TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA
14-15 April 2012
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia
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Message from the Chair of the Forum

For many years the African continent has been ravaged by wars and conflicts. In recent years, however, thanks to the efforts of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, Member States and partners, we have seen the number of conflicts decline, even though there continues to be flare ups in different parts of the continent.

The High-Level Forum on Security in Africa, to be held for the first time on 14-15 April, 2012 in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, is aimed at promoting dialogue as a fundamental, peaceful and durable means to resolving conflict, and to demonstrate that diversity is strength, and not a source of conflict.

The Forum will be an annual event focusing on prevailing peace and security issues on the continent. Every year, we will be joined by a select group of leaders, including Heads of State and Government, African and global eminent personalities, Chief Executive Officers of private sector companies, civil society and think tanks, to discuss topical peace and security challenges for Africa.

I enjoin you to join us and add your voice and support thereby contributing to the attainment of the African Union’s vision of a peaceful and prosperous Africa.

H.E. Olusegun Obasanjo

Message from the CEO of the Forum

African political decision-makers will interact and consult with a broad-based constituency as well as with global actors and scholars within a substantive, open debate on peace and security issues that are of key strategic importance to the continent. The High-Level Forum complements regular formal meetings of African leaders, regional institutions and African Union Member States. The Forum offers space for informal panel discussions, free interactions with participants, and opportunities for personal conversations to share views and experiences in an open manner. The uniqueness of the Forum gives participants an opportunity to share experiences and insights in an informal setting and in a spirit of a quest for fresh insights and perspectives that would contribute, over time, to the emergence of a distinctively African voice in global policy and action on peace and security.

Prof. Andreas Eshete,
CEO of the Tana High-Level Forum,
Special Advisor to the Prime Minister
with the Rank of Minister, Ethiopia
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Embassy of China in Ethiopia

Ms. Zenebework Tadesse
Discussion Note for the Tana Forum on African Security: Managing Diversity to Promote Peace and Security

14-15 April 2012
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Despite our matchless heritage of rich cultural diversity, it is a surprise that the political landscape of most African states does not display a determination to find a hospitable political space for pluralism in cultural communities and identities. There are no doubt reasons of history to explain why African political communities sought to keep diversity at a distance from public life. First, as is widely known, under white supremacist regimes – colonial, apartheid and the like – cultural diversity was cynically and effectively deployed as a divisive means of repressive rule. Second, during the struggle for independence, mass mobilization of the populace, often wantonly cobbled together by an imperial power, liberation movements tended to draw upon inclusive nationalism in order to build a force capable of winning freedom from a Western power in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

In accommodating diversity as well as in securing peace and stability, independence, as with much else, was a pyrrhic victory. In contrast to the chief contending powers, who enjoyed a period of comparative peace during the Cold War, the contest embroiled African states in proxy wars, wars led largely by African strongmen that enjoyed the support of a given power and were, in turn, at liberty to infringe on the freedom of citizens and the autonomy of communities. Beyond the Cold War, postcolonial Africa did not furnish fertile ground for diversity to flourish. To cite an example close to home, on the eve of the end of Italian colonial rule and British administration in Eritrea, there were strong forces, both in Ethiopia and Eritrea, pushing and pulling the two communities to come together. Ethiopia and Eritrea eventually united – first, in a federation and soon thereafter in a union. In the meantime, the Ethiopian empire forcibly suppressed public expression of Eritrea’s distinctive cultural identity as well as Eritrea’s nascent democratic freedoms such as those of the press and association. Thus, Eritrea was swiftly and fully assimilated into the cultural and political norms governing imperial Ethiopia. These highhanded measures fuelled a civil war that lasted for three decades. Similarly, millions of Africans paid an exacting cost in loss of peace and other essential public goods because African states were prone to be in denial about cultural diversity, and widespread cultural cleavage, rivalry and subordination - a crippling legacy of empire. Besides the case of Eritrea, Africa has witnessed many conflicts motivated by secessionist aspirations, among them: Comoros Islands (Anjouan), Malawi, Niger (Toure), Nigeria (Biafra), Senegal (Casamance), Sudan (Southern Sudan). Moreover the genocide in Rwanda, whatever its ultimate causes, centred on deep and deadly cultural division and rivalry. Besides these extremes, the failure to extend political recognition to cultural diversity has caused strife in many parts of Africa. For instance, in Kenya in spite of the lame invocation of ethnic harmony, as in the slogan Harambee, interethnic communal conflict has intermittently broken out, particularly during electoral contests. There are, of late, growing signs that religious differences and identities are becoming serious sources of political contention and violent confrontation. In addition to Nigeria, the freewheeling movement for democracy by citizens in the Arab Uprising has aroused communal tensions and violent clashes between religious communities – say, between Muslims and Copts in Egypt or between rival Muslim sects in Syria – as well as far-flung, sharp divisions between secularists and political movements or parties with religious political agendas.

