

News in brief

*Ethiopia takes the Chair at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Summit...
.... preceded by COMESA's 14th Foreign Ministers meeting
Prime Minister's press conference on relations with Egypt and other issues
GERD's 4th anniversary celebrations and an academic Symposium
The AU Peace and Security Council discuss the ad hoc Committee on South Sudan....
... .and calls for Sudan and South Sudan to implement agreements on the Abyei Area
An Ethio-Oman Business Forum held in Addis Ababa*

News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The AU Chairperson of the African Union Commission Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma told the African Finance, Planning and Economic Development ministers meeting in Addis Ababa this week (March 30- April 1) that the first priority of the AU's Agenda 2063 would be investments on human capital for Africa in the education, health, water, sanitation and nutrition sectors.

The fourteenth Meeting of Common Market of Eastern And Southern Africa (COMESA) Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held under the COMESA theme "Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization" on Saturday (March 28). **(See article)**

The 18th COMESA Summit at the level of Heads of State and Government opened on Monday (March 30) at AU Head Quarters in Addis Ababa under the theme: "Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization". The Summit closed on Tuesday. **(See article)**

Tanzania's National Assembly on Thursday (march 26) unanimously ratified the Comprehensive Framework Agreement (CFA), the Entebbe Agreement, signed by Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania in 2010 and subsequently by Burundi. The treaty has now been ratified by Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania.

The 3rd General Assembly Meeting of IGAD's Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRISI) convened in Addis Ababa on Friday (March 27). The Assembly urged IGAD to invest in innovative strategies and technologies to respond to the challenges of climate variability and change, and promote the involvement of the private sector and NGOs.

A meeting of the UN Environmental Assembly Bureau took place in Nairobi on Monday (March 30) to discuss political priorities and set a course for the 2nd UNEA meeting in May next year. The 1st UNEA Assembly was in Nairobi in June 2014. The UNEA, to which all 193 UN members states belong, is the principal UN body for the environment.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn took over the Chairmanship of the Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA) at the Summit in Addis Ababa (March 30). **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam said on Thursday (April 2) that the Government was considering withdrawing the more than 50, 000 Ethiopian citizens living and working in Yemen. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs committee is working to protect Ethiopian nationals as well as arrange for repatriation of those who wish to leave voluntarily.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, Chairperson of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Support for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), attended the celebration of the 4th anniversary of the start of the construction at the Dam site. In Addis Ababa, Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros attended an academic consultation symposium to discuss the progress of the Dam. **(See article)**

A statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the shocking and murderous attack on Garissa University in Kenya by Al-Shabaab and expressed its deepest sympathy to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of Kenya.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom met with Jean Paul Adam, Minister of Finance of the Seychelles on Tuesday (March 31st) to discuss strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation in tourism, trade, aviation, and peace and security.

Ethiopian Transport Minister Workeneh Gebeyehu met with Egypt's Housing Minister Moustafa Madbouly on Tuesday (March 31) on the sidelines of the COMESA Summit to discuss bilateral cooperation, including possible participation of Egyptian construction firms' in the building of the new international airport for Addis Ababa and various road projects.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos signed an agreement this week with the David and Lucile Packard Foundation for the establishment of a Sub-Saharan regional office for the Foundation in Ethiopia. The Foundation has been working in Ethiopia for the past 15 years and has put US\$150 million into the health care sector.

State Minister Dawano Kedir on Thursday (April 2) met with a high-level business delegation from Oman led by Dr. Salim Al Ismaily, Chair of Oman's Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development. **(See article)**

The World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors on Thursday (April 2) approved US\$350 million to help the Ethiopian Government increase agricultural productivity and enhance market access for smallholder farmers in more than 150 rural districts.

The newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador La Yifan, said that Ethiopia is considered as the best African nation for Chinese investment and trade. He also noted that the political will and commitment of the leaders of both countries made it easier to strengthen the all round relations. The Ambassador said China was working to make the trade relationship fairer by allowing Ethiopian goods to enter the Chinese market.

An Ethiopian delegation of over thirty business representatives, headed by Shisema Gebresilassie, Head of the Addis Ababa City Government Trade and Industry Development

Bureau on a visit to Dubai this week attended a business forum with representatives of forty private sector UAE businesses.

The Gilgel Gibe III Hydro-power Project will start generating electricity later this year during the rainy season. The Project Coordinator said the dam has the capacity to hold 15 billion cubic meters of water of which about 80 million cubic meters has been collected since January this year. It will take three years to fill. A UNESCO team would next week travel to the locality to assess the impact the dam may have on Lake Turkana.

Djibouti

Foreign minister, Mahmoud Ali Yousouf, says Houthi rebels in Yemen have placed missiles, artillery and "small rapid boats" loaded with heavy weaponry on Perim island between Djibouti and Yemen. He claimed they were preparing to attack shipping in the Bab el-Mandeb straits at the mouth of the Red Sea, one of the world's busiest shipping areas, and that all commercial and military vessels that pass through the straits would be within reach of these weapons. "The prospect of a war in the strait of Bab al- Mandeb is a real one."

Djibouti's Finance Minister Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh says he expects Djibouti's GDP growth to rise to 7.5 % or 8% by the end of this year and it could 10% by 2017. Planned developments include a new airport and a liquefied natural gas plant and pipeline to serve future gas production in Ethiopia; and becoming operational next year the new multi-purpose port at Djibouti; a multipurpose port at Tadjourah, for Ethiopian potash exports; the salt project at Goubet and a livestock project near the border with Somaliland

Eritrea

In a statement on Tuesday (March 31), the Foreign Ministry dismissed allegations that Eritrea has allowed Iran to supply and support the Houthi rebels in Yemen through Eritrea as "baseless". Eritrea has been accused to allow one of its islands to be used as a training ground for Houthi rebels. The statement said Eritrea "does not allow its islands, ports and territory for lease or sale" and it fully supported the territorial integrity of Yemen and the unity of its people. Eritrea went to war with Yemen briefly in 1995 over control of the Hannish Islands before these were allocated to Yemen by international arbitration.

