

HORN OF AFRICA The Monthly Review

This update covers the period 1 – 30 November 1997

Regional

IGAD declares Horn of Africa a “Disaster Zone”: The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has declared the Horn of Africa a disaster zone. In a statement made on 27 November, Dr. Kinfe Abraham, Director of the Political and Humanitarian Affairs department, told reporters in Nairobi that the region needed \$10 million to combat the effects of recent torrential rains and flooding. Having just visited Somalia, Dr. Kinfe said the situation there had been made worse by the collapse of infrastructure and the institutions of normal government. “The entire world has treated Somalia like a plague and IGAD has been forced to be the sole picture of that country,” he said. (*The Ethiopian Herald*, 30 November 1997)

Global climate change will impact Africa most: In the lead-up to the UN global climate conference in Kyoto, experts from the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have warned that Africa will be the continent least able to cope and the one most likely to suffer the worst from global warming threatening the planet if “greenhouse gases” are not curtailed. In a report, the IPCC says “widespread poverty limits adaptation capabilities” in Africa, where repeated drought, inappropriate land-use and a dependence on rain-fed agriculture increases vulnerability to climate changes. “Increased droughts could seriously impact the availability of food, as in the Horn of Africa and southern Africa in the 1980’s and ‘90’s,” the report added. (*AFP: November 28*)

El Niño blamed for unseasonable weather: Meteorologists are blaming the El Niño phenomenon for exceptionally heavy rains over the Horn of Africa in October and November. The El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is considered by scientists to be the most important ocean-atmospheric phenomenon affecting weather variability on a global scale. El Niño is a cyclical upwelling of unusually warm water in the Pacific ocean off the coasts of Ecuador and Peru that takes place every two to seven years. The Southern Oscillation is “a seesaw of atmospheric pressure between the eastern equatorial Pacific and Indo-Australian area” and is closely linked with El Niño. El Niño years are typically characterised by extreme weather conditions in the Pacific basin with drought in some parts and severe tropical storms in others. Studies conducted by climatologists have also shown a correlation between El Niño events and anomalous weather patterns as far away as the Indian sub-continent and southern Africa. While the current El Niño event is viewed as possibly the most significant this century, there remains considerable controversy over its relevance and impact on weather patterns over the Horn of Africa. Most specialists now seem to agree, however, that while weather patterns appear more erratic during El Niño years, the general trend is for an increase in the likelihood of drought, especially during months immediately subsequent to the event. Though meteorological agencies in number of countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya, have issued warnings to this effect, it is also recognised that more research on a regional basis is needed to examine the effect of the El Niño/ENSO phenomena on weather in the Horn of Africa. (*Various sources*)

Kenya and Uganda to study feasibility of oil pipeline to Kampala: With \$205,000 loan from the European Investment Bank, the Governments of Kenya and Uganda are to study the feasibility of adding a 400 km Eldoret-Kampala extension to the existing oil pipeline which links the Indian Ocean port of Mombassa with Eldoret and Nairobi. Oil companies have welcomed the project which they say will greatly reduce the cost of transporting fuel to Rwanda, Burundi and the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as Uganda itself. (*AFP: November 6*)

Ethiopia

Italian president visits Ethiopia: Mr. Oscar Scalfaro, President of the Republic of Italy paid a four day official visit to Ethiopia from 23 November—the first such visit since 1941, the end of the six year war between the two countries. During the visit, President Scalfaro held talks with President Negasso Gidada and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. He also addressed the Ethiopian Parliament, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and African and European diplomats in Addis Ababa. He told MPs that his visit could be taken as a step to dress old wounds and forge stronger ties between the two countries. In a statement to reporters after meeting with President Negasso, he said: “Italy identifies closely with Ethiopia’s efforts to be self-sufficient in food and would support measures being taken to bring about economic progress, market liberalisation and democracy.” Scalfaro also expressed his country’s regret over the 1936 invasion and five-year occupation of Ethiopia which he described as a “mistake”. Following the visit, Italy announced development grants worth \$5.8 million for various projects including development planning in Tigray, and health-related projects in Bale and Arsi regions. Finance will also be provided for housing projects and the population census programme. (AFP: November 24 & 27; PANA: November 26)