However, alongside this dispiriting record of miscarriage and misery, there is a Counter-current seeking to make public acknowledgement of diversity integral to decent African governance. Moving or turning variously against the prevailing current are countries such as Nigeria and, more recently, South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Somalia. They all seem to agree that being burdened by a marginalized or denigrated cultural community and identity is to be alienated or uprooted in the very place where one belongs. Put differently, amid diversity the need for a home of one’s own may well be a basic good of equal and free citizenship. Perhaps the boldest experiment in this this counter-current is that championed by Ethiopia, where the right to self-determination, including secession, is a fundamental constitutional right, and a federative arrangement conferring robust rights of cultural and political self-government is constitutionally entrenched. It is, of course, too early to tell if the experiment has taken. For instance, it is a sad fact that Ethiopia’s valiant consent to Eritrea’s independence has not yielded peace between the two amicably separated political communities, communities that share enduring cultural, economic and historical bonds. Still, Ethiopia’s resolve to uphold the collective rights of self-determination and federalism has already engendered a great deal that is of lasting value. First, we now know that there is little to
be gained and nothing to be lost by giving up the longstanding effort to shoehorn our varied cultures into some supposed single, inclusive or privileged culture: Are there any cogent reasons of principle why all our cultures should not bloom? Second, federalism has succeeded in concluding nationalist strife that had consumed the country’s assets for decades; it has, moreover, averted the attendant looming threat of national disintegration. Third, federalism has checked a persistent propensity to look for uniform, centralized rule by a remote, ill-informed authority, an authority that not only stifles the citizenry’s initiative, public participation and free association but also thwarts flexibility in the formulation and execution of public policy. Fourth, federalism opens the possibility of limiting and separating the powers of public authority. Finally, federalism encourages equitable distribution of national income and the emergent fruits of development — a significant achievement, particularly for historically neglected cultural communities. Thus, federalism may well serve to foster political pluralism and social equality — worthy public goals that are notoriously elusive even in mature democracies. In respect to these and other aspects of Ethiopia’s new venture, it is obviously premature to pronounce a triumphant culmination. Given the unforeseeable ups and downs of public life, it suffices to claim the advent of Ethiopia’s novel vision and the promising beginnings of its realization. In the pursuit of worthwhile public aspirations, African citizens and leaders, who doggedly strive for a brighter future for the peoples of the continent, can do worse than to adopt Samuel Beckett’s famous, negative aesthetic credo: “Ever tried. Ever failed. No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better.”

Discussion Note for the Tana Forum on African Security: State Fragility and the Prospects for Peace in Africa

14-15 April 2012
Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

Political scientists define a ‘fragile state’ as a deviation from a developmental norm, i.e. by what it is not. Scholarly and policymaking interest in such a state is restricted to building institutions and putting it ‘back’ on a developmental path. A fine example of this is the World Bank’s World Development Report 2011 ‘Conflict, Security and Development.’ The WDR’s central message is the need to strengthen legitimate institutions, and although it insists that such institutions need not be based on a western model, it implies that only exceptionally will they deviate.

A ‘fragile state’ can also be described as one in which state institutions are subordinated to tactical political bargaining among a national elite. This bargaining is focused on loyalty to the ruler, and is structured around personal or kinship relations, material rewards, or physical protection. Where control over the state is the main mechanism for allocating national wealth, bargaining over state power takes on a life-and-death character, and may become violent.

