

HORN OF AFRICA The Monthly Review

This update covers May - June 1999

REGIONAL ISSUES

Saudi Arabia lifts ban on Somali imports: On May 16th the Ministry of Agriculture and Water for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia lifted the ban on the import of livestock from the Horn of Africa region. The Saudi ban affected animals and livestock products from Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Yemen. The announcement followed the publication of a report that the livestock from the region is free from Rift Valley Fever. According to Reuters, Saudi Arabia's director of animal and plant quarantine was quoted as saying that the ban was lifted after the World Health Organisation and Food and Agriculture Organisation gave assurances that the RVF outbreak had been fully controlled. The ban was imposed early in 1998 after an outbreak of a mosquito-borne disease in parts of Kenya's Eastern, NorthEastern and Rift Valley provinces as well as parts of Somalia. The disease affects mainly animals but can also spread to humans. In humans, infection usually results in a dengue-like illness or severe eye and brain infections. In serious cases, the virus may cause a fatal haemorrhagic disease characterised by bleeding from the body's orifices. In livestock, the virus usually causes abortion in ewes and cows, and death in lambs and calves. During the 1997 outbreak more than 400 human and 5,000 livestock deaths were recorded in Kenya alone. The lifting of the ban was confirmed in a letter from a Saudi port official. In addition, the representative of the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia released an official statement about the lifting of the ban. (*UNCT Monitor, 28 May; East African, June 14*)

WFP concern for Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya: The World Food Programme has noted with concern the unusual shortage of rains across the Horn of Africa region and warned that the extended dry spell in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya is likely to reduce both crop and livestock production in the region. Despite good rains in late April, the erratic rains that fell over Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya during May and June could further worsen the already precarious food situation. In addition WFP said that regional conflicts, including a year-old war between Ethiopia and Eritrea and chronic armed anarchy in Somalia are likely to exacerbate shortages. WFP spokesman Lindsey Davies told reporters "There is a looming crisis ahead... we are seeing an impending crisis that we haven't seen in recent years."

In Somalia, 80 percent of the country's harvest is dependent on the *Gu* rains that fall between April and June. This year the rains fell for only half the normal period, and were light and scattered. Below-normal status of crops and grazing areas have been observed in the Juba Valley, parts of Bay and Bakool and Somaliland. Mid-June normally coincides with full water catchments and the peak of pasture and crop growth. Field reports from the multi-donor Food Security Assessment Unit and other agencies contradict these normal patterns. Throughout this *Gu* season, rainfall has been the limiting factor and the projected estimate of production is about 30% below the 1997 harvest. It must be remembered that 1998 was a particularly bad year, the worst effects of which were compensated by off season production and very good livestock condition. After the first half of June, the likelihood of rains useful for crop growth is slim – in fact, the normal *Gu* season is already over. River levels are also likely to remain low making the availability of water for irrigation difficult. This is compounded by the drought in southern Ethiopia, the watershed of both Juba and Shabelle rivers.

In Ethiopia, rainfall in the highlands has been poor and the total failure of the *Belg* rains from February to May has caused significant crop losses in areas already suffering from food shortages. The planting of crops for the next season has also been adversely affected. In Kenya below average rainfall will reduce the next harvest already blighted by crop-eating armyworms. Kenya is likely to see a maize deficit of around 162,000 tonnes this year from a total production of 2.1 million tonnes last year according to WFP food security adviser. . The most affected by the drought are the pastoral districts and some grain-producing areas of the Rift Valley. According to the Daily Nation newspaper MP's from Kenya's North Eastern province have appealed to the government to declare a state of emergency in the region. (*PS, 24 June; WFP Emergency Report, No. 25 of 1999, June 25; IRIN News brief 23 June; Reuters, 23 June; FSAU FLASH, 15 June*)

Armyworm Update: The outbreak of armyworm that started in mid April 1999 in the southern parts of Ethiopia reached the northern parts of the country in late May and early June. Extensive control operations were undertaken on over 350,000 hectares of crop lands in all regions using 82,420 litres and 27,779 kg of pesticides and traditional control measures. No significant crop damages were reported from regions and the Ministry of Agriculture has reported that adequate quantities of pesticides are available in the country and positioned in each region at strategic sites. The significant increase in rainfall over most parts of *Belg* and *Kiremt* crop growing areas in May and early June has also contributed to halting a potential agricultural disaster.

