

## A Week in the Horn of Africa 12<sup>th</sup> October 2012

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### **President Girma opens the new Parliamentary session**

The new session of the House of People's Representatives and the House of Federation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was opened on Monday (8<sup>th</sup> October). The joint session was addressed by President Girma Woldegiorghis in a wide-ranging speech covering social, economic and political issues.

The President noted that the session was beginning with a “successful completion of a fully democratic transition of power”, adding that this “had only been possible because of the system that the late Prime Minister Meles, and his colleagues had built up”. President Girma paid homage to the late Prime Minister who had, he said, led the nation to “a commendable level of progress”. He said “our grief at his passing remains immense, and I would wish for solace and strength for all the peoples of our nation to help us deal with our sorrow for the loss of the architect of our renaissance.” The late Prime Minister had contributed a lot for the prevailing democracy, peace and economic growth over the past two decades.

President Girma stressed Ethiopia had maintained double digit economic growth since the beginning of the implementation of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) and called on all Ethiopians to exert utmost efforts to achieve the targets set in the budget year and to maintain the rapid economic growth registered over the previous nine consecutive years. The Government had been actively engaged in promoting programmes that benefited the majority of society, including housing programmes and creation of employment opportunities. "More than 300,000 houses were built over the past seven years," he said, adding that the construction of 100,000 low cost houses was underway in Addis Ababa; and government employees with housing problems would be able to benefit from the '40/60' programme under which the government constructs and transfers houses with the government providing 60% of the cost and employee savings contributing 40%. The President also noted that “more than 1.1 million jobs were created” in various sectors of the economy during the past budget year. The President referred to the importance of creating new domestic capital and developing the habit of national savings; and spoke of the improvements in tax collection and **the government's efforts to limit the impact of inflation, supplying wheat, sugar and edible oil at fixed prices.**

President Girma noted that Ethiopia was determined to implement the Growth and Transformation Plan drawn up by Prime Minister Meles in order to lay the basis for Ethiopia to achieve middle-income status. This means more concentration on service and industry sectors, and the government was effectively playing a leadership role in stimulating the expansion of

different economic sectors and the success gained in the infrastructure developments, particularly, among others, in the electric power, road, railway, and telecommunication sectors.

At the same time the agricultural sector will also continue to receive special attention as it still holds great hope and opportunity for further progress. "Rapid agricultural development promoting the policy of green development will, of course, provide an immense contribution to the growth of the economy," he said, referring to the very substantial efforts in water and soil conservation that have been undertaken to speed up sectoral development, while also aiming to prevent drought and soil erosion. The late Prime Minister Meles was a hero of Ethiopia's Green Economic Development. Under his leadership, the foundations were laid for each and every farmer to have a 'water bank' through water storage holes dug in and around farms, and "these 'water banks' are now beginning to provide us with substantial and better opportunities to increase the output of the sector." Environmental conservation works to increase agricultural productivity would continue. Indeed, these and other activities within the agricultural sector, including increased use of improved seeds, fertilizers and modern agricultural practices, could be expected to provide significantly better results and increased productivity: "Rapid agricultural development promoting the policy of green development will, of course, provide an immense contribution to the growth of the economy."

President Girma further noted that the government was effectively playing a leadership role in stimulating the expansion of different economic sectors and the success gained in infrastructure developments, particularly, among others, in the electric power, road, railway, and telecommunication sectors. Key activities to ensure sustainability of economic growth include construction of mega-dams and power-generating projects, and the government would be intensifying the implementation of these and related projects, including the national rural electrification strategy. In infrastructure, the installation of modern telecommunication links with landlines and broadband services had continued and the number of mobile phone users now exceeded 18 million. The construction of 70,000 kilometres of road and more than 2,600 kilometres of railway was underway. Ethiopian contractors at all levels were being employed to enable them build up their capacity. Other notable developments were in the construction of fertilizer and sugar factories. The President stressed "The ultimate goal of our development activities is to improve the incomes as well as the well-being of our people," adding that a significant number of people have been raised out of poverty and indeed transferred to middle-income levels. The number of citizens living below the poverty level "has significantly decreased," he said.