Kenya

The Garissa University Campus was targeted by Al-Shabaab terrorists in a murderous attack on Wednesday this week. When security services recovered control of the campus, killing the four terrorists, 147 people had been murdered and over a hundred injured, mostly students. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack saying it was a response to Kenya's military intervention in Somalia.

Five Kenyan Cabinet Secretaries, for Energy and Petroleum, Transport and Infrastructure, Labor, Agriculture and Fisheries and for Land resigned over the weekend after being asked to do so by President Kenyatta. This followed the presentation of an Ethics and Anti-Corruption

Commission report to Parliament. A number of other senior government as well as eight chief executives of state-run corporations have also stepped down while allegations of corruption are investigated.

The White House announced on Monday (March 30) that President Obama will visit Kenya in July to co-host the Global Entrepreneurship Summit bringing together business leaders, international organizations and government representatives. The visit will be President Obama's first trip as President to his father's homeland.

The Kenyan Government said on Saturday (March 28) it was "shocked and concerned" over the latest travel warning issued by Britain on Friday for people to avoid most Kenyan coastal resorts, citing the threat of Al-Shabaab terrorist activity.

Somalia

President Mohamud called today for Somalia and Kenya to boost security cooperation between them as he offered his offered his condolences on Friday (April 3) on the r "barbaric" Islamist gunmen had massacred 147 students at Garissa University. The President said he mourned the "lives of innocent students" killed and offered his "condolences to the families of those who had died in this attack by the merciless terrorists."

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, attending the Arab league Summit at the weekend said Somalia had officially accepted a Saudi-led coalition request to use Somalia's waters and airspace in the fight against the Houthi in Yemen. He said it would provide any facilities needed for the operation and would stand with Saudi Arabia and its allies.

China signed an agreement this week to provide \$13 million to the Federal Government to boost rebuilding of infrastructure, health, education and other facilities.

The Maka Al-Mukarramah Hotel in Mogadishu was targeted by an Al-Shabaab terrorist suicide attack on Friday (March 27). The attack killed 18 people including Somalia's Ambassador to Switzerland and Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva, Ambassador Yusuf Bari-Bari.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) held a medal parade for the outgoing Ethiopian peacekeepers in Baidoa, Somalia over the weekend. The ceremony was attended by the President of the Interim South West Administration, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan and the Director of the United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia, UNSOA, Amadu Kamara as well as officials from AMISOM, the Somalia military, the United Nations and other donors.

Another senior Al-Shabaab official, Mohamed Ali Hassan, surrendered to the Government on Sunday (March 29). He was said to be the senior Al-Shabaab intelligence commander and a member of Aminiyat responsible for coordinating suicide bombings and ambushes along the Mogadishu-Afgoye road.

On Thursday (March 26) the German parliament voted by a large majority for the continuation of German involvement in the European Union Training Mission in Somalia. Up to 20 soldiers are also to be used in the training of the Somali army and as advisers to the Somali defense ministry. Germany also participates in the anti-piracy operations of Mission Nestor and Operation Atalanta.

Minister for Interior Abdirahman Mohamed Hussein said in an interview with Radio Mogadishu at the weekend that Somalia was still ready to talk to Somaliland but he added that there was no need for external actors to be involved. Two weeks ago, Somaliland's Foreign Affairs Minister said international mediators were necessary.

South Sudan

A spokesperson said in Juba on Tuesday (March 31) said the Government opposes the direct involvement of the United Nations Security Council and the Troika countries (US, UK and Norway) in the next round of IGAD-mediated peace talks. The negotiations between South Sudan's warring parties are expected to resume later this month. **(See article)**

US President Obama signed an executive order on Tuesday (March 31) describing the civil war in South Sudan as a threat to US national security and foreign policy and extending the declaration of national emergency announced in April 2014. The order said the situation in South Sudan was marked by activities that threaten the peace, security, or stability of South Sudan and the surrounding region.

IGAD Monitors, in a report last Friday (March 27) said the South Sudan's army had been laying anti-personnel mines around Nasir in Upper Nile. The monitoring group said this disregarded an international ban and signaled an "alarming escalation" of the war. It urged government forces to remove the alleged new mines and take action against those responsible. The South Sudan army denied the claim.

Sudan

Sudanese president Omer Hassan al-Bashir told the Arab League Summit on Saturday (March 28) in Egypt that the Sudan had been following the Houthi attempts to obstruct Yemen's national dialogue in a way that threatened the whole region. He said Sudan expressed unlimited support to the coalition supporting legitimacy in Yemen and would actively participate in the coalition to maintain peace and stability in the region.

The African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) announced on Thursday (April 2) that it had indefinitely suspended the pre-dialogue preparatory meeting for parties participating in the national dialogue process that was scheduled to take place this week in Addis Ababa after the Government and its affiliated political parties refused to attend.

Ethiopia takes the Chair at the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa Summit...

The 18th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) was held this week (March 30 -31), in Addis Ababa at the African Union Headquarters, under the theme: “Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization.” It was preceded by a week of technical and other ministerial discussions with the COMESA Foreign Ministers’ meeting taking place in Saturday (March 28). Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegn took over the chair of COMESA from President Joseph Kabila Kabange, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Prime Minister Hailemariam, opening the Summit and welcoming participants to Addis Ababa, noted that it was a great privilege and honor for Ethiopia and its government to host the Summit. He referred to the 24th African Union Summit was held in Addis Ababa in January and underlined that the current COMESA Summit of Heads of State and Government was being undertaken in the same “Spirit of Pan-Africanism.” The Prime Minister emphasized that Africa’s economic performance since the turn of the twenty-first century had been remarkable despite the overall grim effects of the global financial and economic crisis. He stressed that sound economic policies, stronger institutions and higher levels of public and private investment were the key factors for the continued socio-economic growth and development in the continent. Some countries in the region, he said, had even managed to translate sustained economic growth into “higher living standards, poverty reduction and improved social indicators.” Reminding his listeners of the challenges facing Africa today, the Prime Minister said, despite the remarkable economic performance in recent years, the commitment of African governments and states and of their policies and strategies must be weighed against the sustainability of this growth and development and the lifting of a significant number of citizens out of absolute poverty.