In Somalia, field monitors of the multi-donor Food Security Assessment Unit for Somalia have been closely following the armyworm outbreak first reported in the Juba Valley in early May. Juba Valley is the breadbasket of the country and is just beginning to recover from a drought last year. The armyworm outbreak is a threat to the 1999 Gu crop, which is still at the seedling stage. The FSAU has reported that even a light attack can be devastating and should a serious outbreak occur, given the absence of a central government, there would be no time for the international community to organise interventions before potentially large-scale damage occurs to the 1999 Gu crop.

In Kenya and Uganda the armyworm has devastated thousand of hectares of farmland and pasture. Kenyan farmers lost crops due to inadequate pesticides to contain the spread according to the Kenya Times. The Rift Valley Province in western Kenya was hardest hit and there are fears that the maize production for this year will be adversely affected although the Ministry of Agriculture has stated that farmers with more mature crops would not be affected.

Uganda has reported the destruction of maize, sorghum rice and millet fields in diverse regions of the country such as Bushenyi, Lira, Katakwi, Kabarole, Soroti, Mukono, Kasese and Kamuli. Overall, the arrival of the rainy season in the Horn of Africa region will help in deterring the armyworm onslaught. (*FAO Armyworm Situation Report, 16 June; UNCT Monitor, 15 - 28 May; New Vision, May20; Xinhua, May 19*)

Kenya - Ethiopia joint security operations: A three day meeting of Ethiopian and Kenyan officials responsible for security along their common border ended June 9 in Nazareth, (Adama), Ethiopia, with a decision to carry out joint operations against Ethiopian Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and ethnic Somali Al-Ittihad Al-Islamia rebels. A joint communiqué issued at the end of the annual meeting also condemned "certain countries of the sub-region" for supporting the terrorist activities of the OLF and Al-Ittihad. Al-Ittihad al-Islam is a group made up of ethnic Somalis while fleeing Oromo rebels have traditionally found refuge among closely related tribes in Kenya. The Northeastern Province District commissioner, Maurice Makhanu has assured the Ethiopians that "Kenya will never harbour terrorists." The meeting also included discussions on arms smuggling, illegal movements of people across the border, frontier patrols, refugees and immigration and ended with an agreement to hold a follow-up meeting in the Kenyan Indian Ocean port city in November this year. Following the meeting, Mr. Makhanu told reporters that the rebel Ethiopian Oromo Liberation Front did not have bases in Kenya and there was no reason for Ethiopian security officials to cross over in pursuit of them. "What we have insisted on is that the Ethiopian security forces should never enter our country in hot pursuit." Makhanu said. "They should not try to come and fight those who are destabilising them in our soil; rather they should let us know. (*AP, June 11, 8; IRIN June 9; AFP, June 10; Ethiopian Herald; June 10; The Monitor, June 10; Stratfor's GIU June 11*)

ETHIOPIA

Coffee prices in world market collapse: The sudden saturation of world coffee markets has sparked a collapse of selling prices, forcing Ethiopian coffee exporters to halt sales and wait for better times. Coffee transactions were practically at a standstill in Ethiopia. The constant decline of sale prices due to Brazilian overproduction, following that country's currency devaluation, hit the bottom of the barrel with \$1.06 a pound in New York on May 13. This represents a price of US\$2,120 a ton, compared with \$3,919 in 1998 and \$2,715 at the beginning of 1999. Ethiopian exporters will have to stock their supplies whilst they wait for a climate-linked decline in Brazilian production that would push world market prices up to \$1.5 or \$2.00 a pound in a few months time. New York coffee prices did begin a slight recovery on May 20, to reach \$1.23 a pound. Ethiopia's Highlands coffee, which is the best quality, is selling for about \$0.75 more than the market average but is still subject to price fluctuations. However, despite several Ethiopian government appeals to exporters to sell their coffee, the traders remain in the coffee shops, not the coffee exchange. But declining coffee exports means declining exchange rate; this has been on the decline since the beginning of 1999. (*ION, May 18*)