Meanwhile, globalization changes the dynamics of political bargaining. Political aspirants can obtain resources from regional and global networks (such as neighbouring states, aid donors and diaspora groups) which puts extra pressure on rulers and their limited budgets. This helps explain the increasing difficulties faced by African governments as they try to build political institutions, and why international state-building efforts so frequently disappoint.

Africa policies towards with ‘fragile’ states should be reassessed, with greater emphasis on pragmatic African practices. Peace-building should prioritize brokering inclusive bargains among elites, rather than the establishment of formal institutions – which will take a long time. The business sector should be brought to the table in the process of building inclusive coalitions. Regional and international coordination should assist in regulating political competition, so that resources can be devoted to consolidating post-conflict stability and shifting towards economic growth.
Programme for Tana High Level Forum 2012

**SUNDAY 15th**

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<td>09.00 – 11.30</td>
<td>Panel 2: State Fragility</td>
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<td>11.30-12.00</td>
<td>TEA BREAK</td>
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<td>12.00-13.00</td>
<td>Closing H.E President Obasanjo (Chair)</td>
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<td>13. – 14.30</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
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<td>16.30</td>
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**SATURDAY 14th**

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<td>11.00 – 12.00</td>
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<td>LUNCH BREAK</td>
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<td>Panel 1: Managing Diversity</td>
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<td>14.30-17.00</td>
<td>Panelists H.E Prime Minister Meles Zenawi</td>
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<td>11 hour for panelists 30 minutes wrap up by panelists</td>
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Host City: Bahir Dar – An Essay by Professor Richard Pankhurst

Bahir Dar is one of the leading tourist attractions in Ethiopia, situated along the shores of Lake Tana, Ethiopia’s largest lake and the source of the Blue Nile. Other than the breath-taking view of Lake Tana, the city gets its beauty from the avenues lined with palm trees and a variety of colourful flowers.

Bahir Dar is a rich part of Ethiopian history. This history has been well captured by the distinguished Ethiopian historian, Professor Richard Pankhurst. The following essay offers a brief historical background on the venue of the Tana Forum.

Ethiopia and the Nile

Threats, Discoveries and Disputes

The Nile, a mighty river, whose waters flowed from Ethiopia to Egypt, irrevocably linked the two countries and civilisations throughout the ages.
Inter-Dependency
This relationship between the two countries, by the dawn of the Christian era, involved a major element of inter-dependency. Egypt was dependent on the Ethiopian interior that provided the Egyptian River Nile with the bulk of its water. Ethiopia for her part was dependent on Egypt for her Abun, the Head of her Church, who was for centuries recruited from among the Christian monks of Egypt.

Mutual dependency of this kind, on one side material (the water, known in Ethiopia as the Abbay) and on the other spiritual (the Abun), might at first sight seem beneficial in providing a workable formula for co-existence. This in the long run, however, was not always the case because the supposed mutual relationship was not inherently stable. The water flowing down the Nile to Egypt varied significantly from year to year. The coming of the Abun to Ethiopia was likewise far from regular - for it depended on all sorts of political and other circumstances.

Variations in Nile Flow
The earliest recorded difficulties with the Nile would seem to be reported in the Ethiopian Synaxarium. It states that, because of the “wickedness” of the Ethiopian people during the time of the Coptic Patriarchs Joseph (831-849) and Gabriel (1131-1149) God “restrained the Heavens” so that “it would not rain”.

An even more serious problem arose in 1089-1090 when, according to the Arab historian al-Makin, the Nile waters failed to reach Egypt. The then Egyptian ruler Sultan Mustanir accordingly despatched an embassy to the king of Ethiopia (whose name is not recorded) asking him to restore the flood of water, which he reportedly did.

Ethiopian Control over the Nile?
This incident appears to have been significant in giving rise to the long-held myth that the Ethiopians could somehow or other control the flow of Nile water reaching Egypt. This belief, though unsubstantiated, was naturally convenient to the rulers of Ethiopia in their negotiations with the Egyptians, who would otherwise have been much the stronger party.

