

## HORN OF AFRICA The Monthly Review

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**This update covers the period November - December 1998**

### REGIONAL ISSUES

#### *Update on the Ethiopian-Eritrean Conflict.*

On November 18, the Government of Djibouti announced that it was severing all diplomatic relations with Eritrea and had requested the closure of the Eritrean embassy in Djibouti within three days. The action came following Eritrean demands that Djibouti withdraw from the OAU high-level committee mediating the border dispute, accusing it of helping Ethiopia's war effort. According to Djiboutian Foreign Minister Mohamed Mousa Chehem, who rejected the accusation as "baseless", President Isaias Afewerki had declared during the November 7-8 Ouagadougou summit that he had proof of Djibouti's involvement. Later in November, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Dr. Tekeste Ghebray was refused entry to Djibouti, the headquarters of the organisation. Ghebray, an Eritrean citizen, was earlier refused entry to Ethiopia where he was to meet with IGAD donors.

U.S. envoy Anthony Lake arrived back in Addis Ababa on December 4 - his third visit to the region since the beginning of October. According to a statement released by the U.S. State Department in Washington, "[The United States] believes that further progress towards resolving the dispute is possible, but is concerned that if a peaceful solution is not found soon, consequences could be grave for the people of the two nations as well as damaging to the U.S. interests in the region." Over the next few days, Lake shuttled between Addis Ababa and Asmara but no official word was given on the substance of his talks with either side. Earlier, President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea had said he hoped Lake would "bring something new to the mediation effort." After a brief meeting with Ethiopian Premier Meles Zenawi, and an overnight stop in Asmara, Lake traveled to Cairo where he met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa before returning to Washington.

On December 17, around 20 African leaders arrived in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso for the fourth ordinary meeting of the Central Organ of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution at the level of heads of states. Present were strong delegations from Ethiopia and Eritrea led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and President Isaias Afewerki, respectively. The meeting considered the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea along with the Great Lakes crisis and recent fighting in the Comoros Islands. Earlier, the Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Seyoum Mesfin characterised the OAU meeting as "important" and "critical" - "the hour of decision". According to media reports, aides to the Ethiopian delegation also indicated that Ethiopia would seek an OAU condemnation of Eritrea as the "aggressor" in the dispute, adding, however, that the government would "explore all peaceful solutions up to the last moment" before resorting to force to defend its sovereignty. The Ouagadougou meeting closed the following day with the following communiqué issued concerning the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea:

*"The Central Organ considered the Report of the OAU High level Delegation on the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea. It congratulated the Delegation on the commendable efforts it had made in order to promote a peaceful and comprehensive solution to the dispute.*

*The Central Organ took note of the respective positions of the two Parties on the proposals of the High Level Delegation.*

*The Central Organ endorsed the proposals for a Framework Agreement submitted by the OAU High Level Delegation to the two Parties which constituted an appropriate framework for the resolution of the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea.*

*The Central Organ commended the two Parties for the confidence they continue to repose in the OAU and for the cooperation they extended to the OAU High Level Delegation in the execution of its mandate, as well as the restraint that they had shown.*

*The Central Organ requested the OAU High Level Delegation to remain seized with the dispute and called on the two Parties to continue to cooperate with the Delegation with a view to creating the necessary conditions for a speedy implementation of the Framework Agreement. The Central Organ further urged both Parties to continue to exercise restraint."*

On December 21, the Eritrean Foreign Minister, Haile Woldensae told diplomats and journalists in Asmara that the OAU Central Organ meeting had been a useful forum which had enabled Eritrea to "reiterate its constructive proposals for a peaceful resolution to the conflict". Woldensae then explained the nature of the Eritrean government's reservations regarding three points under the Framework Agreement: (1) on the issue of troop withdrawals Eritrea felt that this had to be posed in a manner that made it clear that it applied to both countries; (2) on the issue of administration Eritrea felt that as this could not be viewed as separate from that of sovereignty, the whole issue of administration should be excised from the proposal; and, (3) on the issue of human rights, "inasmuch as the proposal had only referred to human rights violations on the part of Ethiopia", Woldensae said that the proposal should include a reference to the expulsion of citizens and specifically state that the "illegally-expelled" Eritrean citizens should be compensated. Woldensae said that the remaining nine points of the Framework Agreement had been accepted by the Eritrean government. The Ethiopian government had earlier signaled its formal acceptance of OAU Framework Agreement at a briefing of the international diplomatic community held in Addis Ababa on November 11.

*(Sources: The Ethiopian Herald, AFP, Reuters, ERINA, ENA, WIC, Eritrean Embassy-Washington, Office of the Ethiopian Government Spokesperson)*

### **Other regional news**

**Egypt and Ethiopia meet to foster better relations:** A two-day Ethio-Egyptian Consultative meeting opened in Addis Ababa in November to discuss Nile issues and the current state of relations between the two countries. Both sides have indicated the need for open discussions to better streamline their relations and to co-operate in areas of shared interest. Meanwhile, both countries have agreed to work together to bring peace to Somalia. Ethiopia has been mandated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to resolve the conflict while Egypt had managed to get the various warring Somali warlords to sign an accord that called for a national reconciliation conference that has since been delayed several times. According to a news report an Egyptian diplomat said the two countries had had "rival approaches to the strife in the Horn of Africa Nation." Ethiopia is expected to send a delegation to Cairo in February to follow up on the meeting held in Addis. *(Ethiopian Herald, November 24; AFP, November 24; IRIN, November 26; Monitor, November 26; Addis Tribune, November 27)*

**Horn of Africa leaders attend Franco-African summit:** Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, Isaias Afewerki, the President of Eritrea, and other top-level representatives from 49 African countries attended the 20<sup>th</sup> Franco African summit that took place in Paris at the end of November. Also present were the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity Salim Ahmed Salim. Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia met with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak on streamlining existing relations and with Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni on bilateral issues. He also met with the South African Vice-President, the President of Senegal, and the President of Zimbabwe. The summit, which dates back to 1973, creates a forum for discussion on issues of concern for African leaders. The summit concentrated on the issue of "Security in Africa". *(Ethiopian Herald, November 27 & 29, December 1)*

**UN training for drug controllers:** The United Nations Drug Control Program (UNDCP) Regional Office for Eastern Africa conducted a training course in Nairobi covering illicit drug interdiction techniques. The course was attended by customs, immigration and police officials from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda and is part of a series of training initiatives for law enforcement officials in Eastern and Southern Africa. While the aim is curbing the growing threat posed by drug trafficking to the region, the purpose of the training is to better equip individual officers to enhance their performance in detecting illicit drugs. *(Xinhua, November 27)*

**Sudan and Eritrea working to normalize relations:** Sudan and Eritrea signed a memorandum of understanding in Doha, Qatar. Sudan's Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail and Eritrea's Haile Woldensae met with their Qatari counterpart at a Qatari-initiated meeting to normalise relations between Sudan and Eritrea. The memorandum lays down the framework of how talks will proceed in the future and underlines the fact that both sides agree to the mediation role of Qatar. Future talks will take place in Doha, Qatar. Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the communication and organization secretariat at the Sudanese National Congress praised the Qatari initiative (as did the Arab League) and said that it receives the respect of the Sudanese government and people. (AFP, November 8, 9 & 12; (IRIN, November 11)

