

News in Brief

The IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative Summit in Kampala

IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process resumes in Addis Ababa

Meeting of Senior Officials of the Ethio-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission

Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister attends a Global Partnership for Education

Egypt's Foreign Ministry perspectives on GERD are full of distortions

Why women are needed in diplomacy

Ethiopia admitted as a candidate for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

News in Brief

African Union

This week the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) Summit was held in Kampala on Thursday (March 27). The Summit was preceded by a meeting of its Steering Committee, an IDDRSI Partnerships and Implementation Forum and an IDDRSI Ministerial meeting. (**See article**)

Members of the AU Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, appointed on March 7 by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Dlamini Zuma, have been sworn in. The Commission is chaired by former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo, will investigate human rights violations and other abuses committed in South Sudan. It submits its report to the AU Peace and Security Council within three months.

Ethiopia

President Mulatu Teshome and Health Minister Kesetebirhan Admasu attended the inaugural ceremony to open the Overseas Infrastructure Alliance Eye Care Facility at the Zewditu Memorial Hospital which was inaugurated on Saturday (March 22). The facility was built and all equipment was provided by the Overseas Infrastructure Alliance of India.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in talks with Mauritanian Environment Minister, Amedi Camara, on Wednesday (March 26) announced Ethiopia's support for the Pan-African Agency of the Great Green Wall of the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative aimed to prevent desertification and drought and mitigate the social, economic and environmental impact of land degradation and in the Sahel and the Sahara.

Prime Minister Hailemariam met with Nihal Deng Nihal, chief negotiator of the Government of South Sudan on Tuesday (March 25). The Prime Minister urged the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A-in-Opposition to observe the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and resolve their political problems through round table dialogue.

Prime Minister Hailemariam inaugurated the Castel Winery, located on the outskirts of Zeway, in Oromia Regional State, on Saturday (March 22). The Winery will produce 1.1 million bottles

of wine per year of which 50% will be exported to China, America, German, Italy, France and neighboring African countries.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, on an official visit to the UK, attended a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) event on Thursday (March 27) in London. **(See article)**

Dr. Tedros Adhanom held talks on Thursday (March 27) with Mrs. Karen Hanrahan, Deputy Assistance Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of U.S State Department and Ambassador Patricia Haslach, US Ambassador to Ethiopia on regional and global affairs of common concern to consolidate the Ethiopia-US partnership in areas including trade, investment, democratization, good governance and human rights through dialogue and discussion.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros met and held discussions with Dr Allan Pamba, Vice President and the Director of the East African Region of GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), which is preparing to invest in Ethiopia.

Germany's Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, visited Addis Ababa on Monday (March 24) at the start of a three-nation African tour which included Tanzania and Angola. In talks with Dr. Tedros, the two ministers discussed bilateral and international issues, including South Sudan, Somalia and the issue of the Nile.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros received UN Special Representative to Somalia, Nicholas Kay on Monday (March 24) for discussions focused on current political and military developments in Somalia. Mr. Kay welcomed the presence of the Ethiopian troops who recently joined AMISOM and their contributions to the recent military victories in AMISOM sectors three and four.

Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom held discussions with an EU parliamentary delegation led by Mr. Arnaud Danjean, Member of the European Parliament and Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Security and Defense on Wednesday (March 26).

Senior Officials of the Ethio-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission held their 4th meeting on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (March 25 and 26) in Addis Ababa, to review and evaluate areas of mutual cooperation, strengthen existing relations, and prepare the ground for the next Joint Ministerial Meeting. **(See article)**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs marked International Women's Day on Monday (March 24) in collaboration with the Embassies of Australia and the US, under the theme: "Why we need women in diplomacy". A workshop, aimed to encourage more Ethiopian young women to become diplomats was attended by Ethiopian diplomats as well as foreign Ambassadors and diplomats. **(See article)**

The World Bank granted Ethiopia a US\$205 million grant (March 20) to support efforts to expand and extend better access to clean drinking water as well as enhance sanitation services for rural and urban poor. The funds will be allocated to assist the Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Project which supports Ethiopia's Wash National Program (EWNP) in these areas.

The 16th Annual L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards were held at the Sorbonne in Paris last week (March 19). Prize winners included Ethiopia's Dr. Segenet Kelemu, Director General of the International Center for Insect Physiology and Ecology in Nairobi, who was honored for her research on how microorganisms living in symbiosis with forage grasses can improve their capacity to resist disease and adapt to environmental and climate change.

Djibouti

Mr. Nicholas Kay, United Nations Special Envoy to Somalia, paid tribute on Sunday (March 23) to Djiboutian soldiers killed in an Al-Shabaab suicide car bomb attack in Buulo Burte last week. In talks with President Ismail Omar Guelleh, he welcomed Djibouti's support for peace and security. The President said Djibouti would continue to assist the Somali National Army under the auspices of AMISOM.

Qatar Airways announced on Sunday (March 23) that it would be launching flights to Djibouti later this year; a three times a week service from the airline's Doha hub to Djibouti will begin on July 27. Qatar Airways launched a three times a week direct service to Ethiopia last September.

Kenya

The US Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Robert Godec, said on Tuesday (March 25) that following a request by President Kenyatta, the US Government would assist Kenya in securing its border with Somalia. He noted the US Federal Bureau of Investigation was already assisting Kenyan intelligence agencies to investigate terrorism cases.

Twenty-five United Nations agencies in Kenya have agreed on a co-ordination framework to implement various projects worth 225 billion shillings (US\$2.6 billion) over the next four years. Under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the agencies will help improve efficiency and reduce costs in advocacy, capacity development, policy advice and other programs designed to Kenya's Vision 2030 development agenda.

Financial agreements for over US\$870m have been signed for the Lake Turkana Wind Power Project intended to add 300MW of reliable, low cost wind energy to the national grid of Kenya. LTWP comprises a group of investors and lenders and the funding is coming from a syndicate of banks led by the African Development Bank.

On Tuesday (March 25), Kenya ordered all Somali refugees living in urban areas to return to the refugee camps in Dadaab and Kakuma with immediate effect. Interior Minister, Joseph Ole Lenku said "emerging security challenges" were the reason.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and an official delegation arrived in Kuwait on Monday (March 24) to attend the Arab League Summit which opened on Tuesday. The President said he would be holding a series of bilateral meetings with Arab leaders during the Summit.

Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed returned to Mogadishu at the weekend, after a three day visit to Switzerland in which he addressed the International Labour Organization, ratified three ILO conventions and agreed to Somalia's involvement in ILO's Decent Work Program.

Somali's Cabinet on Monday approved a \$218 million budget for the 2014-15 period. The approval followed a debate on the inputs into the fiscal plan led by the country's director of budgets in the Finance ministry, Mr. Ahmed Abdi Aden. The spending plan will now be scrutinized by the country's parliament. Constitutionally, they have the right to alter or amend it.

Somali National Army and Ethiopian troops of AMISOM forces captured the strategic town of Eel Buur town in Galgadud region in central Somalia, 320km north of Mogadishu from Al-Shabaab on Wednesday (March 26) after a three day operation which also involved taking a number of other towns as the forces advanced from Dhusa Mareeb.

In a joint operation on Saturday morning (March 22), Somali National Army and AMISOM forces surprised and overran Al-Shabaab outposts around Qoryooley in Lower Shabelle region. Qoryooley, 120 kms southwest of Mogadishu, had been controlled by Al-Shabaab for five years.

The Somali Minister of Defense, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan Hamud, said the arms embargo, continuing conflict, lack of funds and difficulties in receiving financial and technical support caused problems for rebuilding the Somali National Army which currently had about 20,000 registered soldiers including recently enlisted recruits.

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Somalia, Ambassador Wondimu Asamnew, said this week that the security situation in Somalia had improved significantly since Ethiopian troops joined AMISOM in January. He said Ethiopia and Somalia had established a relationship based on confidence and mutual trust and signing cooperation agreements covering military, police, security, civil aviation and information and communication sectors in the last two months.

South Sudan

The Second Session of Phase II of the South Sudan Peace Process resumed on Tuesday (March 25) following the arrival of the representatives of all the Parties in Addis Ababa. The first session adjourned on 3 March. With the resumption of the talks, IGAD Special Envoys are in consultation with the Parties for political dialogue towards national reconciliation. **(See article)**

According to the state-owned *SSTV*, the South Sudanese Government on Sunday (March 23) signed a bi-lateral military cooperation with Egypt less than a week after it reached a consensus on a similar matter with neighboring Sudan. Reports suggest the deal provides for cooperation on sharing expertise, training special forces, joint exercises, and search and rescues issues.

The UNHCR estimates that an average of 1,000 refugees are arriving in the Gambella Regional State from South Sudan every week. So far 69,456 have arrived. The UNHCR and the World Food Program have appealed for US \$371 million to provide urgently needed support for South Sudan refugees crossing into neighboring countries. The UNHCR expects the number across the region to reach 340,000 by the end of the year.

Sudan

President Omer Al-Bashir laid out guidelines of a reform plan before the Sudan cabinet in a session on Sunday (March 23) and directed ministers to fight corruption and uphold the principle of accountability. He announced the formation of a higher committee comprised of five sub-committees to implement articles of the reform plan.

On Tuesday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), called urgently for funding for the humanitarian crisis in Sudan, where it says 6.1 million people currently need assistance, a 40 per cent increase over last year. So far this year only 3% of the \$995 million requested for humanitarian activities in Sudan has been received.

The IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative Summit in Kampala

The Second Summit of the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) was held in Kampala on Thursday this week (March 27) with leaders reaffirming the region's commitment to provide a sustainable response to the phenomenon of droughts degenerating into emergencies and mitigate the effects of drought on the region. The Initiative was launched at the First IDDRSI Summit in Nairobi in 2010 in response to the devastating drought that year in Northern Kenya, Somalia and Djibouti which affected over 13 million people and decimated the livestock population. According to IGAD Executive Secretary, Ambassador Maalim, close to 70% of the IGAD region is either arid or semi-arid, with an estimated 76 million people routinely affected by intermittent drought.

The Summit was attended by Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Chairperson of IGAD; President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda; Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed of Somalia; Vice-President Hassabo Mohamed Abdelrahman of Sudan; Ms. Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary in charge of Foreign Affairs of Kenya; Mohamed Ahmed Awaleh, Minister of Agriculture of Djibouti; and Kwong Danhier Gatluak, Minister of Transport and Envoy of South Sudan, as well as IGAD's Executive Secretary, Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, and representatives of IGAD; development partners, including the IGAD Partners Forum, the Global Alliance, the World Bank Group, and the African Development Bank.

At the opening session, Ambassador Maalim thanked President Museveni and Uganda for hosting the Summit and supporting the Second IDDRSI Steering Committee Meeting and the Drought Resilience Ministerial General Assembly earlier in the week. He said peace and security were priorities for IGAD region but now it was also necessary for the development agenda to top IGAD's agenda. The IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative is expected to be implemented over the next 15 years and, according to Ambassador Maalim, seeks to make "droughts as normal as winters are to Europe and North America.

President Museveni underlined that things now needed to be done differently as droughts have been increasing in frequency and severity. He noted that his country was also affected by the phenomenon and his government was working towards drought resilience. He called for a

concerted and regional effort and a robust response to mitigate the effects of drought through a holistic approach tailored to improving the lives of ordinary people. Calling the decimation of the ice caps on Mt. Rwenzori as “a harbinger of an environmental catastrophe”, and highlighting the dangers a receding water catchment area posed to the region, he said “we should find ways of reclaiming forests, wetlands and swamps from encroachers even if it means setting up a forest to buy these people out.” He emphasized the importance of industrialization, noting that desertification in the region was mainly due to “expansion of primitive agriculture, reliance on fossil fuel and encroachment on wetlands, swamps and forests.”

Somali Prime Minister Abdiweli told the Summit that there were now five times more people living in the drought-prone pastoral areas than there were 60 years ago. He said “we must focus on early warning and preparedness in drought prone communities and a quick response when drought hits, moving quickly and strongly. Our region will always be hit by drought and we have to be prepared and responsive. We have to work and craft long term solutions to continue to mitigate through safety nets and by building resilience.” He added that “as a region we must harmonize our approach on cross border issues including refugees, trade and strengthening peace and security; we must build regional infrastructure for greater regional integration and find regional solutions to reduce our reliance on aid. We must move forward to a sustainable solution to drought and all of us must work harder and smarter together to sustainably save lives in our drought prone region.”

