

HORN OF AFRICA The Monthly Review

This update covers the period July – August 1999

REGIONAL ISSUES

Food supply and crop prospects: Nearly 10 million people in sub-Saharan Africa need emergency food assistance, according to a UN Food and Agriculture Agency (FAO) report released on 8 August 1999. FAO's "Food Supply Situation and Crop Prospects in Sub-Saharan Africa" says the food outlook in Somalia for 1999 and beyond is "extremely grim due to the cumulative effects of adverse weather, the long running civil war and uncontrolled crop pests and diseases." The current main season cereal crop has failed due to erratic and insufficient rainfall, armyworm outbreaks and unusually high temperatures. There have been a series of consecutive poor harvests since 1996, says the report. One million people are facing serious food shortages in Somalia with over 400,000 at risk of starvation. In Ethiopia, the report says more than 5 million people need emergency food aid, including 385,000 people displaced by the ongoing war with Eritrea. The magnitude of food shortages has increased in Ethiopia because the 1999 *Belg* season crop failed due to inadequate rainfall. Though Eritrea had a good harvest in 1998, the report calls the food situation there "very tight for families displaced by the war" as well as for deportees from Ethiopia. In Southern Sudan, despite favorable growing conditions, the food situation continues to be difficult due to persistent civil conflict. Meanwhile, in the western part of Uganda, a prolonged drought has affected crop production and livestock with large numbers of farmers, particularly cattle producers, reported to be in need of urgent assistance. Thousands of Ugandans are reported to have moved to northern Tanzania in search of food and grazing pasture. Kenya is also reportedly facing crop and livestock production difficulties because of erratic and below-average rainfall during the current "long rains" season. According to the report, all of East Africa is experiencing food insecurity and a total of 16 sub-Saharan countries are considered as facing food emergencies. The 16 countries are: Burundi, Congo, the Democratic republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. (*IRIN August 9; Xinhua, August 9; PANA; August 9; AFP, August 9; AP, August 9*)

Armed conflict in Africa: In 1998, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, (SIPRI), defined a "major armed conflict" as one with at least 1,000 battle-related deaths, and identified 11 major armed conflicts in Africa. According to the institute, Africa now has more armed conflicts than any other continent. Wars in Africa in the late 1990's have taken on an increasingly regional character, especially in the Horn, the Great Lakes region, and southern Africa and the growth of arms trafficking has coincided with a change in the nature of warfare in Sub-Saharan Africa. Warfare has become more complicated as guerrilla groups have proliferated and divided into warring factions. Warfare by proxy has helped spread conflicts regionally. In response to the evolving regional conflict, Uganda and Rwanda have provided military support to rebel groups in the Congo-Kinshasa. In another example, Sudan provides assistance to the Lord's Resistance Army and other Ugandan insurgent groups in large measure, the report claims, because Uganda supports the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Such cycles of violence complicate conflict-resolution efforts and increase the damage suffered by local populations.

The region's conflicts have claimed an estimated 7-8 million lives, a large number of which have occurred during the past decade. According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), more than 2 million of the fatalities have been children. Some 45 million children have been disabled, another 12 million left homeless and more than 1 million orphaned or separated from their families. Tens of thousands have become "child soldiers." The Eritrean/Ethiopian border war, in less than a year, may already have cost the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers on both sides. This conflict has spread to Somalia, where local

warlords often exchange allegiance for weapons and other supplies, with no signs of Somalia emerging from the anarchy that has engulfed it for the past 8 years.

The report goes on to say the arms market provides many opportunities to those with assets other than hard currency to fund weapons purchases through parallel financing. The SPLA and UNITA have exchanged timber, cattle and animal trophies for weapons and other military supplies. Rwanda, Burundi and Sudan have mortgaged crops (e.g. sesame, gum arabic, cotton, coffee, tea, etc.) to pay for guns. Somali warlords sell stolen relief supplies or "tax" relief shipments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to get cash to buy weapons.

Several factors limit the international community's ability to control arms flows into Africa. With the exception of countries/groups under a UN arms embargo—Liberia and Somalia, for example—it is not illegal to sell arms to Africa. Even those nations and organizations subject to a UN arms embargo easily acquire weapons because of the paucity of effective international monitoring and policing mechanisms. As a result of these loopholes, no one has been prosecuted during the past decade for violating UN arms embargoes in Africa. (*IRIN, July 14*)

COMESA states to have communications network: African Sky Communications Incorporated, formerly Alexander Resources International Inc., has announced that it has signed a contract to provide voice, data, Internet and video broadcasting services throughout 21 African countries. The project involves the installation and operation of Tele-Trade centers throughout the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region and the Federation of National Association Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa (FEMCOM). Meanwhile, the Abidjan based Regional Satellite Organization, RASCOM, sponsored delegates from Eritrea, Djibouti, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya to attend a sub-regional meeting on a proposed regional satellite telecommunication project that is expected to result in the drastic reduction of international telephone calls in the region. The project, according to Director General of RASCOM, G. D. Adage, is a joint venture between RASCOM and an outside partner. At the meeting, held in Nairobi Kenya, Director of Telecom Kenya, Augustine Cheserem, told the participants that the satellite project would provide inter-connectivity and improved linkages within Africa through efficient and affordable telecommunication facilities. (*Addis Tribune, August 6; Xinhua, August 2*)

