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TOPIC:

Articles

- UNSC extends arms embargo on Eritrea and Somalia: Will Eritrea open itself to the UN Monitoring Team to reverse similar decisions in the future?...1
- Somaliland consolidates its democratic credentials: What is the future?.....8
- President Uhuru Kenyatta sworn in for a second term in Kenya.....15
- Revitalization of the IGAD led peace process for South Sudan: More challenges ahead.....19
- Seminar discusses decisions of the 19th National Congress of the CPC.....26



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UNSC extends arms embargo on Eritrea and Somalia: Will Eritrea open itself to the UN Monitoring Team to reverse similar decisions in the future?

On the basis of the report of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG), on 14 November 2017 the UNSC adopted a new resolution extending the arms embargo on Somalia and Eritrea for a year, through 15 November 2018. It also extended the mandate of SEMG until 15 December 2018. Given the ongoing import of arms to Somalia and Al-Shabaab's continued revenue earnings from export of charcoal and other natural resources, the Council decided to extend a modified version of the twenty-year arms embargo on Somalia and authorized the maritime interdiction of illicit arms imports and charcoal exports. The resolution also requested that the Monitoring Group continue to investigate whether chemicals exported to Somalia have been used as oxidizers in the manufacture of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), with a view to considering further actions by the Council.

While lauding the improving relationship between the Federal Government and the States of the Federal Republic of Somalia, and taking note of the newly constituted national security architecture, the Council in parallel

expressed concern about the growing indications of widespread corruption in the Somalia Federal Government and Parliament, which is believed to be jeopardizing the country's peace and reconciliation process. In light of this challenge, and as a deterrent, the resolution proposes to target these individuals for selected sanctions—an idea that will have implications, but only for political purposes.

The passing of the resolution appeared straightforward, as some countries were critical on a number of issues: support for non-state actors in the region and its impact on peace and stability; division of the Eritrea-Somalia sanctions into separate Monitoring Teams; and whether there is sufficient evidence for the continuation of the sanctions.

Criticisms of the resolution with regard to Somalia came from none other than the representative of that country. Shortcomings were sighted, with some forwarded for the immediate political gain of the government in Mogadishu. These included the failure to draw attention to the possible impact of the Gulf crisis on Somalia's politics; the explicit absence in the text of provisions to support the territorial integrity and unity of the country; the failure to align the arms embargo framework with Somalia's recent national security architecture; and the absence in the Council's consideration of clearly defined

benchmarks leading to the termination of the arms embargo.

But the question of whether to review or extend the five-year-long sanctions on Eritrea remained the primary focus of attention. The Council's debate revealed divergent views in relation to the sanctions regime on Eritrea and Somalia, with implications for future consequences or even probable review in a year's time of the entire sanctions regime that was put in place in 2009 (as Resolution 1907) and again in 2011 (as Resolution 2023) which expands the sanctions regime by including the question of diaspora tax and revenue from mining and due diligence to ensure that finance from these sources would not be used for destabilizing the region.

Council members China, the Russian Federation, Egypt and Bolivia chose to abstain from the vote, citing serious concerns about the effectiveness of the tenets of the resolution and its compliance with the objective of the sanctions regime in the first place. This has generated disagreement among key members of the Council.

The recent Security Council deliberations took into consideration Eritrea's continuous refusal to facilitate the Monitoring Group's entry into the country to conduct investigations, its alleged support for certain armed groups operating in the Horn of Africa (particularly the Benishangul People's

Liberation Movement, the Patriotic Ginbot Sebat and the Tigray People's Democratic Movement in Ethiopia, and the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy [FRUD-Armé]) in Djibouti), as well as the ongoing border dispute with Djibouti as cases justifying the continuation of the UN sanctions. Those members of the Security Council who endorsed the resolution urged Eritrea to respond to the Council's requests and allow, among other things, the Monitoring Group to enter the country. Some expressed reservations about the prospects for change in Eritrea's behavior when it comes to the intent to destabilize the sub-region, and about its ability to reciprocate the international community's efforts to facilitate a mediated settlement of the problem. But Council members welcomed the Government of Eritrea's recent efforts to engage with the international community, as demonstrated by intermittent discussions between representatives of the Government of Eritrea and members of the Monitoring Group.

Others in the Security Council, whose number is very small, have been questioning the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed on Eritrea and thereby calling for a review of the sanctions regime. As a result of these pressures, there is an ongoing effort to review the sanctions on Eritrea and Somalia separately, the latest

manifestation being the ruling instituted in the Council's resolution 2317 (2016). Of course, the government in Asmara bears sole responsibility for it has impeded the process by denying entry to the Monitoring Group and refusing to cooperate with the investigation process. Despite the gradually more favorable situation, to the dismay of most observers, however, Eritrea continues to deny the Monitoring Team entry into the country. This naturally begs the question of the underlying motives informing Eritrea's behavior. If Eritrea is clean and has nothing to hide, as Asmara has continuously claimed over the years, then it defies rationality to maintain a policy of non-cooperation, citing discriminatory treatment by the entire international community.

Nonetheless, it remains a fact that, even without the Monitoring Team's investigations in Eritrea, there are tangible linkages connecting Eritrea to ongoing conflicts in the region, which the latter has used to bypass the legal sanctions. In this regard, Alex De Waal's assertion that "the rehabilitation of Eritrea, which capitalized on the [Yemen] war to escape severe political and economic isolation"¹ best characterizes the current reality, with the additional crisis in the Gulf equally contributing towards the same end. These geo-political disagreements are

likely to keep the Eritrean government uncooperative in the near future. If Eritrea's leaders agreed to allow the Monitoring Team in, where would they hide all the rebels and proxies they had in Eritrea all along, intended to destabilize the entire region, which was the basis for continuation of the sanctions on Eritrea in the first place? Moreover, the regional networks will be tracked through various means, which will force Eritrea to maintain its stance on the Monitoring Team's entry. And so the question is this: To what extent will the international community hold firm with the pledge that the sanctions will continue until Eritrea grants the Monitoring Team permission to enter? Is this sustainable? What are the options one should consider, in case this position becomes unsustainable?

While these are important developments and questions to consider, the SEMG prepared the latest report in the broader context of the need for review of the sanctions on Eritrea and Eritrea's non-compliance with the demand for entry of the Monitoring Group. In this regard, the report outlines the procedures followed and the findings of the latest investigations issuing some general recommendations on the way forward.

