



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

**DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR EXTERNAL POLICIES OF THE UNION
DIRECTORATE B
- POLICY DEPARTMENT -**

NOTE

Background note on Eritrea

Abstract:

Eritrea is the newest African state. It gained its independence in 1993, after 30-years struggle against Ethiopia. Since independence, Eritrea has been at war or conflict with all its neighbours (Yemen, Sudan, Djibouti and Ethiopia), and it currently plays a (mainly negative) role in each and every conflict in the Horn of Africa region. The most important conflict was the border dispute with Ethiopia (1998-2000), which left over 80,000 victims and is still unresolved. The border dispute with Ethiopia conditions Eritrea's external relations, internal politics and economic life. President Isaias Afewerki, once the hero of the national liberation struggle, has increased its totalitarian tendencies, often using the war-like situation as a justification. He has remained in power since 1993 and he has postponed *sine die* the proclamation of the new constitution and the celebration of democratic elections. Internal opposition and free press are non-existent since massive detentions took place in September 2001. Eritrea, one of the 15 poorest nations in the world, remains heavily dependant on foreign aid. However, international donors have significantly reduced their contributions, reflecting the remarkably ill-conceived diplomatic strategy of Eritrea, the "regional troublemaker". The EU remains one of the few, if not the only one, international interlocutor of Eritrea's regime.

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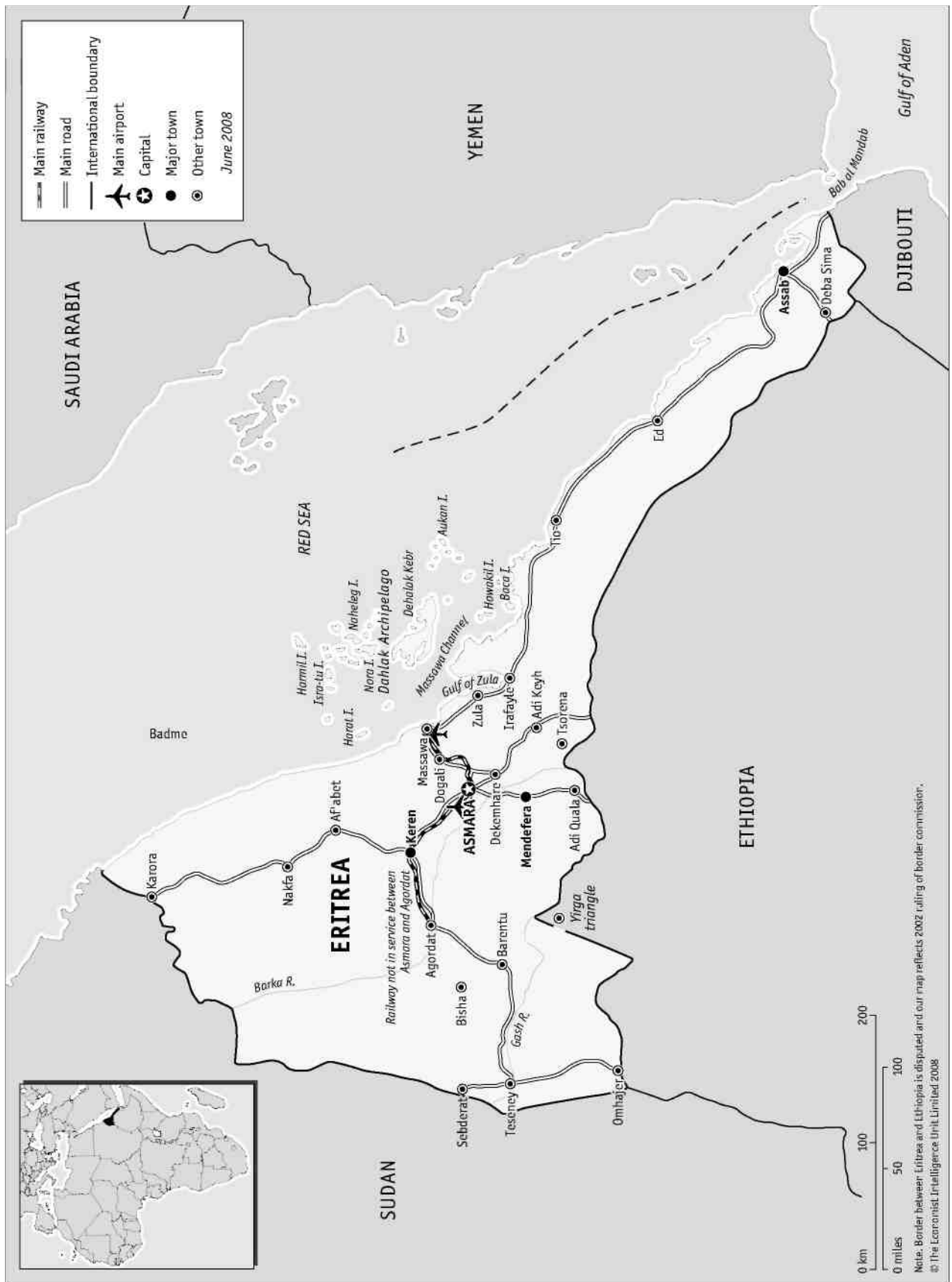
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MAIN SOURCES:

- European Commission
- The Economist Intelligence Unit
- Global Insights
- Human Rights Watch
- Amnesty International
- OCHA
- UNDP
- *L'état de l'Afrique 2008* – Jeune Afrique
- *Bilan du Monde 2008* – Le Monde
- Sudan Tribune
- BBC World
- All Africa News
- DG EXPO Policy Department notes

I. MAP OF ERITREA



II. BASIC DATA¹

*The State of Eritrea (Hagere Ertra)*²

Area: 121,320 sq km

Capital: Asmara (estimate 500,000 population)

Population: 4.5 million (80% living in rural areas)³ (1 million abroad)⁴

Population density : 29 people per sq km

Population growth: 2.6 %

Ethnic groups (nine): Tigrinya 50%, Tigre 31.4%, Saho (Red Sea coast dwellers) 5%, Afar 5%, Beja/Hedareb, 2.5%, Bilen 2.1%, Kunama 2%, Nara 1.5%, Rashaida 0.5%

Religions: Only four religions are permitted in Eritrea: Roman Catholic, Evangelic Lutheran, Orthodox Christian and Islam

Languages: Three official languages- Tigrinya, Arabic and English. Other spoken languages include: Tigre, Saho, Afar, Kunama, Bilen, Italian, Amharic and Nara

Currency (code): the nakfa (Nfa), introduced in November 1997

Exchange rate (av, 2007): Nfa 15.4 : USD 1

*GDP per capita (nominal)*⁵: 274 USD

*GDP per capita (PPP)*⁶: 1,077 USD

Human Development Rank: 157 (out of 177 countries)⁷

Government type: Unitary state

Independence: 24 May 1993 (from Ethiopia)

Constitution: formally proclaimed in May 1997, but not yet implemented

Head of state and government: President Isaias Afewerki⁸ (since independence, elected by the Transitional National Assembly)

Cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by President, last reshuffle August 2001

National legislature: The 150-seat National Assembly, established initially as a transitional legislature, has never been replaced. It has not met since 2002. It is composed of members of the ruling party People's Front for Democracy (PFDJ)

Elections: First ever democratic elections scheduled for December 2001 were postponed *sine die*

Administrative divisions: six regions (Zobas) headed by Governors: Southern Red Sea, Northern Red Sea, Anseba, Gash-Barka, Southern and Central.

¹ Sources for basic data: UNFPA (2007 report), CIA (The World Factbook), EIU

² Local long form of the country name in Tigrinya

³ UNFPA 2007 estimates. Eritrea has never accomplished a population census

⁴ Mostly in Sudan and Ethiopia

⁵ EIU, data for 2007

⁶ GDP per capita at Purchasing Power Parity, data for 2007- EIU

⁷ UNDP – Human Development Report 2007/08

⁸ Eritrean President's name is spelled also Issayas Afeworki

III. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Colonial rule, UN controversial decision and Ethiopian annexation: The colonial state of Eritrea was formed in 1889, when Italy and Ethiopia signed the Treaty of Wechale (Treaty of Ucciali), installing Italian control over the area. In 1896 Italians used Eritrea as a springboard for their unsuccessful attempt to conquer Ethiopia. Following Italian defeat in the Second World War, Eritrea came under British administration between 1941 and 1952. This period saw the neglect and decline of Eritrean industry and the continued exploitation of her agricultural resources by Italian settler farmers. As the Allied powers and the UN discussed the future of the former colony, Ethiopian territorial claims helped to foment a more militant nationalism among the Eritrean population. In 1948, a four-power commission (comprising the UK, the US, the Soviet Union and France), were unable to agree on Eritrea's future status and passed the issue to the UN, which, in 1952, adopted a controversial resolution federating Eritrea with Ethiopia. The resolution ignored Eritrean pleas for independence but guaranteed Eritreans some democratic rights and a measure of autonomy. Almost immediately, however, these rights began to be abridged or violated, and consequently an Eritrean independence movement developed from the mid-1950s onwards. Several years of peaceful protest wrought no improvement, and a guerrilla campaign emerged from 1961. In 1962, Ethiopian Emperor Haile Sellassie unilaterally dissolved the Eritrean parliament and annexed the country; cold war politics ensured that there was no international protest from the UN or the US despite the clear violation of international law. This action sparked the Eritrean fight for independence that erupted into full-scale war in the 70's.

The 30-year war with Ethiopia: the 30-year Struggle, as resistance to Ethiopian rule became popularly known, is Africa's longest war of the 20th century. It has shaped the Eritrean nation and its people. In the absence of any Western or African support for their struggle, it consolidated the principle of self-reliance as a deeply rooted national value. The fight was initially led by the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), but internal differences rendered it militarily ineffective and led to the emergence in 1973 of a splinter group, the Eritrean People's Liberation Force (EPLF). The EPLF, later renamed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, called for social revolution as well as for national independence and it finally became the leader of armed groups in the fight against Ethiopia.

In 1974, the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie was ousted in a coup by a pro-Marxist junta led by Mengistu Haile Miriam, who received the support of the Soviet Union, forcing the EPLF to change strategy and to a significant withdrawal. With the end of Soviet support and supplies in the late 1980s, the Ethiopian Army's morale plummeted, and the EPLF - along with internal Ethiopian rebel forces - began to advance on Ethiopian positions. In 1991, brutal Mengistu's ruling was overthrown by internal armed opposition⁹ cooperating with the EPLF; a defeated Mengistu fled to Zimbabwe and EPLF forces entered the capital, Asmara, without encountering resistance. In May 1991 Eritrea declared its *de facto* independence.

24 May 1993, National Independence: Following the liberation of Asmara by the EPLF, peace talks were held in Washington and London. In April 1993, more than 99% of the population - including Eritreans overseas - voted for independence in a UN-supervised referendum. Independence was declared on 24 May 1993. Eritrea formally attained international recognition on 28 May 1993 and was admitted to the OAU the following month. In September 1993, the Ethiopian-Eritrean joint ministerial commission held its inaugural meeting in Asmara.

⁹ The Tigrean People's Liberation Force, led by Meles Zenawi

Agreement was reached on measures to allow the free movement of nationals between each country, and on cooperation regarding foreign affairs and economic policy.