**Africa's bright economic future:** Sub-Saharan Africa will have a better long-term outlook, according to a new World Bank report. "Despite the challenges of adjusting to a less favourable external environment over the next two years or so, the longer-term outlook for Africa offers the promise of significant improvement," says *Global Economic Prospects and the Developing Countries 1998/99*. However, the report goes on to say that most sub-Saharan countries remain at risk from internal and external shocks. It added that deteriorating terms of trade will also hurt specialised exporters such as Ethiopia (arabica coffee). Africa's economic giant, South Africa is the hardest hit by the global economic slow-down. (Monitor, December 3)

## ETHIOPIA

**Ethiopian Prime Minister visits Djibouti:** Prime Minister Meles Zenawi visited Djibouti and held talks with the Djibouti President Hassan Gouled Aptidon and senior government officials concerning the furthering of existing ties. The Prime Minister also visited the port of Djibouti and the Ethio-Djibouti Railway Company. (AFP, December 6)

**Germany grants aid:** Ethiopia and Germany signed a technical co-operation agreement and two exchanges of notes. The German Ambassador to Ethiopia and the Vice-Minister of the Ethiopian Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation (MEDAC) signed the agreement and the exchange of notes totaling US \$26.89 million. Of the total, US \$20.9 million is earmarked for ten current and four new projects. The exchange of notes concerned primary education and the Adaba Dola integrated forest management project were part of the pledges made on October 10, 1997 at the Ethio-German inter-governmental negotiation. (Monitor, November 26; Ethiopian Herald, November 26)

**Saudi delegation in Addis Ababa:** A Saudi delegation was recently in Addis Ababa for a five-day official visit. The delegation, led by the governor of the cities of Mecca and Medina, came to "assess the situation of Moslems living in Ethiopia". The delegation was met by Sheik Abdurahman Hussein, the Head of the Supreme Ethiopian Council on Islamic Affairs. Governor Sheik Mohamed bin Abdellah al-Soubayel noted that the Ethiopian Government has "adopted measures to improve conditions for the Moslem community in Ethiopia." He also added that the delegation will seek ways to extend religious teaching for the Moslems. The Governor also had talks with President Negasso Gidada. (AFP, November 12; Ethiopian Herald, November 14)

**Al-Ittihad members surrender:** Sixteen members of the armed religious group Al-Ittihad have reportedly surrendered to the Ethiopian Government in the southeastern town of Degeh Bur. Earlier, other members of Al-Ittihad and the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) had surrendered. The reports indicate that "those who surrendered were taking advantage of the extended amnesty by the central government of Ethiopia." (IRIN, November 17)

**Ethiopia purchases arms from Russia:** Russia has agreed to sell Ethiopia used Sukhoi Su-27 fighter jets, Mi-24 combat helicopters, Mi-8 transport helicopters and other military communication and navigation hardware worth US \$150 million. The equipment will be dispatched from the Krasnodar military airfield by Antonov An-22 transport aircraft direct to Ethiopia. The full shipment is expected to arrive by the end of December. (AP, December 3; Itar-Tass, December 15)

**Ethiopia pledges an anti-corruption undertaking:** Ethiopia has become the first African country to pledge "an anti-corruption undertaking" to the World Bank in order to get more loans from the institution. Dr. Kebede Tadesse, minister in charge of social and administration sub-sector in the office of the Prime Minister (speaking at the closing session of a training programme in investigative

journalism) indicated that there were growing instances of corruption, which the government wishes to address. Dr. Kebede also pointed out that Ethiopia had started its civil service reform in 1996 after a study conducted indicated several problems of ethics and organization in the government. The study recommended the "creation of comprehensive and coherent framework and an appropriate and all encompassing capacity building scheme". The World Bank Resident Representative, Nigel Roberts said that the Ethiopian government had welcomed the help of the World Bank and others in diagnosing the extent and the root of corruption and ways of cleaning up procurement and support for investigative journalism training. Dr. Kebede directed a comment to journalists to "try out" government officials. Meanwhile, the bank has agreed to loan US \$79.59 million to Ethiopia for development projects. According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Economic Development and Co-operation (MEDAC), US \$43.35 million will be used for education projects while US \$36.24 million will go towards the national animal resource development project. The loan will be repaid in fifty years. Meanwhile, The African Development Bank (ADB) has agreed to loan US \$83.5 million to Ethiopia to help repair and re-equip schools and to fund a livestock project meant to improve food security. (*Monitor*, November 10; *Addis Tribune*, November 27; *Reuters*, November 25)

**Obsolete pesticides posing a problem:** The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has signed a grant agreement providing USD 1 million (which will run through December 31, 2000) with the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). The money will go towards helping Ethiopia dispose of obsolete pesticides in accordance with international conventions on hazardous wastes and in an environmentally sound manner. There are 1,152 tons of obsolete pesticide and over 100 tons of contaminated equipment and soil in Ethiopia according to the Crop Production and Protection Technology and Regulatory Department. Head of the Department, Dr. Bateno Kabeto said that the large stock of pesticides in 256 major cities and towns is posing a very serious health hazard and causing wide-spread environmental damage. He noted that pesticides have served as the only method of control for certain crop pests and the preferred method for such pests as the Desert Locust, the African Armyworm and *Quelea* birds. In related news, USAID has announced that it will provide a grant worth US \$314,334 to the Ethiopian Investment Authority (EIA). The money will go towards assisting the authority to develop a national investment promotion strategy, strengthen its institutional capacity and enhance investment information in Ethiopia. (*Ethiopian Herald*, November 5, December 3 & 4; *The Monitor*, November 5)

**Ethiopian refugees return from Kenya:** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has announced that it has started the voluntary repatriation of 2,500 Ethiopian refugees from Dadaab camp in north-eastern Kenya. They are being airlifted from Dadaab to the border with Ethiopia at Moyale. The operation is expected to take some five weeks to complete. The returnees are provided with a nine-month food ration (cereal and oil) and a small amount of cash for their transport after their six-year stay in Kenya. More than 50,000 Ethiopians fled to Kenya following the overthrow of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991. (*AFP*, November 16; *Ethiopian Herald*, November 24; *IRIN*, November 30)

**Ethiopia earns 4.9 billion birr from exports:** The Minister of Trade and Industry, Kassahun Ayele has announced that Ethiopia is expecting to earn 4.9 billion birr (a nineteen percent rise) in this fiscal year 1998/99 from exports. The amount is equivalent to approximately US \$660 million. The minister however, noted that there was a negative trade balance and called on exporters to bridge the gap. Coffee makes up 64 percent of Ethiopia's exports while hides and skins make up 22 percent. (*Addis Tribune*, November 20)

**New Ethio-Chinese Pharmaceutical plant:** A private Ethiopian Agricultural and Industrial Investment Share Company and a state-owned Chinese firm are to build a pharmaceutical plant worth US \$1.7 million near Debre Zeit town. The Ethiopian Investment Authority (EIA) announced that the plant, which will begin production next year, would produce up to 250 million tablets consisting of sixteen different types of medicine that are on the list of most essential drugs in Ethiopia. The Chinese Jiangxi Corporation for International Economic and Technical Co-operation holds fifty-five percent of the shares while the Ethiopian counterpart holds forty-five percent. The plant is the first of 20 proposed joint ventures to be implemented in the coming three years. Ethiopia and China have recently signed an investment security agreement. (*Reuters*, November 14; *Monitor*, November 14; *Ethiopian Herald*, November 14)