Italy and Ethiopia sign \$112 million aid agreement – Italy has signed a \$112 million aid agreement with Ethiopia to help its social and development efforts. The Ethiopian Deputy Minister for Economic Development and Cooperation, Dr. Mulatu Teshome and Italian Minister Reno Serri signed the agreement. A statement released during the signing ceremony said the money would be used for strengthening rural development, food security, roads, health, education and other social sectors. (*IRIN, 23 June*)

UNHCR Repatriation programme resumes: Some 1,641 Somali refugees have been repatriated from the Hartsheik camp in eastern Ethiopia to Somaliland this week. A report from the Ethiopian News Agency says a total of 1,641 Somalis returned home from the refugee camp in eastern Ethiopia under a voluntary repatriation program. About 27 dollars and a nine-month supply of food and household equipment was provided to the returnees. Another 984 refugees are awaiting repatriation. The repatriation programme resumed in accordance with an agreement reached by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and officials in Somaliland for a programme that envisages the repatriation of 25,000 Somali refugees in 1999. Last year, more than 49,000 Somalis returned home from camps in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has been providing shelter to nearly 300,000 refugees from Somalia since January 1991. (*ENA 18th June; AFP, June 19; Xinhua, June 16, 18*)

Government allocates 20,000 M/T of grain to meet crisis: In response to mounting concerns about the current drought situation in Ethiopia, the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) announced that the government had pledged 20,000M/T of grain to meet the rising relief needs of the country. In a press release issued on 24 June the DPPC stated that the grain would be borrowed from the Emergency Food Security Reserve, (EFSR), for distribution in the most seriously drought affected areas of the country. Repayment to the EFSR will be made in 2000 through local purchases. This special allocation is in addition to over US\$5 million the government has spent over these last few months to cover distribution and transport costs for 55,000 M/T of food aid secured from donors since April 1999. Additional pledges have also been announced by Canada, UK the Netherlands and US but the overall pledge situation remains alarmingly low and donors are urged to respond to the DPPC's appeal and the WFP Emergency Operation for the drought affected. (DPPC, 24 June)

ERITREA

Eritrea and Italy sign \$135 million aid agreement: Italy concluded a significant aid agreement with Eritrea signing an Indicative Programme of Cooperation for 1999-2001. The agreement, signed by the Italian minister Rino Serri and Eritrean Finance Minister, Gebreselassie Yosief, is for a programme worth \$135 million in grants and soft loans focusing on social services, enterprise and the development of human resources. (*ERINA, IRIN 23 June*)

Joint UN Assessment Mission: The UN Humanitarian Assistance Monitoring Committee conducted a two-day mission to the southern sub-regions of Adi Quala and Tsorona from 23 –24 June to visit the camps of the displaced persons and monitor their needs and the assistance being provided by the agencies through government. The team, comprising representatives of WHO, UNDP, OCHA,

UNFPA, UNICEF and a representative of the Eritrean government's relief organization, ERREC, met with some of the families which have absorbed IDPs in order to gain a clearer understanding of the impact of IDPs on host communities. The representative of ERREC highlighted the need for intervention in the areas of shelter, water and sanitation, food, health and education in the camps visited by the group. The mission is a follow up to a rapid assessment mission undertaken by the UN Country Team in Eritrea and the subsequent release of joint United Nations Country Team Appeal for Humanitarian Assistance in March 1999. Since the preparation of the appeal, the total number of affected population has surpassed the original Government estimates of 540,000, rising to 560,000. There has been very poor response from major international donors to the appeal and, with the rainy season due this month, ERREC has stressed the situation is critical. (*Trip Report to Adi Quala and Tsorona 23–24 June*)