The Summit was preceded by a two day meeting of the IDDRSI Steering Committee meeting, chaired by Ambassador Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD who noted that it was special as it was laying the ground for the Ministerial level meeting to be followed by the Summit. These Summits, he said “will give us the infused energy to move forward.” The IDDRSI General Assembly and Ministerial meeting was attended by ministers from the member states as well as representatives of other organizations. The Ambassador of Italy to Uganda, as Co-Chair of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), Dr. Chiji Ojukwu representing the African Development Bank, and Hillary Onek, Uganda’s Minister of Disaster Preparedness all spoke. Other speakers included Mrs. Mulu Haile, Head of the IGAD Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Forum, and Mrs. Olive Kigongo President of IGAD Business Forum and Uganda National Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Ambassador Maalim told the session that drought was not a phenomenon specific to the IGAD region. “Other parts of the world were and are still affected by droughts. But resilience to drought disasters mechanisms have been put in place so they do not affect populations, livestock, and agriculture the same way droughts have impacted our region.” He called on the regional governments to invest more in drought resilience. A Memorandum of Understanding between IGAD and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was signed during the Assembly.

IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process resumes in Addis Ababa

The next phase of the peace negotiations between the South Sudan’s conflicting parties, the South Sudan Government and the SPLM/A-in-Opposition opened on Tuesday (March 25), in Addis Ababa. The focus of the talks is aimed at ending the ongoing tragic conflict and finding a

lasting political solution to the crisis through a holistic, comprehensive and inclusive political dialogue towards national reconciliation and healing.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn held talks on Tuesday with Nihal Deng Nihal, chief negotiator of the Government of South Sudan, and underlined the need for sustained dialogue and discussion to find a lasting political solution to resolve the crisis and work for the well being of all the people of South Sudan. He urged that the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A-in-Opposition to respect, observe and implement the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in order to reach peace and stability in the country. He also stressed that the continuing violence in South Sudan should come to an end without any conditionalities imposed by either side, Nihal Deng Nihal said that the South Sudan Government welcomed Ethiopia's firm determination and its boundless assistance to South Sudan to resolve the crisis, adding that Ethiopia's support for the resolution of the conflict should continue to be applied through the continuing IGAD-led mediation efforts.

Michael Makuei Lueth, Spokesperson for the South Sudan's Government delegation stated on Tuesday in Addis Ababa that the Government's position in the ongoing peace negotiations with opposition forces "remains unchanged". He said the delegation of the Government had not changed its position to permit the participation of the seven former detainees in the talks as a third party. He said reports claiming the Government's had abandoned its stance to allow the seven former detainees to participate were "lies". He stressed the stance on the seven former detainees "has not changed and it will never change until a solution is found." He also emphasized, however, that the Government was ready to contemplate the involvement of other groups in national dialogue in South Sudan after the conclusion of negotiations between the South Sudan Government and the SPLM/A-in-Opposition.

The same day (Tuesday, March 25), the IGAD Special Envoys held discussions with the Parties on how to conduct a political dialogue that could lead to national reconciliation and healing. The IGAD Special Envoys also held consultations with regional leaders, the African Union, the United Nations and international partners of South Sudan to speed up operationalization of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) and deployment of Monitoring and Verification Teams (MVTs) as well as the MVM's Protection and Deterrent Force (PDF) in accordance with the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of January 23 and the Implementation Modalities that were signed by both Parties.

The IGAD Special Envoys expressed their grave concern on the continuing violence in South Sudan and the 'flagrant' violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. They urged yet again that all signatory Parties should fully respect the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, and suggested that the warring Parties should work jointly and cooperate with the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) for the prompt operationalization of the MVM. They also called for the international community to put pressure on all conflicting Parties to disengage themselves from ongoing conflict in South Sudan. The Envoys also underscored the need for unconstrained access by humanitarian services to people affected by the continuing fighting. They called on all warring Parties to comply with their commitment in supporting relief services to the civilian population.

UN relief officials have also called on international partners to provide humanitarian services urgently to victims and civilians in need of humanitarian assistance in the ongoing fighting between the warring Parties. John Ging, Operations Director of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), indicated this week that the humanitarian situation in South Sudan was “imploding” as fighting between the conflicting Parties had continued. He said the crisis had left nearly 5 million people needing prompt humanitarian assistance with some 3.7 million at high risk of food insecurity. He said what he called the “senseless carnage” had internally displaced at least 700,000 people, of which 67,000 had been forced to take refuge in UN peacekeeping bases. A quarter of a million people had fled to neighboring countries, he said. He pointed out that one of the major impediments in South Sudan humanitarian service delivery was the lack of respect for UN staff and for its convoys, facilities and supplies. He said there must be an enabling environment for humanitarian agencies and UN relief staff to deliver humanitarian services. This was necessary to save the lives of many in South Sudan. He also noted that another potentially serious problem was inadequate funding for relief and humanitarian efforts.

On March 7, the AU Peace and Security Council agreed on the establishment of a Commission of Enquiry into human rights abuses in South Sudan. On Wednesday (March 26), the members of the Commission were sworn in. The Commission is led by former Nigerian President, Ousegon Obasanjo, and the other members of the Commission are Professor Mahmood Mamdani, Ms. Bineta Diop, Professor Pacifique Manirakiza, and Sophia A.B. Akuffo, President of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Dr. Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union, noted that the Commission was delighted with the immense experience and expertise of members of the Commission of Inquiry in the areas of human rights, international law, justice, gender and politics. She described them as “equal to the task”. Chairman Obasanjo emphasized that the activities of the Commission would realize the continent’s capability to manage its challenges and find its own remedies. He stressed that those responsible for violations in the ongoing fighting in South Sudan “must not get away with impunity”. He said “I want to assure everyone that there will be no stone unturned to ensure that...we are able to ascertain who is responsible.” He also expressed his hope that the Commission would create an enabling and conducive environment for peace building, national reconciliation and healing inside South Sudan; and that the work of the Commission would also contribute to the creation of a united, progressive and prosperous country.