Prime Minister Hailemariam noted that the 18th COMESA Summit was being held at an opportune moment, with the promotion of inclusive and sustainable industrialization, the theme of the Summit, serving as a pillar for fostering sustained economic growth, food security and eradication of poverty within the COMESA region. Laying emphasis on the critical need for inclusive and sustainable development in the region, the Prime Minister noted that inclusivity in the processes of growth and development involved prioritizing the creation of shared responsibility and, equally, the benefits of industrialization must aim to be all encompassing: men, women, children, young and old alike. Similarly the Prime Minister said, “Employment opportunities, particularly in industrial and agro-industrial sectors, must be available to all members of the workforce.” This was necessary for building greater prosperity and social cohesion. In addition, the Prime Minister said inclusivity also called for cooperation between governments and private sector actors. This, indeed, would help “harness the investments necessary to strengthen the productive and trade capacities of our Member States.”

Equally important for the promotion of sustainable growth and development, the Prime Minister said, was environmental sustainability. This was central for all-round efforts of industrialization programs in Africa. He reminded his listeners that the promotion of Green Industry and the use of clean technologies in industrial production resulted in “greater resource and energy efficiency; and improved water and waste management,” which in turn offered significant potential for increased competitiveness and enhanced employment opportunities. . In this regard, the Prime

Minister noted Ethiopia had “aggressively embarked on a climate resilient and carbon neutral path to build a dynamic and equitable middle-income economy.” He noted that Ethiopia, recognizing the deep links between climate and socio-economic development, had begun to execute these development efforts without increasing net greenhouse gas emissions and while building resilience to climate shocks.

Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed the importance of promoting the speedy implementation of regional integration programs within the COMESA region for realization of a common market for the free movement of both people and factors of production. This, he said, would enable COMESA “to fast-track domestication of the model frameworks, protocols and policies already in place.” Citing Ethiopia’s commitment to the COMESA Free Trade Area and the speeding up of the regional integration agenda, the Prime Minister also noted Ethiopia was investing in large-scale economic infrastructure, expansion of information technology and development of the energy sector. All were central to the effort and program of regional integration and he mentioned the examples of the regional interconnection projects of IGAD, including Ethiopia’s road links with Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya, along with the power connections it was making with neighboring countries. The Prime Minister also underlined that these regional integration programs and projects were fully and continuously aligned with the country’s national strategies and programs. The actions taken had improved productivity and competitiveness and had thereby enhanced human development and the building of institutional capacities for improved internal efficiency and service provision.

The official closure of the 18th Summit of the COMESA Heads of State and Government came on Tuesday (March 31) after the Summit had endorsed the Draft Communiqué of the 10th COMESA Business Council whose report urged Member States to develop an effective and consistent framework of inter-agency and private sector coordination in the COMESA Region. It emphasized the importance of an effective and consistent framework which could enhance inter-agency and private sector coordination in the COMESA region. The Summit also endorsed the Draft Communiqué of the Eighth COMESA First Ladies Roundtable presented by Ethiopia’s First Lady, Roman Tesfaye, under the theme: “Economic empowerment of Women: A key to Inclusive and Sustainable Development,” and emphasized that the COMESA Member States uphold economic empowerment of women. This was to be seen in the establishment of the Women’s Economic Empowerment Fund, Girls Education, Social Cash Transfer and Land Ownership, as well as the creation of an enabling environment for the empowerment of women in terms of the rights for equal opportunity, equal inheritance and equal pay. The Summit also considered and adopted the report of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs including the Report of the Committee on Peace and Security (**see below**), as well as the discussions on the role of cross-border trade, empowering women and promoting peace and security in the Great Lakes Region.

Its Final Communiqué was presented by Ahmed Shide, Chairperson of the Ministerial Council of the COMESA, and State Minister of Ethiopia’s Ministry of Finance and Economic Development. This gave official endorsement of the Decisions on the adoption of the COMESA Industrialization Policy, the adoption of renewable energy guidelines on Feed-in-Tariffs, Power Purchase Agreements, Public-Private Partnerships, and the decision to set up a ministerial and technical committee to oversee the construction of COMESA Headquarters. It detailed updates

concerning the progress of COMESA programs, including the Free Trade Area (FTA), the Rules of Origin, COMESA - Simplified Trade Regime (COMESA-STR), COMESA Customs Union, Removal of Non-Tariff Barriers, COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation Systems (CVTFS), and Financing Regional Development as well as other programs. On 'Industrialization of the COMESA region', the Communiqué underscored the importance of the COMESA industrialization policy for the economic transformation and sustainable development of the region. On 'Agricultural development', the Summit directed the COMESA Secretariat to implement the CAADP Regional Compact and related investment framework, and complete the design of the Regional Livestock policy. The Communiqué also urged Member States to mainstream the Malabo Declaration (2014) Implementation Strategy and Roadmap for their existing National Agriculture Policies, Strategies and Programs, to continue to mainstream gender in all national development programs and promote the production and utilization of innovation for the attainment of the aims and objectives of COMESA.

.... preceded by COMESA's 14th Foreign Ministers meeting

The 14th meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs took place on Saturday (March 28) prior to the 18th Summit of the COMESA Heads of State and Government, and with the same theme of "Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization." The Secretary General of COMESA, Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya, opening the session which was chaired by Uganda, thanked the Prime Minister, the Government and the people of Ethiopia, and the African Union Commission for the use of their premises. He noted the efforts of COMESA to support the attainment of the target set by the African Union Heads of State and Government to end all wars by 2020. He gave details of the contribution of COMESA programs to post-conflict reconstruction and development, and of the 'Trading for Peace' program which had a focus on empowering border communities in the Great Lakes Region. The Secretary General noted that the COMESA program had created ten trade information desks at various border posts and was in the process of constructing other infrastructure developments including markets and border offices at a cost of over three million dollars. Mr. Sindiso thanked COMESA partners for their continuous contributions.

