

A Week in the Horn

2nd December 2016

News in Brief:

- **Africa and the African Union**
- **Ethiopia**
- **Eritrea**
- **Kenya**
- **Somalia**
- **Sudan**

Articles (from page 4):

- **Gadaa' joins UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage**
- **Continued Eritrean efforts at destabilisation in Ethiopia**
- **South Sudan finally accepts deployment of the Regional Protection Force**
- **Somalia's Presidential Election postponed for the third time....**
- **....and Islamic State activities in Somalia**
- **FAO's latest food security 'snapshot' for Ethiopia**
- **The election for AU Commission Chairperson is gathering pace**

Africa and the African Union

The five candidates for the post of AU Commission Chairperson, which will be decided at the next AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Addis Ababa at the end of January 2017, will be holding a debate next week on December 9 at the AU headquarters, Addis Ababa. The five candidates are: Ms Venson-Moitoi (Botswana), Mr Mokuy (Equatorial Guinea), Moussa Faki Mahamat (Chad), Abdoulaye Bathily (Senegal) and Ambassador Amina Mohammed (Kenya). (See article)

Dr Dlamini-Zuma, head of the African Union Commission, on Sunday (November 27) welcomed the agreement reached between the Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan and the United Nations on all outstanding issues concerning the deployment of a Regional Protection Force. (See article)

President Salva Kiir has nominated former internal affairs minister, Aleu Ayieny Aleu, as the next Secretary General for IGAD. The position is due to go to South Sudan according to rotation as Engineer Mahaboub Maalin from Kenya ends his term of office.

Ethiopia

President Dr Mulatu Teshome and Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn expressed their condolences for the death of former Cuban president, Fidel Castro. President Mulatu said Castro was a friend to Ethiopia who helped Ethiopia defend its territorial integrity in the 1970s. Prime Minister Hailemariam said generations would remember Castro because of his support to Ethiopia during those challenging times.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, went to Abu Dhabi on Thursday (Dec 1) to participate at a conference entitled "Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage," which will be held at the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi.

Prime Minister Hailemariam met with Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Dr Amina Mohammed on Tuesday (November 29) for talks on peace and stability in the region and ways to strengthen the Ethiopia-Kenyan economic partnership.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, also met Ambassador Dr Amina Mohammed, on Wednesday (December 1) to discuss elevating bilateral and people-to-people ties. Dr Mohammed said the bilateral relations were "very mature, very enhanced, and we meet very frequently to make sure that we keep them moving in the right direction." The two ministers exchanged views on Somalia and South Sudan.

Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh, signed the Book of Condolence on the death of the former President of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro Ruz, at the Embassy of Cuba on Thursday (December 1). Dr Workneh described the former Cuban leader s "a great friend of Ethiopia who stood resolutely on the side of the Ethiopian people during their struggle to defend their sovereignty." He would "always be remembered as an inspirational and true revolutionary leader of our time."

Ambassador Rolf Welberts, Special Envoy on the Nile for the German Foreign Office met with Ambassador Shemsedin Ahmed, Director General of Border and Cross Border Resources and Teferi Meles, Director-General of Public Diplomacy at the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday (November 30). Discussions covered the strengthening of partnerships for regional and bilateral issues. Ambassador Welberts praised cooperation among Nile riparian countries on utilization of resources and said cooperation between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt and the Declaration of Principles was an example of what could be achieved. He said Germany was willing to support projects that would contribute to win-win agreements between the three countries.

The Ministry of Defense announced on Sunday (November 27) that a force of armed Ginbot7 fighters, numbering 113, in two groups, were intercepted trying to infiltrate into Ethiopia from Eritrea. They were intercepted by residents and local militia forces. 15 were killed and 73 captured by the joint efforts of the residents and the militias. Weapons and military equipment were also captured. (See article)

UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, at its meeting in Addis Ababa this week, has accepted the 'Gadaa' system, the indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo people, for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. (See article)

Ethiopia will celebrate the 11th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Day this year in the State of Harari on Thursday, next week (December 8). The nation-wide celebration is a commemoration of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), implemented on December 8, 1995, and of the triumph over the repressive and oppressive military regime that had deprived the people of their rights in their own nation.

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization published a food security "snapshot" for Ethiopia last week. It said the prospects for this year's main "*meher*" harvest were favorable and overall crop prospects were above average. Southern and southeastern pastoral areas, however, were still suffering from water shortages and the October-to-December rainy season has been poor so far. (See article)

The Ethiopian Embassy in Japan organized an experience-sharing tour for senior officials of the Addis Ababa City Government this week, November 28 to December 2 in Japan. Officials from the Addis Ababa Kaizen Institute, the Housing Development Project Office, the Public and Human Development Bureau, the Savings House Development Enterprise and the Technical Vocational Education and Training Agency participated.

The Belgian Foreign Ministry has modified its travel warning on Ethiopia. While still advising against all unnecessary travel following the recent unrest, it suggests visitors should take precautions rather than warning against any travel in Ethiopia. The German Foreign Ministry has also lifted its warning for German tourists planning to visit the main tourist areas of Ethiopia.

Eritrea

President Isaias met with President Al-Sisi on Tuesday (November 29) during a two-day working visit to Cairo. A statement from President Al-Sisi's office said after their talks that they had stressed the importance of launching a joint committee aimed at boosting bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation in different fields, including agriculture and fisheries. President Al-Sisi praised cooperation between Egypt and Eritrea in international fora, underlining the importance of increasing coordination and discussions on regional peace and stability related issues.