Meeting of Senior Officials of the Ethio-South Africa Joint Ministerial Commission

The 4th Ethio-South Africa meeting of Senior Officials of the Joint Ministerial Commission was held in Addis Abeba on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (March 25-26). The meeting was Co-chaired by Ambassador Solomon Abebe, Director-General for African Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Ms. Tselane Mokuena, Chief Director for East Africa in the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. The respective delegations included representatives from various Ministries and Institutions in both countries. The meeting conducted an assessment of the status of the implementation of the decisions of the meeting of the Ministerial Commission and of Senior Officials. It also

considered the state of bilateral relations between the two countries as the two sides prepare for the upcoming Joint Ministerial Commission meeting to take place in the second half of 2014.

The co-chairs, in their opening remarks, set the tone and course for the meeting. They agreed that relations between the two countries were good. They mentioned the strong political will on both sides to enhance relations at various levels and in various sectors. They highlighted the point that the two countries ought to approach their stated goals as partners united by a set of common goals that seek to improve the lives of their respective peoples, the regions within which they are located and the Continent at large as laid down by the principles contained in the African Union's agenda 2063.

During the talks, the two parties discussed a comprehensive series of bilateral matters covering legal, immigration and security as well as transport, trade, investment, energy, agriculture, minerals, water, information and communication technologies, tourism, education, health, art and culture, public services, industry, science and technology, tourism, capacity building and education. While both parties expressed their satisfaction at the prevailing warm relations between the two sides at the political level, they underscored the importance of improving commercial interaction between the two countries by opening market access and reciprocal promotion of investment opportunities to each other's business sectors.

Ambassador Solomon noted that cooperation on trade and investment between the two countries remained low even though the potential for economic cooperation was significant. He said the level of economic cooperation was not yet commensurate with the close political cooperation of the two countries, and called for more effort to translate the cooperation framework already in place between the two countries into effective results. Ambassador Solomon said that the two sides should work towards encouraging businesses in their respective countries to collaborate and cooperate on trade and investment areas in order to bring Ethio-South Africa economic relations to the level of their political cooperation. Tselane Mokuena said that the Joint Meeting presented an opportunity for both countries "to stand together as partners as we traverse the route to development and prosperity in Africa."

After lengthy discussions, the two sides agreed to redouble their efforts in expediting implementation of the signed agreements and the finalization of the draft agreements exchanged between them in order to further enhance cooperation in the areas noted. They also exchanged views on the latest developments in their respective regions, the latest developments in the regional organizations, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development and the Southern African Development Corporation. At the conclusion of the meeting both sides agreed to work together towards developing action plans for the signed agreements. They also signed the Agreed Minutes of the meeting.

Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister attends a Global Partnership for Education

Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, attended a Global Partnership for Education (GPE) event on Thursday (March 27) in London. The event, hosted by the UK All

Party Parliamentary Group on Global Education for All, was held under the title of "Fund the Future: Tackling the crisis in financing education for all," in collaboration with the Global Partnership for Education, a working partnership of governments, civil society, international organizations, teachers and the private sector. Ethiopia is taking part in the Forum in its capacity as a member of the Global Champions Group for Education.

Ethiopia joined the Global Champions Group for Education as a result of the high priority it has given to education, following adoption of an inclusive practical strategy. This ensures access to education and has put in place a mechanism that guarantees equity, fairness and quality. Since its establishment in 2002, the GPE has grown from seven developing country partners to 59. Ethiopia mapped out its education sector plan, starting with the Education and Training Policy in 1994 and this evolved through a series of four comprehensive Education Sector Development Programs, of which the latest, ESDP 4, is currently being implemented. By investing increasing resources, Ethiopia has succeeded in raising the number of schools from about 11,000 to over 36,000, the number of classrooms from about 72,000 to 400,000 and teachers to over 412,000 from just 10,5000. The system is now highly focused on science and technology, research and employability to speed up the national development drive detailed in the Five-year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP).

The Deputy Prime Minister, who is on an official visit to the UK, said that Ethiopia's impressive performance in education was the result of building on sustained economic growth along with a strong commitment to alleviating poverty and substantial investment in the country's education system. He underlined that allocation of more resources to the sector had produced impressive results. The primary net enrolment has more than doubled in the last decade, from just 40 per cent in 2000-2001 to 86 per cent last year. During the same period the gross enrolment rate for primary grades 1-8 grew to 95.4 per cent from about 57.4 per cent. Ethiopia, he said, was on the right track to achieving universal primary education but there were still outstanding challenges in addressing disparity in access, low learning outcomes and high repetition and dropout rates. Quality improvement programs were paying dividends but again much still needed to be done. Ethiopia dedicates over 25.3 per cent of its annual spending to education, ranking it among the few countries in the world dedicating at least 6% of GNP to education. The student population in Ethiopia stands at about 22 million, which is close to a quarter of the whole populace. Deputy Prime Minister Demeke expressed gratitude to GPE for its generous support to Ethiopia, including US\$168 million for the Quality Improvement Program phase 1, and a pledge of US\$100 million for phase 2.

The Global Partnership among other things provides funding and coordinated technical assistance for developing high-quality national education plans, strengthening capacity by training and certifying teachers and administrators, building more schools and better classrooms in addition to the distribution of text books, teaching materials and school supplies. Ato Demeke noted that Ethiopia's huge effort in developing its education system over the past two decades would not have been possible without the strong and consistent support of development partners, including GPE, the World Bank, DFID, USAID, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands and JICA. DFID has been a consistent source of support and encouragement for government efforts across a number of sectors, and with £110 million it was the second biggest contributor to the Quality Improvement Program phase 1, and was making an even greater commitment of £120 million to

phase two. DFID has also committed £460 million for the Provision of Basic Services, on top of allocating resources for similar projects. Its annual support for the education sector alone amounts to around £65 million.