Eritrea Celebrates Independence: Eritrea celebrated eight years of independence on May 24, despite fears that Ethiopia would carry out bombing raids to disrupt the festivities. Eritrean MiG 29 fighter jets patrolled the skies over Asmara to deter potential attacks. Over 100,000 people were reported to have taken to Asmara's main street on Sunday night for the event, which included a midnight fireworks display to herald the day of independence. The main official event took place in Asmara Stadium, on Monday May 24th where schoolchildren put on a flag-waving display in front of President Isayas Afewerki. (*Reuters, 24 May*)

DJIBOUTI

Opposition members on hunger strike: Nine Djibouti opposition members on hunger strike in Bangolet, a Paris suburb, since March 29, in solidarity with political prisoners in Djibouti, suspended their strike following the visit of an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegate to the Djibouti prison of Gabode. The hunger strike put pressure on the French government and led the French Secretary of State for Development, Charles Josselin, to visit the hunger strikers in Bangolet on April 26. In addition the Djibouti government has agreed to a quadripartite inquiry – carried out by two foreign jurists (a judge and a lawyer), a representative of the International Human Rights Federation, and one from the International Prison Watch – on prisoners at Gabode. Mrs. Christine Daure Seraty (IPW chairman and wife of Moroccan opposition - member Abraham Seraty) have completed the information mission from May 16 – 22 as the Djibouti government wanted to wait until after the investiture of Ismail Omar Gelleh as president. The European Parliament, which was planning to pass a tough resolution on human rights violations in Djibouti, has decided to wait until the ICRC and IPW reports are completed. (*ION 8 May*)

President's first state visit: Djibouti's new head of state Ismail Omar Gelle took his first official visit abroad since his accession to the presidency on May 8. The President travelled to Paris to meet Defence Minister Alain Richard and the chairmen of the senate and national assembly. Neither Prime Minister Lionel Jospin nor Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine held private meetings with the new President but the Secretary of State for Development, Charles Josselin, hosted a dinner on May 6 and the local chamber of commerce in Marseilles prepared a visit to the port. (*ION 22 May*)

SUDAN

Doha agreements continue: The foreign ministers of Eritrea and Sudan signed an agreement to advance the normalisation of their ties, their Qatari counterpart, Sheikh Hamad bin Jaseem al-Thani announced. The two countries have agreed to establish a joint reconciliation commission to oversee the implementation of the reconciliation agreement signed on May 2 by the Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir and Eritrean President Issaias Aferworki. The accord, signed in Doha under the auspices of Qatari emir Shiek Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, envisaged the resumption of diplomatic relations broken off in 1994. Agreement on the commission followed a meeting between Eritrean Foreign Minister Haile Woldensai and Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Othman Ismail mediated by Sheikh Hamad. Ismail told Sudanese television that a conference of Sudanese opposition in Eritrea would not hamper the process. The National Democratic Alliance meetings in Asmara are "a violation of the Doha agreement," he said, but added that this would not make Sudan "slam the door" on the normalisation process.

NDA meeting in Asmara: Sudanese opposition parties from the umbrella National Democratic Alliance gathered in the Eritrean capital, Asmara for a high-level meeting. John Garang, leader of the main rebel group, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA), former Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi, now head of the Umma party, and NDA chairman Mohamed Osman al-Mirghani, were among the leaders who attended the talks in Asmara. The opposition groups are divided over a meeting held last month in Geneva between Mahdi and Sudan's parliament speaker Hassan al-Turabi, which was seen as a reconciliation bid between Mahdi and Khartoum. The five-day meeting of the NDA opposition ended with an agreement by all member parties to seek a political settlement with the Islamic-led government in Khartoum through consultations with Egypt and Libya. The NDA leadership council, a 28-member body of opposition leaders, trade unionists and independent figures, will travel to Cairo on July 5 for consultations and then will visit Tripoli on July 8. Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Othman Ismail met Egyptian counterpart Amr Mussa in Cairo to discuss "suggestions" concerning Egypt's role. (AFP June 13, Reuters June 8. ION 22 May)