Relief transport organisation to be established: At its 7th extraordinary meeting, the Council of Ministers approved a draft decree establishing a relief transport organisation using vehicles from the former Transport Operation for Refugees. TOR was originally set up under a tripartite agreement between German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) in 1989. Operations were later conducted in close cooperation with the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission (DPPC) until activities were suspended at the end of last year pending an agreement on the future use of the trucks. (Ethiopian Herald: November 1)

Price of petrol and diesel falls: Effective 7 November, the retail cost of petrol and diesel was substantially reduced in the country in line with a decrease in world market prices. The measure, taken by the Ministry of Commerce and Trade, was in line with the decision made a year ago to make price adjustments every six months corresponding with the world market for crude oil. In Addis Ababa, petrol now costs 2.51 Birr per litre (\$0.37), a reduction of about 5 percent over the price adjustment made in April, while diesel now fetches 1.76 Birr per litre (\$0.26), a 9 percent reduction over the previous price. (Addis Tribune: November 7)

Ethiopia issues new bank notes: The National Bank of Ethiopia commenced the circulation of new Birr notes on Saturday 8 November, replacing the old notes which have been in use since 1976. The deadline for changing old 50 and 100 Birr notes, originally given as 28 November, was later extended by two weeks due to the floods which was preventing people in peripheral areas from reaching the banks. Smaller denominations will remain legal tender until December 27 according to the current timetable. Notes are being redeemed with no charges and on par value. The new currency is similar to the old although smaller and without the symbols associated with the regime of the ousted military leader, Mengistu Haile Mariam. Eritrea also issued its new currency, the Nakfa, on the same day giving the country full monetary independence from Ethiopia. The exchange rate between the two currencies will remain one to one for two weeks and thereafter will be determined by the market. In a related development, on 22 November it was announced that business transactions between the two countries would be conducted in US dollars and other hard currencies. To avoid disrupting the small-scale transfer of goods across the border, exemptions will be made for licensed traders moving commodities with a value of not more than Birr 2,000 (approx. \$300). (The Monitor: November 11)

Four million children struggling to survive: Quoting a recent UNICEF study, a government magazine has reported some four million Ethiopian children, 100,000 of whom are already street children, are facing major problems of survival. The study, conducted in 25 major Ethiopian towns, revealed that a further 500,000 children who have no-one to care for them are also on the brink of joining those already on the streets. The collapse of the extended family system, especially in urban areas, had contributed to the increase in destitute children in Ethiopia. According to the study, only 25,000 children are being cared for in 106 children’s centres throughout the country. (AFP: November 10)

Ethiopia coffee crop not affected by unseasonal weather: According to experts, the Ethiopian coffee crop has not been adversely affected by the recent unseasonal weather conditions. Heavy rains in the coffee growing belt of the south-west came after the flowering stage and as such will have no impact on final production, according to Ethiopia's Coffee and Tea Authority. The Authority expects that the export target for 1997/98 of 128,000 tons will be met generating an expected income of around \$348 million. Ethiopia is Africa's third largest exporter of coffee after Uganda and the Ivory Coast and generates some 60 percent of the country's foreign exchange revenues. (*Addis Tribune: November 22*)

Polio eradication campaign gets underway: The first phase of the national polio immunization campaign took place from November 13 to 16. Following completion of the second phase, due to take place from December 12 to 15, the Ministry of Health expected a total of 8.5 million children under the age of five years to have been vaccinated bringing the national coverage to 100 percent. As part of the worldwide effort to eradicate polio by the year 2000, Rotary International has joined other donors and philanthropists in making available 400 million dollars for the campaign, of which, 1.5 million Birr (approx. \$225,000) has been pledged to the Ethiopia programme. Other donors to the programme include USAID which has made funds available for the purchase of some 21 million doses of vaccine and to meet operational costs of the campaign. (*Addis Tribune: November 7; Ethiopian Herald: November 13*)