OAU summit adopts Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict "modalities": African leaders meeting in Algiers at the 35th annual summit of the Organisation for African Unity held from 12 to 14 July unanimously adopted a plan to bring an end to the 14-month border war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, calling it one of the major achievements of their last summit of the century. Delegations from Ethiopia and Eritrea announced their acceptance of the proposed seven-point "Modalities for the Implementation of the OAU Framework Agreement" which was developed during intensive behind-the-scenes discussions before and during the summit. Held amid tight security, the summit attracted a record 42 heads of state and proceeded without violent incident. (*AP, July 14; Reuters, July 14*)

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia to export sugar and soft drinks: Ethiopia will export sugar in the coming year for the first time, the state-owned Sugar Industry Support Center has announced. Ethiopia is planning to export up to 100,000 tons of sugar to the world market in 1999/2000, earning around US \$22 million in foreign currency, Shewaferaw Girma of the center said. The exports have been made possible by the opening of the country's 4th sugar factory at Finchaa in western Ethiopia earlier this year. According to Shewaferaw, Ethiopia will produce around 275,000 tons of sugar in the coming season from 23,500 hectares of irrigated cane-field. The start of sugar exports is expected to help diversify Ethiopia's economy away from its dependence on coffee, which currently accounts for around 60 percent of foreign currency earnings. Meanwhile, a Cadbury-Schweppes franchise plant built at a cost of over 130 million birr, (about US \$16.5 million), has been inaugurated in the north eastern suburb of Addis Ababa. The plant produces Schweppes, pineapple, sport cola, crush orange, Canada Dry, Ginger Ale, Schweppes tonic and Schweppes mineral water. Micheal Asress, the managing director of the Summit Soft Drinks Factory, a subsidiary of Summit Partners of the United States, said the new plant will increase the soft drinks supply in Ethiopia by 25 percent. The plant is also envisaged to export the Cadbury-Schweppes

soft drink brands to neighboring countries and the Middle East. (*Xinhua, August 15; PANA, July 15*)

Ethiopian refugees return to the Ogaden: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has concluded the repatriation of 1,474 Ethiopian refugees from camps in Kenya to Ethiopia's Ogaden region. The operation began on July 15 and ended on July 30 with 21 flights of UNHCR chartered aircraft transporting refugees from Daddab camp in north eastern Kenya to Gode and Jigjiga in Ethiopia's Somali Regional State. Many of those returning had fled the Ogaden region when war broke out between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977. They first sought asylum in Somalia, but when civil war erupted there in the early 1990s they escaped to Kenya. The refugees were inoculated against yellow fever, supplied with tents and given 3 months food rations and US \$60 each prior to their departure. There are now only 3,000 registered Ethiopian refugees in Kenyan camps. (*AP, July 16; Xinhua, 31 July*)

Ethiopian Jews return to Israel: In an operation lasting 30 days, 1,388 Falasha Jews have been brought from Ethiopia to live in Israel. According to the Jerusalem Post, the operation, which began in June and ended July 29 involved the use of 10 flights from Addis Ababa to transport the Falashas from Ethiopia's remote northern region of Quara. Several hundred Falashas from the region still want to move to Israel but the Jerusalem Post reports that the Jewish agency which organized the operation said it would not resume flights until the end of the current rainy season. (*AFP, July 30*)

World population day marked: Ethiopia, with a population of some 60 million, is Africa's third most populous country following Nigeria and Egypt and has been trying to curb the fast increasing population over the years. Speaking on the occasion of the World Population Day and the 6th anniversary of the official launching of Ethiopia's Population Policy, Ethiopian Parliament Speaker Dawit Yohannes spoke highly of the material and financial aid given by international donor agencies for the implementation of the national policy. Under the population policy, the number of children in one family should not exceed four. According to Negussie Tefera, head of the Ethiopian Population Office, financial constraints and shortage of manpower have impacted on the implementation of population programme. Meanwhile, the U.S-based David and Lucile Packard Foundation has announced a five-year, US \$30 million grant for an Ethiopian reproductive health and population project. The grant to Ethiopia is part of Packard Foundation's US \$375 million-dollar project focusing on eight countries. Announcing the grant, the U.S. Embassy said in a statement that the goal of the population programme is to harmonize population growth, economic development and conservation by making reproductive choices available to men and women. The project's principles are formulated on the basis of the framework set by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 and outlined in the Ethiopian National Population Policy. The foundation has identified North Shewa and Welo zones in the Amhara region and West Shewa, Wellega and Jimma zones in the Oromiya region as target areas for the Ethiopian population project. (*Xinhua, July 12; AP, August 2*)