Eritrea post-independence - external relations: Since independence, Eritrea has been at war or conflict with all its neighbours (Yemen, Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti), counting more years at war than at peace. The most important conflict is the border dispute with Ethiopia, which left 100,000 victims between 1998 and 2000 and is still unresolved. The border dispute with Ethiopia conditions Eritrea's external relations, internal politics and economic life. Full background information and recent update of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict can be found in the Policy Department note of September 2008 (Note 2008/172).

IV. POLITICAL STRUCTURE

1. Post-independence transitional period: A four-year transitional period was declared following independence in 1993, during which preparations were to proceed for establishing a constitutional and pluralist political system. A 150-seat transitional National Assembly was formed and one of its first acts was the election as Head of State of Isaias Afewerki, the Secretary-General of the EPLF (renamed as the People's Front for Democracy and Justice – PFDJ). A new constitution enshrining the principle of political pluralism was formally proclaimed in May 1997 and national elections were scheduled initially for 1997, then for December 2001.

However, President Isaias, the immensely popular hero of the liberation struggle, showed that he was unable to adapt to the switch from guerrilla leader to president of an -in theory- democratic state. The presidential ratification of the May 1997 constitution was delayed, initially due to the Eritrea-Ethiopia border conflict, and has never been implemented. The uninterrupted border disputes with neighbouring countries, which have maintained Eritrea on a war foot since independence, have given President Isaias a perfect excuse to maintain a war-like internal ruling.

2. September 2001, crackdown on G-15 political reformists and free press: In early 2001, national elections scheduled for December 2001 were postponed without formal announcement and without setting a new date. The increasingly repressive policies were publicly challenged in May 2001 by 15 prominent government and party figures now known as the G-15 in an open letter to PFDJ members. The G-15 criticised the President's leadership, accusing him of working in an "illegal and unconstitutional manner" and demanded the implementation of the national constitution. This letter was reported and widely commented on in the increasingly assertive independent press. The authors said that it was "a call for correction, a call for peaceful and democratic dialogue, a call for strengthening and consolidation, a call for unity, a call for the rule of law and for justice, through peaceful and legal ways and means." On 18 September 2001 (the "*Black Tuesday*"), 11 of the 15 signatories to the letter were arrested and have remained in detention incommunicado since then, without having been charged with any offence, and without any information about their place of detention, detention conditions and health status¹⁰. A few days later, 10 independent journalists were arrested, followed by further crackdown on dissent among the independent press and the student population. Eight independent newspapers were closed that month on the ground that they represented a threat to national security. September 2001 events are seen as the turning point towards President Isaias' increasingly authoritarian rule.

¹⁰ See Annex II for more details on the G-11 case

On **28 September 2001**, the Eritrean government expelled the **Italian Ambassador** to Asmara, Antonio Bandini, who was representing the EU Presidency. The Ambassador had made remarks criticising the government's attacks on the independent press, and had led a joint EU delegation to the authorities to protest at the detentions of the G-15 members. All EU Member States decided then to recall their diplomatic representatives, conditioning their return on the willingness of President Isaias to engage in human rights dialogue. This request was never satisfied, but EU Ambassadors nevertheless returned to Eritrea, in a non-coordinated way. Since then, and usually around the 18 of September, the EU Presidency issues an annual declaration on political prisoners in Eritrea, expressing its “deep concern” about their situation and asking their unconditional release, as well as to allow access to the prisoners to their families, legal representatives and medical personnel.

3. Current political structure

President Isaias Afewerki was elected interim President in 1993 by the transitional National Assembly and has remained in power since then¹¹. Pending the ratification on May 1997 Constitution, the current president is head of state, head of parliament (National Assembly), head of the cabinet (State Council) and commander-in-chief of the army. In practice, the executive, legislature and judiciary are controlled by President Isaias Afewerki and key members of his party, the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), which remains the only legal party in the country.

PFDJ: the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice, successor of the armed EPLF, is the only legal party in Eritrea. **Alamin Mohammed Seid**, Secretary of PFDJ, holds a lot of power and influence and is considered as number two after Isaias. The PFDJ does not define itself as a party, though, but as a broad-popular front covering all sectors of the society (workers, professional associations, women and students organisations, etc). Civil society organisations exist as far as inside the PFDJ.

National Assembly: The 150-seat transitional National Assembly is composed exclusively of PFDJ members. Their normal term of office is four years but this was extended during the transitional period following independence and general elections are yet to be held. In theory, the Assembly sets the internal and external policies of the government, regulates implementation of those policies, approves the budget and elects the president. It is supposed to hold sessions every six months, but in practice meets only when called into session by the President. The National Assembly has not met since 2002, when the electoral law was ratified. However, the National Assembly postponed making a decision on the draft law on political parties and organizations. As a result, opposition parties cannot operate legally in Eritrea. Since the postponement *sine die* of December 2001 election, Eritrea remains –along with Somalia- as one of only two African countries yet to hold democratic elections.

Cabinet of Ministers (State Council): Nominated by the President, theoretically in consultation with the National Assembly. The Cabinet does not meet regularly and its collegial powers seems overshadowed by the presidential autocratic ruling.

¹¹ See Annex I for a detailed profile of Isaias Afewerki

Composition of the Government of Eritrea (last reshuffle August 2001)¹²	
President Isaias Afewerki	
Ministers (<i>those considered as key ones are marked with *</i>):	
Agriculture	Arefaine Berhe
Defence	Sebhat Ephrem (*)
Education	Osman Saleh
Energy & mines	Tesfai Gebreselassie (*)
Finance & development	Berhane Abrehe (*)
Fisheries	Ahmed Haj Ali
Foreign affairs	Osman Saleh (*)
Health	Saleh Meki
Information	Ali Abdu (*)
Justice	Fawzia Hashim
Labour & welfare	Askalu Menkerios
Land, water & environment	Woldemichael Gebremariam
Local government	Naizghi Kiflu
Tourism	Amna Nur Hussein
Trade & industry	Girgish Teelemichael
Transport & communications	Andemichael Kahsai
Government Spokesmen & Senior Presidential Advisor: Yemane Gebremeskel (*) Considered to be a more influential and powerful figure within the government than most ministers. He articulates President Isaias's position to the outside world	

Regional administration: Eritrea is divided into six administrative regions (*Zobas*) headed by Governors: Southern Red Sea, Northern Red Sea, Anseba, Gash-Barka, Southern and Central. In 1996 the Proclamation for the Establishment of Regional Administrations allowed significant decentralization, but implementation of this law is lagging behind. Regional elections were held in May 2004. A total of 346 seats in six administrative regions were contested, but few other details are available.

Judiciary: The court structure is composed of provincial and sharia courts, presided over by the President of the High Court, and a Supreme Court presided over by the Chief Justice. There are also military and special courts. The judiciary is formally independent but is weak and subject to a high degree of executive interference; in August 2001, the President of the High Court was dismissed and subsequently detained after he publicly complained of executive interference with the High Court. The legal system inherited from Ethiopia is still in the process of being revamped. The shortage of trained legal personnel, adequate funding and infrastructure have limited the system's effectiveness. Support to the justice sector is foreseen within the 10th EDF.

Media: in Eritrea all media are state-controlled. The government controls radio and television broadcasts, and produces its own newspapers (*Hadas Eritrea*, in local language, and *Eritrea Profile*, an English-language weekly). Reporters without frontiers (RSF) released a report in January 2008 rating the Eritrean administration as the world's worst violators of press freedom (169 out of 169 countries).

Political opposition: current Eritrean legislation bans political opposition groups from operating openly. The only functioning opposition exists in diaspora and has been for years divided into a myriad of political groups and sub-groups. However, in early 2008 a total of 13 opposition

¹² EIU, Eritrea Country Report August 2008

groups decided to (re)constitute the umbrella opposition grouping called the **Eritrean Democratic Alliance (EDA)**, with the objective of “both opposing and toppling the Eritrean government”¹³. Based in Addis Ababa, EDA is considered close to Ethiopian government. On the other side, Eritrean dissidents based in the US and Europe are politically less united and their membership is divided amongst various organisations, mostly pro-human rights and faith-based.

MEMBERS OF THE ERITREAN DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE (EDA) (13):

Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrean (Kunama) led by Qernelios Osman,
Eritrean Democratic Party led by Mesfin Hagos,
Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement led by Beshir Ishaq,
Eritrean Islamic Islah Movement led by Khelil Amer,
Eritrean Liberation Front led by Hussein Khelifa,
Eritrean Liberation Front–Revolutionary Council led by Weldeyesus Ammar,
Eritrean Nahda Party led by Nur Idris,
Eritrean National Salvation Front led by Abdella Adem,
Eritrean Popular Congress led by Taher Shengeb,
Eritrean Popular Democratic Front led by Tewelde Gebreselasse,
Red Sea Affar Democratic Organization led by Ibrahim Harun,
Eritrean people’s movement (EPM), led by Adhanom Ghebremariam, and the
Islamic Congress Party, led by Mr. Hassen Salman

EDA has set up a **Foreign Relations Committee**, composed by Beshir Ishaq (**Eritrean Federal Democratic Movement**) and Adhanom Ghebremariam (**EPM**)

Source: Sudan Tribune, January 200; own sources

V. HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

“The government of President Isayas Afeworki continues to maintain its totalitarian grip on the country. Arbitrary arrests and detention without trial are common. Prisoners are routinely tortured and kept for years in underground cells in isolation or crammed into shipping containers. Mass arrests and harassment of members of minority religious denomination continue. The government imposes such prolonged and repeated compulsory military service that thousands of young men have fled the country”.

Human Rights Watch, 2007 Report

Human rights organisations coincide in denouncing Eritrea’s very poor record on human rights, recording numerous serious abuses¹⁴, as well as a record level of militarization of Eritrea’s society.

Prisoners of conscience and political prisoners

The 11 former cabinet ministers and high-level officials arrested on 18 September 2001 for questioning the president’s leadership (the G-15 group, see chapter IV.2) remain detained incommunicado without charge or trial since then. A few days later, 10 independent journalists were also arrested. Their whereabouts in detention have never been disclosed by the government or confirmed by other sources. The government has not provided any information regarding their health situation, and has not permitted any communication with their families or legal

¹³ Eritrean Democratic Alliance Conference, May 2008, Addis Ababa (source: Sudan Tribune)

¹⁴ Information gathered from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State

representatives, nor access to independent organisations. Aster Yohannes, the wife of Petros Solomon (G-15 member, in jail since 2001), was detained in 2003 when she returned to Eritrea from the USA to be with her children. She has been in incommunicado detention since then, without having been able to see her family. At least one of the G-15 members, General Ogba Abraha, is believed to have died in prison. The so-called G-11 has become the symbol of political repression in Eritrea, but several hundreds of other prisoners of conscience have met the same fate (see Annex II for more details on the G-11 case).

Suppression of free expression and other civil liberties

Since 2001 all media are under the control of the State. In 2008 Reporters without frontiers (RSF) rated the Eritrean administration as the world's worst violators of press freedom (169 out of 169 countries). At least 15 local journalists who were arrested in 2001 remain in government custody to date. There were reports in February that one of them, former journalist Fessehaye "Joshua" Yohannes, had died in detention, and RSF estimates that up to four journalists could have also died in prison¹⁵. The EU has paid special attention to the case of Dawit Isaac, a journalist with Swedish and Eritrean dual nationality and founder of the now-banned weekly Setit, imprisoned with the other journalists since September 2001. In November 2005 he was released and, two days later, the authorities returned him to prison without any explanation. He has remained incommunicado since then, he is reportedly seriously ill and his release on humanitarian grounds has been requested by the European Commission, amongst others.