SOMALIA

Baidoa and Kismayo update: Somalia's conflict is becoming regional because of the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Hawiye faction in Mogadishu has reinforced its relations with Eritrea and Libya while the rival groups in Mogadishu and other parts of the country are turning to Ethiopia. In early June, Aideed lost control of Baidoa town after several days of heavy fighting with a rival militia, the Rahanwein Resistance Army. Ethiopia denied accusations of heavy involvement in the capture of Baidoa. The Rahanwein Resistance Army is currently pushing southeast of Baidoa, and captured the town of Bur Acaba. Following the capture of Baidoa, a Somali militia group, SNF, succeeded in ousting the forces of rival warlord General Morgan from the southern port of Kismayo. The port, which is Somalia's third largest after Mogadishu and Berbera, is a key position which had been controlled by Morgan since 1993. The town's capture is a boost for Hussein Aideed who is an ally of the SNF and who lost control of the strategic town of Baidoa. Eritrean and Oromo rebels were said to have facilitated the take over of Kismayo but Eritrea and Ethiopia have both denied any involvement in Somalia factional fighting.

New Somali Banknotes cause drastic price hikes: The Somali shilling, which has remained strong since 1993, after the UN intervention in Somalia, has been weakening daily since the recent arrival in Somali of billions of new Somali banknotes printed in Canada for some Somali warlords and businessmen. Residents of Mogadishu have taken to the streets to protest the spiralling cost of living in the Somali capital. Mogadishu transporters have tripled their rates and fares or suspended operations because a litre of petrol, 2,500 Somali shillings two weeks ago, has risen to 8,600 shillings. Most of the big shops in Mogadishu's main Bakara and other markets were closed because of the deteriorating value of the Somali shilling. The protests, which took place twice in the last week of June, have been violent with two people reportedly killed and three wounded in the first one and eight people wounded in the second according to AFP. The protesters reportedly shouted "Death to greedy businessmen. We need cheaper food, transport, clothes and medicine." Most of the injured were victims of a stampede triggered when gunmen protecting some business centres fired in the air to scare away potential looters and disperse the rowdy demonstrators. There has been no comment from the importers of the currency. (AFP June 29)

Somaliland Cabinet Reshuffle: President Mohamed Ibrahim Egal of Somaliland carried out a reshuffle of the Northwest Somali region's government on May 23, firing four ministers and switching the portfolio of another four. He also thanked his police chief and Berbera Port Director for their services, replacing the latter. Giving no reason for the dismissals, he dismissed ministers for Justice, Defence, Information and Commerce. In addition to the Chairman of the Supreme Court, the Police Commander and Berbera Port manager were replaced. The real reason behind the reshuffle is said to be an effort to try to remedy incompetence and corruption, a problem that donors have raised with Egal several times. Further changes can be expected as Egal is determined to improve the public image of the government, both domestically and abroad. (ION, 29 May; UNCT Monitor, 28 May)

Arab League offers to host Somali peace talks: The Arab League has offered to host peace talks between rival Somali factions. Its Secretary-General, Esmat Abdel-Meguid said after talks with Somali warlords Hussein Mohamed Aideed and Ali Mahdi Mohamed, that the Arab League was ready to host a Somali national reconciliation conference. According to a statement released 22 June, the meeting

would involve Somali factions along with national and regional groups, as well as other countries. A senior Arab diplomat has said that the League was involved in intensive contacts with all sides in the conflict to try to overcome a freeze in peace efforts in recent months. The Arab League invitation was extended during a visit to Egypt by Aideed and Mahdi who met Egyptian officials to review progress since a Somali peace agreement was reached in Cairo at the end of 1997. The Egyptian-brokered agreement was criticised for focusing primarily on the two factions of Aideed and Mahdi and none of the resolutions made were implemented. (*Reuters, June 22*)