**Gold mining potential:** A study conducted over 75,000 square kilometers has identified the existence of over 100,000 kilogrammes of gold and also 12,000 kilogrammes of platinum over a 1,000 square kilometer of land in four states (Oromia, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, and the Southern Nations States). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Mines and Energy disclosed that sixteen investors (nine of which are local) have been given mining exploration licenses in six different states. According to the acting head of the mining ministry, the various investors have allocated approximately US \$20 million for prospecting, exploration and production. The ministry also disclosed that during the past five years, other investors have launched mining projects with a combined capital of US \$59 million. Most of these have completed the initial exploration and are ready to mine for gold and other base metals, salt, mineral water, and potash. (*Ethiopian Herald, November 18 & December 3; Addis Tribune, November 20*)

**Fuel shortage overcome:** The National Fuel Co-ordinating Committee has announced that the country's fuel shortage has been overcome. The Committee disclosed that a problem had emerged early in November after Djiboutian and Ethiopian officials agreed that all trade and service exchanges between the two countries should be conducted by the citizens of the two countries alone. Subsequently, all Eritrean nationals engaged in these sectors, including those manning transport trucks, had to be replaced. The Committee disclosed the temporary shortage in drivers was offset by the sufficient reserves at various fuel depots. (*Ethiopian Herald, November 12*)

**Malaria on the rise:** Malaria is affecting 500,000 and 171,000 people respectively in the East Shewa and South Gondar Zones of the Amhara region according to local health officials. An expert with the Shewa Health Department stated that mosquitoes were breeding along the Awash River where there were a number of irrigation development projects. He also noted that the disease had become resistant to available drugs and newer drugs, such as Fansidar, were too expensive for the local community. Meanwhile, according to health officials in South Gondar, only 33,000 of the 171,000 affected people had received medical attention. Reports also indicate that if preventive measures had been taken place right after the rainy season, the current situation may have been greatly minimized. Some of the preventive measures taken in the Zone include draining marshy areas and ponds and distributing medicine to some 45,000 people. Malaria has also been reported in Southern Tigray Zone where some 33,000 people have been infected. (*Monitor, November 21 & 26; Ethiopian Herald, November 22 & December 4*)

**New bridge for the Blue Nile:** The Ethiopian Roads Authority has announced that a study is underway to examine the construction of a new bridge over the Abay (Blue Nile) River. The bridge, which will be able to accommodate heavy-duty trucks, would be in addition to the existing one which has been in service for 52 years. The Authority announced that the old bridge would be maintained for an further five years. In related news, Ethiopian Roads Authority announced that work on the repair of the bridge across the Tekeze River, which provides an important link between Gondar and Tigray, was nearing completion. Travellers in the region mid-December later confirmed the bridge was indeed open again for normal traffic. (*Ethiopian Herald, November 4 & December 6; EUE, December 13*)

## ERITREA

**Eritrea wishes to join COMESA:** The official Libyan news agency BANA reported that President Isaias Afewerki has requested that Eritrea be allowed to join the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). COMESA, formed in 1997, consists of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger, Sudan and Libya. In related news, President Isaias announced that Eritrea will join the Arab League when the time is appropriate. The announcement came following discussions with Arab League Secretary-General Ismat Abd al-Majid. (*IRIN, November 26 & 29; AFP, November 26*)

**Eritrea admits to ties with Sudanese opposition:** In an interview given by Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki to Sudanese opposition radio, he admitted Eritrea's ties with Sudanese opposition forces had existed since before the current National Islamic Front regime came to power and claimed that Eritrea still has ties to the opposition forces due to the present "odd situation in Sudan". He went on to explain that embracing the opposition force in any country cannot, however, bring about a solution to that country's problems. (*independent sources, December 6*)

**Isaias visits Cairo:** Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at the latter's invitation to discuss the Ethio-Eritrean conflict and the role of the Organisation of African Unity in solving the conflict. Other issues included bilateral ties especially in the economic sector. President Mubarak had also met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi at the sidelines of the Franco-Africa Summit in Paris (see regional news) as part of the effort Egypt is making to resolve the conflict. (*IRIN, November 29; Xinhua, November 29; AP, November 29*)

**Imprisoned AFP correspondent wins prize:** Ruth Simon, the Agence France-Presse (AFP) correspondent imprisoned by the Eritrean government since April 25, 1997 was among five journalists awarded International Press Freedom prizes for courage and independence in reporting the news. Simon, an Eritrean, was arrested in 1997 for reporting that Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki had stated that Eritrean soldiers were fighting alongside Sudanese rebels. Meanwhile, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) launched a campaign to free Simon by asking guests at the award dinner to fill out postcards to the Eritrean leader asking for her immediate and unconditional release. (*AFP, November 25; IPS, November 25*)

**Eritrea buys fighter jets:** Eritrea is reported to have purchased several MIG-29 fighter jets, each worth around US \$20-25 million, from Russia. A team of Russian technicians and trainers are also reported to be in Asmara. Eritrea currently has six Italian-made MB-339 training and light attack aircraft. (*Reuters, December 15*)

## DJIBOUTI

**President visits Arab countries:** Djibouti's President Hassan Gouled Aptidon went on an Arab country tour at the end of November. The President visited Morocco, Egypt, Yemen and Libya. Libyan television reported that President Aptidon arrived in Tripoli, in violation of the UN air embargo, after attending the 20<sup>th</sup> Franco-African Summit. The two leaders discussed the situation in the Horn of Africa, the Great Lake's region and bilateral ties. After his visit to Libya, President Aptidon visited Egypt where he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to discuss relevant issues including the Ethiopia-Eritrean border conflict. President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea preceded the Djibouti President in holding separate talks with the Egyptian President. (*AFP, November 30, December 1 & 2*)

**Rebel attacks:** The exiled leader of the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD), Ahmed Dini announced that FRUD rebels had launched an attack in the Tadjourah district against a government convoy killing eight and injuring an unspecified number. Dini also said that an attack on the garrison town of Alaili Dadda by FRUD had forced government troops to withdraw from the town and the garrison. He explained that the aim of these attacks was "to force a negotiated settlement to end the crisis affecting our country [Djibouti] for the last 20 years." (*AFP, November 17*)

**Mine explosion:** A land mine explosion in southeast Djibouti between Assa Gaila and Dadda'to in the Tadjourah district killed five soldiers and injured nine. Meanwhile, a joint French and Djibouti demining operation has detonated 340 kilogrammes of explosives in the town of Obock 250 kilometers from Djibouti. Land mine units of the French army participated in the operation and set up training seminars for 26 de-miners from Djibouti. The operation is expected to take several months to complete. (*AFP, November 4 & 17*)

**Parisian court sentences five to life:** A Parisian court sentenced five men to life prison terms for a 1990 grenade attack on a Djibouti café in which a six year old French boy lost his life and fifteen other people were injured. The men were tried *in absentia* by a special assize court made up of seven judges. The four men attacked the café because it was frequented by French soldiers and their families. France has about 3,200 troops in Djibouti, a former colony. (*AFP, November 16*)