In November 2006 nine state media employees were arrested and beaten to obtain information about their email accounts and to discover possible escape plans. One is reported to have been forced to join the army, and the others were eventually released but were placed under surveillance. One of them died or was killed while trying to escape to Sudan.

Government permits are required for gatherings of more than seven persons. No domestic human rights organisations are allowed to exist; foreign human rights organisations are denied entry.

Religious and ethnic persecution

Only four religions are permitted in Eritrea: Roman Catholic, Evangelic Lutheran, Orthodox Christian and Islam. Members of unregistered churches, such as Jehova's Witnesses and Protestant sects, are frequently persecuted, although arbitrary arrests can affect also members of registered churches. An estimated 2,000 members of minority churches, including children and women, remain in detention in harsh conditions, without access to their families¹⁶. Three religious leaders have recently been arrested¹⁷. Serious abuses against representatives of the Kunama ethnic group have also been reported.

Prison Conditions and Torture

Incarceration without trial or rudimentary legal safeguards is common. Prisoners are often held in unventilated shipping containers in extreme temperatures or held in underground cells. Torture is common, as are indefinite solitary confinement, starvation rations, lack of sanitation and hard labour. Prisoners rarely receive medical care and death in captivity is common¹⁸. No visits were conducted by local human rights organizations, which the government prevented from operating during the year. The government permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

¹⁵ Probably in the Eiraeiro high-security camp, northeast of the country, Source: RSF Press release, 17.09.08

¹⁶ AI report, 2007

¹⁷ Protestant pastor Haile Naizghi, Dr. Kifle Gebremeskel of the Full Gospel Church and Tesfatsion Hagos of the Rema Church

¹⁸ HRW report, 2007

to visit several Ethiopian soldiers, whom the government claimed were deserters from the Ethiopian army, and to visit and register Ethiopian civilian detainees in police stations and prisons. However, the government did not permit the ICRC to visit other detainees or prisoners¹⁹.

Military conscription and arrests

Men between ages 18 and 50, and women between 18 and 27 must serve 18 months of military service. However, conscription periods are often prolonged or repeated, far exceeding 18-months. Conscripts are used in labour battalions on public works, including mining. Some female conscripts were allegedly subjected to sexual abuse. Eritrea does not recognise the right to conscientious objection. The penalty for evading conscription or protesting against military service is three years' imprisonment, but in practice those caught are tortured and arbitrarily detained for several months with hard labour before being forced back into the army. Since 2005, families of conscription evaders are fined up to \$3,300 (50,000 nakfa) per child. Since late 2006, some family members have reportedly been conscripted to substitute for missing relatives. Since 2003, the final year of schooling for all students is combined with compulsory military training at the Sawa national service training, where young students are not allowed to communicate with parents or relatives for long periods of time, and abuses have been reported.

Refugee crisis

Internal repression and, especially, forced conscription have provoked a mass exodus amongst young Eritreans to neighbouring countries, South Africa, Lybia and Egypt. According to UNHCR, Eritrea has been ranked the fourth highest refugee-producing country²⁰ in the world in 2006, with a total number of 19,400 new claims in 2006. A number of countries, including EU Member States, continued to repatriate refugees to Eritrea²¹, even though upon return they face imprisonment, during which they are forced to confess "high treason" and are subject to harsh punishment measures.

Main requests by human rights organisations to the EU²²

- Declare *personae non gratae* the most senior members of Eritrean government, including army high-ranking officials
- Increase pressure to release details of imprisonment of prisoners of conscience, specially G-11, and to let independent organisations' to check prisoners detention conditions
- Conduct political dialogue with Eritrea in a transparent way, setting up clear benchmarks, in accordance with Cotonou principles
- Open consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement
- Urge the government of Eritrea to dialogue with opposition groups; EU institutions to include Eritrea opposition groups amongst regular contacts
- Immediately halt return of Eritrean refugees to their country
- Reconsider the amount and the focus of development assistance allocated to Eritrea under the 10th EDF;
- Denounce the role played by Eritrea in destabilising the regions (Eastern Sudan and Somalia)

¹⁹ US Department of State, Country reports on Human Rights Practices

²⁰ Preceded only by Somalia, Iraq and Zimbabwe

²¹ According to human rights organisations, mostly Egypt, but also Sweden, Germany and UK

²² Most of these requests were voiced by human rights organisations and representatives of Eritrean diaspora during the hearings organised by the European Parliament on 1 July and 18 September 2008, while some have been

Women and children situation

An estimated 89 percent of girls had undergone **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**²³. In the lowlands, infibulation—the most severe form of FGM—is usual. In March 2007 the government issued a proclamation declaring FGM a crime and prohibiting its practice. The government and other organizations, including the National Union of Eritrean Women and the National Union of Eritrean Youth and Students, sponsored education programmes during the year that discouraged the practice. Regarding children's rights, NGO Plan International (PI) has recently denounced widespread sexual abuses over children in Eritrean schools²⁴.

In terms of **international agreements**, Eritrea has signed but not ratified the Rome Statute

VI. ECONOMIC SITUATION

Main economic indicators, 2007 ²⁵	
GDP (USD bn):	1.3
Real GDP growth (%)	1.0
GDP per capita (USD)	274
GDP per capita (USD at PPP)	1,077
Consumer price inflation (av; %)	17.0
Current account balance (%of GDP)	-15.6
External debt (USD bn)	n/a
Corruption rank ²⁶	126 (out of 180 countries)
'Ease of doing business' rank ²⁷	173 (out of 181 countries)

Summary:

Eritrea is one of the 15 poorest countries in the world, with a GDP per capita estimated at around 280 USD in 2007 and about 37 % of its population living in extreme poverty (below the food poverty line, on the edge of chronic food insecurity)²⁸. UNDP ranked Eritrea 157th out of 177 in its yearly Human Development Index. The economy is largely based on subsistence agriculture, which employs 75 % of the population, and remains heavily dependant on external aid and remittances from abroad. Forced conscription, lack of qualified staff and minimum levels of foreign direct investment hamper any development perspective. The government continues to have an interventionist approach and, in particular, holds a strict control over any potential source of foreign currency. Absence of official data since 2004 - the government does not publish even its annual budgets - makes difficult any assessment of economic performance, as well as any strategy planning.

Background:

The Eritrean economy began to stagnate under Ethiopia's ruling in 1952, when the relatively sophisticated and urban infrastructure left by the Italian colonial rule was marginalised by the

transmitted in writing. To be noted that not all organisations coincide on the way forward, and that the table is a compilation of main suggestions.

²³ UN sources

²⁴ IRIN (OCHA), <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=80851>

²⁵ Official data not available since 2004. If not indicated otherwise, estimations come from EIU, Eritrea Country Report 2008

²⁶ Transparency International, 2007 Corruption Perceptions Index. For comparison, Ethiopia has the same ranking

²⁷ World Bank - Easy of Doing Business Index, 2008. For comparison, Ethiopia ranks 116th

²⁸ UNDP, 2008

reorientation of industrial development towards Ethiopia. Eritrea's economy became then dependent on income from its two ports (Massawa and Assab - crucial access to the Red Sea for Ethiopia) and on a precarious agricultural production with a chronic food insecurity.

The strong economic growth enjoyed immediately after its independence was quickly dissipated during the 2-year war border dispute with Ethiopia: the mobilisation of 250,000 soldiers, heavy spending on military hardware and the loss of revenue from its two ports (which constituted up to 20 % of government revenues), combined to depress growth in the economy (GDP growth plummeted to around negative 12%). Further positive trends in GDP recovery have each time been brought down by serious droughts in 2002 and 2004.

The unresolved border conflict with Ethiopia maintains Eritrea in a no-war-no-peace situation (as defined by the Eritrean government itself), diverting precious human and economic resources from economic development. Defence spending climbed to 35-38 % of GDP during the conflict with Ethiopia and, although it has been reduced, remains one of the highest in the world in relative terms²⁹. During the border conflict with Ethiopia, Eritrea's armed forces expanded to close to 300,000 members, almost 10% of the population. The planned demobilisation of troops has seen very limited progress, and the armed forces still totalled over 200,000 in 2007, plus another 120,000 reservists³⁰, i.e. between 4 and 7 % of the population. Forced conscription hides very high levels

Agriculture. About 75 % of the population relies on agriculture, pastoralism or fishing, but this sector provides only for 17 % of national GDP. The dominant production system is traditional subsistence agriculture, with a chronic problem of **food insecurity**: even in the best harvest years nearly 50 % of Eritrea's food requirement is satisfied by food imports or external assistance. The main crops are sorghum, barley, wheat, millet, teff (lovegrass), maize and peas. Abundant fisheries resources off Eritrea's long coastline remain under exploited.

The main obstacles to agricultural development are: (i) erratic rainfall and lack of irrigation; (ii) lack of labour force due to military forced conscription; (iii) extensive soil erosion; (iv) lack of rural financial services; (v) land-tenure legislation. Relatively recently the government started to collect agricultural production directly from farmers, and to sell it in government's "fair-price shops" at below-market prices. In addition, there are reports that, due to the lack of labour force, the army has been embarked in agricultural production. (*See chapter VII for more details on the food security situation*).

Industry, transport, services and infrastructure: The service sector is the most important for the economy, typically accounting for around 60% of the country's GDP, while industry, including manufacturing, accounts for around 23%. A brewery, a cigarette factory, some small glass and plastics producers and a number of leather goods and textile factories operate in the Asmara area, along with many smaller businesses. Since the end of subsidies to state-run enterprises in 1994 the managers of these entities have been given more autonomy, but most local industries continue to suffer from outdated machinery, poor infrastructure, low management capacity and a lack of capital investment. Government attempts to alleviate these problems through privatisation have met limited success owing to concerns over political stability and shortage of the foreign currency necessary for key imports.

Mining sector: Eritrean government is keen to develop the mining sector in an effort to solve its severe hard-currency shortage. Gold reserves are estimated at over 30,000 kg. Six companies from Australia, Canada and China are currently exploring for gold and industrial metals in

²⁹ Military spending is estimated at about 25 % of GDP by Eritrean diaspora organisations. The government does not publish its annual budgets, which makes difficult any calculation.

³⁰ EIU, Eritrea Country Profile 2008

Eritrea, although production is not scheduled to begin before 2010. The government is examining five new applications for mining exploration licences from companies based in Canada, China and South Africa. In addition, Eritrea signed in October two deals to explore for crude off the Red Sea northern state's coastline, with the Defba Oil Share Company (a company set up in partnership with the Eritrean government). Oil prospection works started in the 60's but were quickly abandoned due to lack of quick results.