An Irish Member of the European Parliament, Brian Hayes, hosted a meeting in the European Parliament on Monday (November 28) for an Eritrean delegation led by Information Minister, Yemane Gebremeskel. It was also attended by representatives from UNDP and the Irish aid agency VITA. Mr Hayes, who visited Eritrea in May, said "engagement" was the key to achieving "positive outcomes".

Qatar Airways announced this week it would be suspending flights to Eritrea December 4, because of "operational requirements". This would continue until further notice. The last Qatar Airways' flight will depart from Asmara on Saturday, December 3. The airline started twice-weekly flights to Asmara on December 4, 2014, a few months after launching flights to Djibouti in March 2014. Other airlines flying into Asmara are FlyDubai, Egypt Air, Turkish Airlines and Sudan Airways.

The UN Food and Agricultural Organization published a food security "snapshot" for Eritrea last week. It said following good '*kremt*' rains (June-September) in the main agricultural areas of Debub, Maekel, Gash Barka and Anseba, harvesting had started in November and could expect to be completed in January.

Kenya

Ambassador Dr Mohamed in Addis Ababa met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, to hand him a message from Kenya's President Kenyatta and to thank him for supporting her candidature for AU Commission Chairperson. She told reporters she would pay due attention to unleash Africa's potential for industrialization, eradicating poverty, and creating jobs for Africa's youth, called for under Agenda 2063. Enabling a free movement of goods, services and capital from one corner of Africa to the other would also be a key priority. (See article)

Kenya's Inspector-General of Police Joseph Boinnet warned this week that small groups of al-Shabaab terrorists were planning to take advantage of the ongoing rains to infiltrate into Mandera, Wajir, Garissa and Lamu counties to launch attacks. Possible targets included security personnel and establishments along the border as well as the passenger service vehicles operating in the border area." He said security was being increased to prevent any attacks and he appealed to the public to cooperate with police and be vigilant.

Somalia

The Chairman of the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team, Omar Abdulle 'Dhegey' announced on Monday (November 28) that the presidential election, originally scheduled for Wednesday (November 30) would be delayed. No new date was announced but the election is expected to take place before the end of the year. (See article)

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made a one-day visit to Addis Ababa on Wednesday (November 30) where he met with Prime Minister Hailemariam. Discussions covered peace and security in Somalia and progress with the electoral process.

Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, announced on Monday (November 28) that the Chinese government has donated \$1.2m to help support AMISOM and peace efforts in Somalia.

The EU has decided to extend its Somalia anti-piracy operation, EUNAVFOR Operation Atalanta, for another two years. The European Council has agreed to provide €11 million to fund Atalanta until the end of 2018. In addition to countering pirates, Atalanta also protects World Food Program vessels and other shipping, monitors fishing off the coast of Somalia and supports other EU missions and programs in the region.

Egypt has announced plans to reopen its education institutions in Somalia, after more than two decades and the Egyptian Consul General in Somalia told the media that the schools would follow the Egyptian curriculum but also teach Somali history and geography. Education would be free of charge and teaching would begin next May in Somali government buildings until the former Egyptian schools were restored. A first group of teachers and administrators arrived in Somalia last week.

The UNHCR said on Monday (November 28) that it had helped 35,192 Somali refugees to return home since the exercise began almost two years ago in December 2014, when UNHCR started supporting voluntary return of Somali refugees in Kenya. Kenya said in November it would delay by six months the closure of the Dadaab camps where 283,558 refugees were living in October.

The Head of Immigration, Mohamed Aden Kofi, said this week that Somalia plans to re-open its border posts once again. Speaking at the opening of training for more than 40 immigration officers in Mogadishu, he said setting up the border posts with Kenya and Ethiopia would be a high priority.

President Abdiwali Mohamed Ali "Gaas" of Puntland, on a visit to China, is reported to have signed agreements with the China Civil Engineering and Construction Company (CCECC) for oil and gas exploration in two blocks in Puntland. Another agreement provides for a CCECC-affiliated company to acquire a fishing license for a \$10million fee. CCFCC, which previously constructed Bosasso airport, is going to construct Galkayo Airport.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir flew to South Africa at the beginning of the week at the invitation of President Zuma to discuss bilateral matters and ways to strengthen relations between the two countries. Officials at the presidency said that President Kiir would also take the opportunity to have routine medical checks.

The South Sudan government announced on Friday (November 25) that it had agreed unanimously to allow deployment of the proposed Regional Protection Force. Cabinet Affairs Minister Martin Elia Lomuro said all outstanding issues related to the deployment had been resolved with the United Nations. (See article)

The outgoing head of United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), Ms Ellen Loej, told her final press conference in Juba on Monday (November 28) that the peacekeeping mission was not finished and lamented the lack of peace in South Sudan. Ms Loej took leave of President Kiir on Monday.

The UNHCR said at the weekend that there had been a massive influx of South Sudanese refugees into Sudan's East Darfur state, since late January this year, with the numbers rising from 164 to over 54,000 by the end of September. It said many were in under-served areas, often difficult to access and this made the provision of assistance challenging.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday for a visit to discuss ways to promote bilateral ties between the two countries. He was accompanied by the Ministers of the Presidency, Foreign Affairs, and Electricity and Water Resources as well as other officials. UAE investments in Sudan are estimated to amount to around \$11 billion, of which about \$5 billion are projects in progress with the rest in pre-execution phase.

President Omer al-Bashir described the intended civil disobedience activity this week, November 27-29, in protest against the recent austerity including lifting of subsidies on medicines, fuel and electricity, which caused a dramatic increase in prices, had been a complete failure. He emphasized that the economic reform program was necessary.

