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DRAFT REPORT

on a European Parliament recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on EU engagement in the Horn of Africa – challenges and strategic priorities
(2026/2045(INI))

Committee on Foreign Affairs

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CONTENTS

	Page
DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RECOMMENDATION	3
EXPLANATORY STATEMENT	9
ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT	10

DRAFT EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RECOMMENDATION

to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) on EU engagement in the Horn of Africa – challenges and strategic priorities (2026/2045(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Council conclusions of 10 May 2021 entitled ‘The Horn of Africa: a geo-strategic priority for the EU’, and to other relevant Council conclusions,
- having regard to its recommendation of 5 October 2022 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the EU’s strategic relationship and partnership with the Horn of Africa¹, and to its previous resolutions on Africa and on the countries of the Horn of Africa,
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 9 March 2020 entitled ‘Towards a comprehensive Strategy with Africa’ (JOIN(2020)0004),
- having regard to the final joint statement of the sixth European Union-African Union Summit, entitled ‘A Joint Vision for 2030’, of 18 February 2022, and to the final joint declaration of the seventh European Union-African Union Summit, of 25 November 2025,
- having regard to its annual reports on the implementation of the EU’s common foreign and security policy and to its annual reports on the implementation of the EU’s common security and defence policy,
- having regard to the Council conclusions on the Revised EU Maritime Security Strategy (EUMSS) and its Action Plan, of 24 October 2023,
- having regard to the updated mandates of EU naval operations ASPIDES and ATALANTA of 30 March 2026,
- having regard to the Djibouti Code of Conduct of 29 January 2009 concerning the repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, as amended by the Jeddah Amendment of 12 January 2017,
- having regard to the African Union’s framework document of September 2015 entitled ‘Agenda 2063 – the Africa We Want’, and to its strategy document of 2012 entitled ‘2050 Africa’s Integrated Maritime Strategy (2050 AIM Strategy)’,
- having regard to the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative (Khartoum Process),

¹ OJ C 132, 14.4.2023, p. 115.

established in 2014,

- having regard to the Agreement for Lasting Peace through a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), of 2 November 2022 (Pretoria Agreement),
 - having regard to the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council and of the UN General Assembly,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,
 - having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - having regard to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court,
 - having regard to Rule 121 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A10-0000/2026),
- A. whereas, in its widest definition, the ‘Horn of Africa’ refers to the eight member states of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD); whereas this recommendation focuses only on Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia;
- B. whereas the region has long-standing ties with, and is strategically important for, the EU; whereas the Horn of Africa has tremendous potential, but is facing significant hurdles;
- C. whereas the Council conclusions of 10 May 2021 and Parliament’s recommendation of 5 October 2022 predate major shifts that have reshaped the strategic environment in the Horn of Africa; whereas these developments, together with the increasingly interconnected nature of the region’s challenges and intensifying geopolitical competition, call for the EU’s engagement with the Horn of Africa to be updated;
- D. whereas Djibouti’s geographic position and its role as a major maritime and security hub make it an important contributor to regional stability, while exposing it to growing geopolitical competition in the wider region;
- E. whereas the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement has stalled; whereas intra- and inter-state tensions have increased the risk of a new war in Ethiopia;
- F. whereas the situation in Eritrea has not improved since 2022, with severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms; whereas tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia have increased significantly and Eritrea’s relations with Djibouti remain fragile;
- G. whereas Somalia faces a severe constitutional crisis, with deepening rifts between its federal government and its member states; whereas the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) faces a critical funding gap;

- H. whereas the strategic importance of maritime security has grown considerably in recent years;
- I. whereas well over half of the population of the four countries is under the age of 25, with limited access to education and employment;
- J. whereas resource constraints necessitate greater strategic prioritisation and financial efficiency to address the multiple and interconnected challenges facing the Horn of Africa;
- 1. Recommends that the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy:

General principles

- (a) urgently carry out a comprehensive review of previous EU strategies in light of recent developments and adopt a new strategic framework for the Horn of Africa to update the 2021 conclusions; focus the new framework on a specific set of priorities, including: (i) the peaceful resolution of disputes, regional stability and increased cooperation on maritime security, (ii) democracy, the rule of law and human rights dialogues, and (iii) youth and youth-led initiatives that drive sustainable development, and accompany this framework with an adequately resourced action plan;
- (b) develop tailored EU programmes on a country-by-country basis;
- (c) scale up bilateral ties based on comprehensive partnerships focused on common interests;
- (d) strengthen EU strategic communication and public diplomacy, including by raising awareness of EU funding and actions in the region;
- (e) make the region's predominantly young population a cornerstone of EU engagement;
- (f) commit to more regular reporting to Parliament on the implementation of EU commitments in the Horn of Africa;