Ethiopian forces clash with Oromo Liberation Front: The Ethiopian Government said on August 12 that it had killed 746 Oromo Liberation Front and allied rebels in clashes in eastern Ethiopia in the last two and half months while the OLF announced the following day that it had killed 1,512 Ethiopian government troops in a similar period. (*Reuters, August 14*)

ERITREA

Egyptian-Eritrean economic co-operation: Egyptian Minister of Trade and Supply, Ahmed Gowalli flew to Asmara to open the first ever trade fair of Egyptian products in Eritrea. Noting that economic and trade co-operation between Egypt and Eritrea was increasing, the Minister said that a number of agreements on trade and economic cooperation had been signed by the two countries. He added that the most important agreement was concerned with fishing rights and is expected to prevent any future disputes between the two countries in this respect. The Eritrean Ambassador in Cairo said the two countries are considering the formation of a joint committee of foreign ministers in a bid to boost co-operation. He called for the opening of maritime lines to link the two countries, as commercial transport through existing air routes had become the main obstacle to the growth of bilateral trade. The trade volume between Egypt and Eritrea stood at US \$28.82 million in 1998 with Eritrea's main import from Egypt being medicine. (*Xinhua, July 16*)

Port rehabilitation: According to the Indian Ocean Newsletter, the Eritrean authorities have just launched a Call for Expression of Interest by international consultants for two port studies financed by an award from the International Development Association in October 1997 and by a grant from Italy. One study will examine the commercial development of the port of Assab and would inquire into diversifying activities and involvement of the private sector. A second study will look into the feasibility of an expansion of the port of Massawa's facilities (construction of specialised terminals, rehabilitation of shipyard repair facilities, appreciation of the state of petroleum terminal and wharves etc). (*ION, July 24*)

DJIBOUTI

Djibouti closes border with Eritrea: Djibouti has closed its border with Eritrea following an exchange of fire between a terrorist group and Djibouti security forces. According to report in the Ethiopian Herald, the London-based Al-Khalij Arab newspaper and Qatar News Agency quoted Djibouti officials as saying that that attacks were launched in the Doha area of Djibouti and that 27 terrorist were killed during the exchange that lasted for an hour. The armed terrorists were said to have infiltrated into Djibouti from Assab through its common borders with Eritrea. The Djiboutian opposition based in Paris, with Eritrean support, were blamed for the attack. (*Ethiopian Herald, July 31; Xinhua, July 31*)

SUDAN

Peace talks resume: IGAD-sponsored peace talks held in Nairobi from July 19-23 brought together the Khartoum Government and the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army for the first time since a similar event held in Addis Ababa was suspended last year. The continuing talks on Sudan are held under the aegis of the regional Inter-Government Authority for Development. In opening the meeting, the Kenyan Foreign Minister, Bonyana Godana summarized the main points of contention as being the implementation of a comprehensive ceasefire, the relationship between state authority and religion, and the delineation of the border between north and south ahead of a referendum on self-determination. The SPLA wants a referendum on self-determination not only in the south, but also in the central Nuba Mountain and Blue Nile regions. On religion, the SPLA considers a solution would lie in the interim creation of two confederal states, with a constitution based on Islamic Sharia law in the north but a lay constitution in the south. The Khartoum government favors a federal system with a referendum only in the south. There have been reservations voiced regarding the IGAD peace initiative by top officials of the ruling National Congress, who have called for abandoning a "fruitless peace initiative by the IGAD." A top official of the NC, Mutasem Abdul Rahim is quoted in Khartoum's papers as saying, "This file should be closed altogether and time should not be wasted in a Byzantine dialogue conducted by IGAD". Rahim added "IGAD member states sponsoring the negotiations are not qualified for resolving the South Sudan crisis." The IGAD mediation committee for Sudan is chaired by Kenya and includes Uganda, Ethiopia and Eritrea. The latest round of talks closed with the Government and SPLA blaming each other for stalling. Kenyan Foreign Minister Boyana Godana focused on the two positive outcomes of the meeting, the creation of a permanent secretariat on the peace process and an agreement to meet again in 60 days. (*AFP, July 9 - 24*)

Sudanese government and SPLA declare separate cease-fires: The Government of Sudan announced that it would observe a 70-day ceasefire in the south so that relief supplies could reach civilians affected by the 16 year-old civil war between the north and south. The Foreign Ministry said in a statement that the ceasefire would go into effect "in all combat zones" until October 15 "to facilitate the distribution of humanitarian aid in the south of Sudan." Earlier, the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had unilaterally declared the renewal of a ceasefire covering the south-western Bahr al-Ghazal province. In addition, the SPLA extended its ceasefire to the west of Upper Nile State (where oil fields lie and heavy fighting has recently taken place between rival militias and the Sudanese government troops).