The external sector: Eritrea's trade balance has a permanent **trade deficit**, caused primarily by large food imports. Latest IMF data available (2002) reveal an export / import ratio of 51 / 533 (USD millions). Exports have been significantly hampered due to the border dispute with Ethiopia and the progressive isolation of Eritrea's economy. Main trading partners are Sudan (main importer of Eritrean exports), Italy (main exporter of Eritrean imports) and Saudi Arabia. Eritrea has recently signed four trade and cooperation agreements with **Iran** and a cooperation agreement with **China**, who will provide senior agricultural experts to help Eritrea's efforts towards achieving food security. Eritrea's **foreign debt** stands at 110.5% of GDP, the larger proportion of which was lent from multilateral creditors (WB, ADB). The servicing of this debt in 2006 amounted to 38.1% of export earnings. **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** is seriously hampered by the short-term licensing system and the lack of legal clarity, in particular relating the repatriation of revenues and profits. As a result, FDI is only significant in the mining sector. The Eritrean economy remains heavily dependent on **remittances** from abroad, which have been reduced over the years: they amounted USD 276 million in 2004, compared to USD 400 million in 1999, and the trend seems to have accentuated over recent years, probably signalling the dissatisfaction of Eritrean diaspora with the current regime. Eritreans abroad are now "invited" to pay a tax of 2% on their income, a practice which has been denounced as illegal by many Eritrean diaspora organisations. Foreign currency is controlled by the government, which has limited its access by the population: since 2006 the possession of foreign currency by Eritrean citizens without formal permission is illegal. With fiscal deficits of around 20% GDP, Eritrea remains highly dependant on **foreign assistance**: in 2005 Official Development Assistance (ODA) represented around 17% of GDP³¹, although some sources give higher percentages.

VII. SOCIAL INDICATORS, PROGRESS TOWARDS MDGs AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY

Main economic indicators, 2007 ³²	
Human Development Rank:	157 (out of 177 countries) ³³
Life expectancy at birth	61.38
Infant mortality rate:	44 deaths /1,000 live births ³⁴
HIV/AIDs-adult prevalence rate	2.7%
HIV/AIDs-people living with HIV/AIDs	60,000
Literacy	Male 69.9%, female 47,6%

1. Progress towards MDGs

³¹ Sources: OECD-DAC, EIU

³² Official data not available since 2004. If not indicated otherwise, estimations come from EIU, Eritrea Country Report 2008

³³ UNDP – Human Development Report 2007/08

³⁴ For comparison, in Ethiopia the ratio is 82 /1,000, in France it is 3.36 / 1,000

The lack of any plausible data makes difficult to assess Eritrea's performance towards achievement of MDGs (Millennium Development Goals). The results of the first MDG report, prepared on the basis of data provided mainly by the Eritrean government, indicate that the country is on track to achieve the MDGs related to gender equality in primary education, child health, HIV/AIDS, malaria, other diseases and access to safe drinking water³⁵. The country is, however, lagging behind in eradicating extreme poverty and achieving universal primary education.

It should be noted that these projections are based on crucial assumptions³⁶: a) resolution of the border conflict, b) favourable climatic conditions, c) robust and sustainable economic growth and development and d) successful mobilization of resources (both domestic and international). Main developmental challenges remain:

Poverty and food security: About 53 % of Eritrea's population lives below the national poverty line³⁷, and around 37 % of Eritrea's population lives in extreme poverty (below the food poverty line), on the edge of chronic **food insecurity**. Eritrea used to be a permanent beneficiary of food aid programmes until April 2006, when the government adopted a new food security strategy: the Cash-for-Work (CfW) programme, aiming at creating and restoring community production assets. The programme was initially financed by the "monetisation" of the in-country food aid stocks, including World Food Programme (WFP) stocks, a practice which was denounced as "confiscation". Under this scheme, farmers are requested to "sell" their production directly to the government, who centralises food distribution. Consequently, the government of Eritrea has refused since then any foreign food aid programme in kind, and the WFP has ceased its operations in the country, although it has maintained an office there. Despite the government's statements that the situation is now under control, and its reluctance to provide any data, the **food security** situation in Eritrea is still of serious concern. A combination of poor rains, decreased food production and the knock-on effects of increased global prices would adversely affect vulnerable groups in Eritrea this year, according to several humanitarian agencies³⁸. In some areas the cereal production for this year is likely to represent half of the 2007 production. Pastoralist population, a majority in Eritrea, will be particularly hard-hit. Nutritional surveys indicate that Eritrean women and children are particularly vulnerable to food insecurity, and show malnutrition rates well above WHO standards³⁹, while UNICEF has revealed spikes in "acute malnutrition" among children in several parts of the country. According to some human rights organisations a "silent famine" is killing people in rural areas of the country; the very poor nutritional condition of an increased number of Eritrean immigrants reaching Ethiopia seems to confirm those fears.⁴⁰

Education: Eritrea's level of enrolment in primary education is amongst the lowest in the region, although marked improvements (especially in the education of girls) have been made since independence. The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) was 51.5%, 18.9% and 14.1% at the elementary, middle and secondary levels respectively in 2003/2004. Adult literacy rates remain low. Educational standards have further deteriorated since 2003, when the final year of schooling for all students was combined with compulsory military training at the Sawa national service training. Eritrea's only higher education facility, the University of Asmara, was closed down in September 2006 and replaced by a system of decentralised colleges headed by military

³⁵ UNDP, 2008

³⁶ Draft Country Strategy Paper Eritrea (CSP), 2008-2013

³⁷ UN Definition on national poverty line: an income level considered minimally sufficient to sustain a family in terms of food, housing, clothing, medical needs, etc

³⁸ IRIN, Humanitarian news and analysis (OCHA), WFP, UNICEF

³⁹ UNICEF Draft CSP Eritrea, 2008-2013

⁴⁰ OCHA update, 22 September 2008

command. Government expenditure in education was 2.4 % GDP in 2006 (for comparison, in Ethiopia it was 6 %, in France 5.7%).

Health: The health situation has improved since independence, but Eritrea still faces a number of challenges to achieve the related MDGs. Both the infant mortality and under-5 mortality rates are below average for sub-Saharan Africa. Maternal mortality remains high, at 630 per 100,000 live births, although it is a net improvement since 1995. Low results in maternal health are mainly related to shortage of trained birth attendants, cultural preference for home delivery, poor antenatal, delivery and postnatal care and limited emergency obstetric facilities. Eritrea has an estimated general population HIV sero-prevalence rate of 2.7 %.

Internally displaced people (IDPs): Out of the nearly 1 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs) caused by the Eritrea-Ethiopia war, around 32,000 still live in camps.

Landmines: In 2002 the World Bank estimated that there were around 2 million landmines in Eritrea. The de-mining effort supported by international experts is under way, although it suffers from frequent government interferences (expulsion of four mine-action NGOs in 2002, seizing of vehicles by the government in 2005).

2. Development policy in Eritrea

In Eritrea policy formulation remains at an embryonic stage. Lack of any official data makes it difficult to formulate development programmes, or to assess economic performance. An interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was prepared in 2004, but has not been utilised in planning terms. The government usually produces ad hoc sectoral policy papers to define the framework of cooperation in specific sectors of donor activity.⁴¹

Eritrea remains heavily dependant on foreign aid, although international donors have significantly reduced their contributions over the years, probably reflecting the remarkably ill-conceived diplomatic strategy of Eritrea. According to OECD / DAC, Eritrea received a total of 355 USD million ODA (Official Development Assistance) in 2005, a figure reduced to USD 129 million in 2006.

ODA (Official development Assistance) to Eritrea, USD million						
	Total, all donors	Multilateral organisations	EU Member States	European Commission	Italy	US
2005	355	132.26	52.66	29.33	25.00	141.50
2006	129.05	67.35	27.92	14.92	3.53	0.56

Source: OECD-DAC, Statistics division

The **USAID** Office was shut down in 2005, allegedly upon request by Eritrea's government⁴², and since then the US has not provided new direct development aid to Eritrea.

For economic assistance Eritrea today relies mainly on China, Arab States, the EU, multilateral organisations (World Bank, UNDP) and remittances from Eritrean diaspora. In 2007, China partially cancelled Eritrea's existing debt.

⁴¹ In the case of the EU/EC, the cooperation framework with the Eritrean Government is defined in the 'Eritrea-EU ties, Broad Outline of the Medium Term Cooperation Programme' (April 2007)

⁴² US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, Background note Eritrea, July 2008

The **World Bank** has so far provided funding for 15 projects in the following sectors: education, emergency reconstruction, emergency demobilisation and reintegration of soldiers. The WB has recently approved new grants for Eritrea: Eritrea's Power Distribution and Rural Electrification project (USD 15,5 million), to rehabilitate and expand the electricity distribution system in the capital, Asmara, and rural areas; and USD 12 million for an Integrated Early Childhood Development project in order to improve the health, nutrition and access to pre-school education of children under six years.

UNDP remains active in Eritrea and has focused its programmes on:

- Poverty Reduction and MDGs, including enhancing government planning capabilities, food security, HIV /AIDs prevention and intervention programmes
- Democratic Governance: institutional capacity building (Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Civil Service Administration, gender equity)
- Crisis Prevention and Recovery: IDPs return programmes, clearing landmines and resettlement
- Environment and sustainable development

3. EU Development assistance to Eritrea⁴³

Since 1993, the EU has committed €229m and disbursed €167m in projects to Eritrea (see Annex III for details in 7th, 8th and 9th EDF commitments and payments). Overall cooperation between the EC and Eritrea has been defined by the priorities set by the government of Eritrea and the limitations to the choices of implementation modalities defined by the specific conditions in Eritrea. In the initial stages of cooperation between the EC and Eritrea, the most urgent needs for cooperation were defined by the prolonged period of conflict from which Eritrea was emerging. Cooperation in the early years of independence concentrated on **post conflict rehabilitation** to assist in the recovery process from the thirty year struggle for independence. The **8th EDF** planning for Eritrea focused on **redressing macroeconomic stability and viability**. The war with Ethiopia (1998-2000), and the resulting destruction of physical and social capital led to new needs in terms of **post conflict rehabilitation**, which became the focal area of the 9th EDF CSP, with emphasis placed on both the reconstruction of physical infrastructure and the demobilisation of combatants. The Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the 9th EDF concluded that to shift away from post conflict rehabilitation, towards more **development oriented activities**, with the introduction of a large support programme to **education** (school construction and capacity building), and an increased focus on **road maintenance** in the infrastructure component.

Absorption levels of EC funds in Eritrea have historically been low across the board: only 55 % out of 9th EDF funds have actually been allocated, and only 23 % actually paid.

Recently the EC has encountered **additional obstacles** in implementing EC cooperation projects:

- access to projects in the field remains problematic, both for EC officials and implementing partners, allegedly for security reasons
- complication of procurement rules and retirement of operating licenses to a series of particular enterprises
- serious constraints to NGO operations, following the 2005 “NGO’s proclamation”⁴⁴
- lack of official budgetary documents or sectoral plans

⁴³ Draft Country Strategy Paper, Eritrea, 2008-2013

⁴⁴ The proclamation introduces taxes on imports by NGOs, and requests the deposit of exorbitant sums of foreign currency by NGOs in order to maintain their operational license

- weak institutional capacity, defiance towards foreign assistance
- limitations to fuel access to NGOs and international organisations

The **Country Strategy Paper (CSP)** for Eritrea covering the implementation of the **10th EDF (2008-2013)** is under negotiation. The delays incurred in its preparation can be described as technical. It is not excluded, however, that some Member States could raise substantial issues during its discussion by the EDF management committee, scheduled for early 2009. According to the draft CSP € 122 million would be allocated to Eritrea under A-envelope, covering the following sectors:

10th EDF CSP Eritrea (2008-2013): € 122 million
Focal Sectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food security (57 % of total resources): focused on sustainable agricultural development, not targeted at individual food aid - Infrastructure (28 % of total resources): aimed at improving road transport infrastructure
Non focal sectors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Governance: support to the justice sector, capacity building for public administration - Rehabilitation of cultural goods

The **EIB** involvement in Eritrea has so far been quite limited. From the five Member States present in Eritrea ⁴⁵only **Italy, The Netherlands and Germany** have had sizeable development programmes.