Power over the Nile was accordingly voiced by a succession of no fewer than seven medieval Ethiopian monarchs: Lalibela (1185-1225?), Na’akuto La’ab (1203-1250?), ’Amda Seyon I (1312-1342), Sayfa Ar’ad, Dawit I (1380-1409), Zar’a Yaqob (1433-1468) and Lebna Dengel (1508-1540).

Scrutiny of their history shows, however, that not one of the above rulers ever took any action to deviate the flow of the Nile, or indeed had the ability to do so. Ethiopian threats were in effect no more than negotiating gambits, i.e. empty threats.

This view is supported by the archaeological record which suggests that no excavations in the vicinity of the Nile or of any of its major tributaries, as would be required to deviate the flow of these rivers, was ever undertaken. However, the Egyptians, living far down the Nile, and for the Ethiopians in their highland fastnesses, the threat seemed real enough.

The Crusaders and the Diffusion of an Idea
Report of the Ethiopian ability to control the Nile duly reached the European Crusaders - Italians, Frenchmen, Englishmen and others. From them it spread to other “experts” on the East, where it was adopted, into Accepted Wisdom. The Italian poet Ariosto thus has the hero of his epic Orlando Furioso, of 1516, declare that Prester John, i.e. ruler of Ethiopia, had the power to cut off the waters of the Nile and thereby reduce the inhabitants of Cairo and its vicinity to famine. Such ideas, by then perhaps a quarter of a millennium old, were soon to be challenged, and overthrown, by the advance of “discovery”, i.e. geographical investigation.
“Discovery” of the Source of the Nile

Any discussion of “discovering” the Source of the Nile, or any other geographical feature, should be qualified by the understanding that what is reported to have been “discovered” by foreign “explorers” was in all probably known to the local inhabitants since time immemorial.

The honour of “discovering”, i.e. first describing, the Source of the Abbay, belongs to the early 17th century Portuguese and Spanish Jesuit travellers to Ethiopia, and, more specifically to the Spaniard Jerónimo Lobo, who visited the country in 1618.

Lobo’s report on his Ethiopian travels, including his visit to the Source of the Nile, is couched in a matter-of-fact manner, but conforms so fully to later descriptions of the area that it can only be accepted as genuine. Its veracity was, however, later challenged by the Scottish traveller James Bruce, who dismissed Lobo as “the greatest liar of the Jesuits”. He did so, we can only assume, because he wanted to be acclaimed the first “discoverer” of the Source.

The Source

Before looking in detail at Lobo’s description of the Source (or in fact two sources) of the river we should recall that, both are situated on marshy land, south-west of Lake Tana. From these the water trickles into the Small Abbay, a little river that runs into Lake Tana from the west. Fed during the rainy season by water carrying with it much silt it is then very muddy and can be identified for a considerable distance as it flows south-eastwards across the lake towards the town of Bahr Dar. Not far from it the river emerges from the lake as the Large Abbay, having lost much of its earlier silt, and makes its way to the Sudan, Egypt and, beyond.

There are indications that the Small Abbay area was venerated in the past, not so much as the Source of the mighty Nile, as Bruce may have thought, but rather on account of the nearby presence of the lake and the river – both of which were in the popular mind endowed with holy significance.

Lobo’s Account

Lobo’s account, to which we must now turn, though brief gives a seemingly accurate picture which could have been based only on personal observation. He describes “two circular pools or wells of water”, which, he says, could more appropriately be called “pits”. Four spans in width and separated from each other by a distance of a stone’s throw, they differed significantly in depth.

Lobo goes on to observe that the whole nearby plain, and especially the part near the sources, seemed “a subterranean lake” because the ground was “so swollen and undermined with water that it appears to bubble up when a person walks on it, which is seen more clearly when there are large rainfalls for then the ground yields and goes down at any step one takes on it, and the reason it does not swallow up anyone who walks on it is that, since all the land is green and this part had many various grasses and herbs, the roots are so intertwined that, with the little soil that holds them together, they can support anyone who walks on the field, which at its widest point can be crossed by a stone’s throw, but only if shot by a sling”.

The second source, which he says, lay to the east of the first, was “so deep that with a measure of more than twenty spans the bottom could not be found”.