The SEMG report took into account a range of geo-political developments, each collectively contributing to Eritrea's unconventionality and tendency to

¹ Alex De Waal (2016): Africa's \$700 Billion Problem Waiting to Happen, *Foreign Policy*, 17

remain indifferent to the demands of the UN resolutions. In this regard, the ongoing Gulf crisis and super-power rivalry come as a windfall for Eritrea, adding unexpected dimensions to the entire situation whereby Asmara is trying to further its immediate interests without expending much effort. It is affirmed in the report that the UAE military base in the Assab port as well as the military assistance Eritrea receives from specific Gulf States has sidelined and undermined the arms embargo. Given the silence about the crisis in Yemen on the part of world powers, with its enormous loss of human lives and consequential human tragedy, this sidelining of the arms embargo seems comparatively easy. The Eritrean government would be considering the changing realities in the sub-region as an unexpected opportunity and windfall, but as a result it may not consider changing its behavior and contribute positively in the transformation of the region's peace and stability. The changing realities, coupled with the financial benefits the state-controlled mining sector has provided, may have helped the government in Asmara to position itself and sustain the gains. But the question is whether those windfalls would transform into a sustainable gain and impact the Eritrean society at large positively. But currently the drips that are falling are not changing lives there. On the flip side, however, regional dynamics have also

fostered tensions, as demonstrated by the withdrawal of the Qatari forces from the Djibouti side of the Djibouti-Eritrea border on 13 June, thereby escalating the latest Eritrea-Djibouti dispute along their common border. Djibouti has made this very clear on multiple occasions.

Nonetheless, irrespective of some corroborating information from states in the Horn and the regional administrations in Somalia, the Monitoring Group underscored that it had failed to find conclusive evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab in Somalia. Generating further controversy in the Security Council, the SEMG, as a result, recommended that the Council separate the sanctions regimes for Eritrea and Somalia, thereby establishing "a separate Security Council sanctions committee and a separate monitoring group on Eritrea." Three alternatives were put forward as a means to set the two sanctions regimes apart, with the Monitoring Group favoring the first option: a) the establishment of a separate committee concerning Eritrea and a separate monitoring group on Eritrea (two committees, two monitoring groups); b) the establishment of a separate committee concerning Eritrea, with the monitoring group as currently configured supporting both committees (two committees, one monitoring group); or c) the establishment of a separate monitoring group on Eritrea

reporting to the current committee (one committee, two monitoring groups).

The first option has been resisted by some in the Security Council and could even trigger their veto power. Moreover, for two consecutive years the Monitoring Group's recommendations have generated intense debate among members of the Security Council on the feasibility of continuing the sanctions against Eritrea—particularly from Egypt, China and the Russian Federation. These countries have also indicated their reservations, strongly favoring review of the sanctions regime for different reasons. Obviously, Egypt wants to continue to use Eritrea as a proxy for its regional policies in the Horn of Africa, as it has been following a similar policy for a long time. Recently, at a high level Egyptian military and security meeting, it was indicated that loss of its membership in the UNSC at the end of the year will deny Egypt the opportunity to use existing arrangements to pursue what it calls "Egypt's national interests." China opposes sanctions in general, but Russia's opposition emanates from the fact that the west has imposed sanctions on it, as well as from the fact that Eritrea continues to be a nuisance for the US and hence, perhaps, this issue is being instrumentalized effectively to undermine US policies.

The realities that are transpiring in the Red Sea and the Gulf States, the overcrowded situation hosted by Djibouti and the uncomfortable state of affairs that is developing there may necessitate the creation of an opening in the region. Some are pondering whether the Horn of Africa will witness something similar to the outcomes of the power struggle in the greater Middle East, including Syria. The visits that some countries of the Horn are making to Moscow are cited as emerging power dynamics with implications for the Horn of Africa.

This becomes relevant when one considers the apparent coordination between certain members in the UNSC on the sanctions issue. Those who abstained on the recent resolution clearly overemphasized the inability of the Monitoring Team to present evidence of Asmara's support for Al-Shabaab, and thereby pushed for review of the sanctions' feasibility, and even contemplated ending the sanctions regime for Eritrea. They tried to excuse Eritrea's destabilization through non-state actors as a regional characteristic and a feature of which Eritrea itself is considered a victim. They likewise opted for the inclusion in the text of the resolution of some sort of roadmap for Eritrea's cooperation with the international community. Few in this circle even went as far as to label the penholders of the resolution and point

out their selective approach and failure to be objective on Eritrea. But their criticism is based on the changing realities of the politics in the Horn and Gulf area and their intention to change the status quo so that they can position themselves in the changing dynamics. The challenge is that there appears to be a clear consensus among those abstaining and even other members of the Council that sanctions should be viewed as a means, and should be adjusted according to the situation on the ground, which they can't acknowledge publicly since they know that Asmara is not blinking on whether it has to allow the Monitoring Team to visit Asmara. But the international actors that are advocating for the lifting of the sanctions fail to recognize that there is no behavioral change in Asmara that would justify the ending of the sanctions for the time being. And yet, the fact that the Eritrean leadership has denied access to the Monitoring Team remains the only demerit that has helped the continuation of the sanctions. This means that those who are demanding that the sanctions continue should prepare for eventualities, since the decision to deny access to the Monitoring Team may change and standing firm may become unsustainable.

The actual value of these developments will be determined by the international community's shifting assessment of the

feasibility of sustaining the sanctions regime. Now, for consecutive years, the likes of China and Russia—together, of course, with Egypt—are demanding the review of the sanctions against Eritrea. Obviously, the regime in Asmara is also upping the ante, citing the Monitoring Group's assertions that there is no evidence of support by Eritrea to Al-Shabaab; reprimanding the Council for imposing selective sanctions on Eritrea. Beyond registering imagined or real scores, the whole situation is indicative of the shifting realities in the Red Sea area and the change in major powers' perceptions of the sanctions regime applied to Eritrea. It is also an indication that when national security interests are on the line, wild cards can override the principles that govern interstate relations. Therefore, it is critical to take into account the evolving geo-political realities along the strategic shores of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean in order to appraise the change in the approach of major global and regional powers-to-be. The powers-that-be appear to be in a rush to grab hold of some vital strategic posts in the region, with a race already underway in Djibouti, Eritrea and Somalia/Somaliland. Military bases are mushrooming across the Red Sea and Indian Ocean corridor, and northeastern Africa suddenly finds itself on the perimeter of a global economic and geo-strategic maritime route that hosts 40%

of European trade, and a competition that might change the status quo.