The Guest of Honor, Ethiopia's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, also made an opening statement, elaborating on the state of peace and security in the COMESA region. Ambassador Berhane said "the decision taken in 1999 by our Heads of State and Government to establish the COMESA program on peace and security was indeed apt". It reflected the conviction that addressing those issues was a prerequisite for promoting economic integration and holistic development, he said. However, the State Minister noted, despite the progress of the last few years, the region and indeed Africa, continued to face serious challenges in the field of peace and security. The consequence of these challenges was to undermine socio-economic development, cause serious humanitarian consequences and contribute to the negative images of the continent. There was, he said, an urgent and demanding need for increased efforts to attain the objective of "Silencing the Gun in Africa by 2020." The State Minister said it was imperative for countries in the COMESA region to cooperate seriously in this. He also noted the importance of cooperation to overcome conflict situations both regionally and continentally. In this respect he briefed member states on the current developments in Somalia, in the fight against terrorism in the region and in the efforts to end the conflict in South Sudan.

Ms. Beatrice Attala, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, who thanked State Minister Ambassador Berhane and through him the Prime Minister, Government, and peoples of Ethiopia, acknowledged the work of the COMESA secretariat for its preparations and its reports. She also stressed the importance of peace and security for economic development and acknowledged the challenges of addressing these issues. She maintained the COMESA ministers were capable of this and emphasized that the agenda of the meeting should be carefully considered in order to ensure the passing of decisions that would support the efforts made to develop the peace, security and stability of the region and to realize ongoing developments in inclusive and sustainable industrialization undertakings.

The meeting elected the Democratic Republic of Congo as Chair, Ethiopia as a Vice Chair, and Uganda as Rapporteur. The outgoing Chair, Philemon Mateke, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Uganda and the incoming Chair, Raymond Tshibanda, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Congo delivered statements, emphasizing the importance of keeping up momentum of efforts in the areas of security, peace and stability, as the basis for mutual development and regional industrialization.

The report of the Committee on Peace and Security was presented to the Ministers. This included a review of the COMESA Mandate on Peace and Security as well as Committee's evaluation of the peace and security situation in the COMESA region, looking at the situation in each of the member states. The Committee also gave an account of the situation regarding the negative forces and armed groups operating in the region, including the Allied Democratic Forces, the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, the Lord's Resistance Army and the responses to these. It gave an account of other challenges to peace and security challenges including terrorism, piracy, climate change issues and Africa's relations with the International Criminal court as well as an outline of current electoral processes in the COMESA region.

The meeting concluded by adopting amendments to its draft report which was forwarded to the Summit of the Heads of State and Government for discussion and debate. On the sidelines of the Foreign minister's meeting, a panel discussion and a photo exhibition entitled "Promoting Cross Border Trade for Women's civic, political and economic empowerment and sustainable peace" were organized.

Prime Minister's press conference on relations with Egypt and other issues

At the end of last week, following the visit of Egypt's President El-SiSi and the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan earlier in the week, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn held a press conference. His briefing focused on the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Khartoum, noting that this had been done on the basis of a win-win agreement in which all parties accepted equitable share of the River Nile, as well as acknowledged Ethiopia's stand that the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) would not be slowed or its holding capacity reduced. The Prime Minister emphasized that the agreement would open the door to mutual trust and enhanced cooperation among the three countries. He hoped it would bring Egypt and the Sudan to sign the Cooperative

Framework Agreement (CFA). The Prime Minister said that the signing of the agreement was a breakthrough and he pointed out the principles incorporated in the agreement were in concurrence with the CFA. It also underlined Ethiopia's position that had from the outset, he said, been clear, principled, scientific and in respect of international laws.

The Prime Minister said the agreement in Khartoum came after a series of meetings and negotiations in which the Egyptian leadership came to understand the position of Ethiopia - that it had no intention of harming the interests of the Egyptian people. The stance of President El-Sisi's Government regarding the Nile and the GERD moved away from the old diehard position that previous governments had followed so firmly. Ethiopia, said the Prime Minister, had managed to persuade the Egyptian Government that Ethiopia was ready for cooperation and that the dam would not bring any significant harm to the downstream countries. This came as a result of repeated diplomatic efforts that made significant progress after he had met with President El-Sisi on the sidelines of the African Union Summit in Malabo, in June last year. It was there they reached an agreement to work on their differences regarding GERD and to restart the tripartite process.

The Prime Minister emphasized that the Declaration of Principles agreement took full consideration of the interests of the millions of people whose livelihood is based on the Nile and it underlines principles of cooperation based on common understanding, mutual benefit, good faith, win-win solutions and international laws. It also contains principles for development, regional integration and sustainability in which GERD will be able to play the role of a catalyst. The three countries, of course, have also agreed to take appropriate measures to prevent any significant harm through utilization of the Blue Nile and other shared water resources in their respective territories. These resources will be used in an equitable and reasonable manner.

The Prime Minister added that the agreement also includes principles covering cooperation on the First Filling and Operation of the Dam, Confidence Building, Exchange of Information and Data, Dam Safety, Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity and Peaceful Settlement of Disputes. More generally, he pointed out the agreement also seeks to address the suspicion and longstanding animosity that have defined relationships over the Nile for so long. In sum, the signing of the Declaration of Principles amounts to a highly positive development that has the potential of transforming regional diplomatic relationships in general and of Ethiopia and Egypt in particular.

