

Drought and the African Union's Pledging Conference

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Drought and the African Union's Pledging Conference

The African Union held its pledging Conference for countries in the Horn of Africa affected by drought and famine in the Horn of Africa yesterday, August 25. It was attended by representatives of governments and regional economic communities and of the organizations of the United Nations, of various inter-governmental organizations from inside and outside Africa, civil society organizations and invited delegations from partner countries. Few heads of state and government attended, with only those from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea and Somalia being present.

The meeting, organized under the theme "One Africa, One Voice against Hunger" was in total agreement on the extent of the disaster and the emergency, and on the need to save lives, urgently, now. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Jean Ping emphasized that there was no time for rhetoric. "Concrete action was needed through the pronouncement of redeemable pledges to build concerted action by Africa against hunger on the continent." He underlined the severity of the drought with the point that one in four children in the south of Somalia was severely malnourished. As the UN Deputy Secretary General, Asha-Rose Migaro, said: "... by the time we go to sleep to night, 13 children will have died in every community of 10,000 people. She added: "If we do not respond, the consequences will reverberate for years. We will be asked how we stood by and watched a generation die, how we allowed a crisis to become a catastrophe, when we could have stopped it."

Food insecurity is predicted to remain at a critical level for months, and indeed to continue to deteriorate in many areas. This was why the African Union had organized this pledging conference to raise resources and awareness amongst member states and the wider international community. The conference was there to give a voice to African solidarity with those affected people. It confirmed the commitment, with donor support, to address the immediate humanitarian need, and to expand support to people's livelihoods by sustained humanitarian intervention until stability is achieved. The aim was to send a clear message to the international community that the African Union was fully engaged with this crisis, and was taking a leading role in the effort to save lives.

In his speech to the conference, Prime Minister Meles noted that Ethiopia, thanks to an effective early warning system and drought risk management mechanisms, has managed to contain the humanitarian emergency in the country. The government had been distributing food to those in need from its Emergency Food Security Reserve. He said that it had now decided to buy and import 300,000 tons of wheat to restock the strategic reserve and ensure there was adequate food in the pipeline. He said that a major element of the tragedy in Somalia had been because there was no effective or efficient system for distributing aid. The callous disregard of Al-Shabaab for the people had forced them to travel for weeks to get aid.

The lack of peace and stability and the consequent absence of governmental institutions had hindered effective responses. Somalia was the country most affected by the drought and famine, though the famine was largely found in the parts of Somalia under Al-Shabaab. Joint assistance efforts should concentrate on that country. Prime Minister Meles, the current chair of IGAD, confirmed that the IGAD region was playing its role by opening doors to refugees as Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya were already doing. Ethiopia, he said, was currently hosting more than 160,000 refugees from Somalia in its Dollo Ado camps and in other places.

By the end of the conference, pledges reached 351.7 million dollars in cash and a further 28 million in kind. 300 million dollars of this came from the African Development Bank, the rest from African countries and other private donors. As Dr. Jean Ping noted, this marked the first large scale African effort to deal with a humanitarian crisis on the continent. It showed that African countries were ready to come together to raise resources to help end suffering in African states; certainly, as he underlined, the doors opened for the Somali people in Djibouti, in Ethiopia and in Kenya, all suffering themselves from drought, demonstrated the strength of solidarity in Africa.

Some of the civil society groups and international agencies were disappointed at the level of the response. "Africans Act 4 Africa" said it had expected more, and that three countries provided nearly half the pledges: Algeria (\$10 million), Angola (\$5 million) and Egypt (\$5 million), and Gambia, Mauritania and Congo-Brazzaville gave more than their proportional share.

The UN says that there are still major shortfalls to deal with the overall drought emergency in which at least 12.4 million people in East Africa and the Horn of Africa are in need of emergency help, and the current shortfall in funding for the region is still over 1 billion dollars. A total of a billion dollars has been requested for Somalia itself, the worst affected area, and of this some 57% has been raised.