Sudanese rebel leader John Garang rejected the government cease-fire the day after it was announced saying that government troops had bombed Yei and Loka in the south on the night before the cease-fire was announced in Khartoum. Foreign Minister Mustafa Othman Ismail followed up on the SPLA

announcement with a statement that the Sudan government will go on implementing its decision of a comprehensive ceasefire irrespective of a declaration by the rebel movement (SPLA) rejecting this ceasefire." However, he said the government army would respond if it was attacked by the SPLA or by the northern opposition forces. He appealed to the international community to exert pressure on the SPLA to accept the ceasefire. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on the Sudanese rebel leader John Garang to accept the unilateral cease-fire declared by the government. "I call upon the SPLM to consider extending the scope of this ceasefire and thus contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for humanitarian operation in the Sudan," Anan said. The Italian Ambassador to Kenya, appealed on behalf of the IGAD Partners Forum's for both sides to agree to a "general and global ceasefire".

Since the summer of 1998, cease-fires have been renewed every three months by both sides to enable relief workers to help civilians mainly in Bahr al-Ghazal. The last such pact expired July 15, and the government has been pressing for a truce to be extended across the south. For its part the SPLA has ruled out any overall ceasefire in the south on the grounds that Khartoum wants such a measure the better to launch the offensive in other parts of the country. The SPLA deputy leader, Major Mayardit said that there could be no general ceasefire before a political agreement. (AFP, July 5 - 23 & August 4 - 8)

US to appoint special envoy for southern Sudan: The US Government has announced its intention to appoint a special envoy to southern Sudan. US Ambassador to Egypt, Daniel Kurtzer, has briefed the Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa on the planned mission of the special envoy for humanitarian conditions in Southern Sudan. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced that President Bill Clinton would appoint such an envoy to co-ordinate his work with Egypt and the parties trying to broker peace in Sudan under the umbrella of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development. In Washington, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Susan Rice said plans to appoint such an envoy did not mean Washington was changing its policy toward Sudan. "This is not an effort to inject a new personality in our still quite serious and troubled relationship with Khartoum," she said. Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail has reacted to the announcements by saying "It is premature to give a negative or positive assessment of US President Bill Clinton's decision to appoint a special envoy, as we have not officially received that decision ... we have learnt of it in the media and when it reaches us officially we will assess it." Susan Rice said that to maximize his or her effectiveness the envoy would have a dialogue with Khartoum. She stressed that the duties of the post would be confined to drawing attention to and co-ordinating aid for humanitarian crises, spotlighting human rights abuses and reinforcing US support for the peace process aimed at ending the civil war. (AFP, July 15, 16 & 19)

Flight ban raises fears of humanitarian crisis: The World Food Programme has warned that a flight ban imposed by Khartoum on an eastern region of Sudan could provoke a humanitarian catastrophe. The ban, announced July 14, renders most of western Upper Nile region inaccessible to the WFP and other relief agencies trying to deliver urgent humanitarian assistance to 150,000 people affected by civil war. Last year a similar flight ban imposed between February and April on Bahr al-Ghazal state resulted in the war torn area quickly turning into a famine zone. The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army has claimed that the ban is aimed at exterminating part of the population there. SPLM/A spokesman Samson Kwaje said, "The government of Sudan is exterminating the Nuer population so that it can annex the area to northern Sudan, without the people". Kwaje explained that the SPLM/A had declared a ceasefire in this area to facilitate humanitarian intervention but that the move was rejected by Khartoum. He appealed to the international community to pressure Khartoum to lift the ban on flights to western Upper Nile. (AFP, July 27 & 28; IRIN, July 28)

Opposition groups meet in Libya: The National Democratic Alliance, an umbrella organization of Sudan's opposition parties held a series of meetings in Tripoli to discuss Libyan plans for reconciliation between them and the government in Khartoum. Officials of the NDA, including NDA leader Mohammed Osman al-Mirgani, Umma Party leader Sadiq el-Mahdi and other delegates from the Sudan People's Liberation Army as well as other smaller groups attended the meeting. The meeting concluded July 28 with a statement calling for the creation of an appropriate atmosphere for dialogue with the Sudanese government through the removal of "any item in the 1998 constitution that restricts public freedoms". In addition, the NDA has demanded that the military-backed Khartoum government "lift the state of emergency in areas outside the war zone, lift the ban on the political activities of all opposition parties and release all political prisoners." The Sudanese government has already rejected changes in the

constitution demanded by the opposition to settle questions related to power sharing, as well as civil and human rights issues. At the NDA's last meeting, held in Eritrea in June of this year, the group agreed to seek a political solution to the country's civil war while continuing its military struggle. Libya's initiative at brokering peace talks is one of several international peacemaking efforts in recent years. Libya has pledged to hold discussions with Sudan's neighbours to co-ordinate peace efforts. (AP, July 31 & August 2; AFP, July 31)