In terms of **humanitarian aid**, ECHO has been particularly active in Eritrea for many years. It has been providing emergency assistance for various regions of the country, as well as support for refugees and IDPs following the recent war with Ethiopia. The reduction in the number of registered NGOs in Eritrea following the ‘NGO proclamation’ has limited the choice of implementing partners with which ECHO can work. In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP) has not been operational in the country since 2006, following a clash with the Eritrean government regarding food aid policy. As a consequence, ECHO has reduced its intervention in Eritrea and in 2008 adopted only one decision, allocating € 4 million focusing on health and nutrition interventions with UN Agencies and the ICRC.

VII. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

In addition to the war with Ethiopia⁴⁶, during its short independence history Eritrea has already been involved in border disputes with all its other neighbours: Sudan, Djibouti and Yemen. In addition, Eritrea plays a (negative) role in each and every conflict in the Horn of Africa region, forging a reputation of regional troublemaker.

Eritrea's hostility towards its African peers stems from the pre-independence era, when African states tended to oppose any cessationist tendencies; consequently, Eritrea's fight for independence from Ethiopia found little support in Africa. Relations with **Yemen** and **Sudan** have improved recently. Although Eritrea has been instrumental in the Sudanese peace-process,

⁴⁵ The Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy, UK

⁴⁶ See Policy Department note of September 2008 (Note 2008/172) for full background information and recent update of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict

some human rights organisations have denounced that Eritrea's objectives are completely selfish⁴⁷ and not at all related to regional stability concerns.

The conflict with **Djibouti** over the remote Ras Doumeira area has, on the contrary, escalated recently, resulting in the deaths of over 35 victims with dozens wounded in June this year. The specific reason for this escalation is still not totally clear although it seems to be linked to massive desertion by Eritrean soldiers to Djibouti and the refusal by Djiboutian army to return them. Some analysts see this conflict merely as a continuation of the unresolved Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute⁴⁸, and as a deliberate attempt by Eritrea to attract international attention without risking open war with Ethiopia. However, Eritrea has refused to meet any fact-finding mission to the area (regional or international) and maintains its position that there is no territorial dispute with Djibouti. A recent UN fact-finding mission reported⁴⁹ that the situation on the Djibouti-Eritrean border is highly volatile. The report explicitly links the resolution of the two border disputes, by considering that the instability of the region is caused, in essence, by the unresolved Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute. The report concludes that Djibouti is being drawn into a crippling and expensive military mobilisation to deal with a situation that "*may ultimately threaten national, regional and international peace*", and recommends to refer the matter to the UN Security Council in case Eritrea continues to refuse cooperation with UN in resolving it.

Eritrea is reportedly supporting armed groups hostile to the **Ethiopia's** regime in an attempt to destabilise it internally, such as the OLF, ONLF and the UWSLF⁵⁰. In **Somalia**, Eritrea has also supported the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and played host to the Somali opposition, whose former leader, Sheik Hassan Dahir Aweys, is designated a terrorist under a UN Security Council resolution. Experts suggest that Eritrea's support for the UIC included surface-to-air missiles, ammunition, training and advisers⁵¹.

US-Eritrea relations were good in the aftermath of 11 September 2001, when both countries agreed to cooperate to fight terrorism in the region. Eritrea was even considered as a possible location for a US military basis in the region, which was ultimately located in Djibouti. This blow was never forgiven by Eritrean President. Relationship deteriorated further when the US backed Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia. During 2007 the US have been repeatedly threaten to add Eritrea to the list of countries "not fully cooperating against terrorism". In October this year the US State Department finally banned arms sales to Eritrea, over concerns that it is aiding terrorist activities in the Horn of Africa.

Eritrea is member of three regional bodies: **IGAD**, **COMESA** and **CEN-SAD**, and it has observer status in the **Arab League** since 2003. During 2007, Eritrea suspended its membership to IGAD as a result of disagreements on IGAD positions on the conflict in Somalia. Eritrea has recalled its Ambassador from the African Union, whose headquarters are based in Addis Ababa, although it maintains its AU membership⁵².

⁴⁷ HRC-Eritrea denounced the fact that Eritrea only forced the armed groups it had armed and trained to sit around the negotiating table when it saw that the fall of Sudanese government was impossible and exclusively for selfish reasons: i) to force Sudanese government to close down any Eritrean opposition based in Sudan; ii) to stop the flow of political and humanitarian refugees through Sudanese border; iii) to use Sudan's territory as an entry point to destabilise Ethiopia by letting in armed groups and military equipment

⁴⁸ The only access to sea for Eritrea is Djibouti

⁴⁹ Report of the UN fact-finding mission on the Djibouti-Eritrea crisis, 28 July-6 August 2008

⁵⁰ OLF: Oromo Liberation Front; ONLF: Ogaden National Liberation Front; UWSLF: United Western Somali Liberation Front;

⁵¹ DG EXPO Poldep Note on Somalia

⁵² The chairperson of the AUC, Mr. Ping, has scheduled to visit Eritrea in October 2008

IX. EU-ERITREA RELATIONS

In 1993, immediately after independence, Eritrea joined the Lomé IV Convention, and the EU Delegation in Eritrea was established in 1995. Eritrea, as member of the ACP group, is signatory to the ACP-EU Partnership Agreement (the Cotonou Agreement) signed in Benin in June 2000, which replaces previous Lomé conventions. For detailed description of EU development and humanitarian assistance see chapter VII.

EU-Eritrea trade regime

Eritrea followed EPA negotiations in the framework of COMESA, although it finally opted to remain included in the Everything But Arms regime (EBA), on the grounds that it does not consider the degree of market openness required under the proposed EPA agreements as relevant to a LDC. Eritrea may opt to sign an EPA agreement in the future.

EU-Eritrea Political Relations

EU-Eritrea relations reached their lowest point at the end of 2001, with the expulsion of the Italian Ambassador to Asmara and EU representative, Antonio Baldini, following his protest at the detentions of the G-15 members (see chapter IV, Political Structure). All EU Member States decided then to recall their diplomatic representatives, conditioning their return on the willingness of President Isaias to engage on human rights dialogue. This request was never satisfied, but EU Ambassadors nevertheless returned to Eritrea, in a non-coordinated way. Since then, and usually around the 18 of September, the EU Presidency issues an annual declaration on political prisoners in Eritrea, expressing its "deep concern" about their situation, denouncing the violation of several international treaties by the government of Eritrea and deploring the lack of continuing lack of progress on this matter by the Eritrean government. In addition the EU reiterates every year its call for their unconditional release, as well as to allow access to the prisoners to their families, legal representatives and medical personnel (see Annex VI).

The European Parliament reacted as well, and on 7 February 2002 it adopted a human rights resolution that was highly critical of Eritrea. The resolution called for the continuation of EU development co-operation to be conditional upon "substantial progress being achieved in the areas of human rights and democratisation, in particular freedom of speech, press and assembly, and the holding of democratic elections."

For a number of years, relations between Eritrea and the EU remained tense and confrontational. Human rights organisations denounced the worsening of the internal situation, with a series of detention campaigns against members of the press and civil society, and prosecution of religious people. In the meantime, none of the September 2001 prisoners was released, and no information was given about their place of detention or conditions. EU-Eritrea political dialogue was virtually non-existent, although the EC never suspended development aid, and consultations under Article 96 of the Cotonou agreement were never envisaged.

On January 2004 a fact-finding mission of the EU-ACP JPA took place upon Eritrea's insistence. The main objective of the mission, which took place just before the EU-ACP JPA in Addis-Ababa, was to recall Eritrea's position regarding the border dispute with Ethiopia. The final joint report described the country situation in mild terms, and it partially upheld the Eritrean government's position according to which full respect for human rights would be possible only after an effective resumption of progress towards peace with Ethiopia⁵³. However, the very same year the European Parliament adopted a resolution firmly condemning human rights abuses in Eritrea, calling for the immediate release of G-11 prisoners, and calling on the Council and

⁵³ Report on the fact-finding mission of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly to Eritrea, 22-26 January 2006

Commission to open the consultation procedure in accordance with Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement (see Annex VI).

In June 2007 the European Commission changed its strategy and initiated a process of political re-engagement with Eritrea. The main reason for Commissioner Louis Michel's change of approach was his determination to ignite a positive regional agenda for the Horn of Africa⁵⁴, where Eritrea has a major role to play in view of its presence in the conflicts in Sudan and Somalia.⁵⁵

Indeed, following this change of approach, Eritrea's president Isaias Afewerki visited Brussels in June 2007, and Commissioner Louis Michel visited Asmara in June 2008. Human rights organisations have criticised the fact that the EC has not publicly called for the release of political prisoners, or the improvement of the human rights situation in the country at any of these meetings.

According to the Commission, however, Commissioner Louis Michel did address the human rights situation in the country with President Isaias, and notably the issue of prisoners of conscience. In addition, the visit of Louis Michel to Eritrea in June has been instrumental in opening a formal political dialogue under Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement: a first meeting defined the process and the agenda, a second meeting took place in September and was focused on the border conflict with Ethiopia, and the following meeting will be focus on migration. An evaluation of the political dialogue will be made by the end of 2008, after which a meeting on human rights could be proposed for 2009.

The EU is currently under pressure from human rights organisations and, sporadically, by the European Parliament to harden its policy towards Eritrea (*see Chapter V on Human Rights*). Although the Eritrean diaspora lacks a clear ally amongst EU Member States (contrary to the Zimbabwe case, to name one obvious example) its recent reunification under one single umbrella organisation has reinforced its position and visibility in Europe. Both the African Commission on Human Rights and the UN Working Group on arbitrary detention have condemned Eritrea detentions for violating international law (see Annex II).

Both sides need the political dialogue to bring some results: the European Commission needs a visible sign of cooperation from Eritrea in order to continue to justify its soft diplomacy, while the increasingly isolated Eritrean regime might need to keep a credible interlocutor and a generous donor. The liberation of Dawit Isaak based on humanitarian grounds could be such a sign but, although welcome, it would only be a drop in the ocean.

⁵⁴ The EC proposed in October 2006 the "EU political partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa" as an integrated response strategy for the region. The EP adopted a related resolution on 10 May 2007, endorsing the Commission's approach (see Annex XX). The strategy's political objective is to engage the seven Horn of Africa countries in a multi-dimensional process of dialogue and cooperation that would ultimately facilitate peace and security in the region.

⁵⁵ A second reason, according to EC sources, is that previous strategies had not worked. This reasoning is undermined by the fact that the EC never opened Article 96 consultations with Eritrea and never stopped delivering aid. The argument that such procedures have not been effective in other countries does not pre-empt their potential results in Eritrea

Profile: Isaias Afewerki , President of Eritrea since 1993

Isaias Afewerki

Isaias Afewerki was born on 2 February 1946 in Asmara. In 1966, after one year of study at Haile Selassie I University, he dropped out to join the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF). The same year he received military training in China. He was one of the founders of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (ELPF). The ELPF, later renamed the Eritrean People's Liberation Front, called for social revolution as well as for national independence and it finally became the leader of the armed groups in the fight against Ethiopia. After independence, Isaias was immensely popular as the unquestioned national hero of the liberation struggle against Ethiopia. He was elected the first president of Eritrea by the national assembly in 1993 and has remained in power since then. Although traditionally austere and unpretentious (he used to drive himself to work), he has apparently moved recently to an ostentatious palace in Massawa.

He is regarded as a remarkably stubborn and diffident man who does not respond to threats and diplomatic influence and, in fact, has a distaste for compromise and diplomacy, both of which he considers weaknesses.