The President noted that fundamental achievements have been registered in the social sectors. There was high-level enrolment of children who had reached school age. Educational coverage from kindergarten to secondary level was continuously expanding and there were significant efforts to improve the quality of education. Following the implementation of a prevention-based health policy, millions of farmers had become beneficiaries of health development packages. Almost all transmittable 'killer diseases' had been brought under control; maternal and infant death levels had been significantly reduced. The overall improvement registered in the health sector "has earned huge recognition," and would be continuing.

President Girma said the country had also shown continued "impressive improvement and progress in the speeding up of democratization and social development" with the government taking various measures to ensure the rights of citizens, to strengthen democracy and to bring about good governance in the country. The democratic system in Ethiopia, he said, was being "built on the principle of respecting the human and democratic rights of all citizens and peoples." In line with this, fundamental changes had been made to nurture the culture of democracy, including respect for human and democratic rights and the conduct of free and fair elections.

Different parties freely participate in the national and regional democratic elections every five years, he said, and he underlined that "Political parties are expected to move our democracy another step forward by competing in the elections while respecting all constitutional regulations." The President added that **"the government will, as usual, do all it can to provide financial and media assistance to all the parties involved in the elections."**

President Girma said that Ethiopia was undoubtedly moving on the right path towards rapid and sustainable development and democracy. The effect of Ethiopia's progress was also "beginning to have a trans-boundary impact [and] many continue to express their hope to see Ethiopia maintain and continue on the right path of development in a post-Meles era." President Girma took the opportunity to reassure all Ethiopia's partners that the country would continue its efforts on behalf of peace and security in the sub-region and more widely. In conclusion, he called on the peoples and governments of the continent to work hand in hand for the implementation of these common goals, and wished the two Houses of Parliament, and all the peoples of Ethiopia, a very successful and prosperous year.

### **Acting Foreign Minister briefs Ambassadors of UNSC member states**

Acting Foreign Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos briefed Ambassadors of the UNSC member states in Addis Ababa today [12<sup>th</sup> Oct] on IGAD's position on the current situation in Somalia. The meeting was co-chaired by the Kenyan ambassador in Ethiopia, Dr Monieoca K.Juma. During the briefing, Ambassador Berhane said all IGAD member states are extremely happy at the overall situation in Somalia. He said the highest credit should go to the responsible Somalia political actors who worked relentlessly to establish the new government before and following the end of the transition. He said significant coordination among regional bodies and the international community has also contributed to the encouraging improvement being seen in Somalia. He also underlined IGAD's unanimous belief that the situation in Somalia is now more critical than any time before, ushering in as it does a new chapter full of opportunities and emphasised the need for a **more coordinated support to the new government in Somalia.**

The Acting Foreign Minister briefed the Ambassadors about IGAD's serious deliberations on the need for member states and the international community to remain actively engaged in **providing a more robust support for post-transition Somalia.** He reiterated IGAD's conviction that the most important role is for the Somalis themselves, and that the role of partners should be to provide robust support on the basis of their proposed priorities. In this regard, IGAD has instructed its Executive Secretary to go to Mogadishu to discuss with the new President of Somalia, among other things, the nature of support the Somali government needs from the international community.

On security, a better opportunity is now created by the Somali government, AMISOM and other pro-government allied forces, and expressed IGAD's and AUPSC's call for the international community to provide stronger support to Somalia's institutions and the effort to build Integrated National Defence and Security forces in Somalia. He also underlined IGAD's and PSC's call to the UNSC to lift its arms embargo on the legitimate government of Somalia. He however underscored that the arms embargo should be maintained on non-state actors so as to close any minor opportunities of possible threats by some groups including al-Shabaab. He also called upon the UNSC to authorize AU support packages on the need for future emphasis on the civilian and maritime components with a view to reinforcing the efforts of the new government in Somalia. In this regard, the need to provide increased support to efforts aimed at building strong National Security was duly emphasized. Ambassador Berhane also pointed out IGAD's request to the UNSC

for support to the AU's future plan to review the mandate of AMISOM following the expiration of its mandate in January 2013.

On the need to establish strong local administrations in the newly liberated areas in Somalia, the Acting Foreign Minister noted that IGAD is in consultation with the new government in Somalia and the local administrations in the liberated areas to encourage them to chart workable directions. He also called upon the international community to further enhance its active engagement in supporting the new government to establish strong local administrations capable of providing proper services to the people.