**HIV-AIDS, a major concern:** Djibouti health authorities have announced that HIV-AIDS is fast becoming a major health concern in the country with 4.2 percent of the population HIV-positive. The health authorities have recorded 1,707 AIDS cases and 7,000 infections with the actual number estimated at 21,000 out of a population of 500,000. Among the factors cited as causing the spread of the disease is the presence of the foreign military garrison, prostitution, and religious taboos while at the same time reluctance to be tested, and the low number of available clinics are contributing factors. (*AFP, November 30*)

## SUDAN

**US extends embargo on Sudan:** The U.S. has extended the year old economic and trade embargo on Sudan. Washington views Khartoum as a human rights violator and a sponsor of terrorism. The Sudanese Foreign Minister, Mustafa Osman Ismail characterised the decision as "a routine resolution coming in the context of the hostile American campaign against Sudan." The foreign minister also reported that the UN General Assembly had almost unanimously denounced the decision except for the state of Israel and the United States. He further noted that Sudan has been able to "contain the adverse effects of the embargo" up to now. In other news, Sudan sent Iraqi President Saddam Hussein two African lions as gifts. The Iraqi President, meanwhile, has vowed that Iraq will continue its fight against its enemies for their "pursuit of a hostile policy towards the Arab world." Baghdad has been hit by sanctions by the United Nations. (AFP, November 4, 24 & 26)

**UN withdraws staff due to safety concerns:** The UN umbrella organisation, Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) has withdrawn forty-two non-essential staff from Western Equatoria State because of thefts and attacks on aid workers. In taking the action OLS announced that it would be keeping twenty essential staff in the State to provide basic programme activities and the others would return as soon as their safety was guaranteed. The attacks were attributed to deserters of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) but the claim has yet to be confirmed. Meanwhile, the Sudanese minister of state for social planning, Hassan Osman Dhahawe, has accused the SPLA of diverting 30 percent of relief supplies for "war purposes". (AFP, November 5 & 12)

**Slavery alleged in Sudan:** The Christian Solidarity International (CSI) voiced its concerns over alleged slave trafficking in Sudan. The organisation, which has "bought back" more than 4,000 slaves in the past 4 years has asked the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) to mount an official investigation. The Organisation works under a mandate given to it by the 1990 peace accords reached between Sudanese Arabs and the Dinka tribe to help the Dinka recover women and children sold into slavery. The Dinka have resisted the government's programme of "Arabisation" and "Islamisation". It is reported that pro-government militias conducted raids in Southern Sudan and abducted thousands of people and sold them into slavery. (AFP, December 3)

**World Food Programme at work in Sudan:** The World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations continues its efforts to provide food to famine-affected areas in southern Sudan. The organisation has hired a total of 18 aircraft to ferry aid into southern Sudan and has stepped up the frequency of flights. It has also announced that seven river barges loaded with 2,500 tons of food aid from Kosti on the White Nile are headed for Juba distributing the food as they go at 33 locations and for some 392,000 people along the way. Meanwhile, there seems to be no extension of the cease-fire in Bahr el-Ghazal, which was expected to continue until January 15. Although the situation has improved in the area, "the level of malnutrition remains high and one cannot yet say that the famine is over" said Malini Morzaria of Médecins sans Frontières. Meanwhile, the Italian government announced it will contribute US \$3.12 million to WFP to aid people in southern Sudan. The funds are to be managed by Operation Lifeline Sudan, which groups several aid agencies. Meanwhile, the Sudanese Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) has announced that 6,968 tones of food had been distributed to people in the central White Nile and southern Bahr el-Ghazal States in the past month or so. In addition, an agreement between WFP and the Sudanese Government provides for procurement of food supplies worth 30 million dollars for refugees in east Sudan. These refugees mainly comprise Ethiopians and Eritreans numbering about 1.1 million. (AFP, November 12 & 30, December 2 & 6)

**Floods recovery plan:** A recovery plan prepared by UN agencies, the government, World Bank, IMF, and regional development banks has been costed at US \$230 million. The plan was devised as a response to the August/September floods, which affected 18 of the 26 Sudanese States and affected about 1 million people, of whom more than 100,000 were displaced. The ensuing increased incidence of malaria, diarrhea, and other water related diseases also posed problems. Meanwhile, donors have given US \$1.2 million to UN agencies, up to October 22, in response to a US \$8.9 million appeal launched by the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in September. According to the Recovery Plan, Sudan has made "considerable progress" in initiating structural reforms under IMF-monitored economic programmes. The document also said that significant improvements had been accomplished in the economic sector with inflation falling from an average of 114 percent in 1996 to 14 percent in August in 1998. (IRIN, November 18)

**Sudan criticises UN official:** Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail has criticised the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast for secretly meeting with Sudanese opposition forces. The Foreign Minister stated, "There is a freedom of movement and expression in Sudan and the envoy did not need to hold a secret meeting." Prendergast met with people from the National Democratic Alliance (a coalition of Sudanese opposition forces) and received a memorandum asking the United Nations to help resolve the political crisis in the south and the rebellion in the country. Prendergast had met with representatives of four non-governmental relief agencies in New York on October 26 who urged the United Nations to play a more active role in finding a solution to the civil war in Sudan. Prendergast visited Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Rome and Khartoum during his mission. In related news, Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir has called on the United Nations to stop the United States and other countries from obstructing the peace process with the southern rebels. Meanwhile, a UN official announced in Nairobi that the UN would support efforts made by the Inter governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to re-launch the Sudanese peace efforts. (AFP, November 9, 13 & 24, December 1)

**Government offensive in the east:** The Sudanese government has reported that its troops and the Popular Defense Forces (paramilitary force formed to crush the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army - SPLA) have retaken the towns of Atarba and Agidayi south of Tokar in eastern Sudan. The government owned *Al-Anbaa* newspaper stated that the troops recaptured the towns after clashes with unidentified attackers. The rebel National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the SPLA still control parts of Tokar, 650 kilometers northeast of Khartoum. The Sudanese military and the Popular Defense Forces have also recaptured the garrison towns of Teluk and Toqan near Kassala town on the border with Eritrea from the NDA. The pro-government *Alwan* newspaper reported that 50 rebels had died in the fighting and some of their equipment was destroyed while nine soldiers were killed and eight others wounded. Meanwhile, rebels have reported that they fought off a four pronged government attack in the Nuba Mountains. (Reuters, November 17 & December 2; Monitor, November 19; AP, December 2; AFP, December 1, 2, 3 & 5)

**Dissent within the ranks:** The Sudan People's Liberation Army has accused renegade commander Kerubino Kuanyin Bol of trying to assassinate SPLA leader John Garang. The SPLA spokesman stated that supporters of Kerubino had raided the SPLA leader's Nairobi home and killed one of his bodyguards in the ensuing shoot-out but did not manage to harm Garang. The spokesman also stated that two of the attackers have been arrested by the Kenyan police and that the SPLA suspects the Sudanese government was involved in the attack through its embassy in Kenya, an accusation that the Sudanese government denies. Commander Kerubino was a founding member of the SPLA and last year defected to the government only to defect back to SPLA. Prior to the attack on Garang, Kerubino had complained that SPLA officials were harassing him on suspicion that he was going to rejoin the government. Kerubino has denied the charge and claims that it is Garang who wants him dead. The two men have been at odds since Garang detained Kerubino between 1987 and 1992 with other SPLA commanders for plotting to take over the SPLA leadership. (Monitor, November 19; AFP, November 18 & 19)