Speaking at the event, MP Mark Williams said there has been progress on education but “we are not on track” as millions of children around the world remain out of school. Globally, donor aid for education was declining just when it was urgently needed, he said. UK leadership on education aid was welcome and crucial and he highlighted the importance of the GPE replenishment conference in June. Mr. Williams described Ethiopia’s commitment to a transformational education system as “exemplary”. The House of Lords Spokesperson for DfID, Baroness Northover, emphasized the UK’s leading role in bilateral aid to education, and as a major donor to the Global Partnership for Education. She also referred to the synergy between DFID’s priorities and those of the GPE, including education in conflict and emergencies, girls’ education and quality of learning. She urged all partners, both donors and developing countries, to make ambitious commitments. Panelists at the event commended the commitment of the Ethiopian Government to mobilizing domestic resources for the expansion and quality improvement of education and urged other developing countries to follow Ethiopia in employing education as a tool for economic prosperity and the enhancement of democratic institutions.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke also held consultations with the DFID Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Lynn Featherstone, on bilateral issues and briefed her development regarding expansion of education and the quality improvement made with the support and partnership of the UK Government and the GPE. They discussed community development programs, respect for human rights and peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. Deliberations also focused on education for girls in vulnerable communities, persons with disabilities and issues related to improved learning outcomes and result-based programs. The Deputy Premier detailed the revised national strategy to address students’ special needs, reinforcing the inclusive educational approach, and the use of diverse, appropriate technology. He said seven universities had been picked to train teachers for special education. Thanking the UK for its consistent support, he also noted that there would be further progress in accessibility of education at all levels, with accompanying quality improvement. This would help achieve economic prosperity by beating poverty and building a peaceful, democratic and viable nation.

On Tuesday (March 25), the Deputy Prime Minister met the CEO of the Global Partnership for Education, Ms Alice Albright, and discussed the gains made in Ethiopia’s education sector on the basis of pro-poor and participatory government policies, paving the way for community ownership of all projects. The Ethiopian Government, he said, had placed education at the centre of all development endeavors, in alignment with the national economic growth trajectory. He also underlined the significant progress made in the enrolment of girls, which now stands at a ratio of 0.95 as Ethiopia makes headway in achieving the MDGs. Ms. Albright expressed her appreciation of Ethiopia’s achievements in the sector, describing them as “impressive and a role model for success in education”.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry perspectives on GERD are full of distortions

Egypt's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a long statement on Monday last week (March 17) regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). From the Spokesperson office of the Ministry, and entitled "Egypt's Perspective towards the Ethiopian Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam", it contains a surprising number of factual inaccuracies and distortions which need correction, not least in order to underline the central fact that Ethiopia's interest in developing the GERD arises from its legitimate interest to develop the Nile Waters to which it contributes more than 86%, in accordance with the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization,

The statement opens with a factual inaccuracy relating to what it claims is Ethiopia's view of the impact of the GERD on downstream countries. It says: "Ethiopian officials claimed at the beginning that the downstream countries (Egypt and Sudan) would not be harmed and in fact would benefit from project. However these statements were then changed gradually to reflect the recognition of the GOE that the dam would have impacts on the downstream countries, but those impacts would be mitigated through water saving projects in South Sudan." This is simply untrue. Ethiopia's position towards the GERD has been entirely consistent during the three years during which construction has been going on. Launching the construction of the GERD, then called the Millennium Dam, the late Prime Minister Meles made an historical speech summing up the position of Ethiopia regarding the Dam and its benefits. Detailing the multifaceted benefits of the GERD he said: "Equally, the benefits that will accrue from the Dam will by no means be restricted to Ethiopia. They will clearly extend to all neighboring states, and particularly to the downstream Nile basin countries, to Sudan and Egypt." He added that the Dam would greatly reduce the problems of silt and sediment that has consistently affected dams in Egypt and Sudan. Indeed, this has been a particularly acute problem at Sudan's Rosseiries dam which experienced a significant reduction in output as a result. Meles said "When the Millennium Dam becomes operational, communities all along the riverbanks and surrounding areas, particularly in Sudan, will be permanently relieved from centuries of flooding. These countries will have the opportunity to obtain increased power supplies at competitive prices. The Millennium Dam will increase the amount of water resources available, reducing wastage from evaporation which has been a serious problem in these countries. It will in fact ensure a steady year-round flow of the Nile."

This is exactly what Ethiopia has continued to point out. Ethiopia's position remains quite clear and unchanged as far as utilization of the Nile waters is concerned. Ethiopia's stand is embodied in the Comprehensive Framework Agreement which enshrines the concept of equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile waters. Nor has Ethiopia ever suggested, for example, that the water passing through South Sudan should be used to supplement a decline in water volume reaching Egypt from Ethiopia. It is not something that would ever be favored by Ethiopia.

The Egyptian statement, though it duly acknowledges the establishment of the International Panel of Experts and its composition, is wrong in its explanation of the Panel's mandate. In the first place the Panel was established to build confidence among the downstream countries, to ensure transparent sharing of information, investigate the benefits of the Dam and the impact on downstream if any, and make recommendations for future consideration by reviewing the design documents. Given this wide mandate, portraying the Panel as no more than a mechanism

launched solely to review the impact of the Dam is hardly accurate. The Egyptian statement deliberately omits an important element of the agreement establishing the Internal Panel of Experts, that the study should be conducted while the construction continued. It also ignores the fact that the Panel outlined the benefits accruing from the Dam, benefits that were consonant with Ethiopia's own studies.

Its account of the impasse reached in the meetings is also highly misleading. Egypt's suggestion was to create a new Panel of Experts, parallel to that already agreed upon, that is a second panel of experts to review the report of the first panel for the ministers. This was seen by both the Sudan and Ethiopia as unreasonable and unnecessary. Over and above this was the additional outrageous Egyptian demand that the opinions of new panel of international experts should be binding as if it was an arbitrary tribunal. This was totally unacceptable and Ethiopia, of course, rejected it and continues to do so. The Egyptian suggestion for "Principles of Confidence Building" was totally out of agenda in a meeting to discuss the Panel's recommendations, and the "principles" which involved requesting Ethiopia to accept Egypt's claims for water security, were rejected by Ethiopia – and strongly criticized by the Sudan.

