

Consolidating Cooperation for Peace and Development in the Region

The fifth Summit of the Sana'a Forum for Cooperation was held on 26 February 2007 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, after the city successfully hosted the African Union Assembly of the Heads of State and Government.

The Sana'a Forum is one, among others, depicting the engagement of the Ethiopian Government in issues pertaining to regional development and mutual cooperation to advance common interest.

In his opening remark to the Summit, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi underlined that the Forum has considerably accomplished its objectives since its inception. He further stated that the Forum awaits promising future.

The success made in the economic and social sectors as well as in the area of peace and security in the Horn of Africa and Southern Red Sea region is bound to make the Sana'a Cooperation Forum more durable and reliable.

In the joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Summit, leaders of Ethiopia, Yemen, the Sudan and the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia /TFG/ condemned all acts of violence, extremism and international terrorism in all its forms while they called for enhancing the capacity of the member countries and cooperation among them to combat terrorism.

The leaders expressed their sincere desire and determination to continue their resolve towards the attainment of durable peace, security and sustainable development in the regions.

Regarding the situation in Somalia, member states of the Forum took note of the new positive opportunity created in Somalia, which "resulted from Ethiopia's response upon the invitation of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia."

The Summit welcomed the initiative of the TFG of Somalia for national reconciliation and dialogue in the country while urging the international community to assist the people and government of Somalia with a view to consolidating the already achieved peace and stability.

News Feature

Appreciating the efforts being made to implement the various agreements signed among parties to bring about lasting peace in the Sudan, the leaders welcomed the latest development to include other factions in the Darfur peace process.

Expressing desire for a peaceful and lasting solution to the border dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the Summit stated that this "can only be achieved through dialogue and diplomatic means."

In the area of economic cooperation, the Forum noted that trade, investment and tourism among member countries is expanding.

A Framework Agreement for the Promotion of Banking Relations, as well as a bilateral agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation between Ethiopia and the Sudan was signed with the view to enhancing the economic cooperation, in this regard.

In a related development, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin said that the Sana'a Forum for Cooperation has shown progress in its efforts to achieve the goals of the Forum.

Opening the 10th Executive Committee Meeting of the Forum on 25 February 2007, Seyoum stated that since the establishment of the Forum, member states have managed to build closer relations, and to undertake various activities which are mutually beneficial.

The Foreign Minister said the Forum's achievement so far illustrates the value it has and its potential for member states making them to engage in a more strengthened manner.

He indicated that cooperation among the business people from member countries becomes indispensable to enhance the benefits that come out of the cooperation.

The trade volume among member states has risen by more than two folds indicating a better future for the cooperation.

News Feature

Briefing journalists at the conclusion of the Executive Meeting, the foreign ministers of the four countries of the Forum appreciated the contribution of the cooperation to stability in the region.

Somalia Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Farhan Ali Mohamud said his country attaches great importance to the Forum.

"We will gain peace and stability through the Forum and with the cooperation of governments of the region."

Foreign Minister of the Sudan, Lam Akol Ajaween, on his part stated that the Forum has taken firm roots as it is getting to the stage of concrete results.

"We are confident that the Forum will serve the aspirations and expectations of the people of the region," he said.

He expressed hope that other countries in the region would take advantage and join the Forum.

Yemeni Foreign Minister, Abubaker Abdullah Al-Qirbi noted that the Forum has been contributing for peace in Somalia and would continue to play an important role in bringing about stability and rehabilitation in that country.

The Forum provides members with the opportunity to ensure economic and social transformation.

Agreements signed on cultural, economic, and trade cooperation have intensified the progress of cooperation in those areas.

In this regard, Ethiopia remains dedicated to the effective implementation of the agreements and commitments of the Forum. This would be the country's utmost priority as current chair of the Forum.

The 6th Summit of the Sana'a Forum for Cooperation will be held in Khartoum, Sudan.