Sudan currency changes from pound to dinar: As of August 1, Sudan has switched its currency, replacing the Sudanese pound, (which has been in circulation since the country's independence in 1956), with the dinar. The dinar, which comprises 100 piastres, is worth ten times the pound and the official rate is 250 to the US dollar. Finance Minister Izz Eddin Ibrahim said that people had had plenty of time to get used to the new money as the dinar was first introduced in 1993 and circulated alongside the pound for six years. He said the main reason for the change was the "erosion of the purchasing value of the pound", which meant "bags of banknotes" were needed to buy anything. Ibrahim also stressed that the pound was originally the currency of Sudan's British colonial rulers, while the dinar was an Arab and Islamic currency mentioned in the Koran. According to official figures the high level of inflation, which reached 150 percent in 1996 has now been brought down to 13 percent in April. (AFP, August 8; July 31)

SOMALIA

New political party launched: A newly formed political party in Somali pledged to overcome the current political stalemate and set up a transitional government soon. The United Somali Republic Party (USRP), which was inaugurated in Moqdishu on August 6, released a statement saying that it would battle against "anarchists and warmongers". The USRP is led by Abdi Nur Darman, 48, a Somali engineering graduate and now a US citizen, who said its membership would not be based on clan affiliation but on a "commitment to the party's charter and its political agency." Various factions including the Rahanwein Resistance Army welcomed news of the establishment of the USRP. During the party's inauguration, which was attended by 500 delegates, the USRP endorsed the idea of a transitional authority in all Somali regions after consultations with members of civil society and talks with "open-minded armed factions". The USRP will oppose warlords who want to establish a government by use of force and has identified its prime task as being voluntary disarmament. USRP leaders recently visited neighboring Ethiopia, Djibouti and other countries to discuss an "enhanced future plan for Somali", according to its party officials. USRP members have also visited Somaliland. Abdi Nur Darman first announced his intention to vie for leadership of Somalia in early May. (AFP, May 26 & August 9)

Fighting in Lower Shebelle: In late July, fighting broke out in southern Somalia between militiamen of a new faction and forces loyal to Hussein Aidid. Members of the newly formed Digil Salvation Army attacked Aidid's militia in Lower Shebelle over what they claim to be high taxes imposed by Aidid's militia men on residents of Qorioley (120 kms south of Moqdishu), according to a Reuters report. The DSA's dawn attack on Aidid's forces took place on July 27 and residents of Qorioley town reported that the bulk of casualties were suffered by the DSA who were forced to retreat. Two women and a child were wounded by cross fire. The attack was the second launched by the DSA who reportedly first entered Qorioley and clashed with Aidid's militia on July 25. In an interview given to AFP, the head of the DSA, Colonel Ali Sheikh Abdulkadir, claimed that the first attack had resulted in "more than a dozen of Aidid's men " being killed in Qorioley. In a statement from Moqdishu, Aidid's faction stated that the Qorioley attacks were being "carried out by freelance gunmen" and not by any organized group. Mahdi Mohamed Jumale, an Aidid spokesman in Moqdishu, denied that the Rahanwein Resistance Army or DSA took part in the fighting.

Earlier in July, the Commander of the RRA, Colonel Hassan Mohamed Nur, (aka "Shatigudud" - Red Shirt), had ordered all Aidid militia to leave southern Lower Shabelle region or risk devastating attacks. He told AFP by radio from Baidoa that "the Baidoa lessons would be repeated in the Lower Shabelle region if Aidid did not re-deploy his militia and those from Ethiopia's Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels outside areas inhabited by Rahanwein sub-clans." Shatigudud's RRA fighters captured the Bay regional capital, Baidoa, from Aidid on June 6 and disarmed and captured many of the warlords' fighters. But Aidid militiamen said they had been overrun by troops from neighbouring Ethiopia and not RRA guerrillas,

a claim Shatigudud has strongly rejected. Aidid has denied that his faction is allied to any Eritrean or Oromo military presence in Somalia.

Further fighting in the area during early August, this time for control of the town of Awdegle, some 80 kilometers south of Moqdishu, followed the clashes in Qorioley. On August 2, the DSA spokesman Asan Abdi Mohamed announced that his troops had captured the town but Aidid's forces responded to the sudden attack by launching a counter attack the following morning, regaining control of the town. According to AFP, at least 4 people were killed and seven others were wounded. Also, the DSA spokesman admitted to using landmines as part of its military tactics against Aidid's forces. The latest fighting in the area has displaced hundreds of people who have fled their homes in Qorioley, Awdegle and the nearby village of Barire, travelling to Moqdishu and Afgoi, local relief workers said. (AFP, August 2-4, July 18 & 26; DPA, August 2; Reuters, July 27; AP, July 26)