Addressing questions raised by those in attendance, the Acting Foreign Minister said Ethiopian forces will continue to support the new government and AMISOM at this critical time if and when this is needed. He emphasised that Ethiopia is single-handedly paying a heavy price and shouldering a huge and expensive responsibility to support the Somali Government and AMISOM. He also told his audience that, despite minor incidents here and there, the situation is generally conducive for countries to open their missions in Mogadishu. He reflected on the encouraging developments in Somalia following the election of the new President and expressed hope that the international community will do its part to further consolidate the gains that have been made thus far.

Regarding concerns of reintegrating different Somali forces fighting against al-Shabaab, he noted the already started Grand Stabilization and Integration plan jointly launched by IGAD, the AU and the UN with a view to integrating all the forces into a national army. He underlined the fact that all regional forces in Somalia were delivering on their share of responsibility cooperatively, and called on UNSC to support this plan. On effective utilization of financial support, he stressed the need for the international community to support the creation of institutions responsible to manage any financial supports, as well as the need for the international community to work with regional actors on how to support the handling of financial supports. He expressed his optimism that the new government would create a more transparent and all-inclusive way of governance, and pressed for more coordinated and meaningful support. Addressing the massive humanitarian needs should also be included in the international community's support package. He finally urged the Ambassadors to communicate the matter to the highest bodies of their respective countries to consider IGAD's and AUPSC's requests at their meeting next week in New York.

### **Ethiopia and UK discuss bilateral relations**

A business delegation led by the UK Minister for the Environment, Mr Gregory Barker, visited Ethiopia, last week, on 5<sup>th</sup> October. The delegation met and held talks with the officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and from the Federal Environmental Protection Authority. Mr Barker and his delegation also held discussions with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn on bilateral issues. The Minister expressed the UK's commitment to further bolstering existing relations with Ethiopia, pointing out his country would work closely with the Ethiopian government on its plans to build a carbon-free economy by the year 2025. Mr Barker said **UK companies had significant experience in developing renewable energy resources including wind, geothermal and solar options**; and he noted that Ethiopia had immense renewable energy resources. **It was the leading country in Eastern Africa in terms of launching green economic development**, he added.

Prime Minister Hailemariam described the UK delegation's visit as an important milestone in further consolidating and increasing ties between the UK and Ethiopia across a range of investment sectors. He said UK companies had ample opportunities to take part in the country's green economic development efforts and underlined the government's readiness to facilitate ways for UK companies to participate in the sector. The Prime Minister emphasized the importance of

foreign direct investment in developing the country's renewable energy resources as well as in achieving carbon-free Green Economic development by 2025.

The Premier also noted that a number of companies had shown interest in coming to Ethiopia following the recent London Business Forum. He added that efforts had been deployed to improve certain areas to attract more investors. These included improving services and speeding up the bureaucracy as well as providing a one-stop-shop service for investors. He also praised the financial assistance extended by the UK to support Ethiopia's development efforts, noting that all funds provided were properly and efficiently utilized.

During the discussions, the UK delegates commended Ethiopia's Green Economic strategy, and emphasized that the country's immense renewable energy resources, particularly in **geothermal** possibilities, could contribute to the sustainability of the country's economic development. They affirmed their readiness to engage in **further developing renewable energy resources to a point where they can be exported**. One area was the possibility of extending support by producing energy from renewable energy sources through off-grid means. The Minister noted that Cambridge Industries was already involved in producing **energy from waste materials**. It had almost finalized preparations to produce 50MW of power, and would soon display this to the public at large prior to launching similar activities in other cities in the country. Mr Barker affirmed **that the UK government was ready to finance this sector and partake in the effort for Green Economy development**.

The Prime Minister pointed out that producing energy from renewable energy sources is a new sector but it had the potential to rapidly expand and grow, in addition to having a beneficial effect on the country's economic development endeavour. The Premier urged the delegation to extend their support to conduct research on how to benefit most from these resources in a bid to assist the country's agricultural-based economy. He stressed that Ethiopia was keen to be a leading country, and indeed a role model, in the pursuit of a Green Economic development path, and to leave aside the more traditional ways to development. Prime Minister Hailemariam assured the UK delegation that the government would provide the necessary assistance for all those companies whose primary area of focus was in this sector.