The Prime Minister said that this also meant Egypt's calls to minimize the capacity of the dam or halt its construction were now over. Egypt was now showing a sense of cooperation under the leadership of President El-Sisi. Certainly Egypt's concern remained as to whether the dam could result in significant harm; the Prime Minister stressed again that it would not. Ethiopia indeed had been the first country to propose the setting up of the International Panel of Experts. It was the late Prime Minister Meles after meeting the Egyptian Public Diplomacy team who had suggested the establishment of the Panel as part of the effort to enhance people-to-people relations to encourage confidence between the countries and counter any ill-thought-out, uninformed media campaign. The Panel had proved that the dam will not have any major adverse impact on the downstream countries. Now the impact of the dam has been assessed by experts, further technical and scientific assessments will also be carried out. These efforts had helped

Ethiopia to show Egypt and Sudan the difference between the scientific and developmental importance of the dam and the negative political and media propaganda. Ethiopia's stance, the Prime Minister repeated, was based on international principles. This had played a significant role in leading to the acceptance of the agreement in Khartoum. The Prime Minister expressed his hope that the way would now be open for Egypt and Sudan to make a move to join the CFA.

The Prime Minister went on to note that the visit of President El-Sisi to Ethiopia came after the agreement reached in Khartoum. This underlined the fact that the agreement would also enhance mutual trust and cooperation among the riparian countries. He said Egypt and Ethiopia relations had reached a new era of cooperation. The two countries had also agreed to boost trade and investment, as well as fight terrorism and extremism in the region. Ethiopia, he said, had ample agricultural produce that Egypt needed; Egypt has extensive knowledge to share with the manufacturing sector to Ethiopia. Both countries had agreed to bolster people-to-people relations, educational links and music and sport exchanges. The Prime Minister added that the two sides had also begun to consider the possibility of road and rail connections.

The Prime Minister also answered questions on various topics. He said the accusations over human rights violations were baseless. They arose from the specific political motives of certain parties and they had been increasing since Ethiopia took the decision to take its own political and economic path, resisting the pressure of outsiders to allow interference in the country's internal affairs. Those who criticized Ethiopia's anti-terrorist law, he said, were now passing similar legislation to deal with the levels of terrorism they themselves were now facing. They would no longer have any ground to accuse Ethiopia now.

The Prime Minister also responded to questions on the upcoming election. He emphasized that the Government was totally committed to the electoral process and to having a fair, free and peaceful election. There had been some minor problems but he said he hoped that those involved would rectify any mistake in respect to the electoral law and code of conduct. He said there was no doubt of the interest of the electorate in following electoral broadcasts and said he was disappointed that not all the parties had been using all their allotted airtime.

GERD's 4th anniversary celebrations and an academic Symposium

The 4th anniversary of the start of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has been celebrated this week at Sirbaba, near the Dam site, on Thursday (April 2) as well at other places and events around the country. The ceremony at Sirbaba was attended by Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, other senior government officials, people from all over the country and other invited guests. The occasion included a visit to see the impressive progress made in construction of the Dam. The Deputy Prime Minister, who is Chairperson of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Support for GERD, underlined the government's appreciation of the efforts of all Ethiopians and their "unreserved and sustained contributions" in terms of providing resources for the construction. He praised the public's participation in buying bonds and said Ethiopians both at home and abroad in the Diaspora had proved their commitment to shoulder the cost of the construction. He noted that contributions for the construction of the Dam were continuing to increase and he urged the public to intensify its

support. The Deputy Prime Minister noted that the Dam with this support from all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia and those abroad was on schedule with 42% of its construction complete. Ethiopian Development Bank President, Isayas Bahre said the overall participation of the public in buying bonds was outstanding and the efforts to reach communities at the grassroots level had been very effective. Within Ethiopia bonds worth more than six billion Birr had been sold.

Engineer Simegnaw, Project Manager of the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, in an interview with the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation on Wednesday (April 1st) on the celebration of the fourth anniversary, noted that there were currently more than 8500 local workers and around 400 foreigners working 24 hours a day on the project site. Emphasizing that the Dam was now 42% he said more than a hundred thousand Ethiopians have visited the construction. GERD is also contributing significantly to construction and development of the surrounding area and towns, as well as to the establishment of technology parks and infrastructures in nearby areas which will be able to benefit from its power when complete.

One of the elements of the week's celebrations was an academic consultation symposium on the progress of GERD which was held on Monday (March 30) in the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa. The symposium, which had the aim of looking at the progress made in the construction of the Dam, underlined the tremendous role played by scholars and academics in encouraging public participation in the project and mobilizing support for the Dam. Indeed, this support from academics and other groups both at home and abroad in sustaining contributions to the Dam was a vital element in the progress achieved so far.

The Guest of Honor at the Symposium was Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom who congratulated all Ethiopians on reaching the fourth anniversary of the start of the GERD. The Dam, he said, had underlined and expanded Ethiopia's national consensus and greatly enlarged the country's international image as well as revitalizing the national belief that "we can realize what we have planned to do." Dr. Tedros, who noted that Ethiopia had now achieved more than a decade of continuous double digit economic development, stressed that its development progress was now regarded as promising and impressive. This had happened, the Foreign Minister said, because of the active public participation in implementing the policies aimed at changing the country and the lives of the people. These policies included the series of major projects involving railway construction, the building of sugar, fertilizer and cement factories, and other developments as well as the provision of necessary and sustainable energy sources for these projects. The Government, said the Foreign Minister, was fully aware of the need for power for these projects and the necessity of power generation as the only option for the country's overall development. This was why it had started the construction of the Dam four years ago.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is, as Dr. Tedros noted, the monument of this generation in the fight against poverty. It is the foundation of the Ethiopian renaissance and, significantly, since the announcement of the project, Ethiopians at home and abroad from all different sectors of the population, have contributed and are still contributing substantially through their labor, their expertise and financially. In fact, as Dr. Tedros underlined, the Dam is a national effort and it was therefore significant that the public in general from all sectors contributed as did the academic community from the start. The Minister said that the symposium was organized for this fourth anniversary with the purpose of creating an opportunity for scholars to keep up the

momentum of their contributions, bringing participants from all the country's universities to discuss the advantages and the multi-purpose benefits of GERD for the country and allow scholarly discussion of the principles of equitable utilization of the Nile waters. So, Dr. Tedros emphasized, it would not only create a forum for continuous academic contribution but it would also help to widen the scope of looking at the wider benefits that would be acquired on completion of the Dam.