As the AU pledging summit opened in Addis Ababa on Thursday, Mark Bowden, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, warned that famine was about to spread to two more regions of southern Somalia. Middle and Lower Juba are expected to be added to the other five regions declared as famine areas. This means that at least 20 percent of households in the regions are facing extreme food shortages, acute malnutrition in a third of the population and a minimum of two deaths per ten thousand a day. Middle and Lower Juba regions are largely controlled by Al-Shabaab though pro-government forces are establishing themselves along the border with Kenya. At the moment access to the worst affected areas still remains severely limited. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) "most of southern Somalia remains inaccessible to the majority of humanitarian organizations, making the provision of humanitarian assistance challenging."

The latest figures from OCHA are that 3.7 million people in Somalia are affected by drought and famine and currently require food assistance throughout Somalia. Assistance is reaching only an estimated 48%. The World Food Program says it is providing food assistance to some 1.5 million people in central and northern Somalia and Mogadishu, and was now trying to reach another 2.2 million people in southern areas. Overall there has been an estimated 15% increase in the number of child malnutrition cases, from 390,000 to 450,000, of whom 190,000 suffer from severe acute malnutrition. Three quarters of those suffering from malnutrition are in the south of the country. Confirmed cases of cholera and acute watery diarrhea are on the rise in crowded urban and refugee centers, as are suspected measles cases.

Internal displacement of people is continuing to increase and UNHCR now estimates that about a quarter of the population of Somalia (about 1.8 million people) have been uprooted since the beginning of the year. This massive displacement is continuing as people try to reach areas of food and shelter. The Dadaab camps in Kenya now have about 450,000 refugees; the Dollo Ado camps in Ethiopia another 120,000.

International assistance for the crisis is continuing to grow. Last week the Organization of Islamic Cooperation promised 350 million dollars and said it hoped to increase that to 500 million dollars. At the weekend, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, launched a national fundraising campaign by donating SR20 million. A telethon collected nearly SR100 million by early Tuesday and was extended for another day. Crown Prince Sultan, Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense and Aviation, gave SR10 million to the fund, and Second Deputy Premier and Minister of Interior Prince Naïf donated SR5 million. In a statement Prince Naïf urged Saudi businessmen, banks, businesses and philanthropists to donate generously to the people of Somalia during the holy month of Ramadan. WFP Executive Director, Josette Sheeran, said the campaign was in response to its appeal for funds to help save the lives of thousands of children. Earlier, WFP said it had received a Saudi donation of \$50 million.

IGAD's Council of Ministers meets on drought and Somalia, no room for Eritrea

IGAD's Council of Ministers convened its 40th Extraordinary Session on Wednesday in Addis Ababa to discuss the drought and current political developments with particular emphasis on Somalia. The meeting, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ato Hailemariam, the current chair of the IGAD Council, was attended by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somalia's TFG, Mohamed Mahmoud Ibrahim; Djibouti's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf; the State Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Kenya; and representatives of Uganda and Sudan as well as Mr. Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD and the Honourable Kipruto arap Kirwa, IGAD Facilitator for Somalia Peace and Reconciliation, and Dr. Jean Ping.

In his opening remarks, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ato Hailemariam noted that the Council had often held meetings at times of crisis but seldom at such a critical time with the region in general and Somalia in particular facing their severest ever problems of food security. He said it was IGAD's responsibility to go beyond emergency solutions, to deal with root causes and draw up long-term regional solutions. The outcome of the meeting should be creative strategies to deal with both the drought and the current political situation.

Following detailed discussions, the Council commended the efforts of IGAD member states to help Somalia mitigate the effects of the drought, and of the international community for its generous response to the crisis. It expressed gratitude to the governments of Djibouti, Sudan and Uganda for their continued assistance, and to the Governments of Kenya and Ethiopia for receiving, hosting and assisting tens of thousands of refugees. It praised the on-going discussions between IGAD Secretariat, the African Development Bank and the World Bank to develop a long-term strategy to reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience. It reaffirmed IGAD's readiness and commitment to enhance existing national and regional strategies to protect natural resources, improve food security, and strengthen rapid response and effective disaster management.