### **Progress and Prospects of Cooperation in the Nile Basin**

On Monday this week (8<sup>th</sup> October) the Nile Tripartite Committee, now named the International Panel of Experts, paid its second visit to the construction site of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The committee is made up of six experts drawn equally from Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, together with four other international figures. The Committee has been set up to study the possible impact of Africa's biggest dam now under construction. It made its first visit to the Dam site in mid-May, and held its first meeting in June in Cairo [6<sup>th</sup>]. The establishment of the committee was at the initiative of the late Prime Minister Meles as a goodwill gesture to build trust among the lower riparian states. The committee which is expected to clear up doubts and come up with a unified stance after assessing possible impacts, is due to present its findings in nine months time to the highest authorities of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan. The Committee is already reported to have hinted that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will have no negative impact on down-stream countries; Egypt and Sudan. Certainly Ethiopia has conducted numerous studies on the project which unequivocally affirmed the benefits of the project to downstream countries including prevention of flooding and siltation and regulation of the flow throughout the year. It will also reduce evaporation of water as the planned reservoir in Ethiopia will be in a far less humid area than current reservoirs.

The River Nile is, of course, a crucial resource both for the Horn of Africa and for the whole of the Nile Basin, a cause both of tension and of alliances among regional powers. Recent agriculture and industrial development in the Nile Basin, and rapidly growing populations, have raised the issue of competition and confrontation, as well as, more recently, significant opportunities to create more constructive interdependence and cooperation.

Some of these were outlined on Friday last week (5<sup>th</sup> October) when Professor Yacob Arsano, of the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Addis Ababa University and Director of the Addis Ababa University Press, gave a talk at Chatham House in London. It was entitled 'Progress and Prospects of Cooperation in the Nile Basin' and it looked at the current status of the situation in the Nile Basin. Dr Arsano underlined the point that historically the geopolitical profile of the basin had been marked by competing quests for hegemony among riparian countries. He noted that for a long time, Egypt and Sudan had wanted to maintain the status quo of usage of the Nile waters on the basis of colonial/post-colonial agreements, to which Ethiopia and the other upper riparian countries had never been a party. Ethiopia, of course, provides 86% of the water of the river, but it has never made any claims of a monopoly, and has made very little use of the water. This contrasted with Egypt which is 97% dependent upon the river and which had claimed a monopoly of usage. Ethiopia and other upper riparian states wanted a negotiated agreement on the basis of equality.

Dr Arsano said that one result of this attitude by the lower riparian states had been “a legacy of net distrust between the upstream and downstream countries. It was under these “challenging circumstances” that the inter-governmental Nile Basin Initiative was established in 1999. This had enormous international support but it also had to face the very difficult task of establishing a mechanism of cooperation from substantially conflicting interests and demands from its members. Dr Arsano noted that the two main pillars of the NBI were the shared vision for the river and the subsidiary action and joint multi-purpose programmes. These eventually led to the adoption of the Comprehensive Framework Agreement instrument in 2009, and its signing by the upper riparian states.

The downstream/upstream division, however, has continued, and in the absence of co-operation, Ethiopia has begun construction of the Nile Dam, whose benefits for Egypt and Sudan, Dr Arsano noted, would include flow regulation, cheaper energy, less silt and control of flooding. The Committee of Experts can be expected to underline these advantages. Interestingly, a recent symposium in Sudan, organized by the Sudanese Engineering Association, and involving government officials, experts, consultants, and other interested parties, linked the Dam's construction with future development in Sudan, and revealed a largely positive attitude towards it. Among benefits noted were reduction of alluvial silt reaching Sudan, provision of water at a fixed and stable rate, reduction of soil erosion, and a supply of electricity at a much cheaper rate. Professor Mohamed Akod Osman, Dean of the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Khartoum, specified that construction of the Dam will bring a “stable rate” of water to the Nile throughout the year.

At the same time there are other challenges to co-operation in the Nile Basin and a need to address such issues as water security overall, improvement of the management of water use in downstream states and, equally, of management of water use in the upper riparian countries. Control of pollution was an additional factor. It is also relevant that there is a lack of joint multi-purpose water development projects in operation. Dr Arsano suggested that the Nile Basin states could learn from others, mentioning the co-operative consensus which operates on a number of other rivers with multi-state access, including the Indus, the Senegal, the Rhine and the Danube.