The dynamics bring both opportunities and challenges, as demonstrated by the financial windfall delivered to countries like Djibouti, Eritrea and possibly Somaliland—a region that has declared its “independence,” but without success in securing international recognition—and the misfortunes this has entailed for Yemen. With Djibouti already congested and nearly at full capacity, potential contenders for control of the strategic and lucrative trade route seem to have decided that Eritrea, Sudan and Somaliland are the best alternatives. More importantly, those who have long sought to advance their immediate interests in the sub-region, by securing the advantages of vast natural resources and advancing their political/economic agendas, continue to influence developments in order to benefit from the process. Emanating from its longstanding engagement in the region, bilaterally or through proxies, Egypt appears to have heavily invested in this regard, operating through carefully interwoven alignments with Gulf States, with systematic and short-term interest based cooperation with the US and Russia. Hence superpower competition is active in the region, and the worry is that the region will be suffering a fate reminiscent of the Cold War era.

By the same token, one has to assume possible engagements by other actors, newcomers or familiar entities, which would further heighten the competition and rivalry over the strategic hub. This involves the clear possibility of their interference in the internal affairs of states in the region. In the meantime, western powers may be forced to invest in additional military bases, which will be run parallel to Djibouti and as a deterrent to limit the possibility of more powers joining the already intense competition in the region. This will eventually open up more alternatives—some negative—for those who feel that they have long been marginalized and isolated without cause.

The future fate of the existing sanctions on Eritrea must be viewed in this light. If current dynamics shed some light on what will transpire in the near future, one can presume that things are liable to change, and in the process introduce new political dynamics with more prolonged and disruptive implications for alliances and counter alliances.

In the likely event of a review of the sanctions regime in a year’s time, therefore, states in the region must carefully examine their policies and prepare for all eventualities before it is too late. After all, it is the states in the Horn that stand to lose the most if the changing dynamics catch them unprepared. Those who are trying to

change realities on the basis of the dynamics in regional politics should be aware that there are other sides of the story. If working on the basis of one side of the story results in the failure of collective security, those in the region may opt to take justice into their own hands and act accordingly.

Somaliland consolidates its democratic credentials: What is the future?^{2*}

President Muse Bihi Abdi was sworn into office on 13 December, after the third presidential election—and fifth election overall—was held a month earlier in the ‘Republic of Somaliland,’ as Somalilanders would like to call it, and ‘a breakaway state’ or ‘autonomous region of Somalia’ as it is termed in Mogadishu, by the federal government of the merged state, and by the international community at large. Many believe that this aim of democratization is nothing more than a quest for international recognition that continues to be elusive, in spite of the territory’s historical basis, with an argument for reinstatement of colonial borders at independence supported by Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union and reinforced by legal contentions, as the Act of Union (*Atto di Unione*) with Somalia was never signed by Somaliland, and the *Union of Somalia*

and *Somaliland Law* never signed by Somalia. The elections have been interpreted as an effort to influence the international community, and indeed, international election observers judged the election process to be both inspiring and exemplary.

It is important to know that after attaining independence from the British protectorate on 1 July 1960 and union with Italian Somaliland just five days later with the intention to unify all Somali speaking territories, Somaliland sought to reclaim its independence on 18 May 1991, with grievances concerning inequality in the state structure in Somalia and Somalia’s failure to unify all Somali speaking territories as previously envisaged. Clan-based attacks on Somaliland carried out by Siad Barre’s government compounded these grievances later in the 1980s.

Taking the lead in 1991, the predominantly Isaaq-clan based fighters who formed the Somali National Movement (SNM) managed to bring about grand reconciliation conferences with the northern clans. These conferences were concluded with the re-establishment of the state of Somaliland. The first constitution of Somaliland came into force on 26 June 1960, establishing a parliamentary governance structure with legislative

* This piece was written by CDRC in collaboration with Tirsit Yetbarek.

authority vested in a Council of Ministers and a Legislative Assembly.

The government was restructured in May 1991, when Somaliland reclaimed its independence, officially adopting a presidential form of government in its National Charter of 1993. This structure was institutionalized in the 1997 Interim Constitution of the Republic of Somaliland, and again on 30 April 2000, when the current constitution was endorsed. Somaliland's legislature now consists of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the House of Elders, known as the *Guurti*.

Somaliland's House of Elders is structured on the basis of clan, which is the foundation of Somaliland society and has enabled all clans of Somaliland to be represented, and thus the state structure itself has been central to the discussion, with questions as to whether clan based representation is enabling democratization or is a barrier to it. The aspiring nation is acknowledged for its incorporation of indigenous governance, as "an African solution to an African problem." However the fact that the House of Elders doesn't have constitutional term limits or legal grounds has become a challenge. Some question the representativeness of its members and their nomination, as women and youth are not represented, and since the members have never been replaced through election. Only

members who have passed away have been replaced, and then by a male relative. Nevertheless, through maintaining this structural arrangement and sustaining the representation of all the clans, which would have been impossible if elections were to decide representation, Somaliland has been government by four presidents, including two who served during the transition and two who were publicly elected for one term each. Somaliland has now elected Muse Bihi Abdi as its fifth president.

By law, Somaliland has three political parties – a structure whereby the parties that obtain the highest vote in the local government election automatically run for office as President and running mate. It is through this process that the Peace, Unity, and Development Party (KULMIYE) represented by Muse Bihi Abdi, and the Waddani party represented by Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi (Cirro), as well as the Justice and Development party (UCID) represented by Faisal Ali Warabe, became the candidates for the November election. In fact, the general elections for the President and members of the House of Representatives were supposed to be held in June 2015. But after the House of Elders voted in April 2013 to extend the parliamentary term for two years, in order to align the elections of the House of Representatives with the presidential

elections, these combined general elections were postponed in September 2015, as the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was not adequately prepared to accomplish the task. The elections were then scheduled for 27 March 2017, but drought in the region forced the government to postpone the elections once again by six months.

Positive developments in the electoral process

Although the international community did not take news of the delays well and threatened to cut funding for the electoral process, the election that finally took place in November exhibited many positive procedural developments. For the first time in Africa, iris recognition biometric technology was used for voters' registration. This technology helped to build confidence in the election process as it prevents double registration of voters, which constituted the major challenge to Somaliland's previous elections. It must be emphasized that this technology was used only for registration, although there are hopes that it will be used for voting in the future. But there were other positive changes as well. For instance, each party was given one specific week for stumping. This made a core contribution in the peaceful and colorful campaigning by all parties, in line with NEC's rules and regulations.

The Election Monitoring Office (EMO) handled complaints from parties and others, playing a significant role in the process although it was not used to its maximum potential. EMO's formal institutionalized complaint procedure was little utilized. This was evidenced by the fact that fewer than 10 formal complaints were officially registered during the month of campaigning, even though there were numerous small-scale but obvious breaches of the electoral code of conduct. Instead, it seems that the parties decided to take an attitude of "they did it as we do it, and so we forgive each other," disregarding practices in breach of the code of conduct, and failed to recognize the fact that this could have undermined the whole process and risked discrediting the entire election.