Sudan

US tightens sanctions: After expectations last month that Washington might be set to improve relations with Khartoum, US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, announced an economic embargo designed to punish the regime for its war against rebel movements in the south and its terrorist links. Under the order signed by President Clinton, Sudanese assets in the United States will be frozen, US trade with Sudan prohibited and financial transactions barred. The latest sanctions are in addition to previous measures restricting US exports and visas to Sudanese officials. In announcing the new measures, the State Department called upon other countries to follow suit. The new sanctions will not affect US humanitarian aid to Sudan which has reached \$650 million since 1988. Responding to the move, the Sudanese government denounced the new measures as unjust and aimed at giving its rebel opponents the upper hand. The Foreign Ministry also said that the sanctions would boost "Sudan's hostile neighbouring countries which have continued to receive American military backing" and would have, "adverse political repercussions on peace and stability in Sudan". (*AFP: November 4/5*)

Sudan's economy under pressure: One of the world's poorest nations with a gross domestic product of around \$250 per head, Sudan's economy may be dealt a crippling blow by the latest US sanctions, according to some experts. The country is already isolated from the rest of the world and except for its relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has no meaningful ties with the international community. While the latest sanctions will have little direct economic impact on the country (Sudan imports only 3.6 percent of it needs from the US and exports a limited quantity of gum arabic used in pharmaceuticals and candy) it is feared that the political ramifications of the US move could endanger Sudan's already shaky links with the IMF. With inflation running at 100 percent and frequent shortages of fuel, food and other basic commodities, western experts are saying that Sudan's economic hardship will persist until such time the civil war ends and economic reforms adopted. (*AFP: November 5*)

Nairobi peace talks adjourned for six months: After ten days of face-to-face talks in the Kenyan capital, the peace conference between representatives of President Omar al-Beshir and the Sudan People's Liberation Front (SPLA) ended with no significant progress made. The talks, mediated by Kenya's Foreign Minister, Kalonzo Musyoka, and held under the auspices of the regional Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD), were called to examine proposals to end Sudan's 14-year civil war, which is estimated to have cost more than a million lives. The main stumbling block appeared to be the SPLA's determination to link its demands to those of its northern dissident allies in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). With Khartoum willing to compromise on the religious issue, it refused to consider the SPLA demand for a confederal system proposing instead a federation where significant powers would be retained at the centre. The talks were finally officially adjourned until April 1998 to "give time for the two sides to consult with their respective headquarters" according to an official Kenyan government communiqué. Failure of the talks led to recriminations on all sides with

Khartoum saying the US Government was responsible for “hindering the talks and for the continued bloodshed in south Sudan” while the SPLA accused the Sudanese government of “intransigence” adding that there would be no cease-fire ahead of the next round of talks in April. Meanwhile, Sudan’s Foreign Minister, Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, said that he regarded an agreement by the two sides on the right to self-determination for the south as “an advanced step”, compared to the outcome of previous talks. (AFP: November 7-11; AFP/Reuters: November 13)

Khartoum to improve relations with Egypt: In a foreign policy statement, Sudanese Foreign Minister, Ali Osman Mohammed Taha, has told parliament that serious efforts would be made to normalise relations with neighbouring Egypt. “Leaving the present situation of those relations without a settlement hampers the two countries’ strategic interests and opens the door to hostile foreign ends,” he said, adding that Sudan will soon announce steps taken to normalise ties with Egypt. One such step was the surprise visit to Cairo in October of Sudan’s first vice president, Al Zubair Mohammed Saleh, the highest ranking official to visit Egypt since 1996, for talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. (AFP: November 25)

While Garang pays landmark visit to Cairo: On his first official visit to the Egyptian capital, John Garang, leader of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), told reporters that his movement did not want to see the break-up of Sudan, saying that he was committed to seeing peace and democracy in Sudan. According to Faruq Abu al-Issa, a spokesman for the National Democratic Alliance—with whom Garang is aligned—the visit was being made to allow talks with Egyptian officials, SPLA and opposition leaders. He admitted that Garang’s call for a confederation raised concern in Egypt and said that the SPLA leader’s visit would help clear the air. Faruq added that Garang’s call for a confederation was “a tactic aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement between all the people in Sudan in a bid to restore democracy, end the war and spread peace.” A meeting with President Hosni Mubarak was not ruled out. Speaking to journalist a few days after arriving in Cairo, Garang charged that Khartoum’s rejection of the separation of religion and state was “one of the stumbling blocks of the last talks in Nairobi” adding that he would not lay down the arms he took up against the central government in 1983 until agreement is reached on “a new secular Sudan”. (AFP: November 24 & 26)

