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Parliament Endorses Resolution to Reverse Somali Islamists Aggression

The House of Peoples' Representatives endorsed a resolution that calls upon the Ethiopian government to press ahead with its efforts to resolve the current threat posed by the so-called Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) peacefully and take appropriate legal measures to defend the sovereignty of the country from attacks and aggression by the Union.

The endorsement of the resolution came a week after the House passed a proposal calling for deliberation on it among the political parties that took seats in the House.

The resolution, which was endorsed second year 8th Regular Session of the House, indicated that the Islamist group has posed clear and present danger to Ethiopia's sovereignty and peace.

The resolution, which was endorsed in the second year 8th Regular Session of the House, indicated that the Islamist group has posed clear and present danger to Ethiopia's sovereignty and peace.

The Union posed the threat by openly declaring jihad against Ethiopia several times and clearly showing its intent on taking control of all territories inhabited by Somali speaking people in the Horn of Africa, the resolution said. It was also stated in the resolution that the Union has collaborated with forces that are bent on dismantling the constitutional order by force.

The resolution further indicated that the Union increased threats to Ethiopian peace and sovereignty by working together with the Eritrean government and other anti-Ethiopia forces in carrying out a coordinated aggression against it.

The session saw divided opposition parties—some fully accepting the resolution and still others opposing it expressing concern over some points.

According to Prof. Beyene Petros, Chairman of the United Ethiopian Democratic Forces (UEDF), one of the main opposition parties in the House, the resolution would allow the government to take action that may put the country into a quagmire that would be difficult to get out of. The Oromo Federalist Democratic Movement (OFDM) also rejected the resolution as expressed by its leaders.

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The Coalition for Unity and Democracy has also opposed the resolution. Party Representative Temesgen Zewdie said that given the seriousness of the issue, the time allotted for deliberation among members of the House is short. The party also called for the intervention of international arbitrators.

Contrary to UEDF, CUD and OFDM that opposed the resolution, EDUP-MEDHIN, another opposition party, expressed full support to the resolution. "After a thorough discussion on the issue, we accepted the resolution as a declaration of self-defence," said Party Leader Lidetu Ayalew.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who reflected the stance of the government, said the UIC has declared jihad against Ethiopia several times and attacked the country. "They gave press conference and openly declared jihad against Ethiopia," Meles said. The Prime Minister also said that the Union has collaborated with the Eritrean government, which, he said is intent on creating instability in Ethiopia, and other forces as well.

The resolution was adopted with 311 votes for, 99 against and 16 abstentions.

Meles: Ethiopia Needs European Partnership to Promote Democracy and Good Governance

Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has recently announced that Ethiopia needs partnership with the EU to support its programme of democratization and promotion of good governance.



Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

In a speech he delivered at the Preliminary Session of the European Development Day which took place from 15 to 17 November 2006, he said as Europe has built robust institutions to anchor its democracy over the years, partnership with Europe is vital for Ethiopia to gain lessons from the success of the continent.

Ethiopia, he said, is convinced that democratization and good governance are critical elements of its overall program of political, social and economic development. "Democracy is our sole means of ensuring national survival", Meles told the participants.

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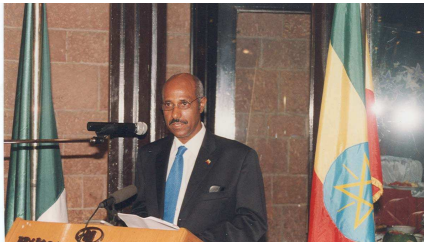
According to Meles, democracy to Ethiopia is the only means to peacefully accommodating the very high level of diversity in its territory and the only means of avoiding the danger of chaos and disintegration.

Ethiopia has focused first on building the institutions of democratic governance and second and simultaneously on building a culture of democracy including that of the respect for the rule of law and tolerance of differing perspectives, Meles went on to say.

Twenty African Heads of State and government, officials of the European Union and its member states and invited dignitaries attended the meeting. This year's European Development Day was observed under the theme of "governance".

Seyoum Underlines Ethiopia's Resolve to Peaceful Resolution of Conflicts

Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin says the government of Ethiopia is committed to peaceful resolutions of conflicts in Africa.



While conferring with the French Minister for Development Cooperation for Francophone Countries, Brigitte Girardin, Seyoum reaffirmed Ethiopia's stand for resolution of conflicts through dialogue in different parts of Africa.

Seyoum also commended the French Government for its effort for peace in the continent.

He said that Ethiopia has conducive political environment for French investors, and invited them to work more and in joint ventures.

Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin

Girardin on her part said that France supports the ongoing economic development and democratization process in Ethiopia.

France would provide close to 800 million USD for the implementation of development activities in health, water and education sectors.

The Minister also held talks with Prime Minister Meles on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

Ethiopia Explores All Peaceful Means

The Government of Ethiopia has continued its efforts to resolve the threat of invasion it has been facing through diplomatic means by holding discussions with the Somali extremist forces.

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In an interview with local journalists State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tekeda Alemu said that efforts were also made to help the Union of Islamic Courts develop the right attitude towards Ethiopia before they controlled Mogadishu.



Dr. Tekeda Alemu

Discussions were held with the relevant bodies of the delegation of the leadership of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) by inviting them to Addis Ababa, over the telephone as well as through Ambassadors in Khartoum, Nairobi and London.