**Sudan to become friends with neighbours:** President Omar el-Bashir warned opposition forces that Sudan is about to sign agreements with Eritrea and Ethiopia to end hostilities which would mean opposition forces could not use either country to launch further attacks into Sudan. President Bashir announced that opposition forces stationed in these countries could either return to Sudan to form a legal political opposition group or become refugees. Meanwhile, an opposition movement called the National Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (NARD) has leveled allegations that forces backing the Sudanese government have tortured students at the Al Ahliya University in Omdurman. The university has been the site of clashes between Islamic pro-government students and pro-opposition students in the past with one fatality. Leaders of NARD have been informed that they would have charges brought against them for declaring their support for the National Democratic Alliance. (AFP, November 16; AP, November 21)

**Sudanese rebels fighting in Congo:** Sudan's ambassador in Kinshasa has said that rebels belonging to the Sudan People's Liberation Army had joined Ugandans and Rwandans in fighting alongside Congolese rebels opposed to the Democratic Republic of Congo government. Ambassador Al-Sadiq Osman told DRC state radio that the SPLA helped the Ugandan troops penetrate into the towns of Isiro and Buta in September. Meanwhile, Sudanese and DRC governments have denied claims by Rwanda, Uganda, and the Congolese rebels that Sudan is sending government troops to



aid President Kabila's regime. Uganda has admitted involvement but claims that it is fighting Ugandan rebels based in Congo while Rwanda, after months of denial, has also admitted involvement saying that it is fighting exiled groups of its Hutu majority to prevent them from staging attacks from Congo. (*Monitor, November 19*)

**Hospital bombed:** It has been reported that a Sudanese government warplane dropped five bombs on the southern town of Yei killing two civilians (one of them a child) and injuring eleven others. The bombs fell on a Norwegian-run hospital and according to a spokesman for the Sudan People's Liberation Army, John Luk Jok, a drug store, two wards and a theatre building were extensively damaged. The hospital has been bombed six times this year although it is has large red crosses painted on the roof. It was reportedly treating only civilians and is more than 110 kilometers from the nearest front line at the outskirts of Juba. In a role reversal, the SPLA has been accused of slaughtering thirty-four merchants in what the pro-government *Alwan* newspaper called the "worst massacre since the beginning of the rebellion in 1983". The paper reported that the incident took place 300 kilometers north of the state capital Malakal in the Upper Nile State. It also noted that such attacks have taken place in the past few months since a pro-government Mezloum brigades faction defected to the SPLA. In another case, the SPLA has been blamed in a court martial hearing for several bomb attacks around the capital in June. The twenty-five people on trial since then, which include two priests, face charges of seeking to undermine the government and possession of unlicensed weapons. (*AFP, November 15, 16 & 18*)

**Aid agreements signed:** The Sudanese government and rebel forces have signed two agreements in Rome that decrease the security risks faced by aid workers and allow increased access to some areas. The regional logistics coordinator of the UN World Food Programme, Russel Ulrey disclosed that the agreements would make sure that aid workers were informed of the hot spots, what kinds of precautions to take and of any impending strikes from either side that would endanger their safety or property. Humanitarian workers would also be allowed to use a wide range of communication equipment as long as they are not used for military purposes. These agreements also lay down a framework through which aid could be sent to southern areas by train for the first time since 1995. (*Monitor/Reuters, November 21*)

**Loan to heighten dam:** The Islamic Development Bank in Saudi Arabia has offered Sudan a US \$8 million USD loan to help fund the heightening of the dam at Roseires on the Blue Nile. The Roseires dam provides Sudan with 90 percent of its electricity. The loan, which will be repaid over ten years, has a two year grace period. Meanwhile, the Sudanese Foreign Trade Ministry has approved the export of 100,000 tons of sorghum to Eritrea. The *al-Anbaa* daily newspaper reported that a local exporter had obtained a license from the ministry to export and sell the crop in Eritrea at reasonable prices. Other exporters have also applied for export permits. (*AFP, November 30, December 5*)

**US Senator calls for investigation into air strikes:** Republican Senator Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania has said in an interview with Fox News that Congress should hold a closed-door hearing to probe the U.S. missile attack on the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Khartoum. The Senator said he did not believe that the evidence saying that the company was producing chemical weapons was overwhelming. Meanwhile, the private U.S. health care organisation, Americares has announced that it is willing to help compensate Sudan for the basic drugs destroyed in the bombing of the Al-Shifa plant through voluntary health organisations operating in Sudan. A U.S. delegation which was led by the head of the U.S. Save the Children organisation met with the Commissioner of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC), Hussein al Obeid who disclosed that a list of priority drugs would be prepared for Americares. The U.S. delegation was also scheduled to visit the towns of Juba and Wau in the south. (*AFP, November 8 & 29*)

**Opposition parties reject new legislation:** Opposition political parties have rejected the new law on party formation saying that they had considered themselves legal all along. The leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), Haj Mudawi Mohamed Ahmed said that the disbanding of political parties by the current government of el-Bashir was illegal and, therefore, parties had no need for new licenses. Representatives from the DUP, Umma, Communist and Moslem Brotherhood parties have said that they will not seek a license to operate because they do not recognise the new legislation. (*AFP, November 30*)

**Four clerics released:** Four clerics of the Ansar sect who were detained for precautionary purposes for two months were released this November. The four are close to the outlawed Umma party and had been acquitted of a charge of preparing and delivering a seditious sermon. Umma is the party of former premier Sadek al-Mahdi who was ousted by the current government. Umma has formed an alliance with Sudan's People's Liberation Army. (AFP, November 9)

**Plight of the displaced:** The Sudanese government has demolished a squatter area in the Carton Kassala part of Khartoum, which houses about 3,000 internally displaced people to relocate them elsewhere. The 1.8 million internally displaced in and around Khartoum are a result of conflict and drought in southern Sudan and southern Kordofan since 1993 and of drought in western Sudan and deforestation in central Sudan. An assessment conducted by UN, NGO's, and government agencies found the 15 main squatter areas to be overcrowded, with poor housing, water and sanitation conditions, plagued by frequent disease outbreaks and lacking health services except for curative treatment. Only about 46,000 of the displaced benefit from a feeding programme run by Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) each month. Ninety five percent of people in Khartoum prisons are displaced women arrested for such activities as beer brewing and prostitution which is the sole source of income for their families. Agencies are recognising the need to offer increased protection for the displaced and sufficiently address what has become a chronic emergency. (IRIN, November 24)

**Draft dodgers will face trial:** Sudan has set up a tribunal to try young men who fail to report for compulsory national service. Those who wish to enter higher educational institutions or be employed must complete 12-18 months of military service beforehand. Those who dodge military service face up to three years in jail and the military service administration has begun rounding them up from homes and work places. (AFP, November 19)