'Gadaa' joins UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Gadaa system, the indigenous democratic socio-political system of the Oromo people has been inscribed on the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Gadaa was accepted and inscribed at the 11th Session of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Addis Ababa this week, from November 28 to December 2. Gadaa is the traditional system of governance of the Oromo people in Ethiopia, regulating the political, economic, social and religious activities of the community, dealing with a wide variety of issues including conflict resolution, reparation and the protection of women's rights, in addition to serving as a mechanism for enforcing moral conduct, building social cohesion, and expressing the cultural norms of the community. Its inscription on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity will underline and promote the visibility and significance of this traditional system of governance, developed from their experience and knowledge and practiced by the Oromo people of Ethiopia.

Representatives of the 24 States Parties to UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage attended the 11th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee, chaired by Yonas Desta Tsegaye, Director General of Ethiopia's Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage. UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage as "traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants", including oral traditions, rituals and skills to produce traditional crafts. During its session, the Committee examined five nominations for inscription on the List of Intangible Cultural

Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding and 37 requests for inscription on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Committee inscribed elements from Portugal, Uganda and Ukraine on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Also examined were issues concerning intangible heritage in emergency situations caused by conflict or natural disaster. The Committee reviewed seven programs proposed for inclusion on the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices. It also considered the creation of a monitoring instrument to measure the Convention's impact and progress achieved.

UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which currently numbers 336 inscribed elements, aims to enhance the visibility of the traditions of different communities and their knowledge "without recognizing standards of excellence or exclusivity." In addition to enhancing respect for the Oromo people's traditional democratic socio-political system, placement of the Gadaa system on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity lends fresh impetus for its preservation and promotion by the Oromo people in the future, underlining its importance as a marker of the community's identity as well as a repository of knowledge and experience. It will also encourage the Gadaa to contribute its share to the positive development and transformation of Ethiopia's political, economic and social practice, meaning and experience.

Ahead of the opening of the 11th Session, Ethiopia introduced the Intergovernmental Committee to cultural performances showcasing the rich and unique traditions and cultural heritage of the country. Over 300 artists and performers took part in a display of the country's intangible cultural heritage. On the occasion, President Dr Mulatu Teshome underlined Ethiopia's status as Africa's oldest independent country, pointing out that "more than 80 nations with distinct cultural traditions and values live here and speak more than 80 different languages." He said Ethiopia had been a member of UNESCO since 1955 and had always collaborated closely with it, adding: "We take heritage as our legacy from the past and we pass it on to the next generation. The Ethiopian government is committed to preserving it and safeguarding it and UNESCO has been a longstanding partner in this endeavor." Ethiopia's Culture and Tourism Minister, Dr Hirut Weldemariam, described Ethiopia as "a land of biodiversity and a mosaic of multiple ethno-linguistic groups making room for various religions in a state of peace and harmony."

UNESCO's Deputy Director-General, Getachew Engida, described the "tremendous advances," achieved since the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage entered into force offering a picture of "peace, diversity and inclusion." The Deputy Director-General noted that UNESCO attached great importance to strengthening human and institutional capacities at the country level through the capacity-building strategy adopted by the Committee. This had been implemented in more than 70 countries to support member states. UNESCO, he said, valued the importance of support "to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to intangible cultural heritage in national development plans." The Chairperson of UNESCO's Executive Board, Michael Worbs, who noted the Committee was meeting in Africa for the fourth time since its creation in 2006, said this was indicative of "the central importance that intangible cultural heritage has for Africa as a whole," and underlined the priority of Africa in UNESCO's activities.

Continued Eritrean efforts at destabilization in Ethiopia

The Ministry of Defense announced this week that a serious terrorist attack had been foiled in north-western Tigray Regional State. In a statement issued on Tuesday this week (November 29), the Ministry said the Eritrean-based terrorist organization, Ginbot7, had attempted to infiltrate dozens of fighters into Ethiopia. Over a hundred armed members of Ginbot7 had crossed the border from Eritrea in two groups, led respectively by Major Mesfin Tigabu and by Destaw Tegegn. However, groups almost immediately ran into local resistance and most were captured through the joint efforts of local residents and regional security forces and militia. Out of the total of 113 in the two groups, 15 were shot dead in exchanges of fire, while 73 were captured. The statement said that security forces were hunting the remaining twenty-five who fled from the scenes of battle. The local security forces had captured weapons, other military material and money, both Ethiopian birr and US dollars. These included a total of 73 rifles, both Kalashnikovs and sniper weapons, an RPG launcher and some 62 hand grenades, pistols, binoculars and satellite communication devices. The infiltrators had clearly been trained and armed in Eritrea before crossing the border, and the Ministry statement said this was another Eritrean-backed attempt to destabilize and hinder development in Ethiopia. It underlined that this was yet more evidence that the Eritrean government was continuing to support armed groups and encourage regional instability in defiance of UN Security Council sanctions.