The Council appealed to IGAD Member States and to the international community to promote relevant measures of emergency aid and increase their humanitarian assistance. It urged the international community to support the creation of humanitarian assistance corridors particularly in the liberated areas to reduce refugee outflows and stabilize the population inside Somalia. It called on member states to put in place medium and long term investments for sustainable agricultural growth and rural development, and instructed the IGAD Secretariat to enhance its early warning and response mechanism to allow for rapid responses to any future crises. The Council commended the African Union for organizing this week's pledging conference on the drought and called upon participants to contribute generously and to translate their pledges into tangible assistance for the affected populations.

On Somalia, the Council directed the Executive Secretary of IGAD to set up a team to assess the implications of Al-Shabaab's withdrawal from Mogadishu, on the humanitarian, political and security situation, and to recommend further action. It urged all IGAD member states to continue supporting the political process in Somalia and make all efforts for the full realization of the Kampala Accord.

In its final communiqué the Council underlined the credibility of IGAD as a regional organization governed by established rules and procedure. It urged these should be followed in the conduct of business and that the application of Eritrea for re-admission to IGAD should therefore follow the appropriate procedures including consideration by the Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government. The Council reaffirmed the decision on Eritrea taken by the 18th Extraordinary Summit of Heads of States and Government of IGAD in July, and called on the United Nations Security Council "to bring the matter to a speedy conclusion".

At the IGAD Summit in July, the IGAD Heads of State and Government concluded that the evidence of Eritrean destabilization was conclusive and that appropriate measures should be taken by the UN for the sake of international peace and security. They called on the UN Security Council to fully support AMISOM, to enforce an air and sea blockade, and to take all measures to fully implement existing sanctions and to impose additional sanctions, selectively but especially on those economic and mining sectors on which the Eritrean regime relied to carry out its regional destabilization activities.

Eritrea has, of course, announced that it wishes to rejoin IGAD and its deputy head of mission to the AU appeared at the meeting on Wednesday. However, he was informed by IGAD's Executive Secretary, Mahboub Maalim, that Eritrea had not been invited to the session because the status of its membership was unresolved. He said it must be discussed at the highest level at the next IGAD summit.

President Isaias in Kampala

President Isaias Afewerki of Eritrea was in Kampala last week in a move that had many people wondering if this was a step towards finally beginning the process of mending fences with neighbors after over a decade of self-imposed isolation. However, surprising as the visit might have been, it was rapidly clear that mending fences was the last thing President Isaias was losing any sleep over. Indeed, if there any people naive enough to believe that the regime in Asmara was finally thinking of behaving in a somewhat normal way, the Kampala visit must certainly have shattered their hopes.

From the little we know about the purpose of his visit, Isaias clearly wanted to convey the message that he isn't to blame for any of the things of which the international community accuses him. The prospect of tightening Security Council sanctions is looming large. This is forcing President Isaias to appear to make a sudden about-face, but even then he is clearly not ready to make any changes in policy or behavior. Security Council Resolution 1907 demands that Eritrea acknowledge its conflict with Djibouti and evacuate Djibouti territory; stop support to extremists in Somalia; and end Eritrea's destabilization activities in the region as a whole. At his press conference in Kampala, President Isaias denied Eritrea's involvement in all three. He then went on to tell the world to rethink its policy on Somalia and to consider adopting the President Isaias' roadmap for what he called "the reconstitution" of Somalia. This appears to be an attempt to add yet another layer to the already complicated situation in Somalia – a situation to which President Isaias has contributed more than most. His argument may be summed up as: the TFG is useless; AMISOM is illegitimate; Al-Shabaab is no problem; Eritrea is not and never has been a destabilizing force. In other words President Isaias wasn't prepared to admit anything and was clearly unwilling to change at all.

It was vintage Isaias in content, though (apparently) not in form. President Isaias clearly wants to avoid any tightening of sanctions but is trying to do this on the cheap without making any commitment to changing his destructive regional policies. His advisor, Yemane Gebre-ab, was even blunter in his reluctance to disassociate Eritrea from Al-Shabaab. When asked by a BBC reporter if he would condemn the activities of Al-Shabaab, he was decidedly circumspect, even refusing to classify Al-Shabaab as an extremist organization.