Somalia

Floods and heavy rains wreak havoc: Several weeks of torrential rain across the eastern highlands of Ethiopia in late October and November and caused extensive flooding of the Wabe Shebelle and Juba rivers in Southern Somalia. An estimated 1,500 were killed while up to 230,000 have been displaced by the rising flood waters. More than a million people are thought to have been affected by the floods in one way or another. The UN World Food Programme estimates that more than 50,000 hectares of farming land has been devastated in the “breadbasket” of the country, destroying some 30,000 tons of maize. In Bay and Bakool regions the floods are thought to have destroyed many underground food stores. Vegetables, sesame plants and other cash crops vital to the livelihood of Bantu (Rahanwein) farmers in the war-torn south have also been wrecked. According to a UNICEF spokeswoman, woman and children under five have been the main victims of the floods. To coordinate relief assistance, the UN agencies and NGOs set up the Somalia Inter-Agency Flood Response Team (and an Operations Centre) which conducted assessments and prepared an action plan for the endorsement of the existing Nairobi-based Somali Aid Coordination Body (SACB). Accessibility has been a major constraint. At the beginning of relief operations, all but two airstrips were under water, most roads impassable and a number of important bridges destroyed. Seeking external support for the relief effort, the Inter-Agency Flood Response Team appealed for \$13 million to meet the cost of procuring relief supplies, hiring helicopters and distributing food and shelter items to people displaced by the floods. As of the end of November pledges of around \$9.8 million had been received. The relief operation is expected to last at least two more months. (AFP: various; Somalia Inter-Agency Flood Response situation reports; DHA-Geneva situation reports)

Despite floods factional fighting continues: Fighting between the militias loyal to south Moqdishu warlord, Hussein Aideed, and the local Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) over control of the strategically important town of Baidoa have continued despite the heavy rains and flooding. A mid-

November report indicated that a further 10 people had been killed and 16 wounded in a series of clashes. While each side claimed to have control, in reality it appears that fighting has divided the town leaving no one group in full control. The latest round of fighting occurs as aid agencies struggle to provide assistance to upwards of 230,000 people displaced by the recent flooding. (AFP: November 19)

Five aid workers abducted: Unidentified gunmen kidnapped five aid workers, including a European Union official near the village of Elayo in the north-eastern part of “Somaliland”. Authorities in the region linked the abduction to a controversy over the lucrative charcoal trade in the north-east which exports several thousand tons to the Gulf states every year. The four men and one woman were released unharmed three days later. In a letter to the UNDP Resident Representative, the authorities in Hargeisa have complained that the five entered the country “illegally” saying they had traveled from the north-eastern port of Bossaso to Somaliland “without any knowledge of our authorities and without permission to enter the country”. (AFP: November 22-24)

Italian aid compound attacked: At least 13 people were killed and several wounded in a flare-up of inter-clan fighting near Moqdishu towards the end of November. During the fighting the compound of the Italian agricultural agency, CINS, was attacked and two Italian aid workers abducted. These were released unharmed with no ransom paid after intervention by north Moqdishu faction leaders. The assailants arrived in “technicals” from north Moqdishu and looted the compound thoroughly according to reports. Following the incident the remaining aid agencies still working in north Moqdishu evacuated their foreign staff to Nairobi. No foreign aid workers are believed to be based in the south of the city at present. (AFP: November 24 & 26)

Somali factions agree to discuss interim government: Following more than two weeks of intensive talks at a former army barracks in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, representatives of the 26-faction Somali National Salvation Council (NSC) and key warlords Hussein Mohammed Aideed and Ali Mahdo Mohammed announced an agreement to hold a national reconciliation meeting in Somalia before the end of December to set up an interim government. The new meeting is scheduled to take place on December 20 in the southern town of Baidoa and is expected to finalise proposals for the creation of a 13-member Somali presidential council, transitional government, a parliament and a legal system. Sources close to the NSC say that a president would be chosen from within the Hawiye clan, the prime minister from the Darod and the speaker of the parliament from the Rahanwein clan. Within a few days of the announcement, however, representatives of the Rahanwein Resistance Army were saying that there would be no conference in Baidoa until such time that the RRA capture the town from rival forces loyal to Hussein Mohammed Aideed. At about the same time, Colonel Abshir Musa Said, acting chairman of the powerful Somali Salvation Democratic front (SSDF), based in the north-eastern port of Bossaso, threatened to establish a regional government if other factions go ahead with the Baidoa meeting. Calling the Cairo conference a “failure”, Abshir told reporters that the SSDF position was “...not a secessionist tendency, but we shall manage our own business until all Somalis become serious about peace”. Meanwhile, the Somaliland authorities declined to comment saying that President Mohammed Ibrahim Egal did not want to interfere in the internal affairs of “neighbouring Somalia”. (AFP: November 7-26, December 2)