The statement, apparently deliberately, falsifies the findings of the International Panel of Experts. In the first place, the allegation that Ethiopia denied documents to the Panel members is untrue and the Panel nowhere suggests this occurred. Nor is it true that Ethiopia deliberately delayed the completion of design documents until after the launch of the Panel's report. This claim shows complete ignorance of the process involved. The nature of the Engineering Procurement and Construction contract makes preparation of the design documents a phase-by-phase undertaking. Ethiopia, as indeed the Panel recommended, has finalized the updating of the design documents from level one to level two as the project progressed and in line with the EPC contract. In any case, this had no relevance to the Panel's studies of the design documents and had no effect on the discharge of its mandate. Indeed, the Panel's report unequivocally confirmed that the design of the GERD fulfilled international standards on dams.

The comment that the Panel's findings suggested that the Hydrological and Reservoir Simulation Study showed "detrimental impacts on Egypt's water demand and High Aswan Dam Hydropower generation" is a serious distortion. In fact, the study is praised by the Panel for meeting international standards and the Panel had no issue with its findings. The reason the Panel recommended a further simulation study was in order for the three parties to conduct a study with a simulation model that all three parties agreed on. The socio-economic study was also recommended in order to add further primary data collected from Egypt and Sudan.

The Egyptian Ministry complains that the Water Ministers' meeting to consider the recommendations of the Panel was delayed and regrets continuation of the construction of the dam during this. In fact, according the report itself, the Panel's recommendations were to be implemented while the construction of the dam continued. As regard, complaint over delays in the Water Ministers' meeting, this had nothing to do with Ethiopia. Following the June 18 visit of the then Foreign Minister of Egypt, Mohamed Kemal Amr, to Addis Ababa it was agreed to hold a meeting of the Water Ministers of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan to discuss ways to implement the recommendations of the Panel as soon as possible. It was at that point that President Morsi was removed and Egypt fell into political turmoil, and presumably as a result

there was no response to the invitation, sent on July 26, for a meeting on August 6. A second invitation was sent on August 26. Egypt finally responded to agree to a meeting for October 20. This, however, did not materialize due to the unfortunate flooding in Khartoum. It was not until November that the first session of the Water Ministers' meeting eventually took place. The delays were nothing to do with Ethiopia.

The Egyptian statement then goes on to accuse Ethiopia of breaching the 1902 Agreement between Britain, made on behalf of its colony (Sudan), and the Emperor Minelik, the then ruler of Ethiopia. This is an assertion made in complete disregard of the nature and content of the agreement. It is actually a border agreement with one single provision with regard to the Nile, and it merely commits Ethiopia not to "arrest the flow" of the Nile. This does not, of course, commit Ethiopia, as a riparian state, in any way from using the Nile water. Even if this agreement can be regarded as still valid in any way, a highly dubious contention, its relevance to GERD, as a hydropower dam which does not arrest the flow of the river, is hard to justify. Equally, as the agreement was a bilateral treaty between Ethiopia and Sudan to which Egypt was not a party, Egypt cannot invoke it against Ethiopia. Egypt here displays its usual glaring and deliberate distortion of fact, ignoring elementary rules on the international law of treaties. Moreover, the Geneva Convention on the Law of treaties (1969) applies only to treaties concluded after the coming into force of the Convention, not to treaties, even if relevant, concluded over a hundred years ago. Curiously enough, the Egyptian statement makes no reference to either the 1929 nor the 1959 Egypt/Sudan agreements, to neither of which was Ethiopia a party, and which equally therefore can have no relevance.

The Egyptian statement does invoke the 1993 memorandum of understanding signed between the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and former President of Egypt, Hosni Mubarek, noting that this commits both parties "to engage in any activity related to the Nile waters that may cause harm to the interests of the other party." This, of course, is only a framework memorandum that cannot be invoked by either side against the other. Equally, if it applies, it applies to both sides. More importantly, given the fact that the GERD does not and will not cause any appreciable harm to downstream countries, the suggestion that it is in breach of the memorandum of understanding is no more than an attempted public relations exercise.

This statement from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry suffers from substantial misrepresentation and from a series of totally wrong assumptions about the GERD. The development of the GERD can only be understood from the basis that it is firmly grounded on the principle of equitable utilization of the Nile waters. It is regrettable that the Egyptian Spokesperson's Office should issue such a distorted statement about the GERD and the International Panel of Experts and its findings. Ethiopia has been consistent and will remain committed to dialogue and cooperation, and in its desire for a win-win agreement which will fulfill Ethiopia's developmental needs, the interest of the Sudan and the concerns of Egypt, as well as provide for the agreed development of the Nile Basin under the Comprehensive Framework Agreement.

To conclude: one point has to be made absolutely clear, namely that the Tripartite Ministerial Talks on GERD talks can continue only within the framework of the final report of the International Panel of Experts (IoPE), the implementation of which is, and always has been, the sole subject of

the talks. As such, extraneous and irrelevant tissues have no place in the talks, however much the Egyptian Government might try otherwise to gain points with the Egyptian public.

Why women are needed in diplomacy

In connection with the celebration of International Women's Day, marked this year with the theme: "equality for women is progress for all", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Australian and US embassies organized a career fair on the subject of "Why we need women in diplomacy." The event was intended to encourage more young women to become diplomats. It was attended by Ethiopian diplomats as well as representatives of the diplomatic community and university students. The guest of honor, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, noted that in the old days only very few women had the chance to join the Foreign Service because of stereotypes of the time. Today the number of female diplomats had increased but there was a long way to go in addressing the gender disparity. Ambassador Berhane said "while it is a source of satisfaction to note the progress that we have made, we are cognizant of the fact that we need to do much, much more to redress the injustice against women who constitute half of our society." The State Minister reiterated the Government's commitment to ensure the rights of women, which he added was "critical not only in changing their position but also in ensuring Ethiopia's socio-economic transformation."

In her welcoming speech, Ambassador Dr. Desta W/Yohannes, Director General of Women, Children and Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized the fact that International Women's Day was a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities. She noted that women's equal participation in diplomacy plays a crucial role in the general process of advancement of women in any field. Ambassador Desta said that achieving gender parity in diplomacy would provide "a balance that accurately reflects the composition of society." She said "classifying women as weak, vulnerable and submissive" were old stereotypes; the inclusion of women in senior ambassadorial positions illustrated a progressive, modernized diplomatic society.