President Isaias told the Ugandan public that the world is quite wrong about Eritrea. Eritrea was no more than a victim of the international community's coordinated campaign of disseminated lies and disinformation. He told reporters in Kampala he was not worried about sanctions or anything else, and he had not come to Kampala to solicit support from President Museveni to avoid sanctions. Whatever his real or ostensible reasons for the visit, the one thing that was repeatedly emphasized in all of President Isaias' public utterances while in Kampala was the continued denial of any responsibility for the regime's obvious and now public destabilization activities. There was no indication of any change of heart or policy. All his remarks demonstrated were the regime's incorrigibility. It was very clear that any change of policy or behaviour was a long way off. In fact, all that President Isaias' apparent change of mind about diplomacy indicates is that he retains his offensive disdain for normal behaviour. He is merely adding insult to the injuries his regime has already inflicted on the entire region.

The Foreign Ministers of Turkey, Nigeria and Egypt in Addis Ababa

The Foreign Ministers of Turkey, of Nigeria and of Egypt have been visiting Addis Ababa this week, and holding talks with Ethiopian officials. On Monday, Turkish Foreign Minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, visited Ethiopia, following a visit to Somalia where he was one of five ministers accompanying Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan there on Friday last week. That visit was designed to draw international attention to the famine and Foreign Minister Davutoglu said subsequently he hoped that Mr. Erdogan's visit would be a "signal rocket" to open the way for more people to reach out to Somalia, He said people should visit Somalia and "fulfil their humanitarian responsibilities so that Somalia can get back on its feet".

In Ethiopia, Foreign Minister Davutoglu met with Prime Minister Meles and briefed him on Turkey's activities in Africa and on his visit to Somalia. The talks covered regional and international issues as well as bilateral concerns. Prime Minister Meles underlined the long and satisfactory relations existing between Ethiopia and Turkey and said these had gained momentum with diversified economic links. He said there was rich potential for intensified cooperation and Ethiopia hoped more Turkish investors would come to Ethiopia. Foreign Minister Davutoglu told journalists later that Ethiopia was one of the strategic partners of Turkey. Turkish companies had created more than 30,000 jobs in Ethiopia and the government was encouraging companies to come and invest in Ethiopia.

Mr. Davutoglu also met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam Desalegn for talks on bilateral and regional matters; and the two ministers agreed to hold more frequent consultations on Somalia and on Libya. Later, Mr. Davutoglu visited the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Dr. Jean Ping. Talks covered bilateral cooperation between Turkey and the AU, as well as the situation in Somalia and Libya. Mr. Davutoglu pointed out that Turkey had increased the number of embassies in Africa from 12 to 33 this year, and had designated an ambassador for the latest embassy which was going to be opened in Mogadishu. Mr. Davutoglu took the opportunity to praise the crucial role being played by AMISOM. Mr. Davutoglu and Dr. Ping agreed that the mid-term Ministerial meeting of the Turkey-Africa Strategic Dialogue could be held before the end of the year in Istanbul.

On Wednesday this week, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Ato Hailemariam Desalegn met with Nigeria's Foreign Minister, Olubenga Ashiru, and in a joint press statement, they announced Ethiopia and Nigeria's recognition of the National Transitional Council in Libya. The statement said that "in the interests of the peace and stability, and the wellbeing of the people of Libya, the governments of Ethiopia and Nigeria have decided to jointly recognize the NTC as the interim and legitimate authority in Libya." The statement said that recent events amply demonstrated that the NTC was in control of the greater part of the country, including the capital, Tripoli. It called upon "all peace-loving countries in general and African countries and the African Union in particular to contribute to peace and stability in Libya by recognizing the authority and legitimacy of the NTC". It said that Ethiopia and Nigeria were ready to extend to the NTC "the support necessary to facilitate the achievement of the difficult tasks of establishing an inclusive transitional government, reconstruction, national reconciliation, and peace building in order to meet the yearnings and legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people for human rights, democracy, the rule of law and good governance." Ethiopia and Nigeria urged the African Union and its members to be consistent and extend to the NTC the same support and recognition that had been extended to Tunisia and Egypt.