## SOMALIA

**Yemen takes in Somali refugees:** Yemen took in 10,000 Somali refugees last year while expelling 1,600 illegal refugees. Meanwhile, the Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Salih announced that his country is interested in hosting and financing a conference for Somali leaders to meet and arrive at a peaceful solution for the internal conflict. (AFP, November 18 & December 3)

**Hussein Aideed returns:** Somali warlord Hussein Aideed returned to Southern Somalia to a warm welcome by crowds in the Gezira district of Moqdishu after trips to Ethiopia, Yemen, Egypt and Libya to seek various forms of support for the Moqdishu administration. During his trip to Libya, Aideed met with Libyan President, Moamer Kadhafi to thank him for his contribution to "stability in Somalia". The Somali warlord told Kadhafi about the establishment of the administration in the Bandir region and its achievements. Libya has since donated US \$800,000 for the Bandir regional administration and set aside US \$250,000 for the still planned reconciliation conference in Baidoa in south-western Somalia. Libyan state television reported that Aideed also appealed for Arab investment in his country. Meanwhile, rival warlord Osman Ali "Ato" has been lobbying to block any political recognition or material support for the Moqdishu. In related news, six political groups, USC-SNA (United Somali Congress - Somali National Alliance), USC-SSA (United Somali Congress - Somali Salvation Alliance) and USC Northern Moqdishu held a meeting to discuss interference by Libya and Egypt in Somali affairs especially in the Bandir region. The meeting appealed to the international community to exclude the two countries from the committee seeking solutions to the country's problems and to take the necessary steps against their terrorist activities. (AFP, November 12, 13 & 16; Xinhua, December 3; IRIN, November 13)

**Influx into Somaliland:** Somaliland is facing an influx of large numbers of repatriated refugees just when its economy is experiencing a downturn. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been under donor pressure to repatriate the refugees, which it had supported for many years in eastern Ethiopia, to what is a relatively peaceful situation. However, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies can only provide transitional assistance to help the returnees reintegrate and not the much needed longer-term development assistance to Somaliland. The challenge lies in the problem of providing a comprehensive development programme that will create a life style better than the life in the camps for the returning refugees. Recently, UNHCR has made plans to close seven refugee camps in eastern Ethiopia by the year 2000. The camps are home to about 250,000 Somali refugees. (Refugees International, November 12)

**Rahanwein declare cease-fire:** A cease fire and a cessation of hostilities were declared in Sakow district, south-central Somalia after weeks of fighting between the Moalin-weyen and Galadel sub-clans of the Rahanwein. The fighting, which was reportedly accompanied by heavy looting, had erupted over humanitarian assistance and employment opportunities with a Swedish aid agency. The fighting left scores wounded, 60 dead and 200 families homeless. Meanwhile, six were killed and 12 wounded in the south central Somalia town of Baidoa after militiamen of the Rahanwein Resistance Army (RRA) attacked strongholds of Hussein Mohamed Aideed. The attack was unsuccessful, however, leaving Aideed's men in total control of Baidoa. The RRA commander accused Aideed of using the Moqdishu-Baidoa road to transport militia and military vehicles to launch an attack on Xuddur town, near the border with Ethiopia. The Rahanwein fighters have since banned all transport vehicles on the road. Baidoa has been the site of frequent clashes between the two sides since 1995. (AFP, November 17, 19, 23 & 27, December 3; Monitor, November 19)

**UN to pursue peace in Somalia:** A top-level UN official has indicated that the United Nations will play a more active role in supporting efforts of organisations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to end the conflicts in Somalia and Sudan. Meanwhile, the IGAD states have called for an immediate end to the renewed fighting in Kismaayo and the surrounding Jubbada Hoose Region in southern Somalia that erupted in October. The fighting involves the Marehan clan backed by Hussein Aideed and forces of General Mohamed Said Hersi "Morgan" over the kidnapping of a Marehan. In related news, the UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs, Kieran Prendergast visited Kenya, Ethiopia, and Sudan for consultations on ending the conflicts in Somalia and Sudan and discussed with regional leaders, the parties to the conflicts and UN agencies working in the field. (AFP, November 9; Xinhua, November 13)

**Fact-finding committee kicked out:** An international fact-finding committee called the International Committee for Somalia, an offshoot of the sub-regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), was ordered out of Somalia by warlords Ali Mahdi Mohamed and Hussein Mohamed Aideed, leaders of the joint administration of Moqdishu. The objective of the committee was to interview Somali leaders and people on how to proceed with efforts to resolve the conflict. Earlier, the committee had been warned by five warlords opposed to the Moqdishu administration that factional fighting could erupt if the committee was given protection by the joint Moqdishu police force. Meanwhile, Aideed and Ali Mahdi accused the delegation of deliberately changing a memorandum of understanding about agreeing to be protected by the Moqdishu police. The two warlords accused Egyptian and Italian envoys of "torpedoing the visit" and Aideed further stated that the Italian envoy had been "circulating documents dividing Somalia into small emirates for the past couple of months to challenge national unity" and encouraging rival factions to ignore Moqdishu's constitutional mandate as the capital of Somalia. He also accused Ethiopia of hampering the peace process by "instigating violence". The delegation had consisted of officials from Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda, Norway, Italy, and Yemen - representing the European Union, the Organisation of African Unity, the Arab League, the United Nations Political Office for Somalia and the Somalia Aid Coordination Body and was led by Italian Envoy to Somalia Francesco Scortino. Ethiopia was acting as coordinator of the group. (The Reporter, December 2; AFP, December 2 - 6)

**Moqdishu police promise tough rule:** The Moqdishu joint police commander, Colonel Abdi Hassan Awale has announced that the force would clear all unauthorised guns from the city's streets next month. The commander disclosed that weapon carrying in the streets would be outlawed and armed pick-up trucks known as "technicals" would be things of the past. He explained that the first units of the force were unable to go operational by mid-November as planned for technical reasons. (AFP, November 19)

**Famine fears:** Up to seven people died of hunger in the middle Shabelle region of Southern Somalia in a two week period according to Governor of the middle Shabelle, Colonel Nur Shirdow. Blaming inadequate harvests which followed floods in the region earlier this year, Shirdow said that the famine in the region was growing worse and warned that an exodus of displaced people from southern Somalia to Moqdishu could follow if emergency relief supplies did not reach the area soon. The UN Development Programme, the UN Children's Fund and the Spanish wing of Médecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) are present in the region, but their capacity to deal with the current famine is limited, he added. Allaying fears of insecurity, Shirdow announced that his administration would guarantee the safety of any expatriate aid workers. Meanwhile, the UN launched a donor alert in

Geneva on November 20 in light of the food crisis in southern and central Somalia. UN agencies appealed for US \$18 million in emergency assistance to 300,000 famine affected people in southern and central Somalia. A joint mission by the WFP-EU-USAID Food Security Assessment Unit (FSAU) and Action Contre la Faim (ACF) to Bay, Bakool, and Gedo regions have indicated that the shortage of food among the internally displaced is becoming critical, and migrations in the region - especially from Wajir district - are an indication of increasing stress. (*AFP, November 25; IRIN, November 24*)

## KENYA

**Protesting environmentalists:** The partial destruction of a forest on the periphery of the capital Nairobi triggered off ardent protests by local environmentalists. The forest is supposed to be under government protection but has been sold to developers. The woods are located directly opposite the headquarters of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). Strong concern has been voiced by the head of the agency. (*BBC World Service, November 16; quoted by Press Digest, November 19*)