Jesuits such as Lobo, with his first hand knowledge of the Sources, played an important part in Nile history, for they rejected the age-old belief that the rulers of Ethiopia could control the flow of Nile water. One of the most prominent of their number, Baltazar Tellez,
emphatically dismissed any such suggestion, declaring that the river, with its immense mass of water could not be re-directed over the vast area suggested, as so much of it was occupied by steep and rugged mountains.

James Bruce, Luigi Balugani, and Empress Mentuwan
James Bruce undertook his famous and self-publicised travels to the Lake Tana area, as he claims, “to discover the Source of the Nile”, and presents this as the great achievement of his life. To enhance his reputation he was apparently not above “doctoring” the historical record: ignoring or caricaturing the earlier travels of the Jesuits; and falsifying the date of his Italian draftsman Luigi Balugani’s death (and totally omitting any reference to him in his published work) to make it appear that he, James Bruce, had been alone in reaching the Source of the Nile.

Bruce’s single-minded interest in the Source of the Nile struck the powerful Empress Mentuwan, and drew from her the following memorable comment:

“You have come from Jerusalem, through hot unwholesome climates, to see a river and a bog, no part of which you can carry away, were it ever so valuable... and you take it ill when I discourage you from the pursuit of this fancy, in which you are likely to perish without your friends at home ever hearing when or where the accident happened. While I, the mother of Kings, who have sat on the Throne of this country more than thirty years, have for my only wish, night and day, that after giving up everything in the world I could be conveyed to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem and beg alms for my subsistence all my life after, if only I could be buried in the street within sight of that temple where Our Blessed Saviour once lay”.

And all the while the question of possible Ethiopian control over the Nile was not finally resolved.

The Uncertainties of Hiob Ludolf
The verdict of Tellez and the Jesuits notwithstanding, one voice was raised in possible support of the old Control of the Nile idea. This was that of Hiob Ludolf, the founder of Ethiopian studies in Germany. Clearly hoping that some means of obtaining such control might be found, he closely questioned his Ethiopian friend and informant, Abba Gorgoreyos, about such a possibility. When the good Ethiopian scholar replied in the negative, dashing such hopes, Ludolf commented that if the Ethiopians had possessed such powers they would surely have used them to obtain from the Turks and Egyptians better facilities for their trade through the Red Sea coast.

The European Scramble for Africa
The politics of the Blue Nile, like those of the continent as a whole, were transformed by the European Scramble for Africa. It began, in this part of the continent at least, with the allegedly “temporary” British occupation of Egypt, which started in 1882 – and was to endure for many more decades than the term “temporary” would have led contemporaries to expect.

The Scramble, which was facilitated by such innovations as the steam-engine, the gun-boat, and the Maxim Gun, was governed by the General Act of Berlin, signed by the Colonial Powers on 26 February 1885. Though primarily concerned with Africa there was not a single African signatory to this Act.

While the General Act was concerned with the continent as a whole, the situation in various areas was determined by more specific regional agreements, likewise concluded between the Colonial Powers, with little or no African participation.
As far as the Blue Nile was concerned the Ethiopian ruler Emperor Menelik, who had only six years earlier overcome an Italian attempt to establish a Protectorate over his country by force, felt it necessary to establish amicable relations with the British. They were pressing him to conclude, on 15 May 1902, what was clearly an “Unequal Treaty” - a term used for treaties imposed by the European Powers in China, for example. Article 3 stated that he engaged “not to construct or allow to be constructed any work across the Blue Nile, Lake Tana, or the Sobat [river] which would arrest the flow of their waters into the Nile, except in agreement with the governments of Great Britain and the Sudan”, i.e. the governments of Egypt and Sudan both under British occupation. Menelik could perhaps afford to agree to this Unequal Treaty because Ethiopia, at that stage of her economic development, had no immediate need for dams or other works on the Blue Nile, Lake Tana or Sobat. It was obvious, however, that as the country developed it would in all probability require more Nile water for irrigation, hydroelectric power etc.– hence the restriction imposed upon it by the 1902 treaty. That treaty was detrimental to Ethiopian interests as it imposed a restriction on the country’s development – a restriction which would become increasingly serious as her economic progress advanced.