Nevertheless, the EMO was in place to handle cases as they arose, and it succeeded in doing so without bias or any perception of bias. To a significant extent, the independent Somaliland Human Rights Center enforced compliance, starting with issues such as respect for campaigning time limitations, as campaigning continued late into the night in the first days, disrupting many communities. The EMO addressed this issue through the parties. Nevertheless, the second week of campaigning raised new concerns, as historical incidents that have divided the communities along clan lines resurfaced. But these

problems were addressed, and the rhetoric was toned down in the third and final week of campaigning. The youth had a strong hand in this as they gave voice to their interest in political stability through initiatives such as 'Naabaad-Ku-Codee" (Vote for Peace).

The televised presidential debate that think tank Inspire Group Africa hosted was another historic milestone in the Somaliland election process. For five hours on 19 October, the candidates faced the nation, answering policy questions collected through online social media submissions, which was another positive indication of Somaliland's political maturity. According to data from the organizing team, more than 9 million people followed this debate, which addressed issues ranging from foreign policy to economics and education, youth involvement, and dialogue between Somaliland and Somalia.

On election day, 13 November, the integration of teams of domestic and international observers marked a significant development, both in terms of numbers and in areas of engagement. The Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum (SoNSAF), a leading civil society organization, played a decisive role in adding credibility to the process through training and leading some 600 domestic observers. With 60 members from 27 countries, the International

Election Observation (IEO) mission was a significant supplementary resource as well.

The National Electoral Commission (NEC) used university students to run the polling stations, and there were a significant number of female polling station chairs. This fact encourages the strong hope that this gender mainstreaming in polling stations will be replicated in Somaliland's political parties and government institutional structures too, as promised during the campaign. But most important of all, the peaceful atmosphere on election day was reaffirming in Somaliland and defining in both national and regional election history.

Even in areas where no election has taken place before—particularly in the contested areas of Sool and Sanag regions—the ballot casting went smoothly, without major hiccups. The agreement signed in July 2017 between the government and the 'Khatumo' state, an organization claiming autonomy since 2012 in the Sool, part of Sanag and Cayn regions of southeastern Somaliland, contributed to the stability of the election process in those regions.

Concerns about the election process

While the election was declared peaceful and fair, this does not mean that it was entirely free from irregularities. There

were problems such as under-age voters and inadequate voter education, which was noted as many of the voters were observed seeking assistance in order to vote, which contravened laws about the secrecy of the ballot. The young and enthusiastic polling station staff members were highly motivated but still needed more training as challenges arose, especially during the counting and tallying processes. These problems were linked to loss of control during the demonstrations that cost the lives of five Somalilanders as the opposition party declared its withdrawal from the results finalization discussion due to rumors about the election results before the announcement was made official. The reasonable actions taken by the main opposition party Wadani, which officially submitted a list of concerns as to why the party would not accept the results, was encouraging, and this gave the EMO and the NEC time to address the issues through discussion.

The steps taken by the NEC to calm the situation delayed the results announcement, and this was unsettling for all, as the anticipation of conflict rose, especially in the strongholds of the opposition party. Politicians around the opposition, the majority of whom were former government officials who were purged due to political differences, had created an illusion that the opposition would win the election. Fake news indicating exit poll results substantiated

this narrative. This extended to certain parts of the country to the east. A previous warlord challenged the process in Erigavo and rejected the final outcome. Thanks to existing traditional leaders mature enough to play their role, elders influenced the communities to accept the results and convinced opposition leaders to follow suit. Elders of Somaliland once again made a tremendous contribution to Somaliland's peace and stability by making the parties that lost the election accept the results. The official announcement was made on 22 November 2017, declaring Kulmiye the winning party and Muse Bihi Abdi the President-elect. Fear was high that the opposition would not accept this outcome, but once again Somaliland and its political parties proved to the world their overriding desire for peace and stability.

The opposition party presidential candidate, Mr. Abdirahman Cirro, concealed his disappointment in defeat, saying, "The country will not collapse for my political ambition. The blood of my people will not be shed for it." Needless to say, this is a rare declaration in the Horn of Africa, where personal gain is often valued more than a nation's interest. It is quite an achievement.

With the election of 2017 Somaliland has once again lived up to its image as a beacon of stability, political maturity and democracy-in-action in East Africa.

Democratic practices and peaceful transfers of power have been carried out efficaciously, and Somalilanders have succeeded in putting their political rights into practice, with leaders who have demonstrated that they put their nation first, in spite of all disincentives and perverse motivations. This unrecognized state has set a good example for all of the countries in the region, where all too often elections are a source of conflict and fear.

But election is not an end in itself; rather, it is a mechanism to legitimize new leadership through the choice of the governed. Hence, the President and the next government are faced with layers of responsibilities. The election promises are now real expectations from the communities. Accordingly, the President and his government ought to live up to the promise of job opportunities for unemployed youth and work to develop Somaliland's infrastructure. His government needs to address the quota demands of the women who represented the majority of voters and fight harmful cultural practices. Somaliland should be enabled to become economically capable of resisting pressures from elsewhere. Somaliland has enough resources, and if the government makes bold and brave decisions that might not be popular but could bring a paradigm shift to the state, it would be worth taking the risk.

This would be a starting point for the new government. .

Of course the highest hope among his constituency is that the President may be able to secure Somaliland's international recognition as an independent country. It is known that the President of Somalia was one of the first to congratulate President Muse Bihi, and it is considered the new President's responsibility to begin a serious dialogue on the subject between the two nations—even if six rounds of conversation on the future relations between Somaliland and Somalia have failed in the past. The government needs to constitute a Cabinet with great care, so as not to be seen as a continuation of the seven years of disappointment inherited from the party, and also to avoid alienating the party members who voted and campaigned for Kulmiye. The President has sent out a message: "You elected me by believing in my decisions," and he has stated that only qualified individuals will be appointed to positions assigned on the basis of clan balance. This has been received positively, but it is confusing for Somalilanders too.

Somaliland's new leaders should be prepared to take Somaliland one step further in addressing deep poverty, unemployment and 'corruption' in the country and seize all opportunities available to bring about a political and

economic paradigm shift. Somaliland has remained in the current situation for almost 30 years, perpetually in limbo. The new leadership has to take the country back to the union or proceed on a different trajectory.

The biggest challenge is still whether the leadership in the South is ready to accept the right of the people of Somaliland to self-determination. What can Somaliland bring to the region as a whole? Can it be a key actor in ensuring the peace and stability of the sea lanes? Can it help IGAD and the continent in peacemaking in Somalia? Will it not be fair to engage Somaliland in actively playing a role in security for the Gulf of Aden and the surrounding areas? Whatever Somaliland has been doing in democratizing its society and providing a semblance of peace and stability in this troubled region has not received sufficient attention and appreciation. This has to change for the better, and the leadership has much to do. Somaliland cannot continue in this manner. Small-shop mentality should change and leaders should think big—what is the benefit that Somaliland could provide the region that others are not supplying? Somaliland has a coastline that could bring billions in revenue that could stimulate the entire region's economy and nurture its resources. It cannot continue to sleep on its vast resources, counting years and losing opportunities.