Indeed, the Minister said, the multi-dimensional benefits of the GERD to Ethiopia and to the riparian countries were noteworthy. It was important that scholars and academics should detail the evidence for this and contribute and strengthen to public awareness of these benefits. He expressed his hope that those attending the symposium would provide a high level of expertise for the discussions. In this context, the Minister briefed the symposium on the Declaration of Principles signed last week between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan, describing these as an excellent example of the win-win principles for cooperation needed for development of the Nile Basin.

The symposium heard a number of presentations, including "GERD and fish production", as well as several panel discussions describing the principles for the use of the waters of the Nile that Ethiopia holds to, the advantages of the construction of the Dam and the way forward from a number of different perspectives. These elucidated, for example, the signing of the Declaration of Principles between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan, and ways to increase further trust between the three countries. The agreement was seen as a testimony to Ethiopia's firm position of support for international principles and as a demonstration of Egypt's belief in reaching mutual agreements through negotiation and discussion. Another panel noted that the GERD in addition to merely generating power could also become a positive engine for regional power integration and people-to-people relations in the region. Scholars from Addis Ababa University noted that the University had contributed to the construction of the dam through selection of the site and the design. They pointed out that the University had documents going back over a century dealing with water management and soil conservation which had been useful in the construction of the Dam. They also underlined the University's long links with other countries which have built grand dams, and its ability to utilize the experiences of others in assisting in the Dam's construction. During the afternoon session there were also presentations on international law, international water law and Ethiopia's rights, Ethiopia's diplomacy on the Nile and GERD, as well as on the GERD itself and the hydro political dynamics of the Nile.

The AU Peace and Security Council discuss the ad hoc Committee on South Sudan....

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union, in a meeting held in Addis Ababa last week (March 24) to consider the overall situation in South Sudan, was briefed by Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chairperson of the IGAD Mediation Team. It also heard statements from representatives of South Sudan and of Ethiopia, Chair of IGAD. The Council welcomed the completion of consultations on the composition of the proposed African Union High-Level ad hoc Committee and agreed it should be composed of the Heads of State and Government of

Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda, and South Africa with a view to strengthen Africa's support to the IGAD mediation on South Sudan. The Council said extending support to, and propelling the IGAD-led South Sudan peace negotiations forward, would be at core of the ad hoc Committee's tasks, to re-energize the process and allow IGAD to continue to lead the mediation process and help the conflicting parties give peace a chance.

The Council stated that the ad hoc Committee was set to meet with a view define its terms of reference as well as set out its work plan. Its establishment is timely in view of the need to encourage the warring parties to compromise over points of political difference and other outstanding issues of disagreement concerning the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity. It is also suggestive of the importance of innovative and home-grown African methods of reinvigorating the IGAD peace process to contribute to a prompt and early end to the fighting. The Council asked the African Union Commission to extend all the necessary support to the ad hoc Committee, enabling the AU to play a full role in the search for a lasting solution to the conflict in South Sudan.

Ambassador Wahide Belay, Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the AU and UNECA, said that the meeting demonstrated "the united support of Africa to the IGAD-led peace process through the establishment of the AU High-level ad-hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government on South Sudan." He stressed that the Council should recommit itself to stand beside the people of South Sudan "at this difficult and disappointing time." Ambassador Wahide went on to reiterate the need to "make it clear, in no uncertain terms, that there can be no justification for the continuation of this senseless conflict and the war must end now." He emphasized the need to call upon the two parties to "courageously make the necessary and difficult compromises to move out of this crisis, rather than only reiterating old positions," adding that "in all this, we have to speak in one voice and avoid the wrong avenue of duplication of forums."

Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chairperson of the IGAD Special Envoys to the South Sudan Mediation Process, briefing the Council, highlighted the agreement made on February 1 by the principals of the two warring factions. By this they agreed to conclude negotiations by March 5 on the formation of a Transitional Government of National Unity and start the process of healing and national reconciliation. He said that expectations and hopes faded as the parties failed to demonstrate the maturity to secure a lasting and just solution or even reach a comprehensive agreement to end the conflict. Ambassador Seyoum reminded the Council that the absence of political resolve, the presence of hardline elements on both sides of the conflicting parties, and the search for ways to use the weaknesses of each other, dimmed hopes for peace. He recalled that IGAD had told the people of South Sudan that the parties had failed to conclude a final peace agreement but had urged them to continue to work for peace and reconciliation as well as say no to those who encouraged and worked for war. What had particularly disappointed the mediation team said Ambassador Seyoum was that although both parties reiterated their readiness for peace when they addressed the region and the international community when it came to actually reaching a peaceful settlement, they refused to do what was necessary. He wondered "how can they make peace if they cannot countenance working together; if they cannot even agree on a reasonable time frame to re-unite their armies?" He noted that they "do not see each other as partners on the path to peace," adding "how then can we make progress

when we see that both sides command armies bent on continuing the war?” The Ambassador said “we cannot have peace without them, and yet they have failed the peace that is so sorely needed.”

Ambassador Seyoum called upon the region “to speak with one voice and act in unison” with a view to help the warring parties and all South Sudan stakeholders end the crisis and secure peace in the country as urgently as possible. He detailed IGAD’s decision to expand and strengthen the existing peace process by incorporating countries from Africa and other partners into the process. The IGAD-Plus framework would comprise the African Union, both through the AU Commission and through individual states, the UN, the EU, China and the Troika (the US, UK and Norway) to support IGAD’s effort. He stressed that “it is important that the Parties in South Sudan and their neighbors see clearly that there is an emerging global consensus on the key issues around the resolution of the crisis in South Sudan.” He hoped that when they saw this “the parties will realize the futility of continuing the war and postponing peace.”