Ethiopia denies talks with Aidid: The Ethiopian government has denied reports coming from Moqdishu that Somali warlord Hussein Mohamed Aidid was due to meet Ethiopian officials to discuss border tensions. As early as 15 July, AP reported on Hussein Aideed's address to reporters upon his return to Moqdishu after a 40-day trip abroad, where he said that Libya would be hosting direct talks between Ethiopian officials and himself. On that occasion Aidid said the meeting would take place once Libyan leader Moammer Gadhafi returned from the OAU Summit in Algiers. A BBC correspondent in Moqdishu was quoted by Ethiopia's Monitor newspaper as saying that Aidid planned to travel to Libya for talks with Ethiopia. The Moqdishu newspapers Qaran and Xogoogal also quoted Aidid as saying "Faction leader Ali Mohamed and I will represent Somalia at a meeting in Libya with Ethiopia." An official in the Ethiopian government spokesperson's office dismissed all the press reports saying, "These declarations are made in order to confuse the international community and the Somali people." (AFP, August 3; The Monitor July 17-18; DPA July 15; AP, July 15)

Somali Standing Committee on Somali holds sixth meeting in Addis Ababa: The Standing Committee on Somali, made up of 17 countries and organizations working for the promotion of peace and national reconciliation in Somalia has agreed to continue exploring ways that would contribute to speeding up the process of peace and national reconciliation in the country. At its sixth meeting held on July 29, Committee members exchanged views on the current situation in Somali and the challenges faced in promoting peace and reconciliation. In a press release issued by the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was reported that a peace and reconciliation initiative presented to the meeting by Djibouti was received with interest. According to the release, meeting participants agreed on the need to coordinate even more the support given to rehabilitation and development activities along with the political process of promoting peace and national reconciliation. It was decided that IGAD, the UN and the Somalia Aid Coordination Body develop a proposal on ways and means of ensuring the success of this "peace dividend" approach. The Standing Committee on Somalia was established in October 1998 as a consultative body chaired by Ethiopia to build international consensus behind the IGAD peace initiative on Somalia. (Ethiopian Herald, July 31; August 3).

Mine action in Somaliland and Puntland: President Egal has said that one of the problems Somaliland was facing was an estimated one million landmines, most of them planted during the rebellion against Siad Barre and during inter-clan warfare in 1994. He said 400 young men had been given rudimentary training in demining by his government, but the international community had dismissed the effort as a "military" exercise, as opposed to a humanitarian one by expatriates. He said he had been made to understand that only "humanitarian" demining by foreign experts would attract donor funding. He added that Somaliland would not wait for the "slow process" by aid groups and would go ahead with its own demining programmes on main roads. "There is no single day in Somaliland that a human being or animal is not killed by landmines," he added.

Meanwhile, in the neighbouring region of Mudug, the Norwegian Red Cross has launched a programme to provide artificial limbs to landmine victims in Mudug region's capital city, Galkayo. Radio Galkayo announced the launch of the project and urged those seeking assistance to contact the International Federation of Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies who will be manufacturing limbs with funds from the Norwegian Red Cross. The center in Galkayo was built by NRC worker, Ibrahim Hashim Ahmed, a US national who said "It was a humanitarian responsibility to help the poor with all we have. The young children are victims of war..." The NRC Secretary-General, Sven Mollekeiv said the NRC was proud to be

part of the process that offered children artificial limbs and pledged more support from his organization. (AFP, July 30 & 31)

KENYA

President Moi speaks out on Lusaka accord: Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi, who is currently chairman of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the Inter-governmental Authority on Development has explained his decision not to attend the signing of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) ceasefire pact because it lacked "goodwill" and "commitment." The ceasefire pact, known as the Lusaka accord, was mediated by Zambian President Frederick Chiluba and signed by six countries involved in the DRC conflict but none of the domestic rebel groups fighting President Laurent Kabila signed. The peace pact was signed on the one hand by Kabila and his military allies from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia and on the other by Rwanda and Uganda. "I could not have traveled to Zambia to be a witness or be a party to the signing of a ceasefire accord which has no goodwill and commitment. That is why even the rebels fighting the DRC government have vowed to continue fighting despite the cease-fire accord," Moi said. (AFP, July 15)

Ethiopian soldier denied asylum in Kenya: Kenya has denied political asylum to an Ethiopian officer fighting in western central Somalia and handed him over to his country, an official said. The soldier was detained in Mandera, a Kenyan trading town near where the borders of Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia converge. Maurice Makhanu, the top government official in North Eastern Province, said the soldier, identified only as Halake was denied asylum because he risked no political persecution in Ethiopia. Relations between Ethiopia and Kenya are good despite frequent skirmishes among their ethnic groups who inhabit both sides of the border. Ethiopia has reportedly sent a large number of troops to western central Somalia bordering Kenya to fight militiamen of Somali warlord Hussein Aidid who is said to be arming and training Ethiopian rebels. Aidid, who controls southern Moqdishu and surrounding areas, is allegedly supporting the Oromo Liberation Front, which is opposed to the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The OLF are in turn said to be supported by Eritrea, which is fighting a border war with Ethiopia. (AP, July 19)