As a practical matter for the time being, the President should focus on advancing the deal with DP World to develop and manage a multi-purpose port project in Berbera. What complicates this is the fact that the Agreement's alleged arrangements were made through Mogadishu during the previous government. But this project may serve to address both internal and external challenges, as it will give the self-declared nation more bargaining power in the eyes of various regional actors. Somalia will not be able to dilly-dally with dialogue on the subject of Somaliland's status, as the project will make this a matter of both sovereignty and economic benefits. As for the other regional actors, states and organizations like IGAD will also pay more attention to Somaliland—not only due to its peaceful and democratic electoral system, but for the changing regional dynamics. Djibouti may well develop a better engagement mechanism, as Berbera is now emerging as a real competitor through becoming an additional port for its main customer, Ethiopia, and the Gulf states' interest shift will require the small but geo-strategically significant nation to review its foreign policy. IGAD will also need to pick up the pace in assuring a tangible dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland, so as to have all-inclusive maritime strategies, lest engagement continue to expand without a well thought-out oversight mechanism. The increased involvement

of many actors in the region could mean further security and instability triggers.

There is much for Somaliland and its neighbors to prepare for, as all of this will come to pass under the administration of the aspiring nation's fifth President. The new President will be key in realizing all these, as he embarks on taking new risks and takes advantage of the opportunities with new vigor and determination. Changing Somaliland and its status are definitely achievable.

President Uhuru Kenyatta sworn in for a second term in Kenya

Uhuru Kenyatta has now been inaugurated President of Kenya, beginning his second, and presumably final term in a ceremony in Nairobi attended by a number of leaders from the region including Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh, as well as President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, among other African leaders. The turnout demonstrated the broader support Mr. Kenyatta enjoys in the region, and may dispel concerns that Kenya might re-experience past election-related political uncertainties.

Without any doubt, Kenya has come a long way since the 2007 presidential poll that brought the country to the brink of civil war. Major reforms introduced in the 2010 constitution proved

instrumental in averting violence and political infighting on the scale witnessed ten years ago. In principle, the reforms put in place 'an independent' electoral system, with a judiciary monitoring the execution of presidential and parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, features of ethnic-based division still linger in the political process, and apparently the reforms fall short of ensuring inclusivity in the democratization process. Decentralization has become very expensive, since rules established have created new players affecting national level politics tremendously.

It is within this general framework that the country conducted its 2017 elections. Reminiscent of the 2007 and 2012 elections, contending parties aligned themselves largely along ethnic lines, each rallying supporters not within the context of a broader national agenda, but rather through power appropriation or sharing arrangements. Observers claim that in the wake of the 2010 reforms, Kenya has succeeded in conducting a relatively smooth presidential election that has brought to power the Kenyatta-Ruto coalition. But, these observers attest, the resilience of these reforms are yet to be tested, as was witnessed during the 2017 elections where the same actors across the political divide competed.

Whatever the merits of the reforms, two consecutive elections were needed to determine Mr. Kenyatta's second term in office as President of the Republic, not because the rules necessitated this, but because the country's court decided so. President Kenyatta won the 8 August election with 54% to his opponent Raila Odinga's 45%; and in the re-run on 26 October, boycotted by rival Raila, Uhuru's coalition obtained 98% of the vote. But doubts about the country's political future still linger, mainly as a result of the decision by Kenya's Supreme Court to annul the results of the 8 August election, and also because of the continued refusal by the opposition party, led by Mr. Raila Odinga, to concede defeat, even going so far as planning to have an inauguration for the opposition leader, although he did not participate in the second round of the elections. Apparently, signals by the supporters of the opposition leader that they would have their own inauguration for Raila met resistance, and the US and other actors are advising the opposition not to do so.

With the formalities out of the way, the Kenyan government must now seek to heal the rift that has occurred in Kenyan society. This presidential election was held twice as the judiciary annulled the first round, and now has endorsed the second one, considered to be much more controversial than the first. Some

considered the decision of the Kenyan Court to be a sign of judicial freedom and hailed it as progress, while others considered it a 'judicial coup' as the ruling coalition had the votes on their side and thus there were insufficient grounds for the annulment. The court's decision in September proved disastrous for the Kenyan economy, as billions were lost in the stock market and more than 60 people were killed in election related violence, exposing deep divisions in the country. Once ruptures like this take place, it may be difficult to stitch a society back together—but obviously it is essential to deploy the resources necessary to begin to do so. With the largest (until recently) and most developed economy in East Africa, Kenya's (in)stability has consequences across the region.

The September 1st decision by Kenya's Supreme Court to annul the results of the 8 August election remains, by any standard, unprecedented and unexpected. It has grave consequences for the political dynamics in the country, the effects of which will definitely reverberate for some time to come. But it is more crucial to underscore the fact that the judiciary ruled in favor of annulment not based on evidence of widespread fraud in a closely contested election. Instead it was due to the failure of the Independent Electoral and Boundary Commission (IEBC) to relay and record tallies electronically, causing

variations in the numbers that precipitated the annulment. So based on this, the Supreme Court discredited the August election results, ruling that the results were "neither transparent nor justifiable," declaring the election "invalid, null and void." In conjunction, the Court ordered that a re-run be conducted within 60 days.

However insignificant the justifications were, the decision by the Supreme Court brought to light several serious challenges confronting electoral politics in Kenya. The prominent ones include the task of improving the electoral commission, ensuring effectiveness and non-partisanship in the way the security forces handle election-related issues, and effective management of the votes. Leading up to the scheduled re-run election on 26 October, aspects of these irregularities in the electoral process became clear, contributing to the impasse following the court's decision, which the opposition was clearly manipulating.

There were attempts to redress the situation by all stakeholders just before the 26 October re-run election. Major contending groups, the incumbent president as well as his main rival, Mr. Raila Odinga, for example, grudgingly accepted the ruling. The IEBC, for its part, took note of Mr. Raila's complaints concerning the election administration; and thereby introduced changes to the

Commission's IT management and security protocols. But allegedly because of time constraints, the Commission was unable to consider demands by the opposition to replace the service providers for the IT vote management system and to secure another company to print ballots and return forms. There were tremendous pressures on the electoral commission that forced some members to flee the country in fear for their lives.