Dr Arsano, indeed, was very clear: “there is no viable alternative to upstream-downstream cooperation for equitable and reasonable utilization and sustainable benefit sharing...”. The Nile River, he pointed out, provides for a permanent bond between the states of the Nile Basin. This underlines the four basic parameters and imperatives for development and co-operation which cover environmental and economic factors as well as security and institutional issues. Sudan now appears to be considering the matter of the use of the Nile waters on the basis of evidence rather than emotion and propaganda. Ethiopia hopes that Egypt will follow suit and consider the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project with an open mind, understand that the impact of power generation, not irrigation, will be positive, not negative for the lower riparian states, and accept the very clear benefits of cooperation for all the Nile Basin states.

### **Eritrean prevarications and evasions**

The Eritrean regime has a habit of engaging in selective reading of texts to fit them into its own bizarre worldview. This approach was in full view in the latest letter written by Eritrea's Foreign Minister to the United Nations Security Council arguing that the UN sanctions imposed on Eritrea ought to be lifted. This was based on what can only be described as a highly selected reading of the report of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea.

The letter begins by claiming that “the initial and principal accusation concerning Eritrean support to al-Shabaab has now proven to be non-existent”. The implication of course is that the sanctions regime imposed on Eritrea was, in fact, unjustified. This is hardly the case. Despite Mr Osman Saleh's claims that such support has been proved to be non-existent, Eritrea's long-time support for extremist elements in Somalia has always been fully documented, not least by the Eritrean government's own comments. The series of sanctions on Eritrea were always imposed on the basis of ample and detailed evidence.

In fact, the sanctions were not just imposed because of Eritrea's support for al-Shabaab and extremism in Somalia, undoubted though that was. They were also imposed because of Eritrea's violent aggression against Djibouti, its subsequent denials and its refusal to respond to UN Security Council resolutions, as well as for the variety of destabilizing activities it has regularly carried out through the entire region. Again, the evidence was clear, detailed and multiple. Eritrea's selective diplomacy, however, deliberately avoids the real issues. Indeed, it seems to take a position of total denial, even of the well-known or obvious. This is why the government of Eritrea continues to take texts out of context, distort their meaning, deny the obvious.

This is why the most recent letter of the government should be looked at very carefully. The Monitoring Group, in its most recent report, says the activities of the Eritrean regime in support of al-Shabaab have been significantly reduced. It identifies the main reason for this as the effectiveness of the sanctions regime that had been imposed by the UN, though it also notes that this had a number of weaknesses. The Monitoring Group makes it quite clear that any suggestion that Eritrea might have voluntarily reduced its support for the Somali terrorist group out of its own freewill is simply implausible and cannot be accepted. It correctly points out that Eritrea found it extremely difficult, indeed impossible, to continue to flaunt its open support for the extremist elements in Somalia in the face of mounting pressure from the international community.

It is very clear, of course, why the regime should claim that accusations of its support to al-Shabaab have been proved to be non-existent. For the government of Eritrea, “the absence of evidence is the evidence of absence.” To say that one has stopped support and to admit to some previous activity is one thing. To claim one should be exonerated from past crimes after stopping a dangerous game because of obvious difficulties and pressures is very different. This, however, is

the pattern of reasoning that has characterized Eritrea's diplomatic correspondence and practice over many years; and still does so.

In fact, despite all its verbal acrobatics, the regime is far from acknowledging any wrong-doing. It consistently prefers to blame everything on the international community in general and the Monitoring Group, Ethiopia and of course the US in particular. In the bizarre politics of Eritrea, the rest of the world does not have the slightest moral authority over Eritrea, which claims to be a bastion of justice and freedom. The regime in Asmara insists that it, and it alone, has a monopoly of judgment on all issues relating to what should be seen as just or unjust. Very simply, it claims all its actions are just and acceptable; all those of the rest of the world are unjust and unacceptable. Eritrea can do no wrong; the rest of the world can do nothing right when it comes to dealing with Eritrea. There has been no indication yet that the regime in Eritrea is ready to give up this illusion now or at any time in the near future.

As for the support it has provided for any and all elements trying to destabilize other governments in the region, including both Ethiopia and Sudan as well as Somalia, Eritrea has even escalated its reckless adventures. It seems quite clear, it has never had any intention of stopping. Its actions in the region remain as destructive as ever, although their magnitude has been kept rather lower recently than the regime would like, thanks to the realization that none of its behaviour will be now be left unchecked. As noted, the government still refuses to acknowledge its invasion of Djibouti. The only factors that have made a difference from the open aggression displayed against Djibouti and the continued activities against other countries have been the impact of the UN sanctions regime and more recently, Ethiopia's firm warnings that there will be distinct, though carefully calculated and proportional consequences to any further aggressive Eritrean adventures.