Less than a month ago, when adopting resolution 2317 (2016) on Thursday (November 10), the UN Security Council renewed the arms embargo on Eritrea until November 15, 2017. The Security Council specifically noted its **“concern over reports by the Monitoring Group of ongoing Eritrean support for certain regional armed groups”**. The Council, therefore, encouraged the Monitoring Group to provide further detailed reporting and evidence on this issue. As we noted previously, only a couple of months earlier, there had been considerable corroboration of this when a reporter of the *New York Times* visited Eritrea and accompanied Berhanu Nega, the head of Ginbot7, to the organization’s military camps in Eritrea close to the Ethiopian border. The reporter saw Ginbot7 fighters being armed and trained under the auspices of Eritrea and Eritrean soldiers in preparation for cross-border terrorist operations into Ethiopia. The Security Council also noted its concern that the Monitoring Group was unable to visit Eritrea and was thus unable to fully discharge its mandate. It called on Eritrea to cooperate fully with the Monitoring Group and facilitate a visit to Eritrea, and thereafter to support regular visits to Eritrea. The Council even added that increased cooperation would help the Security Council be better informed about Eritrea’s compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The latest report of the UN Monitoring Group released at the beginning of November raised a number of different areas of concern about Eritrea, including military activities and related issues. These included the establishment of military bases by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the repeated refusal of the Eritrean government to engage with the Monitoring Group, its continued refusal to clarify the whereabouts of the remaining Djibouti prisoners of war and serious concern over Eritrea’s continued support for armed groups involved in regional destabilization. It said the use of Eritrea’s land, water and airspace by other countries to conduct military operations in the third state was not, in itself, a sanctions violation. However, "compensation diverted directly or indirectly towards activities that threatened peace and security in the region, or for the benefit of the Eritrean military, would constitute a violation." It also noted that foreign support for the construction of permanent military installations in Eritrea amounted to the provision of technical assistance, training, financial and other assistance to Eritrean military activities, which were banned under the current terms of the U.N arms embargo on Eritrea.

In its report, the Monitoring Group also defined its mandate which, as it underlined, included the monitoring of the implementation of the Council’s demand for all Member States, “in particular Eritrea, to cease arming, training and equipping armed groups and their members, including al-Shabaab, that aim to destabilize the region or incite violence and civil strife in Djibouti.” While the Monitoring Group said it found no “firm” evidence of support for al-Shabaab, it certainly emphasized that it had found considerable evidence of arming, training and support for a number of other groups that were publicly committed to regional destabilization as well as indications of Eritrea’s support for the armed Djibouti opposition, the Front pour la Restauration de l’Unité et de la Démocratie (FRUD). This carried out low-level attacks in northern Djibouti throughout the current mandate and continued to undermine the normalization of relations between Djibouti and Eritrea and obstruct the implementation of Security Council resolution 1862 (2009).

In fact, the Monitoring Group said firmly that it “continued to find consistent evidence of Eritrean support for armed groups operating in both Ethiopia and Djibouti.” It added: “It is clear that Eritrea continues to harbor anti-Ethiopian armed groups, including the newly remodeled ‘Patriotic Ginbot 7’, and provides at least some logistical support to them.” It said former fighters, including the former Chairman of the Tigray People’s Democratic Movement, Mola Asgedom, who had returned to Ethiopia last year, provided detailed evidence that the Eritrean authorities were providing weapons and training to these groups. Equally, because the Eritrean Government continued to refuse to allow the Monitoring Group access to Eritrea, the Monitoring Group was unable to determine how far the Peoples’ Alliance for Freedom and Democracy, incorporating such anti-Ethiopian movements as the Ogaden National Liberation Front and the Oromo Liberation Front, might pose a threat to Ethiopia. The Monitoring Group, however, had no doubt that the Eritrean authorities were continuing to provide substantial support to armed groups aiming to destabilize the region in defiance of Security Council resolutions.

It is clear that the Monitoring Group did not believe that the Government of Eritrea was in full compliance with the sanctions regime over the last year. Nor was the UN Security Council persuaded by Eritrea’s protestations of innocence. Eritrea, as this latest incident indeed demonstrates, has remained consistent in its support for armed groups involved in cross-border activities. There is no evidence it has changed policies in this regard or in its approach to regional destabilization. Its continued refusal to allow the Monitoring Group to investigate on the ground also suggests that it has something to hide. Eritrea’s current activities give no indication that it is trying to respond positively to UN Security Council resolutions and the sanctions regime, or that it is prepared to change its long-standing policies of aggression towards its neighbors.

South Sudan finally accepts deployment of the Regional Protection Force

President Salva Kiir declared on Monday (November 28) that he accepted the deployment of the Regional Protection Force unconditionally, renouncing the conditions he had previously attached to its deployment. The President said he had changed his mind after he had received various guarantees from the United Nations and from regional leaders that the force would never take any unilateral decisions. He also explained: "We have accepted the deployment of the regional protection force because of peace. We need our people to return to their homes and resume their normal lives. If this force will play a positive role, then let them come." He noted that: "Many leaders from the region have been calling and asked me to accept on behalf of the people of South Sudan the deployment of the regional protection force. I told them this is not a personal thing for me to just decide. I said I would consult with the people. And so we did this with the stakeholders." The President also pointed out that First Vice-President Taban Deng Gai, who leads a splinter faction of the SPLM-IO and his team, had also considered the issues, and agreed the matter should be taken to the cabinet. It was the cabinet that had taken the formal decision to accept the 4,000 strong force. Originally, the South Sudanese government had initially rejected the deployment of troops from countries sharing borders with South Sudan because it believed they "they might have interests in the country."

It was after a visit from Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn that the Transitional Government of National Unity was persuaded to accept the involvement of neighboring countries in the Regional Protection Force authorized by the United Nations.

Dr Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission quickly welcomed the decision and commended the agreement reached between the Transitional Government of National Unity and the United Nations for full implementation of Security Council resolution 2304. Dr Zuma said the deployment of the 4,000 troops would create a conducive political environment for the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan of August 2015. She urged "all South Sudanese stakeholders to fully cooperate with the Regional Protection Force and desist from engaging in activities that may set back the progress made." She also called on the Transitional Government of National Unity to ensure full implementation of all the necessary security arrangements.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) similarly welcomed the "decision taken by the Council of Ministers of the Transitional Government of National Unity on the issue of the deployment of the Regional Protection Force pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution 2304 (2016)." The JMEC said, "The decision to move forward with immediate deployment of the RPF is critical to providing a secure and safe environment in Juba and creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the peace agreement." Additional discussion on the details of the deployment of the Regional Protection Force in South Sudan and other related regional peace and security issues, including the make-up of the force will be discussed at the next Extraordinary Summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia next week.