The Ambassador of the United States, Patricia Haslach, said educating girls could boost a country's development more than anything else. She recognized the Ethiopian government's commitment to promote gender equality and to improve women's health, legal and socio-economic status. She stressed that women were critical to economic development, an active civil society and good governance as well as foreign policy. Australian Ambassador, Lisa Filipetto, said that in all their diplomatic efforts women had to fight for the protection of the rights of women and children during conflict. It was essential to have women's voices in diplomacy, adding that "as women we can only enjoy our careers if we are helping other women."

The panel discussed such questions as "Can a woman be a foreign minister? Can a woman be an Ambassador? Can women be a diplomat? Can a woman be a diplomat and at the same time have a family?" The responses to all these questions were clearly "yes". Responding to the first point, the presenter, Ms Rosemary Museminali, former Foreign Minister of Rwanda, pointed out that

women have occupied leadership positions in politics in the past, in Ethiopia and in Africa as well as in the rest of the world. Even if diplomacy and politics were perceived to be a world reserved only to men and stereotypes and structural impediments still persisted, women equipped with relevant education and experience could still make a career in diplomacy. The biggest challenge is for a woman to believe in her own capabilities and to be able to beat the odds. In response to whether a woman can be a diplomat, a speaker asserted that being a woman diplomat did not require a person to be extremist but required work in close collaboration with other women as well as men. She noted that it is important to recognize the numerous women who paved the way for the new generation and said working mothers would inspire their children. In the history of US diplomacy, women were not allowed to have a family until 1972, and even today, the panel agreed that being a woman diplomat required juggling professional and private lives. It was, however, perfectly possible. Ms. Letty Chiwara, UNWOMEN Representative to Ethiopia, the AU and UNECA said that diplomats were the best parents, husbands and wives, since being engaged in diplomacy and having a family suggested there are obligations and responsibilities to respect and it provided the opportunity to learn to respect others, to communicate, and to protect interests. All the participants agreed that women in diplomacy brought a different and valuable perspective. They all emphasized the need of support from other women to help the young diplomats and quoted Madeline Albright "there is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women".

Mr. Fekadu Beyene, Director General of the Ethiopian Foreign Service Training Institute, detailed the representation of women in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the Ministry's headquarters, 134 of the 468 professionals (28%) were women, a ratio below the national average, indicating more needed to be done. He said the Ministry was implementing legal as well policy frameworks to enable all departments to include women issues in their planning, execution and evaluation phases. The ministry was also implementing a policy of affirmative action. An increasing number of women were being appointed as Ambassadors and serving the country abroad. The number of directorate positions occupied by women was also increasing. He referred to awards to women who were role models like Ambassador Konjit Sinegiorghis. This, he said, encouraged other women as well as recognizing the recipients' long time achievements and hard work. It was impossible to think of development without empowerment of women.

More generally, the Government has sought to implement gender equality in all its policies, instituting joint planning between individual ministries and the Ministry of Women's, Youth and Children's Affairs. Although there are still areas where concentrated effort is needed, there has been a reduction in gender disparity, especially in education. Ethiopia recorded a near 40% improvement in its gender parity index in primary school enrolment between 1991 and 2010, and is now approaching gender parity at primary school level. At the secondary level, the gender parity index has risen from 0.67 in 2007 to 0.82 in 2010. Other related developments include the sharp drop in maternal mortality from 510 deaths per one hundred thousand live births in 2005 to 350 in 2010, due in part to a concerted effort to make family planning services more widely available. Other gender equality indicators are promising. The percentage of parliamentary seats held by women reached 28% in 2012, up from 8% in 2005. The government has reviewed discriminatory laws and made female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women punishable crimes. Similarly, at the continental level, AU Ministers of gender equality and women's affairs adopted a ministerial declaration that gave support for a stand-alone gender

goal and have advocate for a sixth pillar, with gender-specific priority areas and mainstreamed across all other pillars, to be included in the African Common Position on the post-2015 development agenda.

Ethiopia admitted as a candidate for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative

The International Board of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative at a meeting in Oslo on Wednesday last week (March 19) accepted the application of Ethiopia as a candidate country. Candidature is not a recognition of a country's levels of transparency or accountability and “in accordance with the EITI Standard and associated transitional arrangements, Ethiopia is required to publish its first EITI Report within two years of becoming a Candidate (by 19 March 2016). If the EITI Report is not published by this deadline, Ethiopia will be suspended. Validation will commence within three years of becoming a Candidate, that is by 19 March 2017. In other words, Ethiopia has three years to achieve compliance with the EITI Standard.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is a global initiative launched by former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in 2002. An initiative of governments, companies and civil society aimed to improve transparency and accountability in the extractive sector and strengthen governance, it is the leading global initiative to combat corruption in the energy and mining industries. Under the Initiative, payments made by companies and revenues received by governments are published in independently verified reports. The process is overseen by a working group drawn from government, civil society and companies. Implementation helps countries collect revenues more effectively and supports anti-corruption measures and good governance, allowing people to hold governments accountable in the use of these revenues. This builds a more effective investment climate and encourages more Foreign Direct Investment.

The Chair of the Board, Ms. Clare Short in a statement said: “I am pleased that the Board has decided to accept Ethiopia as an EITI Candidate country. Some opposed this decision, but it should be remembered that becoming a candidate does not mean that any country has met the EITI Standard. In the case of Ethiopia, the decision shows that the Board was convinced by the government’s commitment to the EITI’s principles. Membership of the EITI will mean that all stakeholders, including civil society, will have a better platform to hold the government and the companies to account and ensure the better management of the burgeoning sector.” Tolesa Shagi, Ethiopia’s Minister of Mines, had written to the Board to assure them that “the Ethiopian Government is highly committed to work with Civil Societies to ensure their engagement in the Ethiopian EITI”. EITI rules call for candidate countries to make a commitment to meaningful participation of independent groups in public debate on natural resource management and civil society representatives sit on the national steering committee. Ethiopia's application for membership was accepted because Ethiopia met the criteria for membership, one element of which is that “a member shall commit to meaningful participation for civil society on issues related to natural resources.”EITI's Standard instructs that, “Government must ensure there are no obstacles to civil society and company participation in the process.