Ambassador Seyoum underlined the central role of the AU and of its member states in mapping out a blueprint for a common approach to push the parties to conclude a mutually acceptable agreement. He said the IGAD-Plus approach would build on the efforts made by the IGAD mediation process and the Special Envoys to articulate the position of the parties and develop a comprehensive compromise. He said the mediation team had come up with a draft agreement. This comprised a number of key thematic areas in which compromises have been developed. These included: the establishment of a Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU); the structure of the top executive; a permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangements; transitional justice, accountability, national reconciliation and healing structures; a permanent constitution-making process; resource, economic and financial management; humanitarian assistance and reconstruction and finally the election-making process to usher in a new political dispensation in South Sudan.

In a communiqué, the Council expressed its deep concern over the situation in South Sudan, which, it said, had been “characterized by fighting in recent weeks and a serious humanitarian situation”. It strongly condemned all acts of violence and violations of international humanitarian law and human rights in South Sudan. Disclosing its utmost disappointment over the failure of the South Sudanese parties to reach an agreement on the remaining outstanding issues that were to be finalized on March 5, the Council, once again, appealed to the South Sudanese Parties to live-up to their commitments under the Agreement of Cessation of Hostilities and show the required political will and sense of responsibility. Recalling its own earlier pronouncements on the issue of sanctions, the Council noted the adoption, on March 3 of UN Security Council resolution 2206. It reiterated its appreciation of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Chairperson of IGAD and other leaders of the region, for their commitment and tireless efforts and to the IGAD Mediation Team, the UN and other international partners for their continued support. It also reiterated its support to UNMISS and to the IGAD Monitoring Mechanism, demanding, once again, that the Parties fully cooperate with these organizations. The Council looked forward to the next steps envisaged by IGAD for the resumption of negotiations.

The decision to form an ad hoc Committee of selected African countries underlines the African Union's hope and desire to create a synergy with the existing framework of regional cooperation

and integration and the IGAD-led mediation, as a way out of the continuing fighting. Africa has the best understanding of the nature of its own security problems and of possible solutions and the African ad hoc Committee is an important development for assisting the pursuit of a lasting and durable solution in South Sudan. The establishment of the Committee also underlines the urgent need to speed up the efforts to bring peace, security, dignity and prosperity to the country and emphasizes the importance of unity and integration in all areas. Africa's support and re-commitment for the IGAD-led mediation underlines the place of African solutions for African problems. It is a clear sign of the continent's collective and internal support for the promotion of the collective peace, security and prosperity.

... and calls for Sudan and South Sudan to implement agreements on the Abyei Area

The Peace and Security Council in its March 24 meeting also considered the overall situation in the Abyei Area. It heard from the representatives of Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the representative of Ethiopia as the Troop Contributing Country to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). It expressed its satisfaction at the African Union's encouragement of the efforts of the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to work towards the conclusion of an agreement on the final status of the Abyei Area, under the auspices of the AU High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP).

Ambassador Wahide Belay, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the AU, said the cooperation between the AUHIP, the PSC and IGAD testified to Africa's growing capacity to solve its own problems. He noted that the African Union Roadmap provided a way for both parties to sink their differences. The Roadmap, he said, had been instrumental in de-escalation of tension between the two countries and encouraged a return to negotiation. Ambassador Wahide said the signing of the Roadmap offered a way forward in the right direction. He welcomed the attitude of both the leadership of Sudan and of South Sudan in exhibiting their commitment to peace, but he noted that since the outbreak of the civil war in South Sudan the situation in Abyei had made no tangible advance. The PSC meeting, therefore, came at the right time to review the progress made so far and to look at the challenges still facing the implementation of the African Union Roadmap.

Ambassador Wahide stressed the Council needed to stimulate the two parties into ironing out the problems on the remaining issues. He said the implementation of the existing agreements faced impediments and described the situation as fragile, "very delicate, complex and sensitive." He indicated that the absence of public administration and law-and-order mechanisms made it impossible to fully maintain and uphold the security of the Area. He underlined the urgency of making practical decisions to address the current and possible security, political, administrative and inter-communal challenges in Abyei. He noted that IGAD would be supportive of both parties in their progress towards peace.

In its communiqué, the Council expressed its deep concern over the inconstant and changeable security situation in the Abyei Area. It noted the security situation was still characterized by killings, abductions and the raiding of livestock, indeed, in continuing tension between the local

communities. The Council denounced the continuation of violence and of any other actions that intensified tension and made difficult the pursuit of peace despite the commitments of the parties. It reiterated the need to demonstrate restraint and refrain from any unilateral or other actions that might escalate tension in the Area.

The Council expressed its concern over the mismatch between the commitments made by the parties and the failure to apply these practically, singling out the failure to implement key provisions of the Agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement on Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area made on June 20, 2011. The Council expressed special concern over the lack of progress on the establishment of the Abyei Area Administration, Council, and of the Police Service which is to assume policing functions throughout the Abyei Area. The Council, stating that "the resulting vacuum, in terms of public administration and the rule of law, is seriously affecting security and stability in the Area and posing additional challenges to UNISFA," once again urged the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to immediately live up to the agreement and take the necessary steps for the establishment of the agreed structures promptly.

The Council strongly emphasized that the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) could play an instrumental role to deal with the continued challenges and ensure that the necessary enabling conditions were fulfilled in pursuit of a lasting solution over the Area. It welcomed the appointment of an AJOC Co-Chair by the Government of South Sudan to work in concert with his Sudanese counterpart, and underlined its full support to the AU-designated AJOC Facilitator for the AJOC meeting in Addis Ababa at the end of March. It appealed to both sides to use the meeting as an important platform to reach agreement on the immediate commencement of inter-communal dialogue as directed by the Heads of State of Sudan and South Sudan.