KENYA

South Africa and Kenyan Trade Relations: South Africa and Kenya have launched negotiations that could lead to a trade agreement that will enhance the terms of Kenyan trade with South Africa. The proposed accord would supplement access to South Africa within the framework of the World Trade Organisation and a senior official at the Kenyan trade and industry departments Africa trade relations unit has said that South Africa is to respond to the proposals for a Kenya-South Africa accord. In addition, a meeting of trade ministers was being planned for later this year. Under WTO rules, SA could not discriminate or put up barriers against Kenyan exporters. The complaints about restrictive trade practices relate mainly to Kenya's leading exports such as coffee, tea and some fruit. Kenya has criticised South Africa over unfair trade practice and said it will revise taxes to stem a flood of South African goods into the country. Kenyan Trade Minister Joseph Kamotho is quoted as saying that South Africa subsidised its products before exporting them, but put a lid on its own market to ward off regional competition. Kenya imports goods worth about 294 million US dollars annually from South Africa.

Erastus Mwanacha, Secretary-General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), has stated that the African trading block remains concerned about the lack of access for its members to the South African market, adding that COMESA might consider common external tariffs against South Africa. At his opening address during the Fourth Summit of the COMESA Authority of heads of state and government recently held in Nairobi, President Moi hinted that Kenya may consider placing some restrictive condition on imports from South Africa, making it possible for the country to enhance trade with other members of the COMESA. "We are trading with South Africa at a disadvantaged 20:1 ratio but after this meeting, we will stick to COMESA". (*Business Day, May 11, Xinhua, 18 May; 25 May, The Nation*)

Kenyan Courts jail 10 Ethiopians for Arms Offence: Ten people believed to be members of the Ethiopian-based Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) captured during the on-going security operation in the northern Kenya districts of Moyale and Marsabit have been sentenced to 10 years in prison for possessing assorted weapons. Marsabit senior resident magistrate Njuguna Kimani also fined the sentenced men the equivalent of about 300 US dollars for being in Kenya illegally. The 10 will be repatriated to Ethiopia on completion of their jail terms. The accused were arrested 23 May and charged with possession of eight AK-47 rifles, one carbine and one machine gun. In addition they also had two rocket-propelled grenades, two bazookas, 43 assorted hand grenades, an unknown gun and 3,832 pieces of assorted ammunition. The 10 pleaded guilty to both charges. The accused also pleaded not to be repatriated at the end of their sentence requesting refugee status after completion of their jail terms for fear of being killed if sent back. (*PANA, 29 May; AFP June 8; Xinhua, June 9*)

World Bank Technical Mission to Kenya : The World Bank has told Kenya's energy and finance ministries on March 15 that it would be freezing financing for the energy sector from June first because Kenya Power and Lighting Corporation and Kenya Electricity Generation company, (KenGen) had failed to work out a price structure for electricity. The role of the two units has been clearly separated on paper since January, but in practice, KenGen operates as if it were a KPLC subsidiary. The World Bank has insisted that any agreement, even an interim one, must clearly indicate the price KPLC will pay for its electricity from KenGen. An urgent World Bank technical mission is expected in Nairobi in early June to evaluate a new proposal submitted by Kenya's energy ministry covering the manner in which KPLC will pay for its purchases of electricity from KenGen. The separation of the two institutions is part of an overall government plan to increase privatisation in line

with World Bank/IMF aid prerequisites. The Kenyan government is currently attempting to negotiate new aid from the International Monetary Fund and has drafted a policy framework paper that outlines promised government reforms for 1999-2002. The reforms include the separation of the distribution and transmission activities of Kenya Power and Lighting Corporation, and the completion of the split of KPLC and KenGen with the creation of a regulatory body for this sector by 2002. The electricity distribution company to come from KPLC will sell 30 percent of the shares to the private sector while KenGen will put up 25% "once reorganisation of the power sector is complete." (*ION, 29 May*)