A Changing World
The founding of the United Nations and of the African Union, the dawn of the Arab Spring, and other developments of the present, such as Ethiopia’s recent achievement of swift economic growth. It is now increasingly agreed that the Nile region should be ruled by its own people, rather than by foreign leaders in far-off capitals. The waters of the Nile must henceforward belong, without any restriction, to all the African inhabitants of the countries where this water originates or through which it flows.

Management of the Nile must henceforth provide a basis of scientific cooperation and friendship; no longer of rivalry, enmity and mistrust.

Tourist information
The capital city of the State of Amhara is Bahir-Dar. The State of Amhara consists of 10 administrative zones, one special zone, 129 woredas, and 38 urban centres. Amharic is the working language of the state. The State of Amhara covers an estimated area of 161,828 square kilometres.

Location
The State of Amhara is located in the north-western and north-central part of Ethiopia. The State shares common borders with the state of Tigray in the north, Afar in the east, Oromiya in the south, Benishangul/Gumuz in the south west, and the Republic of Sudan in the west.

Major Economic Activities
About 85% of the people are engaged in agriculture. The State is one of the major Teff (staple food) producing areas in the country. Barley, wheat, oil seeds, sorghum, maize, wheat, oats, beans and peas are major crops produced in large quantities.

Cash crops such as cotton, sesame, sunflower, and sugarcane grow in the vast and virgin tract of the region’s lowlands. The water resources from Lake Tana and all the rivers found in the region provide immense potential for irrigation development.
About 450,000 hectares of arable land is irrigable and suitable, especially for horticultural development.

Rivers and Lakes
Tana, the largest lake in Ethiopia, is located at centre of the region. It covers an area of 36,000 km². The rivers and lakes of the region have immense potential for hydroelectric power generation, irrigation and fishery development.

Minerals
The State of Amhara has mineral resources such as coal, shell, limestone, lignite, gypsum, gemstone, silica, sulfur and bentonite. Hot springs and mineral water are also found in the region.

Tourism and Heritage
The 12th Century rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and the palaces in Gondar are world-known heritages in Ethiopia. The traditional mural paintings and hand craft, the preserved corpse of the royalty found in the ancient monasteries in Lake Tana, as well as the Semien mountains national park, which shelters the endemic Walia ibex are spectacular tourist attractions. Three tourist attractions found in the region are registered in the UNESCO list of world heritages. Besides these known heritages, the Blue Nile Falls, the caves and unique stones in northern Showa, and the Merto Le Mariam church are special tourist attractions.

Important Tips
Altitude
The altitude of Addis Ababa is 2500 meters (8000 feet) and may affect some visitors. You may feel a little tired or sleepless for the first 24 hours. Therefore, do not over exert yourselves by doing tiring exercises. The altitude of Bahir Dar, at 1800 meters (5900 feet), is considerably lower.

Currency
The “Birr” is the Ethiopian currency. 1 USD is equal to about 17.34 Birr. As the Birr is floating, check before you change your currency but all banks have the same rate. ATM machines are available and international bank cards such as Visa and MasterCard are accepted.

Weather
The month of April is usually sunny but there can be occasional rain. The average day temperature will be around 22 degrees Celsius (71 degrees Fahrenheit) and will be considerably less in the evenings and mornings. Bring a warm jacket for the evenings.
Acknowledgments from IPSS Director, Mulugeta Gebrehiwot

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- The Federal Police
- Addis Ababa Traffic Police
- The Amhara Regional Government
- Ethiopian Airlines
- The German Federal Foreign Office/German International Cooperation (GIZ)
- Sheraton Addis
- The City of Bahir Dar

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The Tana Forum Secretariat

(From left-right, top row: Seid Negash, Dawit Yohannes, Dalaya Ashenafi, Medhanit Kidane, Ahamou Diop, Billene Seyoum, Mulugeta Gebrehiwot, Mercy Fekadu, Hesphina Rakata, Demelash Tesfagiorgis, Mahlet Birret, Beakal Legesse, Markus Koerner; bottom row: Mikian Yitbarek, Michelle Muita, Karoline Klose, Aichatou Tamba, Helen Yosef Hailu, Seble Mulugeta)