Kenya

Parliament passes constitutional reforms: Ahead of the upcoming elections, the Kenyan Parliament has approved a three part series of constitutional changes put forward by the Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group (IPPG) of ruling party and opposition representatives. The first of three bills deals with the rights of political organisations to hold public meetings and the registration of political parties; the second bill removes the president’s constitutional power to appoint members of the country’s electoral commission; and the third provides for the formation of a commission to review the constitution. President Daniel arap Moi (73), whose term of office is due to expire on January 3, signed all three bills into laws on November 8 shortly before announcing the dissolution of parliament (see below). Following the ratification ceremony, the United States and 33 European and other western embassies praised the reform package and pledged to follow carefully its implementation. (Reuters/Ethiopian Herald: November 6; The Monitor: November 8-9)

Floods cause havoc: Torrential rain associated with the short-rainy season (September-November) have affected Kenya's coastal region as well as the normally rainfall-marginal North Eastern Province, killing some and making 25,000 homeless. The rains, which broke 30 year records in Mombassa, caused floods, landslides, washed away bridges and houses, damaged roads and disrupted water supplies. Parts of the Tana River District were submerged and many communities isolated when the river broke its banks. Prolonged rain in western parts of the country also gave rise to fears that cholera, already affecting the region, might spread further. Furthermore, it was feared that any extension of the unusual rains could have a disastrous effect on crops during the harvesting period of November/December in the important maize and wheat growing provinces of Western and Rift Valley. The Meteorological Department of Kenya warned that the heavy rains "...could mean more poor harvests, food shortages, higher prices and a slow economic growth in the country". Meanwhile, the UN Disaster Management Team in Kenya, emphasised the importance of focussing on long-term drought preparedness given current meteorological forecasts of a poor 1998 long rainy season. (UNDHA Situation Report: November 11; PANA: November 17 & IPS November 4)

Elections set for December 29: The Chairman of the Electoral Commission of Kenya has announced presidential and general elections will be held on December 29. The announcement came just two days after Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi took the decision to dissolve parliament. Some opposition groups called the measure a betrayal of the spirit of the Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group, formed to pave the way for constitutional reform. "I hope this is the last time that parliament is dissolved by the executive at his own whim," said George Anyona, chairman of the Kenya Social Congress party. Others, however, welcomed the decision saying that it gave Kenyans an opportunity to elect fresh leaders to take the country into the next century. (PANA: November 12)

Political parties registered: The Kenyan government has approved the registration of all political parties with applications outstanding with the registrar of societies. The parties registered include "Safina", associated with well-known conservationist Richard Leakey. (PANA: November 26)

Nurses strike for more pay: Many government hospitals were thrown in chaos when some 25,000 registered nurses and paramedics began a nationwide strike on 30 November. They are demanding a basic salary of Ksh 30,000 – up from the current level of Ksh 5,970. The worst affected institution was the giant referral Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi where many patients were forced to wait many hours before being transferred to private hospitals for treatment. (PANA: December 2)

Kenya's investment climate: According to a new report from the Economist Intelligence Unit, Kenya has attracted very little investment over the last decade due to concerns over corruption. The poor condition of Kenyan physical infra-structure (particularly electricity, water and roads) is another major impediment. It was felt that the government's ambitious plans designed to propel Kenya into the ranks of the newly industrialising countries (NICs) will remain fanciful until these problems are addressed. Poor rains, power shortages and high interests rates have been forwarded by the government as the main reasons behind the fall in GDP growth in 1996 as compared to the previous year. Better rains in April/May, new spending controls and improved monetary and fiscal management are expected to be reflected in an easing of inflationary pressures in the current year. Meanwhile, privatisation is attracting a number of investors with the number of listed companies on the Nairobi stock exchange expected to rise from 60 to 75 by the year 2000 despite the exchange's low level of liquidity. (Economist Intelligence Report)