UGANDA

Museveni offers amnesty to rebels: In a bid to end a 13-year old rebellion Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni has offered amnesty to Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). According to the senior presidential advisor for media and public relations, John Ngenda, an open amnesty has been granted to the rebels a few years back but had no response. On May 13, President Yoweri Museveni travelled to Odek, the home village of the Lords Resistance Army, Joseph Kony, to offer LRA rebels an amnesty provided they participated in the 2001 elections. (*ION, 22 May*)

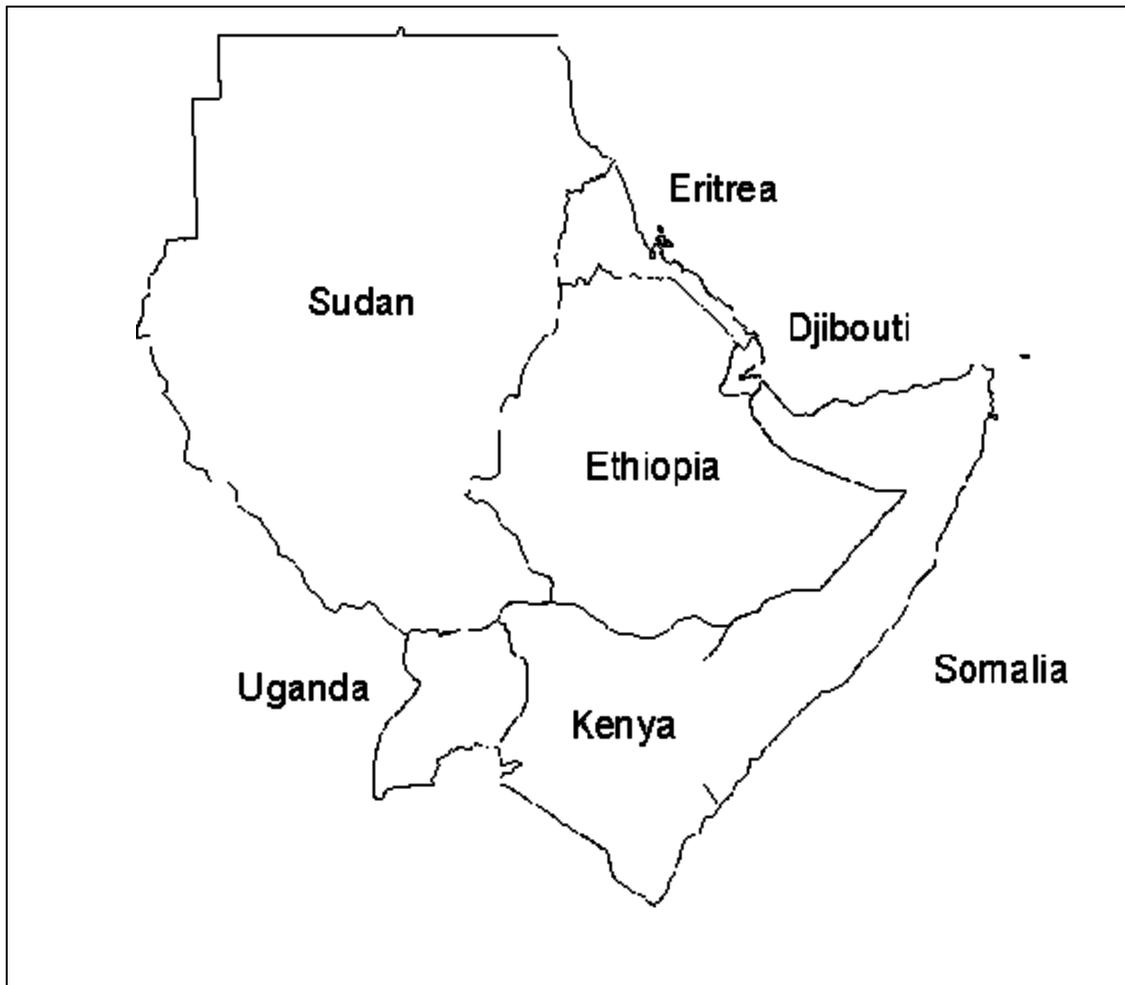
Libyan "peacekeeping forces" arrive in Uganda: Some 40 Libyan soldiers have flown into Uganda uninvited to impose peace in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, according to a statement given to AFP by a Ugandan minister. The Libyan foreign ministry said that the "Libyan forces arrived in Uganda to form the vanguard of African forces who will keep the peace and oversee the cease-fire" in the DRC. The Ugandan State Minister for Defense Stephen Kavuma told AFP that there were about 41 or 42 soldiers currently stationed in Ugandan hotels. The Minister added that the Libyans had been advised that the arrival of troops was premature but that the clearance for the troops to land had been given "so that we could find out what was happening." President Yoweri Museveni has troops fighting alongside DRC rebels who are trying to topple President Laurent Kabila. The rebels also have the support of Rwanda and Burundi although Bujumbura continues to deny that its troops are across the border. Kabila's army has support from Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Chad. In April of this year President Laurent Kabila and Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni signed a peace accord with the DRC president in the Libyan town of Sirte.