Irrespective of the initial encouraging gestures, however, ethnic divisions became driving factors in the proceedings in the run-up to the 26 October election. In this regard, an array of strictly partisan actions by each group complicated preparations. Prominent among these were the electoral reforms endorsed by the Parliament, wherein members from President Kenyatta's Jubilee Party abound. Likewise, on the part of the opposition the announcement of withdrawal from the re-run election by Mr. Odinga on 10 October, and his subsequent declaration of intent to boycott the vote followed by his unilateral promise to address the nation on the "way forward" on the eve of the election all significantly affected the process.

There were also mixed signals from the opposition leader as to whether he would participate in the re-run, adding

more bewilderment. There was also apparent confusion in the IEBC, demonstrated by disagreements among commissioners over how to handle the Supreme Court's decision; the subsequent resignation and departure to the US of the commissioner Ms. Roselyn Akombe on 18 October; the statement by the Chairman of the IEBC to the effect that he cannot guarantee a credible vote within the expected timeline; and the forced departure for a leave of absence of the IEBC chief executive officer, Mr. Ezra Chioba. All of this adversely influenced the electoral process.

It was in the context of these broader challenges that the 26 October presidential election was conducted. The main opposition leader boycotted the elections, and only 39% of voters turned out (in contrast with 80% for the first election), allowing President Kenyatta a 98% landslide victory. This also indicated that the vast majority of those who participated were Uhuru's supporters, and that the opposition had succeeded in keeping more than its share of voters at home. This was intended to delegitimize the entire process.

The Court that had annulled the previous election, on the other hand, is the same one that upheld this controversial re-run election, declaring it legitimate. Most commentators would

agree that the first election that the court annulled was more legitimate and convincing than the second election, both in terms of voter participation and credibility of contest.

In point of fact, there was never much doubt about who would win the presidential election. Politics on the basis of ethnic-based constituency alliances plays the biggest role in Kenyan elections, as in other countries in the sub-region, if not in the larger continent, and it is a simple question of numbers. The alliance between the Kikuyu and Kalenjin is numerically challenging to beat. The personalities involved and the tyranny of numbers compared to the alliances of Luo and other minority ethnic groups makes the question rhetorical, and that is why the two major ethnic groups have dominated in Kenyan politics since independence.

So some of the questions that one could contemplate are as follows: Why did the Supreme Court overturn the initial election results—is it because the judiciary has ethnic inclinations favoring the opposition? Was it truly a question of judicial independence, as it was hailed in western media? Short of engaging on the negative political rhetoric, what does the opposition envisage for the future? Irrespective of the 'landslide' victory, can President Kenyatta's government bring the divided

country together? These issues will determine Kenya's stability in the short-term, and the way each item will be addressed potentially impacts the way forward and the long-term stability of the nation. Election victory aside, the new government has to win the hearts and minds of all Kenyans and prove that it is there for everyone. A better elite bargain will also help in addressing dissenting voices. After all, political entrepreneurs manipulate popular discontent. Therefore, unless tangible steps are taken to compensate for misgivings about the electoral procedures, to address the qualms of those who really are opposing the ruling party and to relieve some of the prominent institutional and constitutional challenges informing the recent political life of the country, then Kenya may be heading for far greater uncertainties.

Kenya has long been a beacon of peace and a resounding economic success in a region that has lacked these features. It would be a great misfortune if Kenya were to join the community of troubled states, tremendously affecting the peace, stability and development of the whole region. Most agree that there is a great deal at stake in Kenya, both for the region and for other countries with significant interests. Therefore, it remains imperative that Kenyans rise to the challenge and forge a universally acceptable way forward, in the best

interest of their country as well as the region.

Revitalization of the IGAD led peace process for South Sudan: More challenges ahead

South Sudan's ills continue unabated. The country's humanitarian situation is deepening by the day, and the political crisis continues to intensify. Given the policies pursued by the government and the opposition inside and outside the country, reversing the downward spiral of South Sudan will be increasingly difficult. The consultation stage of the revitalization process that the IGAD Heads of State and Government announced in June 2017 has been completed and the IGAD Council of Ministers is expected to deliberate on the matter on 15 December 2017 in Addis Ababa. There are challenges ahead, and signals that the government is unhappy about the report on the consultation process. The South Sudan government, through its ambassador, openly expressed this in a meeting of the IGAD Plus convened in Addis Ababa.

Apart from the discontents of the consultations, hopelessness is developing due to the parties' lack of readiness to compromise and jointly address the challenges the country faces, the further fragmentation of the opposition, the growing proliferation of initiatives by regional and extra-regional powers, and lack of clarity on the way

forward. In particular, some of the initiatives taken by extra-regional powers are heartless, because the people of South Sudan need genuine support instead of being used as pawns in a geo-political game by those who will not be effected by whatever happens in South Sudan, as well as potentially dangerous because of the huge implications for regional peace and security. Some are questioning whether the revitalization process can succeed if the objective will challenge the leadership in power in Juba. The Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was signed in 2015 between known stakeholders, and the issues that legitimized the existing leadership were outlined. Implementation mechanisms for reform were put in place. Yet decisions made at the beginning have undermined expeditious implementation of the ARCSS. These include the creation of 28 states that have now increased to 32, and the impossibility of incorporating the ARCSS into the constitution within the time permitted in the Agreement, which the government is now considering doing. But for all this, IGAD should not have remained silent. By not making a peep about the implications of these decisions on the integrity and implementation of the agreement, it allowed the process to face challenges as indicated by the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) report. While the government

announced the national dialogue and declared a unilateral ceasefire, IGAD did welcome the move. But, the national dialogue did not go anywhere and the unilateral ceasefire has been broken. Taking all of this together, some South Sudanese actors question what exactly IGAD is trying to do now through this "revitalization." While at the beginning the Government was undermining the agreement, it now sees the ARCSS as the only vehicle that will legitimize it and probably provide the legal framework for elections to be conducted. IGAD has already endorsed the prospect of elections in South Sudan in a communiqué it adopted, contrary to the beliefs of South Sudanese and the international community, who cite the total chaos the country finds itself in, including the absolute lack of resources if international partners decline to fund the process. Indeed, the Presidential Statement issued by the UN Security Council on 14 December states, "The Security Council takes note of the September 2017 mid-term implementation status report of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) and its findings that the parties to the conflict have failed to implement substantive elements of the [ARCSS] and that conditions for credible elections do not presently exist."