Uganda

Another grenade attack in Kampala: Unidentified attackers threw grenades into a Kampala hostel popular with foreign backpackers on 31 October injuring three. The attackers had been able to enter the hostel grounds under the cover of darkness during a routine powercut. The grenade blasts were the latest in a series to rock the Ugandan capital since attacks in July and August killed 12 people and injured many more. The Government has claimed the blasts are the work of common criminals. A number of arrests have been made in connection with the earlier blasts, but possible motive materialised when two days later the Ugandan rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) claimed responsibility in a letter faxed to a local newspaper. The letter implied that tourists had been singled out as a target. Later in the month, a former Uganda Freedom Movement fighter was arrested in connection with the attack. (AFP 1, 3 & 12 November)

French companies discuss East Africa trade: Representatives of more than 60 French companies met in the Ugandan capital in mid-November to discuss trade opportunities in East Africa. Companies attending included those in the construction, electricity generation, transport and communications, water and waste management, and agro-industrial sectors. The annual meeting, which this year received an address given by President Museveni, aims to boost knowledge of business opportunities in the region and foster co-operation between African and French companies. (AFP 10 November)

Donors pledge \$750 million in aid for 1997-98: Following a two-day Consultative Group meeting in Paris, the group of 17 donor nations applauded Uganda's efforts to eradicate poverty but warned against excessive expenditure on defence and "non-strategic" areas of the economy. Noting that Uganda is "at the forefront of economic reform in Africa", the chairman of the donors meeting told reporters that slightly more money had been pledged than what Uganda had been asking for to meet the gap between its projected income and expenditure in the coming year. (AFP 13 November)

Floods, landslides kill 20: Torrential rain towards the end of November triggered landslides in the Mbale area of eastern Uganda killing an estimated 30 people. Scores of houses were also washed away in several days of unseasonable heavy rains. The dead included a family of four. Flooding was also reported in the eastern districts of Tororo, Bugiri and Pallisa. Police, villagers and the Ugandan Red Cross Society launched rescue operations in the area affected. (AFP: November 23; The Monitor - 25 November; DHA- Situation report: November 28)

More troops sent to border with Sudan: Ugandan troops are being deployed in the north with orders to search and destroy rebel hideouts on Kitgum district, and to provide additional security to displaced people in the region. The move is seen as an attempt to prevent further infiltration by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which Uganda says has bases in southern Sudan. More than 60,000 people were left homeless in Kitgum in January this year when LRA fighters entered Uganda and killed nearly 400 people. Another 40,000 people were displaced during attacks this August. Towards the end of November, a further 14 people were reported killed when the LRA attacked a group of people returning to a "protected" village in Gulu district. The regional army commander later urged the population to stay in the 26 protected villages which were set up last year as safe haven for civilians during military operations against the insurgents. The LRA has been fighting for nearly ten years to overthrow the government of President Yoweri Museveni. (AFP: November 22 & 27)

Joint operations to fight rebels: According to a report in the state-owned New Vision newspaper, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are planning joint military operations along their common border in an effort to dislodge the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) rebel group. The ADF, a coalition of disparate rebel groups, initially operated from bases within the DRC (former eastern Zaire), but have since moved into the Ruwenzori mountain range. Sporadic raids into Uganda in recent months have killed a number of people and displaced several thousands. (AFP: November 25 & various)

Djibouti

Ethiopian trade delegation visits: A high level Ethiopian ministerial delegation arrived in Djibouti on 20 November on a visit intended to "strengthen bilateral relations". The Ethiopian delegation included Transport Minister Abdulmajid Hussein and State Budget Minister, Desta Amare. The mission was met by President Hassan Gouled Aptidon. Meanwhile, the small Red Sea state sent a strong team to the 3rd Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce International Trade Fair. The high-powered sales promotion campaign at the trade fair underlined the efforts being made to strengthen commercial links between the two countries—building on the theme, "Djibouti, Gateway to Ethiopia". (AFP quoting Radio Djibouti: November 20; Press Digest: November 20)