The World Bank, which worked closely with the government through an EITI Multi-Donor Trust Fund project that facilitated preparation for EITI candidacy, welcomed the decision. The

Manager of the Gas, Oil, Mining Unit of the Sustainable Energy Department of the World Bank, Paulo de Sa, said that “the World Bank applauds the step Ethiopia has taken to engage on transparency issues.” The focus of preparation was not only on the basics of revenue transparency, but also on capacity building and learning from the experiences of other EITI implementing countries like Liberia and Tanzania. The Government also welcomed the acceptance of its bid for membership, alongside those of the United States, and Papua New Guinea. The Minister in Charge of the Government Communications Affairs Office, Redwan Hussein, said the Government had been proactive in trying to achieve a waste-free, transparent and corruption free industrial system in support its pro-poor development approach. He said that Ethiopia was pleased to join international efforts to fight corruption in these industries.

Objections to Ethiopia’s candidature came from Human Rights Watch which put out an typically extravagant and violent statement critical of the EITI claiming that “with this decision EITI has thrown its principles to the wind and damaged its reputation as a leading good governance group.” It called the EITI’s decision, to admit Ethiopia without insisting on reforms, an affront to local activists, whom Human Rights Watch claimed had been jailed or exiled for calling for a more transparent, accountable government. Human Rights Watch said “EITI’s leadership had an opportunity to stand up for the core principle that civil society participation is a linchpin of good governance, [however] it sacrificed EITI’s credibility by allowing Ethiopia to join the ‘transparency’ club despite intense repression.”

Human Rights Watch’s angry outburst isn’t the first time it has tried to stop Ethiopia’s candidacy. It lobbied against Ethiopia when it first applied for candidacy in EITI in 2010. Ato Redwan said that Human Rights Watch’s opposition did not come from any true desire to stand watch for human rights “it was only ideological.” He said “There have always been interest groups who have been trying to slander Ethiopia in connection with its human rights record and Human Rights Watch clearly has been under the influence of these groups,” adding that their campaign deliberately to falsified what had been on the ground in Ethiopia and the progress towards building a developmental democratic system . He said Ethiopia was striving to build a sound industrial system that was fair and equitable, noting that “industries will catalyze Ethiopia’s endeavors towards fast-track growth.”

Human Rights Watch, in pursuit of its continuous anti-Ethiopian government campaign, has once again based its comments on a serious and apparently deliberate misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009. It argues that this law "prohibits nongovernmental organizations from working in human rights and good governance if they receive more than 10 percent of their funds from abroad. As a result, today there are few organizations working on these issues and those that do, self-censor and straddle a knife-edge, always concerned about a potential crackdown." This is a misrepresentation of the Proclamation and its application. Indeed, far from limiting the activity of charities and NGOs, the Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009 was carefully designed to encourage and broaden civil society activities. It was drawn up in response to requests from civil society organizations to update the laws governing the registration and operation of NGOs in Ethiopia as these dated back to the 1950s, based on the 1952 Ethiopian Civil Code and Regulations of 1959. They were outdated and seriously constrained the operation of both NGOs and charities by the beginning of this century. Nor were they designed to cope with the substantial increase in the numbers of NGOs

and in their areas of activity that came after the introduction of a democratic federal government and a constitution allowing for full freedom of association.

Indeed, the aim of the Proclamation was very clear. It was to facilitate and strengthen the role and effective contributions Charities and Societies and of NGOs to development through realization of citizens' rights to association as enshrined in the Constitution. It is also worth noting that the drafting process involved extensive and detailed discussions with NGOs in Ethiopia and other stakeholders. A series of fora were held in which CSOs and NGOs had opportunities to discuss the issues with government representatives and other stakeholders. Before and after the proclamation was referred to the Council of Ministers, CSOs had the opportunity to make recommendations. The then Prime Minister invited all CSOs and NGOs to discuss the final draft legislation.

The result provided, for the first time in Ethiopia, an effective enabling environment for CSO and NGO operations, incorporating detailed provisions for the different types of organizations. It included specific provisions about charities and societies which hadn't previously existed, allowing for the creation of consortia of charities and societies for the first time, and for charities to engage in income generating activities, exempting them from income tax. The establishment of the Charities and Societies Agency to undertake the registration and supervision of civil society organizations and a council to handle related issues was another positive feature. The Agency is an autonomous body with the power to license, register and supervise Charities, Societies and NGOs and assist them achieve their goals with transparency and accountability.

The legislation also included detail of the sectors of operation open for foreign charities, societies and NGOs and those reserved for Ethiopian organizations. The unsurprising limitation to the operations of foreign Charities and Societies was that they could not engage in domestic Ethiopia politics as of right. Political activities were reserved, as is normal, for Ethiopian citizens. Sectors open for Foreign Charities, Societies and NGOs included: the prevention, alleviation or relief of poverty or disaster; the advancement of the economy and social development and environmental protection or improvement; the advancement of animal welfare; the advancement of education; the advancement of health or the saving of lives; the advancement of art, culture, heritage or science; the advancement of amateur sport and the welfare of youth; the relief for those in need by reason of age, disability, financial hardship; the advancement of capacity building on the basis of the country's long term development directions. Activities reserved for Ethiopian Charities, Societies and NGOs included: the advancement of human and democratic rights; the promotion of equality of nations, nationalities and peoples, as well as the promotion of equality of gender and religion; the promotion of the right of the disabled and of children; the promotion of conflict resolution or reconciliation; the promotion of improving the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services.

It might be added that despite all Human Rights Watch's assertions, the Proclamation does not in fact totally exclude the possibility that Foreign NGOs operating in Ethiopia might contribute in areas otherwise totally reserved for Ethiopian organizations. It does, however, say this must be done through agreement with the Government and allow for regular evaluation. It is this last constraint to which Human Rights Watch appears to have taken most exception.

It might be noted that the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation has had a significant effect on the growth of CSOs in Ethiopia. In the fifty years prior to the Proclamation some 3,800 NGOs were registered, an average of 76 a year; since 2009, over 2,000 have been registered. There is no doubt that the Proclamation has greatly improved the speed of processing registration and has made it far easier to discharge their activities in a responsible and transparent manner. It has provided an effective legal and acceptable working environment which has been welcomed by the Charities and Societies themselves.