The "G-15" case

On 18 September 2001 (the "*Black Tuesday*"), 11 of the 15 signatories to an open letter criticising President Isaias Afewerki's leadership were arrested. The so-called G-15 was composed of high-level government officials and members of ruling party PFDJ. All of the 11 prisoners, now called the G-11, as well as at least 10 journalists detained a few days later, have remained in detention incommunicado since then, without having been charged with any offence, and without any information about their place of detention, detention conditions and health status.

Members of the G-15 Group:

Petros Solomon (jailed): Head of military intelligence for the EPLF until independence. Since then, he served in various cabinet positions (Foreign Affairs, Fisheries).

** Aster Yohannes, the wife of Petros Solomon, was detained in 2003 when she returned to Eritrea from the USA to be with her children. She has been in detention incommunicado since then, without having been able to see them.*

Mahmoud Ahmed Sherifo (jailed): various cabinet positions (Foreign Affairs, Local Government) Fisheries). Chairman of the Committee to prepare draft laws concerning the formation of Political Parties, which President Afewerki eventually blocked. He was considered the unofficial number two.

Haile Woldense (jailed): various cabinet positions (Minister of Finance Foreign Affairs). He negotiated and signed the peace accord with Ethiopia in December 2000

Mesfin Hagos (in exile): Founding member of the EPLF in 1970, alongside President Afewerki. He was Eritrea's first Minister of Defence. During the arrest of the G-15 group Mesfin was abroad for medical reasons. He is now a leader of the opposition party Eritrean Democratic Party (EDP), which is based outside Eritrea.

Hamid Himid (jailed): Held various government posts since Eritrean independence, including ambassador to Saudi Arabia. He was member of the EPLF Central committee and of the National Assembly.

Ogbe Abraha (jailed): Held various government posts, including Minister of Trade and Industry, Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Chief of Staff of the Eritrean Defence Forces. Ogbe suffered from a serious case of asthma and is believed to have died in prison.

Saleh Idris Kekya (jailed): Member of the National Assembly, member of the Central Council of PFDJ, Director of the Office of the President, Ambassador to Sudan, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Transport and Communication.

Estifanos Seyoum (jailed): Member of the Central Council of PFDJ, member of the National Assembly, Secretary of Finance, Head of Finance in the Eritrean Defence Forces

Berhane Ghebrezgabihier (jailed): Member of the Central Council of PFDJ, member of the National Assembly, Secretary of Industry, Administrator of Hamasien Province, Commander of the Ground Forces in the Eritrean Defence Forces as Major General, and Commander of the reserve army.

Astier Fesehazion (jailed): she held the following positions: member of the Central Council of PFDJ, member of the National Assembly, Head of Social Affairs in the Ministry of Social Welfare

Mohammed Berhan Blata (in exile): Consecutively the mayor of Mendeferra, Adi Kayih and Dekemhare, from 1992 to 2001. After signing the open letter with the rest of the G-15 Mohammed later recanted. He now lives in exile.

Germano Nati (jailed): Held the following positions: member of the Central Council and Executive Committee of PFDJ, member of the National Assembly, Administrator of the Gash-Setit Province and Head of Social Affairs in the Southern Red Sea Region.

Beraki Gebreselassie (jailed): Minister of Education and later Minister of Information and Culture. Before his incarceration, he served as Eritrean Ambassador to Germany

Adhanom Ghebremariam (in exile): He held various posts in post-independence Eritrea: Regional Administrator of Seraye, Attorney General of the State of Eritrea, Ambassador to Sweden and later Ambassador to Nigeria.

Haile Menkerios (in exile): a Harvard graduate, he was once a leader of Eritrean Students of North America. He represented the Eritrean Government in various capacities including that of Ambassador to Ethiopia and the Organisation of African Unity, Special Envoy to Somalia and also the Great Lakes region, and as Permanent Representative to the United Nations.

Two legal cases against the Government of Eritrea⁵⁶

1. African Commission on Human and People's Rights

In November 2001, Mr Mussie Ephrem, an Eritrean national based in Sweden, launched a legal case against the State of Eritrea concerning massive detentions conducted in September 2001. The case was brought in African Commission on Human and People's Rights. After two and a half years, the Commission issued a report finding Eritrea's arrest of the eleven government officials in 2001 and their continued incarceration in violation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, namely Articles 2,6,7(1) and 9(2). The Government of Eritrea responded to the report stating that the delay in bringing prisoners to justice was simply a matter of routine procedure. The final report was adopted in 2005, urging the State of Eritrea to order the immediate release of the 11 detainees.

2. UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UN WGAD)

On February 2007, two Eritreans living abroad (Dawit Mesfin and Habtom Yohannes) opened a case against the government of Eritrea with the **UN WGAD**, under the UN Human Rights Commission, denouncing the illegal detention of 11 Eritrean citizens. The Eritrean government was, finally, forced to give official information about their situation. The Eritrean government's response, dated 29/08/2007, states that "*the 11 persons are detained for conspiracy and attempt to overthrow the legal government in violation of relevant UN resolutions*" and recognises that "*the accused did not get speedy and fair trial yet [..because..] the evidence gathered so far cannot be made public and forwarded to judicial proceeding since the war situation is not yet over*", adding that "the issue of legal representation is premature since the charges are not yet framed and submitted to the accused".

On 27 November 2007 the UN WGAD adopted the OPINION No. 23/2007 (ERITREA), which stated that⁵⁷:

"The deprivation of liberty of Messrs. Petros Solomon, Ogbe Abraha, Haile Woldensae, Mahmoud Sherifo, Berhane Ghebregabher, Salih Idris Kekya, Hamed Himed, Stefanos Seyuom, Germano Nati, Berraki Ghebreslasse and Ms. Aster Fesehazion is arbitrary, being in contravention of articles 9 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Eritrea is a party, and falls within categories I and II of the categories applicable to the consideration of cases submitted to the Working Group. (...) The Working Group believes that under the circumstances the adequate remedy would be the immediate release of Mr. Petros Solomon and the ten others."

There are no records of an official response by the Eritrean government so far.

⁵⁶ Source: AWATE, pro-opposition website. Documents distributed during the hearing on Human Rights in Eritrea organised on 18/09/08 in the European Parliament

⁵⁷ Warning notice: the UN WGAD opinion has not yet been published on the UN website, which so far has published only opinions adopted by the UN WGAD until May 2007

Commitments / Disbursements in Euro as of 25 September 2008 (Source: EC)

PROGRAMME	COMMITTED	CONTRACTED	PAID EC
9th EDF- NIP	117.749.297	63.016.284	27.068.119
Envelope A			
Focal sector 1 - Post Conflict Rehabilitation			
9.ACP.ERY.1 Rehabilitation of Nefasit Dekemhare Road	98.430	98.430	98.430
9.ACP.ERY.4 Support Refugees and internally displaced	162.035	162.035	162.035
9.ACP.ERY.5 Augmentation de plafond - 7.ACP.ERY.21 "Infrastructure Rehabilitation of Transmission lines, substations & Distribution system in Massawa".	233.310	233.310	233.310
9.ACP.ERY.7 Post Conflict Rehabilitation Programme for Eritrea	20.000.000	18.326.136	5.567.520
9.ACP.ERY.9 EC Support to Education in Eritrea	53.000.000	38.751.816	18.580.331
9.ACP.ERY.13 Road Maintenance and Safety Phase II	34.450.000	0	0
Focal sector 2 - Demobilisation/Reintegration*	0	0	0
Focal sector 3 - Transport			
9.ACP.ERY.10 Road Maintenance and Safety Phase I	4.300.000	3.315.658	663.132
Non-focal sector			
9.ACP.ERY.6 Technical Cooperation Facility I	1.600.000	1.186.350	1.097.166
9.ACP.ERY.11 Technical Cooperation Facility II/1	199.999	199.932	119.959
9.ACP.ERY.12 Technical Cooperation Facility II/2	1.300.001	284.208	87.827
9.ACP.ERY.14 Support to the Auditor General	1.950.000	2.886	2.886
Envelope B			
9.ACP.ERY.8 Humanitarian Aid to the victims of climatic hazard and food insecurity	455.521	455.521	455.521
Intra ACP**			
9.ACP.RPR.163 (Energy facility) Expansion LPG Storage	4.613.178	0	0
9.ACP.RSA.33 (Reg. B envelope) HPAI Preparedness	800.000	454.000	353.754
9.ACP.RPR.39.12 Debub Water Supply and sanitation	751.822	751.822	301.789
9.ACP.RPR.39.13 Rural Water	2.227.507	2.227.507	578.406
9.ACP.RSA.42.1 Support to IDSP (Food component)	3.795.000	3.795.000	1.984.613
9.ACP.RSA.42.2 Support to IDSP (Infrastructure component)	1.605.000	1.605.000	0
TOTAL Envelope A	117.293.776	62.560.763	26.612.598
TOTAL Envelope B	455.521	455.521	455.521
TOTAL 9th EDF Intra ACP	13.792.506	8.833.329	3.218.562
Budget Lines***			
Food security and Agriculture		15.910.300	10.080.176
NGO co-financing/ ONG-PVD		3.974.084	1.990.164
MAP -Land mine clearance		1.000.000	695.117
Environment/Forestry		1.000.000	719.110
Rehabilitation		162.729	138.076
DDH / Human Rights		526.474	485.636
TOTAL Budget Lines	22.573.588	22.573.588	14.108.280
4. 8th EDF	20.789.826	18.011.576	18.009.602
5. 7th EDF	54.786.244	54.786.244	54.786.244
TOTAL	229.691.461	167.221.021	117.190.807

* Amount for this focal sector is zero, following policy decision by the GoE to secure the integration of the demobilised soldiers in the rural areas through a different approach; **No information is given under the "Committed" column as it does not provide relevant information for Eritrea; ***baseline : from year 2002; EDF: including closures 7 and 8 EDF (P.indicatif + hors P.indicatifs) including ECHO project but excluding TPS, BL: ongoing and closed. Baseline: from 2002

P6_TA(2004)0068

Human rights in Eritrea

European Parliament resolution of 18 November 2004 on the human rights situation in Eritrea

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the ruling against Eritrea by the African Commission on Human Rights in March 2004,
- having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. deeply concerned by Eritrea's steadily deteriorating human rights situation, and dismayed by the manifest lack of cooperation from the Eritrean authorities, despite repeated appeals by international human rights organisations and NGOs,
- B. whereas on 4 November 2004 the Eritrean security forces indiscriminately arrested thousands of young people and others suspected of evading military conscription, and fearing that the prisoners may risk torture and ill-treatment,
- C. whereas 12 people died in an alleged escape bid on 4 November 2004 in the Adi Abeto military prison,
- D. whereas many young people have fled the country to escape from military service, and many of those forcibly returned to Eritrea from Malta and Libya have been arrested, tortured and sent to a secret prison where most are still detained incommunicado,
- E. strongly deploring the continued imprisonment without charge since September 2001 of the so-called Asmara 11, a group of former ruling-party members of parliament campaigning for democratisation,
- F. having regard to the de facto suppression of the independent press and the arrests of numerous journalists, in the wake of which the association 'Reporters sans frontières' now ranks Eritrea as the third most repressive country in the world towards journalists,
- G. whereas since September 2001 13 independent journalists have been arrested in Asmara, one of them being a Swedish citizen, Dawit Isaak, who has not been tried for any crime, while the Eritrean authorities have refused to make any comment on his fate,
- H. whereas the constitution adopted in 1997 and guaranteeing civil liberties, including freedom of religion, has never been implemented,
- I. whereas respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, constitutes an essential element of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement,