On Thursday, Prime Minister Meles held talks with Egypt's Foreign Minister, Mohamed Kamal Amre who stressed that the Egyptian government wanted to enhance the existing amicable relations between the two countries. Discussions covered Somalia and Sudan, and Prime Minister Meles emphasized the importance of an urgent response from the international community to the drought and the importance of relief aid reaching people before they were forced to leave their home areas. Prime Minister Meles accepted an invitation to visit Egypt. Mr. Amre also met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hailemariam to discuss bilateral relations and ways to further strengthen ties between Egypt and Ethiopia. The ministers agreed that a meeting of the Joint Ministerial Commission should be held as soon as possible, probably in September.

TFG and AMISOM consolidating in Mogadishu

Although Al-Shabaab forces have largely retreated from Mogadishu following their series of defeats by AMISOM and the TFG, its leadership remains essentially intact, if not entirely united. It has dispersed throughout the areas of southern Somalia that it still controls and threatens hit and run and terrorist attacks even in Mogadishu. Mogadishu, as the seat of the government, remains the place where the government's performance is most easily assessed by the external stakeholders. With the absence of Al-Shabaab, the government's efforts to establish law and order and the quick actions against abusive soldiers have already started to give it a better image. The TFG's readiness to use the available grassroots support of Ahlu-Sunna wal Jama'a in the Banadir region has demonstrated an increased capacity to adapt; and police units and administrative support are already being deployed in the districts liberated from Al-Shabaab.

Prime Minister Abdiweli Mohamed Ali addressed a rally in Mogadishu's Stadium on Tuesday, until recently a training ground for Al-Shabaab fighters. Thousands of Somalis gathered to celebrate the withdrawal of Al-Shabaab forces. The Prime Minister thanked both AMISOM and the TFG forces for their efforts. He said that the government forces had achieved their victories despite a number of difficulties, including lack of salary and logistical support, adding that "Within a short period we shall get rid of Al-Shabaab from the country." Those attending the rally made it clear they were tired of being intimidated by Al-Shabaab, and they hoped it would not return.

On Monday, the ninth session of the Joint Security Committee (JSC) convened in Mogadishu, co-chaired by Prime Minister Abdiweli Ali and the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Augustine Mahiga. Present were representatives from AMISOM, the EU and the Arab league, Denmark, France, Japan, Sweden, the UK and the USA as well as senior TFG officials and ministers. The JSC commended the TFG and AMISOM for the progress made, and recognized the efforts of AMISOM, thanking Uganda and Burundi for the support that they have provided. It welcomed the expansion of the TFG's area of control elsewhere in the country as well as in Mogadishu. It appealed to the international community for greater support in providing equipment and reiterated AMISOM's need for air and maritime capacity. It expressed its appreciation for the Japanese Government's offer to revitalize the police and appealed to all concerned to expedite action on procurement procedures, stipend payments and the provision of equipment. The Committee noted the increased responsibility already being shouldered by the police. The Committee also discussed the recently announced state of emergency and the role envisaged for the newly created "Task Force" in providing security. Not all humanitarian organizations wanted military involvement in aid distribution. Prime Minister Abdiweli emphasized that TFG support for such organizations and in the delivery and distribution of aid would come from the national security services.

The Committee also commended the TFG for the progress made in revising the National Security and Stabilization Plan following the discussions held in Naivasha in Kenya earlier in the month, (August 12th-16th). It noted that priority areas of the plan would be reflected in the Roadmap to be presented at the Consultative Meeting on Ending the Transition, which is to

be held in Mogadishu, September 4th to 5th. The Committee encouraged those drafting the Plan to finish it as soon as possible and consult with partners before finalizing it.