Regional context

- (g) recognise the need for the EU to cooperate with other actors that have influence in the region;
- (h) address, as a matter of urgency, the risk of spillover effects of the war in Sudan;
- (i) engage with the Gulf states, as influential external actors in the region, while openly addressing actions that run counter to EU objectives;

Peace, stability and maritime security

- (j) foster regional dialogue by providing support to intra-regional, African Union and IGAD-led initiatives on conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding;
- (k) develop a sustained EU conflict prevention strategy for the four countries referred to above;
- (l) continue to strongly oppose the use or threat of force to resolve disputes, and support efforts to address the underlying drivers of conflict in the region, particularly drought and famine;
- (m) make the prevention of further escalation and regional spillover of the conflict within Ethiopia, as well as the prevention of renewed conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea, a political priority of EU engagement in the region;
- (n) maintain structured engagement with Eritrea, encouraging its constructive participation in regional dialogue, and support measures that reduce the risk of regional conflicts;
- (o) support Somalia's efforts to combat the al-Shabaab militant group and other armed groups while strengthening legitimate and inclusive state institutions; further step up EU support to AUSSOM and maintain and enhance the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia) and the European Union Training Mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia);
- (p) recognise that the Horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula increasingly form a single strategic and security space;
- (q) urgently adopt an EU strategy for the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, treating the two shores as a single strategic theatre;
- (r) strengthen coordination across EU maritime security efforts by assessing options for closer coordination between and a potentially joint command of EUNAVFOR ATALANTA and EUNAVFOR ASPIDES;
- (s) strengthen cooperation on maritime security, in line with the Djibouti Code of Conduct, as updated by the Jeddah Amendment;
- (t) strengthen EU support for locally owned reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives, including those involving civil society, traditional and community leaders, and women's and youth organisations;

Democracy, human rights and the rule of law

- (u) maximise the use of political dialogue, development cooperation, technical support and other appropriate instruments to encourage measurable improvements in democratic governance, the rule of law and human rights, and in civil society protection and participation;
- (v) support initiatives to protect and expand civic space by safeguarding freedom of expression and media freedom, in particular by protecting journalists and human

rights defenders;

- (w) promote transitional justice, and support nationally and locally owned accountability and reconciliation processes;
- (x) maintain and enforce accountability for the crimes committed during the 2020-2022 war in Ethiopia's Tigray region;
- (y) advocate for full and effective cooperation with relevant UN bodies and mechanisms;

Sustainable development, regional integration and youth

- (z) ensure that EU development cooperation addresses the specific vulnerabilities of communities affected by climate change, food insecurity, displacement, conflict and migration flows, while strengthening local ownership and the participation of women and young people;
- (aa) support sustainable and inclusive development by investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy, water management, and sustainable agriculture and fisheries, while strengthening access to education, healthcare and employment;
- (ab) promote regional integration focusing on factors that can unify the region, including cross-border investment and trade, as well as an interconnected transport, energy and digital infrastructure;
- (ac) support all four countries in strengthening institutional capacity, and banking and financial systems, and in improving the business environment to create favourable conditions for strategic investment, while ensuring compliance with international labour standards and supporting social dialogue;
- (ad) make youth employment a central pillar of EU development cooperation; provide targeted support to empower young people through youth-led initiatives, vocational education and training, skills development, job centres and improved access to finance;

Country-specific issues

- (ae) develop a strategic partnership with Djibouti on maritime security; support efforts to tackle the growing challenge of refugees arriving there from Yemen;
- (af) call on the Ethiopian Government to fulfil its role as a central actor in regional stabilisation by reducing tensions over sea access and control of the Nile waters; ensure that EU budget support remains conditional on measurable progress in democratic governance and respect for fundamental rights; express concern over renewed fighting in the Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions;
- (ag) increase engagement with the Eritrean Government on human rights and encourage the national authorities to cooperate with the UN, including by

facilitating access and cooperation with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea;

- (ah) reaffirm the EU's position on Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, while supporting Somali-owned dialogue between Mogadishu and Hargeisa;

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2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Horn of Africa is one of the world's most unstable and fragile regions, facing armed conflicts, climate related shocks, weak governance and humanitarian crisis. At the same time, the Horn of Africa is a strategically important territory, both as a vital gateway for international maritime security and trade, and as an arena in which external actors compete for power and resources. Furthermore, the European Union and the Horn of Africa share longstanding ties – reinforced by a significant diaspora living in different EU Member States – and the stability of the region has a direct impact on the EU and its citizens.

In its widest definition, the Horn of Africa encompasses the member states of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development; this report, however, focuses on the four “core countries” of the Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, due to their historical, geographic and geopolitical common grounds.

The report builds on previous Council conclusions and European Parliament recommendations. In preparing this report, exchanges with Horn of Africa actors were guided by a central question: Five years after the Council's 2021 New Strategy for the Horn of Africa, where do we stand?