1. Firmly condemns all human rights abuses in Eritrea and calls on the country's authorities to uphold human rights, to respect the international conventions and to cooperate in full with international human rights organisations and NGOs;
2. Calls on the Eritrean government to abide by the international human rights conventions;
3. Calls for a thorough and independent investigation of the incident at the Adi Abeto military prison on 4 November 2004, where at least a dozen prisoners were reportedly shot dead; calls for those responsible to be brought to justice;
4. Calls on the Eritrean authorities to immediately release the 11 former members of parliament, in compliance with the ruling of the African Commission on Human Rights of March 2004;
5. Calls on the Eritrean authorities to lift the ban on the country's independent press and to immediately release the 13 independent journalists and all others who have been jailed simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression;
6. Calls on the Eritrean authorities to respect the human rights of all detainees, including the young people arrested on 4 November 2004, and allow them immediate access to their families and lawyers;
7. Stresses the importance it attaches to fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression, freedom of association, especially in the political and trade union spheres, and freedom of assembly;
8. Reiterates its demand for the initiation of an inter-Eritrean political process, bringing together the various party leaders and representatives of civil society with a view to finding a solution to the current crisis and to setting the country on the path to democracy, political pluralism and sustainable development; in this context, confirms its commitment to supporting the development of Eritrea, as well as peace and stability and cooperation in the region;
9. Calls on the Council and Commission to open the consultation procedure in accordance with Article 96 of the Cotonou Agreement in order to stop human rights violations and pave the way for political pluralism;
10. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the ACP-EU Council and ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the African Union, and the Government and Parliament of Eritrea.

P6_TA(2007)0180**EU partnership in the Horn of Africa****European Parliament resolution of 10 May 2007 on the Horn of Africa: EU Regional political partnership for peace, security and development (2006/2291(INI))**

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the EU strategy 'The EU and Africa: Towards a Strategic Partnership' (The European Strategy for Africa), adopted by the European Council of 15-16 December 2005,
- having regard to the Joint statement by the Council and the representatives of the governments of the Member States meeting within the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission on European Union Development Policy: 'The European Consensus' (The European Consensus on Development) signed on 20 December 2005⁵⁸,
- having regard to the Partnership Agreement between the members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States, of the one part, and the Community and its Member States, of the other part, signed in Cotonou on 23 June 2000⁵⁹, as amended by the Agreement amending the Partnership Agreement, signed in Luxembourg on 25 June 2005⁶⁰ (the Cotonou Agreement), in particular Article 8 thereof,
- having regard to the EU Strategy to combat the illicit accumulation of and trafficking of SALW (small arms and light weapons) and their ammunition, adopted by the European Council of 15-16 December 2005,
- having regard to the Commission's Communication entitled 'Strategy for Africa: An EU regional political partnership for peace, security and development in the Horn of Africa' (COM(2006)0601),
- having regard to its resolutions on Darfur, in particular those of 15 February 2007⁶¹, 28 September 2006⁶², 6 April 2006⁶³, 23 June 2005⁶⁴ and 16 September 2004⁶⁵,
- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1706(2006) proposing a 22 000-strong peace-keeping force for Darfur,
- having regard to the Darfur Peace Agreement signed in Abuja, Nigeria, on 5 May 2006,

⁵⁸ OJ C 46, 24.2.2006, p. 1.

⁵⁹ OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.

⁶⁰ OJ L 209, 11.8.2005, p. 27.

⁶¹ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2007)0052.

⁶² *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0387.

⁶³ OJ C 293 E, 2.12.2006, p. 320.

⁶⁴ OJ C 133 E, 8.6.2006, p. 96.

⁶⁵ OJ C 140 E, 9.6.2005, p. 153.

- having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, which addresses the impact of war on women, and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa of 26 October 2005;
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is binding and applicable without exception,
 - having regard to the outcome of the General Affairs and External Relations Council of 12-13 February 2007,
 - having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2006 on Somalia⁶⁶,
 - having regard to the Presidency Conclusions of the European Council of 14-15 December 2006,
 - having regard to the Conclusions of the General Affairs and External Relations Council on Sudan/Darfur of 5 March 2007,
 - having regard to its resolution of 6 April 2006 on aid effectiveness and corruption in developing countries⁶⁷,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Development and the opinion of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A6-0146/2007),
- A. whereas, at the Second EU-Africa Summit, to be held in Lisbon in 2007, the Heads of State and Government are to approve a Joint EU-Africa Strategy which would represent the EU's commitment to transforming the EU Strategy for Africa into a Joint EU-Africa Strategy; whereas Parliament has so far not been included in the consultation,
- B. whereas the above-mentioned Commission Communication on the Strategy for Africa builds on the concept of the interlinked security and development issues, stating that there is no development without lasting peace and there is no lasting peace without development, and further aims to serve as a guidance in the formulation of Country and Regional Strategy Papers,
- C. whereas the European Strategy for Africa is aimed at setting up a comprehensive, long-term framework for EU relations with the African continent, with the primary goal of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promoting sustainable development, security and good governance in Africa,
- D. whereas Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement provides a framework for conducting a political dialogue on specific political issues of mutual concern or of general significance to the parties, and provides that broadly based policies to promote peace and prevent, manage and resolve violent conflicts are to play a prominent role in this dialogue,

⁶⁶ *Texts Adopted*, P6_TA(2006)0322.

⁶⁷ OJ C 293 E, 2.12.2006, p. 316.

- E. whereas Article 11 of the Cotonou Agreement entitled 'Peace-building policies, conflict prevention and resolution' stipulates that the parties shall pursue a comprehensive, integrated policy of peace-building and conflict prevention and resolution with a particular focus on building regional, sub-regional and national capacities,

Security dimension

- F. whereas the Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict-prone regions in the world as well as being one of the poorest, with a systematic insecurity in which conflicts and political crises feed into and fuel one another, with difficult inter-State relations, unstable, disputed, underdeveloped and insecure borders, with States providing refuge, rearguard bases, military support and diplomatic recognition to groups fighting wars in neighbouring States,
- G. whereas the root causes of conflicts are generally human rights violations, the absence of democracy and the rule of law, bad governance and corruption, ethnic tensions, inefficient administration, organised crime and drugs and arms trafficking and the uncontrolled and illegal proliferation of SALW, as well as poverty, unemployment and social, economic and political injustices and inequalities, rapid population growth and poor or bad management and/or exploitation of natural resources,
- H. whereas the conflicts in the Horn of Africa have taken on regional dimensions with the involvement of neighbouring and other countries, and also an increasingly broader international dimension,

Regional frameworks and external actors

- I. whereas the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a central part of the political and security architecture and crucial to conflict prevention in the Horn and is the only sub-regional organisation of which Somalia is a member,
- J. whereas the African Union (AU) is developing capacities to engage in conflict mediation and peace-keeping and whereas the African Peace Facility is one of the most tangible aspect of EU cooperation with the AU,

Development dimensions

- K. whereas the chronic instability of the region undermines its political, social and economic development and represents one of the main impediments to achieving the MDGs,
- L. whereas the countries of the Horn of Africa belong to different regional economic organisations and initiatives such as the East Africa Community (EAC)⁶⁸, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)⁶⁹ and the Nile Basin Initiative⁷⁰,
- M. whereas the problems of the region are exacerbated by the regional impact of population growth, climate change and related pressures on natural resources, mainly oil, and by the friction generated by competition for the water resources of the Nile and the high proportion of nomadic pastoralists, bound largely by ethno-linguistic ties rather than political borders, who are among the most marginalised groups in the region,

⁶⁸ EAC members are: Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

⁶⁹ COMESA members are: all the countries in the Horn of Africa are members with the exception of Somalia.

⁷⁰ Nile Basin Initiative members are: Burundi, DRC, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda.

- N. whereas poverty-related diseases, especially HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria, are a major cause as well as a consequence of the considerable poverty in the region,
 - O. whereas in most countries in the region fewer than 50% of children are enrolled in primary school,
 - P. whereas women and children are the most vulnerable people during conflicts and are easily exposed to any kind of violation of basic human rights, including violence, ethnic rape, torture and genital mutilation, and whereas they suffer from diseases to a greater extent than men and are denied access to education and natural resources,
1. Deplores the fact that neither the European Parliament nor the parliaments of the African countries, nor the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, nor civil society representatives, were duly consulted at any stage in the formulation of the EU-Africa Strategy, which calls into question the democratic legitimacy of the common commitment;
 2. Recalls that conceiving a sustainable approach to the establishment of lasting peace in the Horn of Africa requires the conjunction of all existing EU instruments and legal frameworks for Africa; calls for full implementation of Articles 8 to 11 of the Cotonou Agreement;

Security dimension

3. Stresses that the conflicts in the Horn of Africa must be addressed through a comprehensive, conflict-sensitive, regional approach that will enable the formulation of a comprehensive response to the regional dynamics and conflict systems;
4. Takes the view that the EU's action with regard to the Horn of Africa must address not only security concerns but also the structural causes of conflicts connected to social, political and economic exclusion, as well as strengthening security and justice;
5. Stresses that, while addressing security concerns and pursuing counter-terrorism policies, the EU must not neglect human rights and humanitarian law; urges Member States to bring to light and denounce any 'international renditions' of persons arrested in the region on suspicion of terrorism;
6. Calls on the Council and the Commission to take resolute steps to counter impunity in the region, arms trafficking, human rights abuses, violations of ceasefires and attacks on civilians, peace-keepers and humanitarian workers, and to support the involvement of the International Criminal Court (ICC);
7. Stresses that long-term peace in the Horn of Africa will also depend on the EU's commitment to democracy and human rights in the region; calls on the EU to publicly condemn the repressive regimes in that region; expresses its deep concern about the repressive backlash in Ethiopia - the seat of the AU - against opposition leaders, journalists, human rights activists and ordinary people that has taken place since the rigged elections in 2005;

Peace-building regional approach

8. Calls for consolidation of the EU presence in the region through the appointment of an EU representative for the Horn of Africa, a person to be entrusted with the coordination of EU

initiatives for the region to serve as the main EU interlocutor for all Horn of Africa States and submit regular reports to Parliament;

9. Encourages the Commission and the Council to make further progress in establishing an EU Delegation to the AU based in Ethiopia, in addition to the Commission's Delegation in Ethiopia;
10. Calls on the Commission and the Council to start a consultation process with the other stakeholders involved in the region, namely the UN, AU, IGAD, the League of Arab States, USA and China, on the initiative of convening a Comprehensive Security, Peace and Development Conference to deal with these security concerns of all Horn of Africa States simultaneously; points out that such an initiative should serve as a starting-point for launching confidence-building measures for the populations and in the States of the region;
11. Strongly believes that, in its efforts to address the crisis in the Horn of Africa region, the EU should first and foremost seek African solutions, that is, solutions to be achieved with the involvement of the regional organisations in place, AU and IGAD; emphasises, however, the need to strengthen these organisations through capacity and institution building, and particularly through the African Peace Facility, in terms of conflict prevention and conflict resolution;
12. Recalls that improving Africa's ability to prevent, manage and resolve African conflicts, requires concrete measures to support the implementation of the AU's Peace and Security Agenda, by providing technical support, expertise and institution-building assistance to the African Standby Force and to the AU Commission's Peace and Security Department;
13. Recalls the important role of regional initiatives such as the African Peer Review Mechanism in curbing corruption and promoting good governance; emphasises the need for African countries to implement these initiatives and for the Commission and the Member States to provide technical and financial assistance for this purpose;
14. Calls on the Member States to promote a legally binding international instrument on the tracing and marking of SALW and ammunition and to support regional initiatives to combat the illicit trade in SALW and ammunition in developing countries;
15. Welcomes UNICEF's initiative in organising an International Conference in Paris (on 5 and 6 February 2007) on child soldiers, and underlines the need to put an end to the illegal and unacceptable exploitation of children in armed conflicts;
16. Stresses the need to end illicit trade in and tighten controls on the circulation of SALW; welcomes the adoption on 6 December 2006 by the UN General Assembly of a resolution entitled 'Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms';
17. Calls on the Commission and the Council to enhance and to extend to other countries/regions the existing Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives;
18. Stresses the need to foster the role of national and international NGOs, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), grassroots movements and other non-State actors in peace-building and conflict prevention;