Some progress in security has been made outside Mogadishu and there is some optimism that this will increase. There are relatively few Al-Shabaab fighters in Middle Shebelle region and with the region largely inhabited by the Abgal/Hawiye, the clan of President Sheikh Sharif, there is expectation that the TFG could make progress there. With Ahlu Sunna wal Jama'a having a majority in the central areas of Galgudud and South Mudug, there is also anticipation of success in these areas, but much will depend upon the ability of Ahlu Sunna to achieve a united leadership to allow it to participate fully in mainstream politics and provide for sustainable administration in the areas it controls. It has to prove it can provide a satisfactory alternative to the relatively more organized extremist forces.

In Gedo region, where Ahlu Sunna are also active, pro-government Marehan clan militias are poised to regain all their territories from Al-Shabaab despite problems of poor coordination and a lack of political and military leadership. Close to four hundred new fighters from Ahlu Sunna and pro-government militias are expected to finish their training in Dollo town shortly. The next target for these forces will be the strategic town of Bardere just across the border in Bay region. Bay, with its capital Baidoa, and neighboring Bakool region, are largely controlled by Digil and Merifle clans whose support for Al-Shabaab has been shaken by Al-Shabaab's failure to respond to the drought. Bay and Bakool have been particularly hard hit. Under pressure from clan elders, the second in command in Al-Shabaab, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow "Abu-Mansoor", has withdrawn most of the Digil and Merifle Al-Shabaab fighters out of Mogadishu. Sheikh Mukhtar has been a prime mover in getting Ahmad Abdi Abu-Zubeyr "Godane" replaced as local leader of Al-Shabaab in Somalia by Ibrahim Al-Afghani (Abubakar Al-Zeyli'i). "Godane" is now apparently the head of Al Qaeda for East Africa.

The largest and richest region of Somalia is Lower Shebelle, mostly populated by members of the Digil, Hawiye and Dir clans. It is currently, with Lower Juba and the port of Kismayo, the main focus of Al-Shabaab activities. The TFG has relatively little contacts with this area and it will need to build up support carefully. Lower Juba and Middle Juba are both likely to be declared famine areas shortly and this may help pro-government militias, including the Ras Kamboni fighters, operating along the Kenyan border areas of Lower Juba and moving towards Afmadow, and aiming to threaten Kismayo.

The UN Monitoring Group's view of the government of Eritrea

One of the more surprising and unexpected elements in the Report of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea has been the detail it has unearthed about the actual operations of various elements of the government in the State of Eritrea, or of certain peoples in the government or the ruling party.

The Report notes that the border issue is "routinely cited by Asmara as justification for its support for Ethiopian armed opposition groups" but its suggestion that Eritrea's war with Ethiopia altered the country's political and development trajectory is hardly plausible given the behavior of the ruling Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) and its chairman, President Isaias, before 1998. Equally, it is certainly true that the ruling Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice now has "control over functions that would normally be discharged

by the state” and that “state and even party institutions have been left to atrophy, while power and resources have become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of individuals and are largely managed outside government institutions and channels.”

As we noted when looking at the way Eritrea supported armed opposition groups throughout the region, whether in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia or elsewhere (even to the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, between 1999 and 2008), this support “is directed by a small, but efficient team of officers from the National Security Office (NSO), Eritrean military and PFDJ leadership under the direct supervision of the President’s Office.” The report says that the secretive nature of these bodies, the overlap between their functions and the “subversion of official structures in favour of personal loyalties and informal authority” has meant that it is difficult to disentangle the precise chains of command. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, the Report identifies a number of individuals reporting to Brigadier General Te’ame Goitom, the chief of Eritrea’s external intelligence operations in the Horn of Africa, the External Operations Directorate. The report also identifies officers at training camps in Eritrea who provided direction, training and organized logistical and financial support to armed opposition groups infiltrated into Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia as well as support for terrorist activities.

The Report also provides detailed evidence of the way acquisitions of arms have been acquired and paid for in violation of Security Council Resolution 1907. It concludes that Eritrea manages to pay for these activities through “a vast and complex informal economy through which senior officials in the Eritrean government and the PFDJ collect hundreds of millions of dollars each year in unofficial revenues, largely from taxation of Eritreans in the diaspora and private business arrangements involving PFDJ run companies or business partnerships abroad.” The Report calls this an “extensive, offshore and largely illicit financial apparatus, controlled and operated by intelligence, military and party officials, many of them operating in an ‘unofficial’ capacity.”