Ethiopia has also been communicating that it has no hatred as such for the Union and constructive relations could be cultivated, Dr. Tekeda said, adding that messages have also been passed to them so that they can refrain from moves that are harmful to Ethiopia.

Though the responses of the UIC are not so far encouraging, Ethiopia has been pursuing its diplomatic efforts, the State Minister added.

As the gains from the diplomatic efforts could be significant, the government is determined to try all peaceful options. Yet, the government would be forced to take measures in self-defense alongside the diplomatic efforts if there is no spirit of cooperation on the part of the Union, the State Minister added.

He further indicated that the country has good political and economic relations with neighboring countries, which emanates from its foreign policy, and the government would like to similarly develop constructive relations with the Union.

Dr. Tekeda dismissed the allegation of some foreign media that the country has been striving to fulfill the interest of another country as baseless, noting that the looming danger should be aborted in time before it gets even worse.

Save the Children-UK to Establish Headquarters in Addis Ababa

Save the Children - UK signed an agreement with the Government of Ethiopia to establish its Headquarters of the Regional Office for East and Southern Africa in Addis Ababa.

The agreement was signed by H.E. Dr. Tekeda Alemu, State Minister of Foreign Affairs and Save the Children UK Regional Director of Eastern and Southern Africa, Ms. Yoland Weldring. Tekeda expressed his pleasure on the establishment of the Headquarters as it enhances the existing partnership between Ethiopia and the Organization. He also assured Yoland of his government's engagement to continue to provide whatever assistance and cooperation expected from Ethiopia.



Signing the agreement

The Minister also demonstrated the government's interest to see more and more organizations making their home in Addis Ababa, reiterating that the government feels second to none in terms of extending goodwill, various assets Ethiopia has to give for the good of the organization and necessary facilities for smooth and effective functioning of the office established in Addis Ababa.

On behalf of Save the Children - United Kingdom, Ms. Weldring commended the Ethiopian government for its agreement for the establishment of the Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa.

The agreement would give much more confidence to Save the Children-UK to work closely with the Ethiopian government, the African Union and the UNECA.

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This offers the organization to stay in Addis principally focusing on irrigation, health, food security and protection of Children on the basis of UN Convention.

Ethiopia's Role Said Key at FOCAC Summit

The high level Ethiopian delegation played key role in China-Africa Cooperation Forum /FOCAC/ held in Beijing, China on November 2006.

Asia, Australasia and Middle East Director General, Ambassador Mahidi Ahmed told MoFA Newsletter that the delegation led by Prime Minister Meles Zenawi played key role at all levels for the successful completion of the Summit.



Ambassador Mahidi Ahmed

He said Meles Co-chaired the forum with his Chinese counterpart and Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin and Ethiopian Ambassador to China Haile-Kiros Gissese Co-chaired the Ministerial and Experts meeting respectively.

He said the Ethio-Chinese trade relations have shown dramatic increment particularly in the past few years. The trade balance between these countries is 300 million dollars of which Ethiopia shares 80 million dollars.

Chinese companies are highly engaged in construction and other investment sectors.

In the FOCAC summit China reaffirmed its commitment to pursue its support of the development initiative of Ethiopia, he said.

After the Summit China has pledged to give Ethiopia 500 million USD.

Ethio-India Relations Further Bolstered

The existing bilateral relation between Ethiopia and India has shown significant progress.

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According to the Asia, Australasia and Middle East Directorate General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia and India are enjoying excellent relations with remarkable growth in the areas of investment, trade, and cooperation in the international fora.

A significant number of Indian investors are engaged in the agricultural sector in Ethiopia and their capital is steadily increasing. This, according to the Directorate General, is owing to the country's conducive investment and trade policy as well as the prevalence of peace and stability.

Recently, an Indian delegation headed by Mr. Kantilal Bhuria, State Minister of Agriculture paid visit to Ethiopia with a view to further strengthening the relationship of the two countries focusing on the agricultural sector.

During its visit to Ethiopia, the delegation identified possible areas of investment in the agricultural sector for Indian investors. Ethiopia has a lot to learn from the Indian experience in agricultural development.

The delegation met and discussed with President Girma W/Giorgis, Deputy Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Addisu Legesse and senior officials in the Ministry.

Belgium Keen to Assist Industrial Sector in Ethiopia

The Belgium Embassy in Ethiopia reaffirmed the determination of Belgium to support the industrial sector in Ethiopia.



Mr. William De Baets

First secretary at the Embassy of Belgium, William De Baets said entrepreneurs from his country would like to invest in textile and garment industry.

The amicable bilateral relations between Belgium and Ethiopia have now been running for a century and this proves that the uninterrupted cooperation is gaining momentum.

Belgium is committed to support Ethiopia in achieving food security, improve education and health care, among others.

He said the government of Belgium appreciates the role Ethiopia plays for peace in Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular.

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National Consensus Forum Raises Fund for Flood Victims

The Ethiopia National Consensus Forum - UK in collaboration with the Ethiopian Embassy in London donated about 75,000 birr to flood victims.

Former Ethiopian National Consensus Forum Chairman, Ato Wuhib Muluneh, handed over the money to the Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Agency.

Ato wuhib Muluneh said on the occasion that a fund-raiser was urgently organized by the Forum.

The Forum in cooperation with the Ethiopian Embassy continues to raise funds to support affected compatriots.