Development dimension/Axes of regional integration

19. Emphasises that the objective of reducing poverty by achieving the MDGs and putting the Millennium Declaration into effect must be prioritised and clearly reflected in all relevant EU policies for the region, but believes that the MDGs should not be seen as a technical issue which will be resolved simply by providing more money without identifying and tackling the underlying causes of poverty;
20. Strongly believes that the States of the Horn of Africa have, in addition to shared security problems, a common development agenda which require common efforts to be made and the mobilisation of the political leadership and the societies in these countries; stresses the fact that these concerns can be fully addressed only through conflict-sensitive joint actions aimed at finding common solutions;
21. Stresses the fact that organising initiatives and regional cooperation around clearly identified issues of common concern such as refugee flows, border control, food security, natural resources, energy, the environment, education, infrastructure, arms control and gender equality would serve as a solid basis for positive political dialogue among Horn of Africa States;
22. Urges the Commission to pay due attention to the needs of the region when drawing up not only the Regional and Country Strategy Papers for the ACP countries but also the Thematic Strategy Papers and the Annual Action Programmes under the Development Cooperation Instrument⁷¹;
23. Calls on the Commission to promote better coordination among its departments and the Member States, in order to harmonise the interventions in areas such as the EU-Africa Infrastructure Partnership and the EU Governance Initiative and to ensure coordination in these areas with the UN, USA, China and other international actors;
24. Expresses its concern at specialists' predictions stating that Africa, although it contributes the least in greenhouse gas emissions, will suffer the most from global warming due to its underdevelopment and poverty; underlines the need for the international community to support the region so that it may be in a better position to adapt itself to the severe repercussions of climate change;
25. Recalls that the sustainable management of natural resources, including the exploitation of water and access to and use of energy sources must be an integral part of development plans and of strategies for fighting poverty and preventing conflict in the Horn of Africa region;
26. Takes the view that EU support is needed for the sustainable land management and desertification programme through the thematic programme on the environment and sustainable management of natural resources, as well as for the ACP-EU Water Facility, in order to increase the environmental protection of water resources;
27. Invites the Council and the Commission to seek dialogue with China, taking into consideration the fact that China has intensified its political and economic involvement in Africa, investing heavily in infrastructure and development projects in countries such as

⁷¹ Regulation (EC) No 1905/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation (OL L 378, 27.12.2006, p. 41).

Sudan;

28. Calls on the Council and the Commission to encourage EAC, COMESA and the Nile Basin Initiative to share information on their respective roles and activities among themselves and with the Horn of Africa States and key actors in the region; stresses the positive experience of EAC, COMESA and the Nile Basin Initiative in areas such as border control, efforts to combat trafficking in and the proliferation of SALW, the EAC Customs Union, promotion of trade and investments (COMESA) and cooperation for sustainable use of waters of the Nile basin;
29. Welcomes the EU's intention to work with various partners to address the question of migration, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the proposal to provide additional support to host communities, States and the relevant organisations working in the field to prevent south-south migration and refugee crises;
30. Considers the involvement of local communities in economic activities, in rural as well as in urban areas, to be of crucial importance in order to endorse their socio-economic position in post-conflict societies;
31. Stresses that the fight against HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, as well as neglected diseases and female genital mutilation, must be one of the key strategies for eradicating poverty and promoting economic growth in the Horn of Africa States; emphasises that EU action must be designed in such a way to target disadvantaged and vulnerable groups;

Country level

Sudan

32. Calls on the Council, the Commission and the Member States to fully assume their responsibilities and make every possible effort to protect the people in Darfur from the humanitarian disaster resulting from the continuing violation of the ceasefire by all parties, and in particular the violence directed against the civilian population and the targeting of civilian assistance;
33. Expresses its serious concern about the developments in Darfur and calls on the Sudanese Government to prevent exactions by the Janjaweed militia; urges the Sudanese authorities to facilitate without further delay the deployment of a joint international AU and UN force in the region, and calls for the setting of a starting date for its deployment;
34. Deplores the fact that, according to the UN sources, thirty NGOs and UN compounds have been directly attacked by armed groups, and twelve relief workers killed, in the last six months;
35. Calls on all parties to the conflict to fulfil their duty to respect humanitarian law and to ensure the full, safe and unhindered access to relief personnel of all people in need in Darfur and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance, in particular to IDPs;
36. Calls for implementation of the UN Security Council sanction regime by means of targeted economic sanctions, including travel bans, asset freezing and the threat of an oil embargo; calls for equipment to be made available for the enforcement of the no-fly zone over Darfur established by UN Security Council Resolution 1591(2005);

37. Stresses the need for, and calls for, early implementation of the decision by the government of Sudan and the UN regarding the deployment of the AU/UN joint force in order to increase security and improve the protection of civilians;
38. Urges the international community, especially the UN, the EU and its Member States, the US, China, India, the League of Arab States and the AU, to launch peace talks to improve the content of the Darfur Peace Agreement and make it acceptable for all parties and thus increase the parties' ownership of the Agreement;
39. Stresses the fact that failure to resolve the conflict in Darfur would have serious consequences not only for the East Africa region but also for other relatively stable parts of Africa, namely Central Africa and the region of the Great Lakes;
40. Urges the international community not to focus on the Darfur conflict to the exclusion of other conflict situations in Sudan and, in particular, to recognise the fragility of the peace in Southern Sudan resulting from the slow progress made in implementing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and the high risk of destabilisation due to North-South tensions, inter-tribal conflicts and the widespread ownership of arms in society;

Somalia

41. Condemns foreign intervention in Somalia and calls on the Ethiopian Government to withdraw its army from the country; endorses the deployment of an AU peace-keeping force under an inclusive political agreement between the warring parties, leading to the creation of a government of national unity able to encompass that part of the Union of Islamic Courts which is open to a process of peace and reconciliation and the clan chiefs absent from the current government;
42. Takes the view that the AU peace-keeping operation in Somalia, AMISOM, should be framed within a broader political process supported by the population that has a clear mandate, good capacity, clear objectives and an exit strategy;
43. Welcomes the EU's support for AMISOM but stresses that the EU's contribution must be conditional on the launch of an inclusive political dialogue and reconciliation by the Somali authorities, addressing promptly the challenges of reconciliation, institution building and providing peace for the Somali people;
44. Stresses the central role of an all-inclusive political dialogue that will lead to reconciliation and the reconstruction of the country; welcomes the commitment of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) for Somalia to call a broad reconciliation conference (National Reconciliation Congress) involving clans, religious communities, civil society, business communities and political leaders; points out that the way forward must be the establishment of a credible, all-inclusive government;
45. Calls for a reassessment of the role of the International Somalia Contact Group, which involves the EU, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom, UN, AU, IGAD, the League of Arab States, Norway, the United States, Kenya and Tanzania, established in May 2006 as a forum for coordination of the international community's activities in Somalia in order to focus efforts on issues of governance and institution-building, humanitarian assistance to displaced persons and populations in need, and on improving regional stability and security;

46. Calls on the Somali TFG to rescind the state of emergency and reinstate the speaker of parliament as a precondition for the implementation of the process of national reconciliation;
47. Emphasises the urgent need for the TFG to establish representative authorities for key municipalities, including Mogadishu and Kismaayo, in order to provide political stability and manage local security over the short term, and to abandon the principle of forcible disarmament, especially in Mogadishu, and instead negotiate a plan for voluntary disarmament;
48. Considers that the Somaliland request for independence should be examined as part of the over-arching security agenda for Somalia;

Ethiopia

49. Calls on the Council and the Commission to put pressure on the Ethiopian Government to disclose the total number of persons detained throughout the country, to allow visits by the International Committee of the Red Cross and to allow all detainees access to their families, legal counsel and any medical care that their health may require, and also to release immediately and unconditionally all political prisoners, i.e. journalists, trade union activists, human rights defenders and ordinary citizens, and fulfil its obligations with respect to human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law;
50. Calls on Ethiopia to accept the demarcation and delimitation of its border as set out by the UN Boundary Commission;

Eritrea

51. Urges the Council and the Commission to take action with regard to the Eritrean Government to release all political prisoners, bring prisoners with specific charges against them to a speedy and fair trial and disclose the place of detention of all who are detained in secret prisons;
52. Encourages the Eritrean President to maintain frequent contacts with EU representatives and various Member State ambassadors to Eritrea;

Uganda

53. Calls on the Council and the Commission to facilitate the peace process in Northern Uganda, which calls for all parties to the conflict to demonstrate a genuine and continuous commitment to the peace process, to respect the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and to put an end to hostile and inflammatory propaganda;
54. Calls for the launch of a true reconciliation process, with those responsible for war crimes being recognised as such; emphasises the central role of the ICC in bringing to justice those indicted on charges of war crimes; calls on the Council and the Commission to support local processes for alternative justice and reconciliation to take place in Northern Uganda as well as between Northerners and the rest of the country;

55. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the Member States of the European Union and to the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.



Annex VI

**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 22 September 2008
13213/1/08 REV 1 (Presse 264)
P 118/08

**Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union
on political prisoners in Eritrea**

On 18 September 2001 a group of eleven prominent members of parliament and of the people's front for democracy and justice, the only political party in Eritrea, was arrested. A few days later, 10 independent journalists were also arrested. Since then, other individuals have been arrested and detained incommunicado, with no charges and with their right to a due process suspended. Despite repeated appeals by the international community, including the EU, and several governmental and non-governmental human rights bodies, these prisoners remain in detention, without having been charged with any offence, and without access to a free and fair trial. None has been brought before a magistrate, although Eritrean laws require this to be done within 48 hours.

This treatment as well as the lack of information about their place of detention, detention conditions and health status are also not consistent with the obligations foreseen in several international treaties ratified by the government of Eritrea, such as the UN covenant on civil and political rights and other international declarations, such as the resolution no. 45/111 about basic principles for the treatment of prisoners, adopted by the UN General Assembly on 14th December 1990.

The European Union remains deeply concerned that the government of the state of Eritrea continues to severely violate basic human rights in violation of its obligations under domestic and international law. The European Union profoundly deplores the continuing lack of progress on this matter and urges the government of the state of Eritrea to disclose evidence of the place of detention, detention conditions and health status of the prisoners. Furthermore, the European

Union urges the government of the state of Eritrea to allow the families, legal representatives and medical doctors of their choice to have access to the prisoners. The European Union also urges the government of the state of Eritrea to unconditionally release all the political prisoners.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, Croatia* and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and the EFTA countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia align themselves with this declaration.

* Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