Election date confirmed: In an announcement read over state radio, Interior Minister Idris Harbi Farah has confirmed legislative elections will be held on December 19. In addition to the ruling Popular Rally for Progress party, three other parties may field candidates: the Party for Democratic Renewal, the National Democratic Party and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy, a former rebel movement legalised last March. There are 65 seats in the National Assembly. Presidential elections are scheduled for 1999. (AFP: November 11)

Recognition for Somaliland: The authoritative Indian Ocean Newsletter reports that Djibouti has made official its long-standing *de facto* recognition of the Republic of Somaliland headed by President Mohammed Ibrahim Egal. This follows a recent mission to Hargeisa headed by Djama Mahamoud Haid, brother-in-law to Ismail Omar Gelleh, President Hassan Gouled Aptidon's *chef de cabinet*. The mission worked-out an agreement with Egal whereby Djibouti would recognise officially the state of Somaliland and to grant certain advantages to Issaq clan members living in Djibouti. After accepting the deal, President Egal dispatched Abdillahi Hussein Iman, Minister for Rehabilitation, Repatriation and Reconstruction, to Djibouti to open Somaliland's first diplomatic mission abroad. (*Indian Ocean Newsletter: November 8*)

Rains bring fear of epidemics: The risk of malaria, dysentery and even cholera in the wake of untimely rains has raised concerns in Djibouti. The head of the Hygiene and Epidemiology Service has issued a detailed list of precautionary measures while the United Nations is helping to fund a mass aerial spraying campaign using an aircraft chartered from the Desert Locust Control Organisation (DLCO) in an effort to control the sudden infestation of flies and mosquitoes in the capital. (*Press Digest: November 27 & other sources*)

FRUD holds congress: According to reports, *Front pour la Restauration de l'Unité et de la Démocratie* (FRUD) held its congress from November 10 to 12 during which Ahmed Dini was re-elected chairman. The congress was held on Djibouti territory at the Rara waterhole in Obock district where FRUD militia had fought with a detachment of Djibouti forces in September. A spokesman in Paris, said that FRUD had renewed its commitment to "continued armed combat" while maintaining a readiness to enter into negotiations. (*Indian Ocean Newsletter: November 22*)

Eritrea

World Bank approves \$30 million loan: The World Bank has approved a loan of \$30 million to help rehabilitate Eritrea's two major Red Sea ports. The loan is part of a \$57.6 million project designed to improve the capacity and productivity of the ports of Massawa and Assab. The Italian Government is providing \$21 million for the project with the Eritrean government raising the balance. "The Ports Rehabilitation Project will increase substantially the efficiency of the two major ports, which in turn will help bolster the country's economy significantly," said Sture Karlsson, project manager for the World Bank. (*Addis Tribune: November 21*)

New opposition radio station: What appears to be a third Eritrean opposition radio station has been monitored broadcasting from a transmitter thought to be located in Sudan. The station introduced itself as the "Voice of Democratic Eritrea – The Voice of the Eritrean Liberation Front Liberation Front Revolutionary Council" in both Arabic and Tigrigna. The Voice of Free Eritrea and Voice of Truth, thought to be operated by the Eritrean National Alliance and Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement respectively, are the other two clandestine radio stations. (*BBC Monitoring Research: November 11-21; Indian Ocean Newsletter: November 22*)

Red Sea oil exploration protests: Yemen has protested Eritrean plans to conduct exploration work in "...the separating sea area between the two countries". Eritrea has signed deals with U.S. oil company Anadarko Petroleum Corporation for the exploration of 9 million acres offshore with the drilling of the first of three wells planned to commence in the first quarter of 1998. (*Entrepreneur: October 29 – November 5*)

Private newspapers launched: Following the issuance of the press law in September this year, 24 private newspapers and magazines have been granted licenses of which 16 have already gone into print. (*The Reporter: November 19*)

Committee formed to draft electoral law: President Isaias Afewerki has named a 13-member committee to be entrusted with responsibility for drafting an electoral law that would regulate the subsequent holding of national elections. The draft law will be submitted to the National Assembly for ratification, and on that basis the election process will get underway. (*Press Digest: November 20*)

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SOURCES:

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