It will be an important meeting. South Sudan remains at a critical juncture and time is running out. Thousands continue to flee from conflict in South Sudan every week into Ethiopia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Sudan. There are hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people inside the country who need immediate assistance, and there is the real threat of a major humanitarian catastrophe with urgent need of increased funding to deal with the situation both in South Sudan and among the refugees outside. South Sudan faces severe economic problems as well as its still unresolved political crisis. The international community fears a return to large-scale civil war with the continuing proliferation of armed political and criminal groups, and calls for renewed armed conflict which have exacerbated fears of a relapse into widespread conflict. The security situation remains problematic. The IGAD Summit will have to focus attention on ways to salvage The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which remains the roadmap for sustainable peace.

The dangers were underlined on Wednesday this week (November 30) when a three-member UN Commission on Human Rights warned at the end of a ten-day visit that South Sudan was on the brink of catastrophe. The chairperson, Yasmin Sooka, said: "The stage is being set for a repeat of what happened in Rwanda and the international community is under an obligation to prevent it." In a statement, she cited an increase in hate speech, a crackdown on the media and civil society, deepening divisions between the country's 64 tribes, renewed recruitment in a country already awash with guns and the proliferation of armed groups aligned to both sides in armed conflict. She said: "There is already a steady process of ethnic cleansing underway in several areas of South Sudan using starvation, gang rape and the burning of villages;

everywhere we went across this country we heard villagers saying they are ready to shed blood to get their land back." At a press conference in Juba on Wednesday, Sooka warned of "unprecedented levels of violence and ethnic tension" She said both government and rebel armies were forcibly recruiting soldiers, including children, and warned that "renewed recruitment is an indicator that all the parties are preparing for the next conflict". The UN team called for the international community to take immediate steps to avert mass bloodshed, including expediting the immediate arrival of the 4,000 strong Regional Protection Force, ensuring that it is restricted to the capital, freezing assets, enacting targeted sanctions and implementing an arms embargo.

The U.S representative at the UN Human Rights Council said "We have credible information that the South Sudanese government is currently targeting civilians in Central Equatoria and preparing for large-scale attacks in the coming days or week; and the US Permanent Representative to the UN Security Council said "We are raising the alarm. We are calling on the government of South Sudan not to move forward with the offensive they have planned."

A statement issued by the command of South Sudan army on Thursday (December 1) denied reports that it was moving forces into the Greater Equatoria region in anticipation of a dry season offensive against opposition fighters. It said activities taking place in the region were troop rotation. It said: "The public needs to remain calm and know that there is no build-up of troops in the Equatoria region. It is just normal rotation of troops."

Somalia's Presidential Election postponed for the third time....

Somalia's presidential election, scheduled to take place on Wednesday this week (November 30), has been postponed for the third time. The Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team finally announced the new postponement on Monday (November 28). Omar Mohamed Abdulle, 'Dhegey', head of the FIEIT, told journalists that the presidential election due on Wednesday could not happen as planned. He said: "We are very sorry to share with the Somali people that the presidential election is postponed again because the members of parliament, those who could vote, are not ready." He said a new date would be announced after the FIEIT had met with MPs, but offered assurances that it would be before the end of the year.

The reason is because the parliamentary elections have yet to be completed and Parliament, after completing its own elections and electing Speakers for the House of the People and the Senate, is responsible for electing the President. The original delay in September was blamed on security issues, but the present delay is due to the failure of the states to complete the electoral processes for the House of the People on time. More time is also needed for FIEIT and the State Interim Electoral Implementation teams to investigate some irregularities, allegations of election malpractice and accusations of corruption.

The election process for the MPs to be elected for Benadir only started on Wednesday this week in Mogadishu, following meetings to ensure the security and safety of the election places. National Intelligence and Security Agency officials and Benadir police chiefs have been in additional discussions to secure the capital during the electoral process, and on Wednesday, security forces closed off roads leading to the election venues. Two of the three MPs elected on Wednesday came from the Surre (Dir) and one from the local Benaadiri clan. The voting was observed by the Mayor of Mogadishu, Sheikh Yusuf Hussein Jimale and by Omar Mohamed Abdulle, 'Dhegey', chairman of the FIEIT who described it as "a significant day because we began the electoral process in July and now we are in the conclusion stages, having held the exercise in the regions." The remaining seats for the Benadir region should be decided by the end of the week.

There has also been difficulty over the selection of members of the Electoral College for northern areas and a dispute over one of the elders meant to be selecting the Electoral College. The selection of delegates who will elect both the lower and upper house members from the northern region has been leading to difficulties. At least two lists have appeared and there has been a dispute over at least one of the elders involved in the selection of delegates. The northern region, which covers Somaliland, has been allocated 11 members of the Senate and 47 members of the House of the People. This means that presidential candidates, who include both Federal President Mohamud and Federal Prime Minister Sharmarke, have been making strong efforts to gain support among the potential MPs and Senators.

The issue of northern areas also caused a brief hiccup in the Puntland elections. At the beginning of the week, the Vice-President of Puntland halted voting in Puntland. This was because of Puntland objections to a statement by the outgoing Federal Parliamentary Speaker about Upper House quotas for clans from the Sool, East Sanag and Buhodle areas. These are areas in dispute between Puntland and Somaliland and elders from

both regions have claimed the right to nominate candidates. The statement appeared to contradict seat distribution endorsed by the National Leadership Forum. However, following discussions between representatives of the international community and Federal Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke, President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali of Puntland lifted the suspension of the ongoing Lower House elections. By the beginning of the week, Puntland had succeeded in electing 22 MPs out of the 37 it is entitled to in the House of the People.