Kenya launches security operation for Ethiopian Oromo rebels: Kenyan security forces have launched a manhunt in north-eastern Kenya's Bute sub-district to track down a group of armed men believed to be Ethiopian Oromo Liberation Front rebels, the official Kenya News Agency said. KNA quoted Wajir District Commissioner Fred Mutsami as telling a public meeting at Bute that the operation was to comb the Malaba Hills, some 270 kilometers north of Wajir, where local people reported seeing armed Oromo rebels. Mutsami called on area residents to co-operate with security forces in the hunt for the rebels. Locals in the area said about 300 rebels from the Oromo Liberation Front arrived in the region recently after they were forced out of their bases in Somalia by the Ethiopian army. (AFP, August 12; Reuters, August 14)

Border with Somalia closed: Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi announced on August 22 the closure of his country's border with Somalia and summoned Somali faction leaders to Nairobi for advice on how to improve the situation in their country. "I have patiently waited for Somalia to form a government and I have not seen it. "I am now closing completely the border, including (the sea route from the southern Somali port of) Kismayo," said Moi during a gathering here to mark the 21st anniversary of the death of Kenya's founding president Jomo Kenyatta. Moi suggested that the closure of the sea route from Kismayo was intended to prevent smuggling and to check criminal activities and the proliferation of illegal firearms from Somalia to Kenya. A few days later Moi also announced a total ban on flights from Kenya to Somalia, saying relief flights would require prior clearance from government before being authorised. The announcement took the humanitarian community by surprise and gave rise to serious concerns regarding the safety of staff working in the country. Through the Somalia Aid Coordination Body - an umbrella group comprising donors, UN agencies and international NGOs - an agreement on procedural arrangements for humanitarian flights was being sought ahead of the ban, which was scheduled to begin on September 1. (AFP, August 22 & 27; IRIN, August 27)

UGANDA

Ugandan army prepared to negotiate with the rebels: The Ugandan army has said that it is ready to talk to Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebels after three years of fighting, the state-owned New Vision newspaper reported. The paper quoted Lieutenant-Colonel Benen Birara, commander of the western region, as saying that the army was planning to have talks with the ADF to end a conflict that has internally displaced about 70,000 people. The army has invited the rebels to name a mediator of their choice, adding that the go-between should be authoritative and committed to achieving peace. The rebels have reportedly told Birara they wanted an end to the conflict and wished to return to their families and farms.

Sporadic fighting continues in both western and northern Uganda despite President Yoweri Museveni's blanket amnesty extended to all rebels earlier this year. The conflicts have resulted in 70,000 internally displaced people mainly concentrated in Western Uganda's Kasese region. Over the weekend of July 16 to 19 Allied Democratic Forces rebels attacked and killed eight displaced people in western Uganda's Bundibugyo district. Security sources told New Vision paper that four rebels were also injured during the morning attack on Bumadu displaced camp, where the rebels also looted property. Over 1,000 Ugandan soldiers had arrived in Bundibugyo following the attack to reinforce the region against further attacks by the ADF rebels. (*AFP, August 4 & July 16 - 19*)

AIDS research progress in Uganda: Uganda and South Africa have signed an agreement in Kampala for collaboration on anti-AIDS research and treatment of people who are HIV positive. South Africa and Uganda will specifically share information about Neviparine, a drug that apparently reduces mother-to-child HIV virus transmission by up to 50 percent. The two countries are also likely to work on an agreement for bulk purchasing of anti-AIDS drugs to reduce costs said South African Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