The findings indicate that the geopolitical landscape has deteriorated (e.g. outbreak and spill-over effects of the war in Sudan, Houthi attacks and resurgence of piracy in the Red Sea, renewed fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray, Afar and Amhara regions, growing risk of collapse of the Pretoria Agreement) and has become increasingly complex and interconnected (e.g. intensifying competition among external actors, including the Gulf States). EU engagement has not kept pace with these changes.

The report argues that, despite the shifting context, the underlying political priorities persist. Promoting peace, stability and maritime security stands as the overarching goal. Supporting national governments in upholding democracy, human rights and the rule of law continues to be imperative. Sustainable development, regional integration and youth engagement remain key areas. Specifically, navigation in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Bab el-Mandeb Strait emerged as an area of increased concern, while the region's predominantly young population came up as a cornerstone for action and a central priority for future engagement.

To address persistent political priorities and tackle new contextual challenges, the report considers that a renewed mutual engagement is needed, based on a candid approach, clearly expressing EU values and interests and recognising the existence of areas of alignment and of divergence with Horn of Africa countries, in a partnership among equals.

Across the consultations, actors from the Horn of Africa countries expressed their willingness to deepen engagement with the EU. Through this report we call on the EU to demonstrate an equally strong commitment, driven by advancing the political priorities and respecting general principles and turning them into concrete action. This requires ensuring adequate provision of the necessary resources for implementation, developing tailored EU programmes on a country-by-country basis and strengthening EU strategic communication and public diplomacy.

ANNEX: DECLARATION OF INPUT

Pursuant to Article 8 of Annex I to the Rules of Procedure, the rapporteur declares that she included in her report input on matters pertaining to the subject of the file that she received, in the preparation of the draft report, from the following interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register¹, or from the following representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic missions and embassies:

1. Interest representatives falling within the scope of the Interinstitutional Agreement on a mandatory transparency register

- Horn of Africa Head of Division, EEAS
- Chief of Staff to EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa

Eritrea

- EU Ambassador to Eritrea
- Head of Cooperation, EU Embassy to Eritrea
- Ambassadors of the EU Member States to Eritrea

Ethiopia

- EU Ambassador to Ethiopia
- EU Ambassador to the African Union

Djibouti

- EU Ambassador to Djibouti
- Ambassadors of the EU Member States to Djibouti
- European Union Naval Force Operation (EUNAVFOR) ATALANTA - Spanish Air Detachment
- European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) ASPIDES

Somalia

- Director for Africa at EEAS
- EU Ambassador to Somalia
- Head of Partnership EU Delegation to Somalia
- Ambassadors of the EU Member States to Somalia
- Head of Mission of the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia)
- EU Mission Force Commander for the European Union training mission in Somalia (EUTM Somalia)

2. Representatives of public authorities of third countries, including their diplomatic

¹ Interinstitutional Agreement of 20 May 2021 between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on a mandatory transparency register (OJ L 207, 11.6.2021, p. 1, ELI: http://data.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinst/2021/611/oj).

missions and embassies

Eritrea

- **Minister of Foreign Affairs**
- Minister of Information
- Head of Economic Affairs, People's Front for Democracy and Justice
- Chargé d'affaires, US Embassy to Eritrea
- Ambassador of Türkiye to Eritrea
- Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Eritrea
- Representatives of EU-supported cooperation projects

Ethiopia

- DG for African Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- DG for International Organisations, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- President of the Somali Region, Ethiopia
- UN Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa
- UNSG Personal Envoy for Sudan
- Deputy Chief of Staff for the African Union Commission Chairperson
- Ambassador of Somalia to the Ethiopia and the African Union
- UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UNICEF Representative
- Head of Office, UN OCHA Ethiopia
- Senior Operations Coordinator, UNHCR
- Ethiopian civil society representatives and human rights defenders
- Members of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Jijiga
- Somali refugees in Kebribeyah
- Minister at the Embassy of Ethiopia in Brussels

Djibouti

- Ambassador of Djibouti to Belgium
- Minister of Defence
- Minister of Women and Family Affairs
- President of the National Assembly
- Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce
- Senior Technical Adviser, representing the Minister of Youth and Culture
- Deputy Director of the Resource and Competence Centre
- Director-General of the National Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- Director of Studies, Statistics and Planning at the National Agency for Persons with Disabilities
- President of the National Human Rights Commission
- Programme Coordinator at the National Union of Djiboutian Women
- President of the Taalo Saan Association
- Chief of Staff of IGAD
- Director of Health and Social Development - IGAD
- Director of Planning, Coordination and Partnerships – IGAD

Somalia

- Minister of Commerce and Industry of the Federal Government of Somalia

The list above is drawn up under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur.

Where natural persons are identified in the list by their name, by their function or by both, the rapporteur declares that she has submitted to the natural persons concerned the European Parliament's Data Protection Notice No 484 (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/data-protect/index.do>), which sets out the conditions applicable to the processing of their personal data and the rights linked to that processing.