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Millions of residents of Addis Ababa city on Sep. 1, 2013 staged a rally at Meskel Square to say "no to religious extremism." People from all walks of life attended the rally organized by the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE), an independent body established to promote and systematize interfaith learning, collaboration and synergy to address issues of common concern such as peace building and conflict transformation. IRCE has six member religious institutions, namely, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC), the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC), the Ethiopian Catholic Church (ECC), the Ethiopian Adventist Church (EAC), Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE). Waving the Ethiopian flag and chanting slogans denouncing religious extremism, the demonstrators pledged to defend the Constitution and fight against extremists operating under the guise of religion (State media, Sep. 1).

Semayawi Party has called a public protest rally at Meskel Square for Sunday. It was later reported that the office of religious affairs of Addis Ababa has also called a public rally on the same date at the same place. It is therefore not known which of the two rallies will take place (Sendek, Aug- 28).

A top Ethiopian security official has been arrested on corruption charges, Radio Fana, a radio owned by the ruling party said. The official, Woldeselassie Woldemichael, a close friend and confidant of Azeb Mesfin, the widow of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, was thrown into jail as part of the ongoing hunt for officials who have amassed wealth on grounds of corruption. Woldeselassie was a close friend of Gebrewahid Gebretsadik, former deputy head of the Ethiopian Revenue and Customs Authority, who has been in jail for months accused of corruption (Ethiomeia, Aug. 31).

Some 450 new immigrants from Ethiopia will board two Jewish Agency-chartered flights bound for Israel on Aug. 27. Since 2010, thousands of Ethiopians have immigrated to Israel as part of Operation Dove's Wings. Tomorrow's flights will bring this historic effort to a dramatic close. Upon the flights' arrival at Ben Gurion Airport, there will be a welcome ceremony webcast live at 5:00 a.m. EDT on The Jewish Agency's website. The new immigrants' relatives will be on hand to greet them as will The Jewish Agency partners in completing the Journey of Operation Dove's Wings. Operation Dove's Wings began in November 2010 with the Government of Israel (GOI)'s decision to bring 8,000 Falash Mura in Gondar to Israel (PRWeb, Aug. 27).

Ethiopia's economy is likely to grow 7% a year over the next three to five years, below its average of the last decade, and to push that rate higher, the government needs to change policy to encourage private investment, the World Bank said. While 7% GDP growth would be the envy of finance ministers in Western economies, it would fall short of an average rate of 10.6% that Ethiopia said it achieved in the last 10 years with its state interventionist policies. It would also be insufficient to meet Ethiopia's target of reaching middle-income status by 2025. The bank says that goal is still within reach, however, if the government shifts the balance from public to more private investment (Reuters. Aug. 26).

The Ethiopian Grain Trade Enterprise said it has secured over 4.5bio Birr in revenue from the sale of coffee and other agricultural output during the past budget year. Enterprise General Manager, Berhane Hailu, said the enterprise obtained the revenue from the sale of over 6.2 q of coffee to global and local market. The enterprise supplied coffee, oil seeds, grains and cereals to the global and local market. The performance exceeded the target by over 11.2mio Birr and over 540,400 q from the previous year, he added. Meanwhile, the enterprise has imported and distributed over 5.1mio q of wheat to stabilize the local market. (State media, Aug. 29)

A year after the death of former Ethiopian leader Meles Zenawi, hopes for change in the African country remain bleak, including for local aid groups struggling to cope with a wide range of restrictions over their work, The Ethiopian government passed in 2009 a law that restricted NGO fundraising activities and operations, and imposed stricter requirements for registration, like asking charities and civil society organizations to secure a letter of re-commendation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Four years later and with the dictator out of the picture, the law remains a burden to aid groups, whose numbers have

decreased since. Prior to 2009, there were reportedly some 3,822 registered civil society organizations in Ethiopia, but today there are no more than 1,500, according to a local aid official. In fact, the official told Devex the situation for NGOs has "worsened" under the current regime (Development Newswire, Aug. 27).

.Chinese manufacturer Dongfang Electric is tipped to build a 120MW wind power facility at Aysha, in western Ethiopia, with funding from the China Exim Bank, according to Wind Power Monthly. It is thought likely that a Chinese company will also be awarded a further 60MW at Aysha, again with Exim Bank support, in partnership with Ethiopia's state-owned Metal and Engineering Corporation. This is in addition to the 51MW already turning at Adama I with gold wind turbines and 153MW under construction at Adama II, powered by Sany. Both projects were awarded to HydroChina International Engineering Company in a joint-venture with Chinese construction group CGCOC and backed by the Exim Bank. HydroChina also helped draw up Ethiopia's wind and solar energy master plan in 2012. By contrast, the sole European initiative is the 120MW Ashegoda facility, which French manufacturer Vergnet is currently completing using Vergnet and Alstom turbines, with funding from France. The European Investment Bank has also expressed interest in backing another 120MW at Aysha. The project would then be open to international tender (WIC, Aug. 28).

The Ethiopian Ministry of Water and Energy reported over 13,200 home solar systems has been installed over the past nine months in rural areas which are not connected to the national electric grid. The Ministry told that the installation is part of the yearlong project which was launched in Dec. 2012 at a cost of 208.8mio Ethiopian birr secured from the World Bank. According to the report, the project has so far benefited more than 13,200 households across the country. Estimates suggest a total of 25,000 households will benefit when the project ends in Nov. 2013 (Ethiopian News Agency, Aug. 30).