

## No.31, September 29, 2014(\*) **Seven Days, Vol. 21**

Water ministers of Egypt and Sudan have confirmed that the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project is progressing well. The Ministers of the three countries together visited the GERD project on Sep. 21. Egypt's Water and Irrigation Minister, Hossam Moghazi, said the dam should not be a source of argument or quarrel; it should rather be a means of collaboration. He expressed admiration for the Ethiopian Government for being open and letting him visit the project (*WIC, Sep. 21*).

Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan successfully concluded a tripartite ministerial meeting on the controversial Ethiopian Nile dam project by signing cooperation agreements on Sep. 22. During the three-day meeting held in Ethiopia, the three nations announced the establishment of a technical committee comprising four experts from each country. The committee, which is tasked with conducting additional studies on the impact of the massive Ethiopian dam on lower riparian countries, begins its work on Tuesday. The 12-member experts committee will conduct its studies based on the recommendations forwarded by an international panel of experts, which previously made the assessments. The ministers also agreed to hold the next round of the national technical committee meeting next month in Cairo, Egypt, where they are expected to consult on which international consultancy firm will be hired by the tripartite experts committee (*Sudan Tribune, Sep. 22*). The Tripartite National Committee will follow up and conduct the studies recommended by the International Panel of Experts, namely the Study on Water Resources/Hydropower System Simulation Model, and the Study on Transboundary Environmental and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (*ERTA, Sep. 23*).

The World Bank has expressed concern that Ethiopia will be in danger due to its piled up loan from the bank. This was noted during the recent working visit paid to Ethiopia by the bank's Managing Director Madame Andretti. She told newsmen last week that the amount of loan to Ethiopia is becoming too much and the country would not be able to pay it unless it devises a proper loan management and a very transparent loan repayment system. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economics Development, Ethiopia's total loan amounts to 20 billion USD, 12 billion of it from foreign sources (*Reporter, Sep. 21*).

Horizon Plantations Ethiopia Plc, majority-owned by Saudi billionaire Mohamed a-Amoudi, plans to almost double annual revenue within three years by investing at least \$500m in coffee and orange projects. The agriculture company will train workers, improve roads and replace washing units at the Limmu and Bebeke coffee plantations, which together have over 18,000 ha under coffee, General Operations Director Kemal Mohammed said. The development is part of a five year program to invest in projects that also include Upper Awash Agro-Industry Enterprise, the country's largest orange grower with 1,200 ha of citrus, he said (*Bloomberg, Sep. 22*).

Turkish investors with over 3 billion USD capital are engaged in various sectors in Ethiopia, Turkey's Ambassador to Ethiopia disclosed. This makes Turkish business persons the leading foreign investors in Ethiopia in terms of capital volume. Ambassador Osman Riza Yavuzalp said most of the investors are engaged in the textile and construction sectors. The ambassador said the railway to be built from Awash to Woldiya by the Turkish company Yapi Merkezi will create more than 10,000 jobs (*ENA, Sep. 23*).

MIDROC Gold Plc. has announced that it would build its second gold extraction plant with an outlay of 250m USD in Benshangul Gumuz Regional State. The exploration work at Gilay locality in Bulen Woreda in the state took 10 years, it was indicated. MIDROC Gold Project Director, Abiy Setargachew, said the exploration carried out on 4,000 sq. Km has proved that there is a huge gold deposit in the locality. The deposit could last some 10 years, according to the director. The company has spent a quarter of a billion birr for exploration work and created 250 jobs, Abiy stated (*State media, Sep. 23*).

About 73,000 households will benefit from the voluntary villagization program to be carried out in 2014/2015, the Ministry of Federal Affairs (MoFA) said. The head of the ministry's Public Relations Office, Abebe Worku, told that the program will be carried out in four regional states; namely Afar, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella regional states. He said 30,000 households from Afar, 34,000 households from Somali, 6,000 households from Benishangul Gumuz and 3,000 households from Gambella regional states will benefit from the program meant to provide basic socio-economic services to the scattered people. All the necessary preparations, including the construction of roads, potable water and health institutions, are nearing completion to start the program, Abebe said. The 2014/2015 villagization scheme is the final program that Ethiopia plans to cluster a scattered settlement pattern of rural population and provide them with socio-economic infrastructures, he said (*WIC, Sep. 24*).

Ethiopian Airlines has announced an order for twenty 737 MAX aircrafts worth 2.1 billion USD. The order represents the largest single Boeing order from an African carrier. Ethiopian CEO Tewolde Gebremariam said the order underlines the commitment of the airline to its 15-year strategy, through which the airline is striving to become a leading airline carrier in the continent, 'carrying 18 million passengers per annum' (*State media, Sep. 22*).

A camel milk and dairy industry, the first of its kind, was established recently in Berwaqo, Jijiga, in Somali State. The owner of the manufacturing industry Amire Muktar told agricultural experts and journalists who visited the site recently that after processing the raw milk into finished products, the industry supplies them to local and international markets. Such a manufacturing industry to process and produce camel's milk in Ethiopia is unprecedented. According to Amire, in the near future, the industry will have the potential to produce more than 10,000 l of milk per day. It has been producing 5000 l of milk a day since it became operational recently (*Ethiopian Herald, Sep. 24*).

Lake Tana, the largest water body in Ethiopia and source of the Blue Nile has been infested by water hyacinth, an invasive aquatic weed, posing a significant threat to biodiversity, the Amhara environment and land administration bureau said. This weed is now abundant along 40,000 ha of the lake, according to Woldegebriel Gebrekidan, environmental impact analyst at the bureau. The weed first invaded Lake Tana in 2004 E.C. and infested 4,000 ha of area the same year. The weed had covered 20,000 ha within a year. A campaign undertaken during that time helped to clear close to 95% of the infected area he said. Less priority given for the protection of the weed in 2006 E.C. And the weeds production mechanism through budding and stolon allowed the infestation of 40,000 ha area." he added (*ENA, Sep. 21*).