Of course IGAD has now finalized the first round of consultations in its efforts to revitalize the ARCSS, and people are

expecting that the next phase of the revitalization process will happen soon and should probably be completed before the January 2018 AU Summit. There is no doubt that if all of the parties cooperate in good faith, there is a possibility that the effort may succeed. All parties, including the exiled Riek Machar, former military generals who fell out with Juba, political parties locally and in exile were consulted internally and elsewhere in the region. The next step is to decide on who should be participating, where and when, and develop next steps to take the process forward. But this undertaking will be facing challenges related to issues of inclusivity, as the various armed groups must participate in a united way. The proposed meeting of the opposition in Djibouti, to create a united front, has faltered since IGAD did not show its enthusiasm for this effort. Furthermore, a combination of factors ranging from the worsening political and humanitarian crisis in South Sudan to the visible lack of coordination among international partners engaged in the process will send messages to those internal actors who wish to create obstacles on the way forward. The lack of clarity, on where to go after ending the consultations is evident. This must be clarified now. The relative strength of the government in relation to further fragmentation of the opposition will also add more challenges.

The challenges by IGAD countries to fully coordinate their activities, let alone to have a common policy, has created an opportunity for the proliferation of initiatives, which some IGAD members are spearheading through their proxies and with other extra-regional actors. Egypt, for example, in collaboration with Uganda, a member of IGAD, has hosted an SPLM unification meeting, a continuation of the Arusha SPLM unification meetings that has created more obstacles than solutions for the IGAD led peace process that resulted in the ARCSS. Even if these parties are calling their effort “complementary,” in actual fact they are undermining the existing IGAD-led peace process. This should stop. The effort to insert the SPLM Former Detainees into the government, in order to prop up the government in Juba, has other regional implications as well. Given the way the Sudan views the role of the Former Detainees in shaping relations between South Sudan and Sudan following the independence of South Sudan, Khartoum might be disappointed with the move—as it appears to be the target of this effort. The changing regional dynamics related to the Nile waters might also contribute to the discontent.

Of course, as per the decisions of IGAD Heads of State and Government during their 31st Extraordinary Summit (12 June 2017) that provided for the establishment of the High Level

Revitalization Forum (HLRF) of ARCSS, a series of meetings and consultations have been conducted with the South Sudan stakeholders including representatives of IGAD Plus, a group consisting of IGAD states, the AU High Level Ad hoc Committee on South Sudan (known as the AU5 – South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Chad and Rwanda), the Troika, the AU, the UN, the EU and China. This was undertaken with a view to generating consensus on resolving the crisis in South Sudan and applying much-desired pressure on the conflicting parties, more so on the Government in Juba, to comply with the provisions of the 2015 Agreement. More importantly, through the indicative matrix for the HLRF, IGAD states established an ambitious timeline that ultimately provides for the submission of an ARCSS Revitalization Resolution to the IGAD Summit by the year's end.

The revitalization's consultation phase has identified critical issues. These critical issues could only succeed as a process if compromises are made on the basis of what is offered. There is a need to identify the issues and the cards that may entice the parties to make concessions and have meaningful conversations towards that end. One should not assume that the parties will be involved in identifying them or sifting through more discussions if they are not shown clearly. Moreover these compromises and suggestions should

win the full support of the IGAD region and the IGAD Plus so that they can be realized.

It should be known that the pre-forum consultations unearthed serious differences among the various segments of the conflict in South Sudan, and the variations in understanding of existing realities of the country obviously forced them to put forward solutions that are contradictory. And now there is a clear indication that might trigger differences between members of IGAD Plus on the approach and methodologies to employ on the way forward to resolving the crisis in that country on the basis of these variations. For instance, concerning the number of states to be constituted, views ranged from 3 to 28, and many insisted on comprehensively reviewing government institutions and postponing the scheduled election. Some are demanding a complete overhaul of the system, triggering a reaction from the TGoNU. Some of the proposals demand a complete revision of the ARCSS, and IGAD needs to prepare itself adequately for this.

Obviously, the Government of South Sudan considers the revitalization process only helpful insofar as it legitimizes its plan. When the process is perceived to have overstepped in accommodating actors that might threaten the power balance in its view, Juba might engage in accusing the HLRF

of exceeding its mandate by accommodating the political interests of decedent elements and meddling in affairs which should remain solely the preserve of the state. But this will not help South Sudan. The Government needs to consider proposals in good faith for the sake of peace and stability in the country.

These challenges in particular were witnessed during the 22 November meeting of the IGAD Plus in Addis Ababa. Irrespective of the turnout and enthusiasm, the event revealed the divergence of views on IGAD's handling of the matter so far, as much as the actual issue itself. Members of the AU5, in particular, expressed their frustration about being left out of the consultations, and complained about the challenges of getting access to documents explaining the consultation process. Their repeated objections to not being adequately consulted beforehand and their concerted effort to call into question the activities undertaken thus far may be a signal that those spearheading the consultations should do more legwork and hold prior consultations individually involving both the AU High Representative to South Sudan and the AU5. The creation of frameworks to engage members of the AU5 and the AU High-level Representative in the process will be critical in smoothing relations and creating harmony in the revitalization endeavor. The parties to the conflict,

beyond seeing differences and loopholes, are unbeatable in their capacity to manipulate variances between external actors. The proliferation of initiatives is considered a windfall. The recent effort by Uganda and Egypt to reconcile part of the SPLM-Former Detainees in Cairo and the subsequent agreement that was signed reflects this challenge. The relations the Former Detainees have with the Sudan, the Ugandan and Egyptian intention to prop up the government in Juba and determine the fate of South Sudan with a longer-term perspective has been taken into consideration in this effort. In this context, ensuring a timely coordination mechanism that will avoid institutional bickering between IGAD and the AU in relation to the crisis in South Sudan is critical, both for the revitalization process and in denying the South Sudanese elites the opportunity to manipulate the differences.

The meeting also witnessed efforts by some who were trying to discredit the revitalization and the consultations that IGAD held with various South Sudan actors, directly contradicting the 12 June 2017 decisions by IGAD Heads of State and Government. They did not shy away from lamenting IGAD's effort as if it was an effort to consult with 'power hungry persons' residing in hotels in regional capitals. They also brushed off the notion that the current initiative represents 'the last opportunity for

South Sudan to achieve peace,' arguing that peace is a process not necessarily bound to a tight timetable, and expressed South Sudan's preference that the AU handle the revitalization effort rather than IGAD. This is precisely what has been outlined earlier, the elite's capacity to manipulate real or perceived differences between external actors, trying to divide the various parties seeking to resolve the crisis in the country.

