

IGADD and Its Limitations

The first summit meeting of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD) opened in Djibouti on January 15, 1986. The six East African states which attended the summit were Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia. Tanzania and Egypt have also applied to join IGADD; the former as a full member and the latter as an observer.

The purpose of the summit was to discuss inter-governmental co-operation between the member states of East Africa on matters concerning desertification and environmental destruction, economic development, and the tapping of the natural resources in the participating countries.

In forming IGADD, the first summit resolved to hold its future summits once every two years, elected President Hassan Gouled of Djibouti as its Chairman, set up a council consisting of foreign ministers from the member states, appointed Mr. Mekonen Kibret (Ethiopian) as its Secretary General, and drew up a budget of \$3.06 million up until the next summit. Member states are obliged to contribute a proportional amount for the operational budget on the basis of their respective Gross National Product (GNP), area and population. Accordingly, the proportional percentage due for member states is as following: Sudan 25%, Kenya 24.9%, Ethiopia 22.7%, Uganda 12.6%, Somalia 9.9%, and Djibouti 4.2%.

IGADD also expects to raise \$822 million from various donor countries and international agencies. It has also laid a plan to allocate this fund proportionally to member states corresponding to the severity of the famine and their respective needs in emergency relief operations. The percentage of allocations to the member states is: Ethiopia 44.3%, Sudan 41.3%, Somalia 7.3%, Uganda 3.8%, Djibouti 2.5%, and Kenya .8%.

The initiative taken collectively by the six East African states, in order to cope with the escalating famine crisis in the region, is commendable. However, Each member state should primarily resolve the domestic politico-military conflict, that prevail currently in Ethiopia, the Sudan, Somalia and Uganda, in a peaceful and democratic way. The leaders of the six states should also collectively recognize that the regional political problem has been a prime factor in aggravating the famine and in adversely affecting an economic development.

The democratic aspiration of the peoples of the region is being suppressed by the states and as a result millions have fled from one to the other East African country, thereby further aggravating the already prevalent political and economic crisis in that given country and in the region as a whole.

As a result of the Ethiopian Military Government's repressive rule, for instance, close to two million Ethiopians have taken refuge in the neighboring countries of the Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya. The aspiration of nationalities for equality has still been reciprocated with punitive campaigns. Due to the Military Government's callousness and disregard to the urgency of the problem, the intensity of the famine increased claiming hundreds and thousands of people. Its misdirected economic policy is leading the country into an abyss. etc., etc.

Without peaceful resolution of various internal conflicts and without the democratization of the entire region in which the peoples' aspiration for democracy, equality and independence could be fulfilled, any individual or collective effort toward economic development is unattainable. Leaders of the East African states should first of all recognize that for the current discontent and fermentation, their respective governments are accountable. Unless the root cause to the region's problems is extirpated, it will persist as major impediment to a satisfactory relief operation

and to any plan of economic development.

Following the summit, Colonel Mengistu held bi-lateral talks with Somali and Sudanese leaders concerning the normal relations of the countries in the Horn of Africa. Even if the outcome of these bi-lateral talks is positive, Colonel Mengistu and the other leaders shouldn't cherish illusion in regarding their "mutual goodwill" as a guarantee for political stability and economic prosperity in the region. Because in a country like Ethiopia, the underlying cause of political destablity and economic dislocation is embedded in the undemocratic nature of Mengistu's regime and his squandering policies.

With all their merits, the formation of IGADD or the ensuing bi-lateral talks could be at least cosmetic solutions or at most historical farce.

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