The 10 point Sirte accord was signed at a conference sponsored by Libyan leader Moamer Kadhafi. The agreement has failed to halt the fighting so far and the Ugandans later downplayed the agreement with the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Amama Mbabazi saying, "the peace agreement is simply a statement of our desires...what we would like to happen in the Congo and Rwanda has said that it was not bound by it." Minister Kavuma has said that the Libyans used the Sirte agreement to justify their arrival. The agreement provides for the "deployment of neutral African peace-keeping forces in the area where there are troops of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi inside the DRC". Specifying that the "withdrawal of Ugandan and Rwandan troops will be timed with the arrival of the African peace forces." Ugandan presidential spokeswoman Hope Kvenjere told AFP Thursday that the countries involved in the Lusaka initiative have yet to agree on the mode of operation of a peacekeeping force in the DRC, or its logistics. Meanwhile, in Tripoli, the Libyan Ministry said it was sure of receiving the "support of the United Nations and Security Council for the peacekeeping forces in the Great Lakes region", of which the Libyan forces would form the initial core. (*AFP, May 31; AFP, May 28; AFP, May 27*)

Uganda welcomes Rwandan cessation of hostilities: The government of Uganda, whose troops back rebels in the DRC, has welcomed a decision by Rwanda, also fighting alongside the rebels, to declare a unilateral cessation of hostilities. Rwanda's announcement said the cessation of hostilities would take effect from midnight Friday 28th May. Uganda's State Minister for Defense, Amama Mbabazi, told AFP "This is a welcome move and a good gesture in support of the peace effort." Uganda had earlier withdrawn troops deployed in the Rwandan-controlled sector of the Democratic Republic of Congo following a widening rift over strategy, press reports said. Uganda and Rwanda had been supporting Tutsi-led rebels during the 10-month war against DRC President Laurent Kabila. Uganda controlled the northern sector of the rebel-held area in the DRC, while Rwanda has overseen the fighting in the central and southeastern regions, but each ally had some troops in the other sector. There has long been tension between the two allies with disagreement over the best way for the war to proceed. Uganda has argued for greater mobilization and politicization of the population, and a wide political base among the rebels, while Rwanda has concentrated on a military solution to the

war, informed sources say. This tension appears to have been brought to a head by a split in the main rebel group, the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), with one faction led by “ousted” RCD president Ernest Wamba dia Wamba backed by Uganda and the other, under “new” president Emile Ilunga, backed by Rwanda.

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.

30 June 1999

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