This, therefore, calls for a firm position of IGAD and unequivocal support from the international community. In this connection, the statement issued by the IGAD Partners' Forum reaffirming the support to the High-Level Revitalization Forum is crucial. The IPF stated that it welcomes the consultations and the preparations for the HLRF conducted by IGAD and its Special Envoy and underscored that the HLRF provides a unique opportunity for all parties to demonstrate commitment to reach a long-lasting political solution to the crisis in South Sudan. It also called for urgently convening the HLRF without further delay. In this connection, IGAD countries should be able to do more through actively engaging forums such as the IPF and the IGAD Plus in a coordinated and organized manner. The 22 November meeting revealed that some IGAD member states show indifference in defending the revitalization process and the

consultations, as well as the findings of those consultations. Although IGAD Ministers endorsed the consultations report during their meeting on the sidelines of the AU-EU partnership meeting in Abidjan, they need to do more to defend the activities of IGAD and JMEC, and to argue in favor of exposing and punishing spoilers and violators of the ceasefire agreement currently in place in South Sudan. Referring to the endorsement of the Pre-Forum report by the Council of Ministers, in the absence of the TGoNU, the President of the Republic of South Sudan wrote a letter to the IGAD Chairperson protesting his government's rejection of the report. The letter accuses the IGAD Special Envoy of failing to engage the TGoNU but reflecting in the report the views expressed by the Former Detainees and other opposition groups. The letter further emphasizes the need to present the report to the Council of Ministers of IGAD and then agree to eventually present it to the Heads of State for endorsement, which will then—finally—decide where, when and who participates in the High Level Revitalization Forum. This message will be the major stumbling block on the way forward. Hence, as significant partners to the peace process and as neighbors, one would expect more direct engagement with the Government of South Sudan from all IGAD member states without exception. The

Chairperson of IGAD has responded to the request of President Salva, highlighting the fact that the Pre-consultations report indicates only the records of the discussions with the various stakeholders and hence these are not necessarily final conclusions of the process, and he has urged the TGoNU to participate fully in the deliberations of the HLRF in a way that reassures the government in Juba.

If one factors in the various positions taken by IGAD Plus members and the TGoNU on the issue of revitalizing the peace process in South Sudan, more questions are raised than answered about the future. Even if the Government of South Sudan appears reluctant to accommodate recommendations that will be forwarded by the IGAD-led process, if the process includes estranged groups and others who might enter into a power-sharing arrangement that results in the redistribution of resources availed to the government at the center as well, there is a need to encourage the Government to see the effort in a positive light. Moreover, differences revealed between IGAD and the AU5 should quickly be fixed so that there is more coordination and collaboration. Likewise, the UN-AU partnership when it comes to the crisis in South Sudan, as compared to their collaboration on Somalia and elsewhere in Africa, has much room for improvement. On 29 November, the

Assistant Secretary General of Peace Keeping Operations and the IGAD Special Envoy to South Sudan briefed the Security Council on South Sudan. Following deliberations, the Council has come up with suggestions to address the current realities in the peace process and provide guidelines for future action.

As the Presidential Statement issued by the UN Security Council on 14 December underlined, "The Security Council expresses its strong support for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) High-Level Revitalization Forum (HLRF) for the Agreement and looks forward to the convening and full inclusivity of such a Forum and substantive progress on the initiative by the end of December. The initiative will need strong, coordinated, and cohesive regional support and the Security Council urges IGAD to continue efforts in this vein. The Security Council strongly urges all parties to engage constructively in the process to revitalize the Agreement, underlines that no party should set pre-conditions to participation, and that there must be cost and consequences for those who undermine the HLRF process."

This combined with the visible divergence of views among stakeholders, including some differences even among some IGAD states on issues related to South Sudan, is expected to challenge the revitalization

process. Given the seriousness of the situation awaiting the peace process, it would be wise to advocate and encourage all of South Sudan's actors and their international partners to rise to the challenge, consider the lives of the South Sudanese at stake and move forward with determination to find a long-lasting solution to the crisis in that country. If the process goes astray of the intended plan, those who are supporting the peace process financially and politically will have difficulty in convincing their constituencies as to why they should continue supporting it. There will also be a serious legitimacy question that will be raised about the ability of IGAD to move the peace process forward.

Hence, the upcoming IGAD Council session to be held over the weekend should pull its act together and be firm in ensuring cohesion within IGAD member states and deliver clear outlines on the way forward. There is a lot of expectation and hope from the people of South Sudan. Staying on course and putting pressure on the actors to resolve the crisis is not only a must, but also the only choice IGAD has for the time being.

Seminar discusses decisions of the 19th National Congress of the CPC

In collaboration with the Mission of the People's Republic of China to the African Union, CDRC organized a public seminar on 9 November 2017 at the Sheraton

Addis on the topic "The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China: What will it mean for Africa and the rest of the world?"

Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, President of the Board of Trustees of CDRC, and Amb. Kuang Wellin, Head of Mission of the People's Republic of China to the African Union, delivered keynote addresses to attendees who included representatives of the Ethiopian Government, the diplomatic community and researchers from public and private institutions.

The Seminar introduced the major aspects of the national and foreign policy goals outlined during the Congress that was held in Beijing on 18-25 October 2017. During this Congress, the Communist Party of China (CPC) reviewed the party's work over the past five years, elected its top leadership and unveiled the country's national and foreign policy goals.

In his speech, Ambassador Seyoum took note of what China has achieved in recent decades, pointing out that they are today one of the largest economies in the world. He emphasized that China supported Africa during the continent's first phase of struggle, the struggle for independence, and is now showing support for Africa in its second phase of struggle, against poverty and hunger. "With wealth and economic power comes global responsibility, and as

China emerges closer to global leadership, it is increasing assistance to developing countries, one of which is Ethiopia," he said.

Ambassador Seyoum finished his remarks with mention of a report on *China's Engagement in Africa* by David Dollar, a senior fellow at the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution, who after conducting research in five African countries concludes that China's engagement with Africa is a *win-win* scenario.

Ambassador Kuang Wellin, after explaining how the 19th CPC National Congress is of great importance, at a decisive stage in the country's development, summarized the main outcomes of the Congress as follows: 1) China has entered a new era of development; 2) China has mapped out a new blueprint for its long-term development; 3) China has established new thoughts; and 4) the CPC has elected new leadership. He also indicated that for China, the Congress means that the country has entered a new stage of economic development, social development, environmental protection and better governance. When speaking of China's foreign policy, Amb. Kuang said that it is based on mutual respect, win-win cooperation, fairness and justice.

Amb. Kuang indicated that China will increase assistance to developing

countries, especially the least developed countries, and do its part to narrow the North-South development gap. "China and Africa have always belonged to a community of shared destiny, bound together by similar historical suffering and the common task of development. Over the past five decades and more, we have always been good friends who stand together through thick and thin, good partners who share weal and woe, and good brothers who fully trust each other despite changes in the international landscape."

China's development will bring more opportunities and offer new inspiration to Africa. China will also contribute more to peace and security in Africa, according to Amb. Kuang.

The prepared remarks were followed by a brief question and answer session.