The Monitoring Group found that Eritrea’s hard currency deposits are essentially managed, used and distributed by the PFDJ Economic Affairs Director, Hagos Gebrehiwot. He is described as coordinator of all operations involving the use of hard currency in procuring weapons or support for armed groups in the region. Similarly PFDJ-owned companies, notably the Red Sea Corporation, are “one of the principal sources of revenue for the party and by extension, the Eritrean state,” and the PFDJ Economic Affairs Department controls a number of other foreign companies and offshore bank accounts often registered in the name of Eritreans with dual citizenship rather than in the name of the party.

The Report identifies the most significant sources of revenue for the PFDJ. One is the highly controversial 2% income tax on Eritrean citizens living abroad, routinely collected by diplomats from the 1.2 million Eritreans abroad, and bringing in tens of millions of dollars. “Those unwilling to pay may have entry rights into Eritrea denied, property in Eritrea seized or family members in Eritrea harassed.” Remittances from the diaspora are sent to Eritrea through Himbol, a PFDJ controlled wire transfer company which maintains offices in Eritrean embassies and community centers abroad. A third source of funding is PFDJ-organized social and political events regularly held among the diaspora. These are often run by the Youth wing of the PFDJ which operates under the auspices of the Political Affairs Department, headed by Yemane Gebre-ab. He was named in the previous Monitoring Group Report as a principal coordinator of support to armed Somali opposition groups.

The Report details the way the PFDJ uses private individuals to move funds around using foreign businessmen, some appointed as honorary consuls. These often “appear to be closely involved in military procurement and, in some cases, criminal activity.” The Report looks in detail at Dubai as an offshore Eritrean financial hub “serving as a conduit for much of the revenue, in the form of taxes, remittances and contributions, gathered by the Eritrean diaspora in North America, Europe and the Middle East.” Another hub for laundering funds for the PFDJ is Nairobi from where intelligence activities related to Somalia are supported. “Eritrean officials are routinely dispatched to retrieve money from their Embassy bank accounts in Nairobi, whereupon such proceeds are distributed to various Somalis for their travel and operations in Kenya and Somalia.”

The Report identifies PFDJ activity in smuggling goods into Sudan, coordinating the process with officials on the western border. One of these is General Teklai Kifle ‘Manjus’, the western border zone commander. He is also alleged to be involved with people smuggling across the border: “military officers involved charge roughly three thousand dollars a head for each person exiting Eritrea”. In some cases, however, the smugglers, ethnic Rashaida, who live on both sides of the Eritrea/Sudan border, apparently demand additional payments of up to 20,000 dollars a head. Families have to send the funds to Eritrean officials in the Eritrean embassies in “Egypt and in Israel, in order to obtain the release of their relatives.”

The Report’s conclusions, as we have seen in looking at other areas of activity, are detailed, comprehensive, and quite conclusive as well as totally convincing. The Eritrean leadership “has committed multiple violations of the Security Council Resolutions 1844 and 1907.” The denials of government officials have been largely unconvincing and usually irrelevant.

The only surprise is that the Report suggests these activities are symptomatic of “the systematic subversion of Eritrean Government and party institutions by a relatively small number of political, military and intelligence officials” operating through “informal and often illicit mechanisms, including people smuggling arms trafficking, money laundering and extortion”. The Report doesn’t appear to consider that this is actually the way that the government of Eritrea operates as a matter of course. Nor does it appear to consider the almost total power that the President wields in Eritrea: he is after all the chairman of the nominal national assembly, of the ruling and single party, of the executive council, and of the council of ministers as well as commander in chief of the army. In the absence of the executive council or of the national assembly which seldom meet, he personally supervises all ministries and government offices which are responsible to him directly. The President appoints all ministers, senior civil servants, commissioners, military commanders and diplomatic representatives. It appears frankly inconceivable that any of the actions and policies detailed by the UN Monitoring Group’s Report could have been launched without President Isaias’ full knowledge and detailed direction.