**Committee on ethnic conflicts:** Twenty-eight Members of Parliament have formed a committee to address ethnic conflicts countrywide. They are drawn both from the government party KANU and the opposition. The legislators said they would use the constitutional review process to bring about national integration and enhance peace. A spokesperson of the committee said: "We are committed to peace and would like to curb ethnic strife in the country. We will embark on a mission of strengthening dialogue and respect among all politicians." He pointed out that peaceful means should be followed to bring an end to ethnic conflicts caused by land insecurity, cattle rustling and political anxiety. (*The Nation, November 17; quoted by Press Digest, November 19*)

**Telkom privatisation in 1999:** The Kenyan government has to complete at latest in January 1999 establishing the three units (Telkom Kenya, Postal Corporation of Kenya, Communications Commission of Kenya) which will arise from the ashes of Kenya Posts and Telecommunications Corporation. That is a precondition set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for resuming talks with the government on balance of payment loans. Calls for bids must be issued at the beginning of 1999 to find a strategic partner who will agree to take up to 26 percent of Telkom Kenya shares. Considerable interest has been expressed in the privatisation process by leading international telecommunications companies and by the commercial services of four Western embassies represented in Nairobi. (*The Indian Ocean Newsletter, November 28*)

**Catching fish by poisoning:** The Kenya Fisheries Department and provincial authorities in Nyanza are calling for stiffer penalties for people caught using chemicals to harvest fish in Lake Victoria. Currently, the penalty for poisoning fish in Kenya ranges from three to six months imprisonment or a fine not exceeding Ksh 3,000 (US \$ 50). In Uganda, where chemical fishing was first reported before it spread to Kenya and Tanzania, the government has put in place measures aimed at eradicating the practice including penalties of up to seven years in jail and fines of Ush 5 million upwards. (*The East African, November 23-29*)

**Severe water shortage:** A report by the John Hopkins School of Public Health noted that Kenya is among five countries in the world likely to run out of water in the next 25 years. The report titled "Solutions for a Water-Short World" forecasts that the water per capita will halve by 2025 due to doubling of the population. In 1995, the water per capita was 1,112 cubic meters. The study also pointed out however that the nation's water resources are under exploited and if properly utilised can easily cope with the expected increase in water consumption. Therefore, the problem seems to be one of redistribution from areas with abundant water supply to those with little supply. (*The Nation, November 18*)

**Kenya tea exports:** The Chairman of the East African Tea Trade Association (EATTA), Eustace Karanja, announced that he expects an upward trend in tea exports from Kenya with the crop expected to earn Sh27 billion (approximately, US \$450 million) in foreign exchange making tea the country's largest foreign exchange earner. The Mombasa tea auction, the largest producer and buyer representation in the world and managed by EATTA, attracts strong interest from the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Iran, Ethiopia, Poland and a host of other countries. (*The Nation, November 27*)

**President addresses the nation:** On December 12, President Daniel arap Moi addressed about 20,000 Kenyans gathered at the Nyayo Stadium in the capital to commemorate the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kenya's independence. The President's address covered pertinent national and regional topics like Kenya's recovering economy, corruption in government, the banking scandal where politicians and businessmen were discovered to owe millions of dollars to Kenyan banks, the rebellion in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Ethiopia-Eritrean border dispute. The President also told the Kenyan people, "You are getting finished by AIDS" while addressing the HIV-AIDS crisis in the country. (AP, December 12)

**Crackdown on illegal immigrants:** The Kenyan police have conducted a major crackdown on illegal immigrants at the order of President arap Moi. The President, who had just arrived back from attending the Franco-African summit in Paris, told police to detain any foreigners without proper papers, people whom he said were responsible for much of the crime in Nairobi. The police have arrested some 894 people among whom are women and children of Somali, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Pakistani, Rwandan, Congolese, Burundi and Sudanese nationalities. Charges that the police raped women, extorted money and plundered property were quickly denied by the Nairobi provincial police who countered, "When police stage such an operation, it is not strange to hear all sorts of allegations being heaped against us from those who are not happy with the work." A senior officer disclosed that foreigners without proper papers would be deported. (IRIN, December 6 & 7; Reuters, December 6)

## UGANDA

**Rebel forces still active:** Rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacked a Ugandan army base in the west of the country in early November killing three people. The incident came following government confirmation that it had thousands of troops deployed in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo to prevent infiltration into western Uganda. Ugandan Chief of Staff, Brigadier James Kazini made the admission that Ugandan troops had helped DRC rebels capture the northeastern town of Buta. Meanwhile, at least 600 rebels from the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) crossed into northern Uganda from bases in southern Sudan and started attacking civilians around the town of Kitgum. Local authorities have since ordered the closure of schools in the area. According to a junior defence minister, the incursion had been planned for some time and would be countered by Ugandan forces. This was the first time that LRA fighters have entered Uganda since the bulk of their forces retreated back into Sudan four months ago. In another clash, more than 14 LRA rebels were killed in the areas of Ato hills, Lalogi and Opit in Gulu District and 24 children who were their captives released according to the state owned *New Vision* paper. Uganda accuses Sudan of backing at least four rebel groups, while Sudan, for its part, accuses Uganda of backing the SPLA. (AFP, November 6, 9, 12, 13 & 14; IRIN, November 27)

**Diverging views between allies:** A question of leadership seems to have arisen in the joint forces of the DRC rebels and Ugandan troops. The rebel weekly *Les Coulisses*, mouthpiece of the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) pointed out that Ugandan Armed Forces Chief of Staff James Kazini had said Congolese territory was "under Ugandan administration and that as a result nothing can be done without its authorisation". Similarly, the Ugandan government announced it had set up a joint command with Rwanda and the DRC rebels against Kabila and troops allied to him from Angola, Zimbabwe, Chad and Namibia. The rebel's military leader Jean-Pierre Ondekane, however, said, "The joint command does not exist yet" and further commented that the story was Kazini's creation and that the Ugandan's themselves had not discussed the issue. Ondekane also said a single Chief of Staff had become necessary and that Uganda's leader, President Yoweri Museveni had said that no officer could be above him (Ondekane). According to *Les Coulisses*, the RCD "is seeking to clarify the rules of solidarity with its Ugandan and Rwandan partners." (AFP, November 25)

**Signs of peace:** The Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni disclosed that warring sides in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) had agreed to "reaffirm" the need for an end to the conflict, an immediate cessation of hostilities and a "determination to sign a cease-fire as soon as possible" at the Franco-African Summit in Paris. The President reserved the right, however, to keep Ugandan troops in the DRC until there were no longer any security troops to Uganda. The French President Jacques Chirac had disclosed earlier that such a deal had been reached at the sidelines of the Summit. (AFP, November 28)