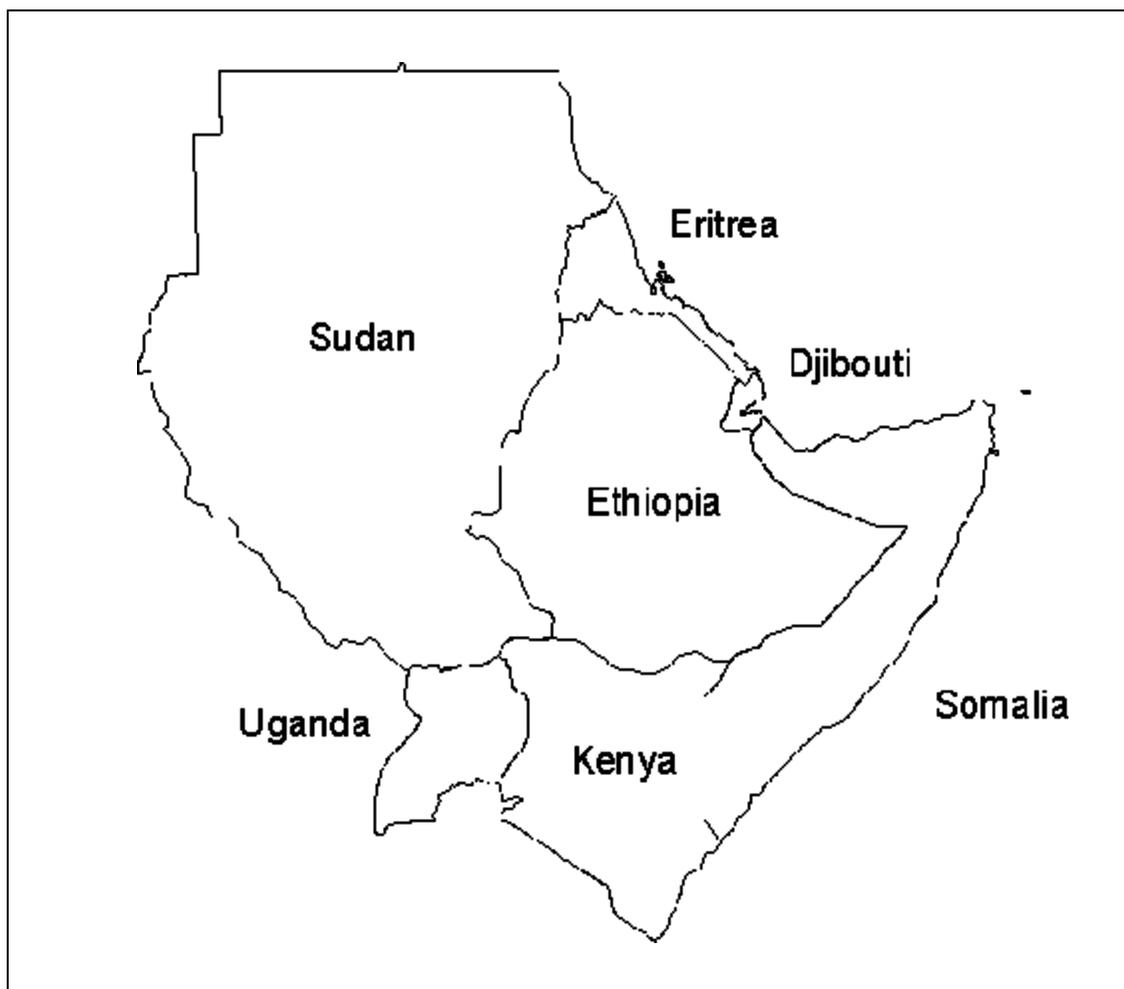
This agreement follows the successful completion of a joint Ugandan and US study on Neviparine that was funded by the US National Institute of Health. The 18-month research project carried out at Uganda's Central Mulago Hospital showed that a double oral dose of the anti-retroviral drug given to an HIV-infected mother in labour, and to her baby at birth reduced the risk of transmission to the unborn child by up to 50 percent. Neviparine, which is manufactured by Germany pharmaceutical company Boehringer-Ingelheim, costs 6,000 Ugandan shillings (four US dollars) per treatment making it significantly cheaper than drugs currently on the market. Those responsible for the project estimate that if implemented widely in developing countries, the process could prevent up to 400,000 children a year becoming infected with the Human Immune-Deficiency virus at birth.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Children's Fund annual report, the Progress of Nations, has placed Uganda at the top to its World AIDS orphans list. The report, which quotes World Health Organization and UN-AIDS figures, reveals that by 1997, Uganda was still leading the list with the highest number of children under the age of 15 orphaned by AIDS, a total of 1,100,000 children. Ethiopia follows closely with 700,000 orphans and Tanzania is third with 520,000. The report reveals that AIDS has orphaned 1,100 out of 10,000 children under the age of 15 in Uganda in the last three years. Up to 10 percent of Uganda's urban population are believed to be infected with the AIDS virus but a successful AIDS Awareness campaign has made Uganda one of the few countries in the world where new levels of HIV infection have been brought down. (*AFP, August 5; Kampala Monitor, July 24; AFP, July 15*)

Uganda suspends commercial flights to DRC and condemns bombings: Following a complaint by President Laurent Kabila to the International Civil Aviation Organization that Uganda was violating his country's airspace, Uganda has suspended all commercial flights to rebel-held areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Civilian flights to war zones are outlawed under ICAO regulations. The New Vision newspaper reported that the flights were suspended starting July 30 and that the ban was being implemented in order to facilitate implementation of the ceasefire agreement signed in Lusaka in July. In addition to banning its own flights to DRC, Uganda has condemned reported plane bombings in northern Democratic Republic of Congo. The air attacks were allegedly carried out on August 4 against the rebel troops of the Congo Liberation Movement. CLM chief, Jean Pierre Bemba told AFP "in the bombing of Makanza and Bogbonga by two Antonov planes in Sudanese colors who dropped 18 bombs on the two

towns.” The Ugandan Regional Co-operation Minister Amama Mbabazi condemned the attack and urged all parties to the Lusaka Accord to “strive to respect if the region is to see peace”. (*AFP, August 5 & 6*)

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.

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