25 May, 1999

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