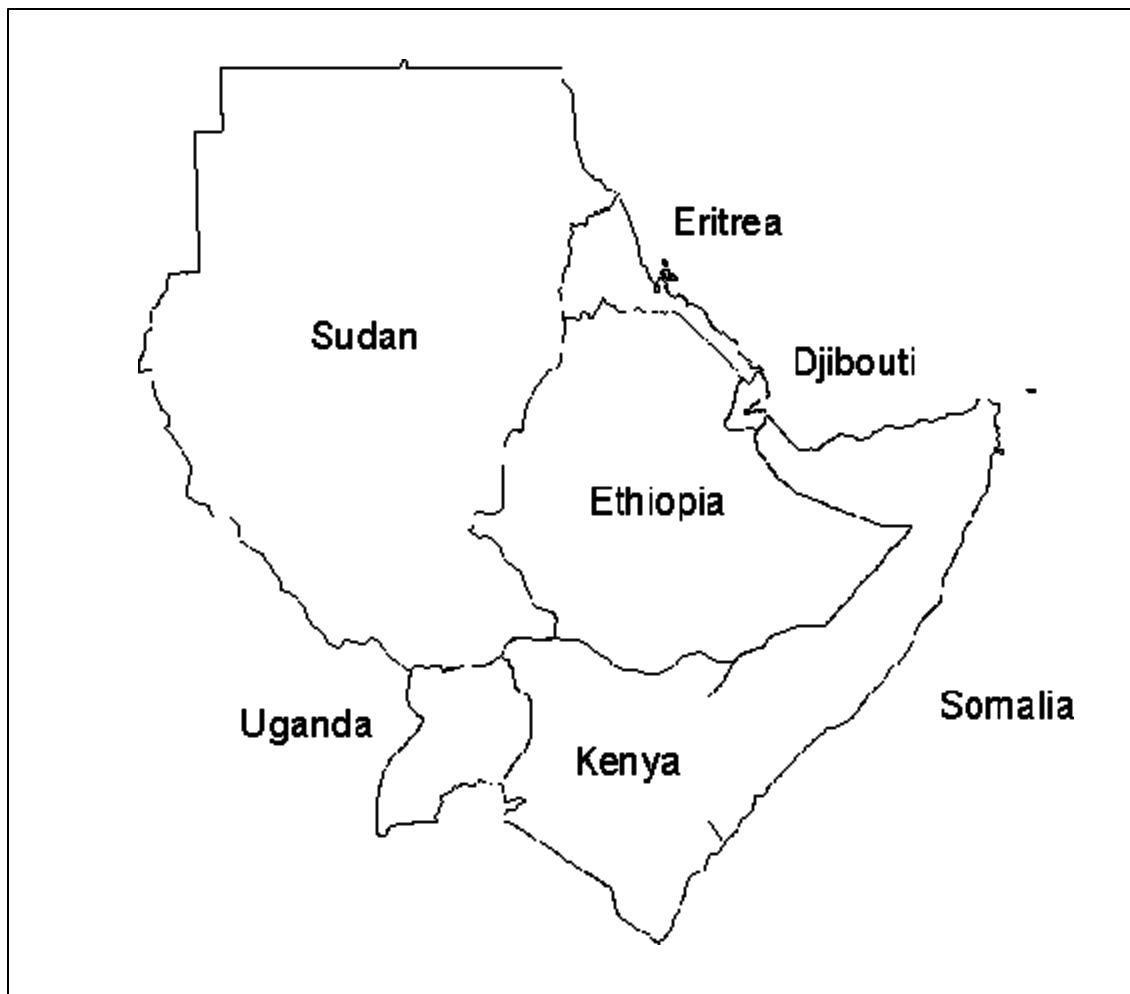
**Coffee exports under threat:** The Uganda Coffee Development Authority has reported plunging coffee exports. Exports in the October-November season declined by 52.3 percent in volume and 48.8 percent in value, the lowest performance in five consecutive seasons. Meanwhile, coffee wilt disease is reported to be spreading fast in Uganda, where it has destroyed some two percent of the country's coffee plantations. Known scientifically as *Tracheomyces*, according to government officials the disease is rapidly becoming a major problem, doubling every two years. The government is expected to spend more than US \$330,000 in developing coffee varieties that are resistant to the disease. (AFP, November 8 & 9)

**IMF extends new loan:** In a statement released in Washington, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it has approved a US \$46 million loan for Uganda to support the country's economic reforms. The loan will be disbursed in two installements, with the first released on November 25. The Ugandan government's reform programme seeks economic growth of seven percent a year from 1998 to 2001, with inflation held to five percent. Structural reforms advocated by the IMF call for the recapitalisation and privatisation of several banks as well as the establishment of supervisory bodies. Meanwhile, the African Development Fund (ADF) has made a grant of US \$2 million to help Uganda finance the management of foreign aid. The grant brings total commitments of the ADB in Uganda to about US \$203 million. In a related story, a World Bank organised meeting of the Paris Club aid donors was opened with a fact-finding session ahead of allocating aid to various sectors in Uganda. The donor representatives met with civic leaders, private sector figures, and NGOs to discuss future plans on education, health, agriculture and poverty. The issues of corruption in government and military spending concerning the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were discussed and Uganda pledged not to divert money intended for priority sectors to defense spending. The meeting raised US \$2.2 billion for Uganda's socio-economic programmes over the next 3 years. (IMF, November 11; AFP, November 12, December 7 & 10)

**Corruption in government:** Corruption, said to be running rampant in Ugandan government, has been exposed in several banking and privatisation deals. A parliamentary select committee's report on Uganda's privatisation process has called for the resignation of three cabinet ministers for using political influence to run down the Uganda Airlines Corporation. The report charged that serious crimes had been committed by a number of individuals including the brother of Yoweri Museveni, Major-General Salim Saleh, who is a joint owner of "Efforte Corporation", which allegedly improperly took over in-flight catering services. The Uganda police have since opened files on the individuals mentioned in the parliamentary report to see if they "contravened the law". In a related report, the same Major-General Salim Saleh resigned from his post as presidential security adviser for using a Malaysian company, Westmont, as a front to buy the Ugandan Commercial Bank (UCB). In a three-page statement, he confessed that Greenland Investments, a company of which he was a major shareholder, used Westmont as a front to buy a 49 percent share in UCB after he failed to secure the deal through Greenland Investment directly because of long standing liquidity problems. Then he persuaded Westmont to sell the shares to Greenland Investments after which Greenland Investments received US \$44 million in loans from UCB to bail it out of its liquidity problems of which US \$1.8 million went to Efforte Corporation. The parliamentary select committee has ordered his investigation and prosecution for his illegal take over while several members of parliament have called for his imprisonment for corruption. Saleh has maintained that he acted without the knowledge of the president. Uganda's Central Bank has placed Greenland Bank under statutory management and is attempting to formalise its irregular loans. Saleh has since disclosed that he will sign a multi-million-dollar business deal contract in Burundi concerning the export of beef. The timing of Saleh's confession and the parliamentary probe is linked to the upcoming foreign donors' conference in Kampala, which has corruption high on the agenda. Meanwhile, President Museveni has reiterated his commitment to fighting corruption. (AFP, December 6 - 8 & 10 - 14)

**Ugandan mayor found guilty in Boston:** A U.S. district court found the mayor of Kampala, Nasser Sebagala guilty of eight counts of bank fraud and the transfer of altered documents to bring cheques into the U.S. The judge ordered Sebagala to remain in detention until his sentencing hearing which will take place in February. He had been charged with attempting to conceal US \$108,000 when entering the U.S. and trying to deposit four false cheques at the Bank of Boston. (AFP, December 4 & 5)

## 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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