On Thursday last week (November 24), the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team and the Independent Electoral Disputes Resolution Mechanism (IEDRM) released a joint statement announcing they would be conducting investigations into electoral malpractices in various regions after allegations of intimidation, vote rigging and harassment of candidates. They warned that action would be taken against clans that fail to do so. The statement said "The FIEIT and the IEDRM are concerned by allegations of malpractices, [and] when investigations confirm that serious malpractices have occurred the FIEIT and the IEDRM will take appropriate and decisive actions. Such actions can and will include nullification of the election results and disqualification of candidates who have committed the malpractices." The two bodies have raised particular concern over the 30% requirement for women in parliament. The two bodies called on the clans to abide by the electoral rules and ensure women's participation in the ongoing process.

Last week, the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team dismissed the voting results of Lower House elections conducted on 26 November in Jowhar because of a failure to stick to the required women's quota in the seats contested. Under the rules laid down, a clan that has three seats in the Lower House has to reserve one seat exclusively for women candidates from the same clan. Clans that have a smaller quota have to work together to reserve one seat for women candidates to keep to the 30% requirement. FIEIT told the Hir-Shebelle State-level Indirect Electoral Implementation Team (SIEIT) and the Hir-Shebelle President it was nullifying the voting results for failing to abide by the National Leadership Forum decision to reserve 30% of seats in the lower house of parliament for women candidates. Five more MPs were elected in Jowhar on Thursday this week.

...and Islamic State activities in Somalia

In 2015, Sheikh Abdiqadir Mumin, then leader of a small al-Shabaab group operating in the Galgala mountains to the south west of the Puntland port of Bosasso, declared his allegiance to the overall leader of the Islamic State, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Sheikh Mumin then moved to the east of Bosasso into his own Ali Saleban clan area. Originally operating with no more than 20 or 30 followers, he has been active in planting bombs, making guerilla attacks against Puntland and local security forces and gradually increasing his numbers to an estimated 200 to 300 members. When the group was formed a year ago, it was initially reported that only 20 of the 300 Shabaab fighters based in the Galgala Mountains joined Sheikh Mumin. However, in August this year, when the US designated Abdiqadir Mumin as a global terrorist, it noted that Mumin "expanded his cell of Islamic State supporters by kidnapping young boys aged 10 to 15, indoctrinating them, and forcing them to take up militant activity." He appeared in a propaganda video in April showing some fighters training in the "Commander Sheikh Abu Numan Training Camp," in Puntland. The camp was named after Bashir Abu Numan, a former commander who was killed by al-Shabaab after he defected to the Islamic State late last year.

At the end of October the group attacked and overran the small fishing port of Qandala about 90 kms along the coast from Bosasso, the major port of Puntland. This was its first real success offering both symbolic and propaganda value. The capture of Qandala was the first attempt of IS militants to take over territory in Somalia. This would be a requirement for the group to be recognized as an official province of the Islamic State's 'global caliphate'. More important, it offered the logistical advantage of an outlet to the sea, providing new financial opportunities and better connections to southern Yemen. This means the group had the possibility of being able to acquire shipments of weapons and other materials from Yemen. Qandala offers proximity to the Yemeni port of Al Mukalla, believed to be a major source of weapons to Somalia. The UN Monitoring Group has highlighted the flow of illicit weapons from Yemen to Somalia, and a former head of Puntland intelligence was quoted in June as saying that Mumin had already begun receiving supplies from Al Mukalla. Qandala is also a mountainous area very difficult to access by land. Since the port was captured, Puntland has deployed gunboats to the area to try to intercept any shipments by militant groups in Yemen.

Others have followed Sheikh Mumin in breaking away from al-Shabaab and pledging support to IS. There are several small groups operating in various parts of the country but Sheikh Mumin's group is the largest, best organized and most active. Since April this year, Islamic State began claiming a number of attacks in Somalia.

The majority of these have been in and around Mogadishu, but scattered attacks in other places by elements claiming to be IS, and noted in IS media outlets, suggest there are a number of disparate defectors from al-Shabaab in various areas. The IS has also called for al-Shabaab leader, Abu Ubaidah, to pledge loyalty to the Islamic State.

One reason for the delay in responding to Sheikh Mumin's success in taking over Qandala has been the deteriorating relations between Puntland and Galmudug and their conflict in the divided city of Galkayo. A new Somalia Federal Government, the African Union, UN and EU brokered ceasefire agreement was signed in Galkayo on November 13 after a United Arab Emirates monitored [one] collapsed, but the issue between the two states has yet to be resolved. The conflict in Galkayo has meant that Puntland security forces have been overstretched. In addition to policing the frontier with Galmudug and fighting in Galkayo, it has to watch the situation in Sool and Sanag, regions within Somaliland that are claimed by Puntland. It has also been carrying out operations in the Galgala Mountains against al-Shabaab, and according to the UN Monitoring Group, with the aid of Galmudug militia, it dealt successfully in March with an al-Shabaab seaborne invasion of Puntland on the Mudug coast, involving up to 400 militants.

It was only this week that reports indicated that Puntland forces had begun moving toward Qandala. They included Puntland troops and clan militia. The district commissioner said on Monday that they would continue the advance until they liberated Qandala.