Eritrea, it is clear, remains as recalcitrant as ever. There is simply no reason for sanctions to be loosened or lifted, and certainly not at a time when it seems clear they have actually had some impact. If anything, indeed, there is every reason to suggest they should be strengthened in order to ensure continued compliance by the regime with the decisions of the international community. Eritrea, not for the first time, has demonstrated that it only responds to real and serious pressure. Now would appear to be an excellent time to reinforce, not abandon, the message that the UN and the international community should be delivering.

## **News and Views**

### **New Somalia Prime Minister named**

The President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Somalia H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud appointed Mr Abdi Farah Shirdon (Saa'id) on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at Villa Somalia as the new Prime Minister of Somalia. According to reports from Somalia, the President has appointed Saa'id in the Prime Ministerial post in consultation with the various constituencies and clans. Mr Abdi Farah Shirdon is from the Darod and Marehan sub-clan and is a former University graduate in economics and now a business man. Analysts said his vast experience as an economist in the private sector will greatly help Somalia at this critical time of moving towards development. He was also a political activist during the last 20 years and was elected as the first Chairperson of the Rajo Forum (RF Somalia) in March 2012. He is married to Asha Haji Elmi, an influential and high calibre woman from Habargedir clan, bearing four children together. She is a member of the new Federal Parliament of Somalia and a chairperson of South Central Somalia Women Civil Society.

Partners described the appointment of Mr Abdi Farah Shirdon as prime minister as another important milestone in bringing sustainable peace and stability in Somalia. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Somalia, Ambassador

Boubacar Diarra, on Monday (8<sup>th</sup> October) congratulated Abdi Farah Shirdoon on his appointment as the new Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Somalia. Ambassador Diarra said the Prime Minister's election is a significant step on the path towards restoring peace and stability in Somalia and applauded the new Somali government for this critical step towards the formation of an inclusive new government. He said "today is the culmination of years of hard work by the Somali people who have showed great determination and commitment in creating a new political framework based on transparency and accountability." AMISOM's statement also praised the newly elected President, Mr Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, for his announcement of the new prime minister in line with the provisional constitution and the roadmap process. It expressed its belief on the formation of a new cabinet by the Prime Minister, which will start to deliver on the six pillar priority policy frameworks identified by the President. There are reports that AMISOM is ready to continue its support to the Somali government. The statement also recognised the key contributions made by the international community to smoothly end the transition. It called on the international community to continue its support as Somalia enters a new phase. It also congratulated the Somali people for their participation and overwhelming support to the political process, as well as for their strong desire to put their country on a path toward improved governance, stability, and prosperity.

The newly appointed Somalia Prime Minister, Abdi Farah Shirdon, who is waiting for the parliament's endorsement and approval to officially be sworn in, on his part announced his plans to form a new effective government on Wednesday (10<sup>th</sup> October). The Prime Minister noted that he is in the midst of choosing the cabinet members to form an effective government which will better ensure the restoration of peace and security in Somalia. The Prime Minister promised to establish an effective government if he secures the confidence vote and endorsement from the new Somali parliament. He said his priority targets would be security, reconciliation and reconstruction of Somalia. He also underlined that his government wouldn't allow any form of continuation of unrest in the country, while strongly fighting against corruption, poverty, piracy, and illiteracy. The new Premier was appointed by the new President of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Wheat for Food Security in Africa conference kicks off in Addis**

The conference on Wheat for Food Security in Africa, organized by the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT) in collaboration with the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), and the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) started in Addis Ababa on Monday (8<sup>th</sup> October). The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ato Teferra Derbew, in his opening speech, noted that Ethiopia is currently producing over 3 million tonnes of wheat on 1.5 million hectares of land, which makes it the **largest wheat producing country in Africa**. The Minister said African countries spend more than US\$12 billion importing 38 million tonnes of wheat. He added although Africa is developing nearly 10 million hectares of wheat, the continent is still less productive. The ICARDA and EIAR recognized that Ethiopia is one of the most productive wheat-growing nations in Africa, and has the potential to reach self-sufficiency in wheat. The EIAR Director General, Dr Solomon Assefa, also highlighted that Ethiopia has better opportunities because of its climate and agriculture policy.