The prospect of an emboldened IS provides an additional security worry for the authorities in Puntland and elsewhere in Somalia. The seizure of Qandala and the emergence of IS operations elsewhere show that factions aligned to Islamic State are determined to try to evolve into an expanded threat in Somalia. This can no longer be dismissed as trivial. It urgently needs a successful military response to the takeover of Qandala, as well as a concerted and multi-pronged response by the federal government and its member states as well as regional and international partners.

FAO's latest food security 'snapshot' for Ethiopia

The latest food security 'snapshot' for Ethiopia, produced by the UN Food and Agricultural Authority last week, said that the prospects for this year's main "*meher*" harvest were favorable. The harvesting of the 2016 main "*meher*" season cereal crops had started in lowland areas and overall crop prospects were above average as the June to September "*kremt*" rains started on time and have been favorable across the country. However, lower yields were expected in the lowlands of central and eastern Oromia Region and in SNNPR along the Rift Valley, where the rains started late and were below-average in quantity and suffered from erratic distribution. In the Southern Regional State SNNPR, the delay in the 2016 "*belg*" harvest meant the planting of "*meher*" crops was delayed. Farmers were forced to plant short-cycle and lower-yielding crops instead of maize and sorghum. Some localized highland areas in Amhara, Tigray and Oromia regions also suffered from torrential rains and flooding. Overall, the 2016 "*belg*" cereal production is estimated at about 1.5 million tonnes, slightly below average, but well above the 2015 drought-affected output of only 760,000 tonnes.

Southern and southeastern pastoral areas, however, are still suffering from water shortages. The October-to-December rainy season has been very poor so far. The onset of the rains has been late and amount has been minimal so far, especially in southern Oromia (Borena and Guji zones) and the southern zones of Somali Region. Grazing resources have deteriorated significantly due to the impact of dry weather conditions since mid-May. In most of the Afar Region and in Sitti Zone of the Somali Region, two consecutive seasons of favorable rains, have meant improvement in pasture and water availability. Livestock herd sizes in these areas, however, still remain below-average following deaths which occurred in 2015 as a consequence of the El Niño-induced drought.

The report said prices of maize increased by 6-19% between July and September, as heavy rains and floods caused crop losses and disrupted marketing operations in some areas. In October prices began to decline with the beginning of the 2016 "*meher*" main season harvest. Although prices of white sorghum and teff in Addis Ababa remained higher in October than in the same month last year, wheat, partly imported, declined by 15% compared to last year as a result of sustained imports and declining international prices. Overall, the year-on-year rate of inflation in October was 9% for meat, milk, cheese and eggs, and fruits. At regional level, the highest rates of food inflation were recorded in Dire Dawa (9.2%), Afar (9.4%) and Tigray (16%) regions, due to the upward pressure exerted on prices by the lingering effects of the 2015 drought and by the reduced secondary "*belg*" season harvest.

The FAO also said that food insecurity levels remained high in regions affected by the 2015 El Nino-induced drought. The effect of the drought on last year's "*belg*" and "*meher*" crop production as well as on grazing resources in northern areas meant food security conditions deteriorated with the estimated number of food insecure people increasing from 4.5 million in August 2015 to 10.2 million during the first half of 2016. This year the August revision of the Humanitarian Requirements Document, following the start of the "*belg*" harvest, was able to revise the number of people in need of assistance to 9.7 million and the number of "hotspot priority" *woredas* also fell slightly. With this year's "*meher*" crops now becoming available, overall food security conditions are gradually improving but conditions remain insecure in eastern areas of Oromia, Amhara and Tigray regions as well as in southern Afar and northern Somali regions, due to the lingering effects of the severe drought of 2015 on local livelihood systems. In southern and southeastern areas, food security conditions for most pastoral households are worsening due to the unfavorable start of the current "*deyr*" (October – December) rains. In Afar and northern Somali regions, milk availability has improved following the positive effects on grazing resources of the rains of the two seasons. Equally, most poor pastoral households still face food insecurity, as the herds have yet to recover from the number so livestock deaths in 2015.

The report also expresses some concern over the levels of humanitarian assistance to the more than 743,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers now present in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is now the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa and it says financial constraints have limited the levels of assistance. It also draws attention to the environmental degradation being caused to fragile eco-systems in and around the camps.

The election for AU Commission Chairperson is gathering pace

The term of office of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission ended in July 2016, but the Assembly of the Union meeting in Kigali was unable to come to a decision over the three candidates for the position. It decided to postpone the next vote until the next meeting of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2017 in Addis Ababa. In July the candidates for the position of Chairperson were Ms Pelonomi Venson Moitsoi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana; Mr Agapito Mba Mokuy, Foreign Minister of Equatorial Guinea; and Ms Specioza Wandira-Kazibwe, former Vice-President of Uganda. Despite several rounds of voting, none of these was able to reach the legal requirement of a two-thirds majority of the Assembly for election. At Kigali, it was clear that a number of countries felt that none of the candidates had the necessary capabilities to lead the Commission at such a challenging time. There were indications that the candidates both for the Chair of the Commission and for commissioners' posts did not satisfy the necessary gender and regional balance.

The rules for the election to the AUI Commission chair and for the Commissioners are clear, laid down in the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly of the Union, the Statutes of the Commission of the AU, and the Modalities for Election of the Members of the Commission. Each region is required to nominate two candidates, including a woman for each portfolio. This means 16 candidates from each region for the eight portfolios, making a total of 80 candidates, 40 men and 40 women from the five regions of Africa. In fact, at Kigali, no region complied with the required modalities for the presentation of candidates, either in number of gender or regional balance for the Commission. According to the regulations, at least one commissioner from each region should be a woman. The region from which the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson are appointed is entitled to one commissioner each, while all other regions are entitled to two commissioners.

The Chairperson of the Commission is the Chief Executive Officer of the African Union, the legal representative of the Union, and the Accounting Officer of the Commission.

The Chairperson also has a significant role to play with reference to regional integration and Africa's relationship with other organizations as well as in conflict prevention, management, resolution and mediation. According to the Rules of Procedure, the voting starts with the election of the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson, and is followed by the Assembly appointing Commissioners elected by the Executive Council. For the election of the Chairperson and his/her deputy, balloting continues until one of the candidates obtains the two-thirds majority required. If a third ballot is inconclusive, the next ballot is restricted to the two candidates who obtained the highest number of votes in the third ballot. If after three further ballots neither of the two candidates obtains a majority, the candidate with the fewer votes should withdraw. If the remaining candidate fails to obtain the two-thirds majority required in that round, the Chairperson suspends the election.

There are now five candidates for the position of Chairperson and four for Deputy Chairperson with neither of the incumbents seeking re-election. AU Commission elections are often affected by the principle of rotation. The current candidates for the position of Chairperson are respectively from South, Central (two candidates, East and West Africa). East Africa last held the position in 1989-2001 when M. Salim Ahmed Salim of Tanzania was Secretary-General of the OAU.

The candidates for the position of Chairperson include two who failed to get the required majority in July, Ms Venson-Moitoi of Botswana, and Mr Mokuy of Equatorial Guinea. The other three candidates are Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, Foreign Minister of Chad; Mr Abdoulaye Bathily of Senegal, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Office for Central Africa, and Ms Amina Mohammed, Kenya Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, who has previously served as Kenya's Ambassador to Switzerland and Representative to the UN in Geneva, and as Deputy Executive Director of UNEP. Both President Kenyatta and Deputy President Ruto have been actively working to get support for Ms Mohammed. Another candidate is Chad's Foreign Minister, Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat. The five candidates will be holding a debate next week on December 9 at the AU headquarters, Addis Ababa.

The candidates for the position of Deputy Chairperson are Mr Yacin Elmi Bouh, Interior and Decentralization Minister of Djibouti; Mr Claude Joachim Tiker of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a former Deputy Secretary-General of ECCAS; Mr Thomas Kwesi Quartey of Ghana, currently Secretary to the President and a former Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, as well as Ambassador to Ethiopia and the Permanent Representative to the AU and UNECA; and Mr Abdulhakim Rajab Elwaer of Libya, currently Director of Human Resources, Science and Technology at the AUC.

For the eight Commissioner posts, 41 candidates have been put forward with four of the commissioners, for Peace and Security, Social Affairs, Trade and Industry, and Economic Affairs, running for re-election. The present commissioners for Political Affairs, Infrastructure and Energy, Rural Economy and Agriculture, Human Resources, and Science and Technology are not seeking re-election. The regional distribution of candidates is relatively balanced with twelve from South Africa, eleven from Central Africa, ten from West Africa, nine from North Africa and eight from East Africa. The candidates for Peace and Security Commissioner, usually regarded as the most important of the commission's posts are: Mr Smail Chergui of Algeria, the current Commissioner; Ms Ephiphanie Kabushemeye of Burundi, former Ambassador to the AU and currently AMISOM's civilian Chief of Staff; Mr Geoffrey L. Mvula and Ms Rose Tujilane Chizumila, both of Malawi; Ms Fatima Kyari Mohammed of Nigeria, Special Adviser to the ECOWAS Commission; and Ms Diye Ba of Mauritania, a former Minister.

The new Chairperson of the Commission will have the task of working to implement the first ten-year plan of Agenda 2063, maintaining the continental momentum of growth and ensuring broad-based and pro-poor development; silencing the guns by 2020; accelerating continental integration; uniting the continent to speak with one voice at the global level particularly in issues of climate change; building the Commission and other institutions of the Union into satisfactory bodies for the 21st century; and ensuring predictable and sustainable funding for the Union. It requires "dedicated, innovative and strong leadership with a pan-African vision."

Kenya's State House said President Kenyatta's active support for Ambassador Mohammed's candidacy for Chairperson of the AU Commission was "part of President Uhuru Kenyatta's commitment to ensuring African institutions have robust leadership that delivers on the continent's agenda, including the ambitious Agenda 2063." State House said on Sunday that "Kenya remains encouraged by progress made in the campaigns. Ambassador Mohammed has acquired endorsements from two Regional Economic Communities, the East African Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; IGAD is expected to follow suit shortly. Kenya's State House says Kenya sought "an African consensus on Mohamed's candidacy. That can only be achieved if the President reaches out to all the continent's leaders, which is what he is doing.

In her campaign statement released in mid-November, Ambassador Mohammed said "I am an African with impeccable pan-African credentials. I bring on board competencies and experience that shall make it possible to secure the vision of Agenda 2063." Her statement said, "Every African citizen deserves a life of dignity free from harm in order to promote social justice and the realization of their potential. I am optimistic that together we can continue to create a continent that not only embodies our pride and dignity, but also is a hub for peace and stability." Ambassador Mohammed said her 30 years' experience in diplomacy gave her the edge in leading the African Union to push the continental agenda in the global arena. She said "I have shown my mettle during the most difficult times for the continent. My independent international credibility

and professionalism have been tried and tested." She would, therefore be able to leverage on her rich experience and contacts across the globe and she would not hesitate "to advocate a stronger and respected African voice in the international arena". She said she would focus [on] intra-Africa trade, unleashing the potential of African women and youth and social investment and inclusive growth. Her priorities also included peace and security, predictable and adequate financing as well as establishing an enhanced consultative forum.