The Council which noted its appreciation of UNISFA's "outstanding work on the ground" to stabilize Abyei, also applauded its activities to engage with local community leaders, facilitate unimpeded and peaceful migration throughout the Area, and to deter violence. The Council, extended its thanks to Ethiopia and to other Troop Contributing Countries for their sustained efforts and continued commitment. It strongly denounced all attacks against UNISFA. The Council, welcoming the decision of the UN Security Council to extend the mandate of UNISFA until 15 July 2015, expressed its readiness to support and encourage UNISFA to continue to take measures as necessary to ensure security in the Abyei Area. It called upon both parties to cooperate with UNISFA in the discharge of its mandate. The Council also underlined its willingness to extend full support to the AJOC's decision of May 3, 2013 to declare Abyei a weapons-free area, conveyed a request to the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to take the necessary steps to make the Abyei area a demilitarized and secure reality. With reference to the prevailing humanitarian situation, the Council, applauding the role played by humanitarian agencies in delivering assistance to affected populations, reiterated the importance of the voluntary and safe return of all displaced populations as well as the ongoing efforts to ensure peaceful and orderly migrations through the Abyei Area.

Meanwhile, the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) successfully held its 9th meeting in Addis Ababa (March 29-30). This brought together the two new Co-chairs, Deng Mading Mijak from South Sudan, and Hassan Ali Nimir from Sudan, as well as the new head of UNISFA, Haile

Tilahun Gebremariam. The meeting agreed on the importance of convening a “traditional leaders meeting/dialogue in the light of the urgent need to involve the Ngok Dinka and Messiriya communities in addressing their common concerns." This dialogue will be held during the last week of April in Addis Ababa and the AJOC, the AU and the UN will facilitate it. The AJOC emphasized that the meeting should be held "in a spirit of friendship and cooperation". The AJOC also decided to support a sustained humanitarian and recovery/development program in the disputed area, and ensure full access of aid workers by both governments "within the rules and procedure prevailing in the two States". The meeting denounced all acts of violence in Abyei and in particular the recent attacks on Marial Achak and Diffra [Kech] oil fields. It also underlined the urgency of making the Abyei Area a weapon-free zone.

An Ethio-Oman Business Forum held in Addis Ababa

The Ethio-Oman Business Forum, held in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (April 1), underlined the interest of both countries to move beyond their long-standing friendly relationship. The deliberations and discussions held by an Omani business delegation testified to the importance of strengthening business-to-business links as a way for mutual advancement. The Forum demonstrated some account of the business and investment trends of Ethiopia to Omani investors and business persons and it stressed the need to forge a forward-looking, comprehensive and all-round cooperative network of trade, business and investment ties for a stronger partnership.

The Forum was attended by State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dawano Kedir along with 157 Ethiopian business persons while Dr. Salim Al Islmaily, Chair of Oman’s Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development was accompanied by a high-level business delegation comprising twenty representatives of Omani companies. It showed Ethiopia’s willingness to encourage Omani investors to participate in Ethiopia’s manufacturing sector to help broaden of the country’s manufacturing base and chart the course for the planned transformation of the economy. This is in harmony with the country’s Growth and Transformation Plan aiming to sustain the momentum of economic growth and provide for structural economic transformation from an agricultural to a manufacturing economy. Equally important was the interest of Omani investors to move business cooperation forward and transcend the traditional friendship between e two countries with stronger business ties.

In his opening remarks, State Minister Dawano described the Forum as a positive force to reflect on the past and look to a real cooperative and bilateral partnership to expand investment ties in the future. The State Minister highlighted Ethiopia’s business and investment trends and the growing FDI and trade inflows, adding that this made the country into a new frontier for quality FDI in Africa. The State Minister encouraged investors to engage in the manufacturing sector, the country’s main current priority, noting that Omani companies and investors would also be welcome to become involved in other investment opportunities in Ethiopia, including agriculture, tourism, trade, textile and food processing. He detailed the attractive investment incentives available for investors in light industry, including tax free machinery imports, and listed the trade preferences available, the security of investment, conducive tax environment, low labor costs and the trainable labor force, and the impressive market potential as well as the

availability of cheap and sufficient power, excellent air links and stable macro-economic and political status within a tough neighborhood. The State Minister added that Ethiopia's location at the crossroads between Africa, the Middle East and Asia and its membership of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) would also help investors access the region's fast developing markets.

Dr. Salem bin Nasser Al Ismaily, the chairman of the Public Authority for Investment Promotion and Export Development (ITHRAA), reminded participants that the first Muslim immigrants had crossed the Red Sea to Ethiopia to seek refuge from religious prosecution in their homeland. He noted that the current value of trade between the two countries did not match the spirit of deep-rooted and cordial relations between the two countries. He said the Sultanate of Oman was 'serious' when it came to enhancing its trade cooperation with Ethiopia, which he described as changing fast and becoming one of the promising emerging markets in Africa. Dr. Salem bin Nasser Al Ismaily said Oman intended to organize an investment and trade exhibition in Ethiopia next year, and he expected it to involve more than 150 Omani companies. He also highlighted the presence of investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman, pointing out that his country was one of thirteen countries in the world that had registering an annual growth of 10 per cent for 25 consecutive years.

Solomon Afework, President of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, noted that the bilateral trade between the two countries stood at US\$24.5 million in 2013, rising from no more than US\$2.6 million in 2004, but standing very much in Oman's favor.. He said "Ethiopia's total exports to Oman between 2004 and 2013 were worth US\$7,253,635 while total imports from Oman in the same period were worth US\$113,954,418." Ato Solomon said that Omani investors had received licenses for three projects between 1992 and 2014 with a capital of 64.7 million Birr and these would provide for 138 permanent and 55 temporary jobs. Ato Solomon also noted that some Omani investors had also invested in partnership with Ethiopian, Sudanese, and Romanians. He said the proximity of the two countries provided a great platform for the expansion of ties. Noting that Oman was one of the emerging economies in the Middle East and Ethiopia was emerging as one of the leading commercial centers in East Africa, he emphasized the possibilities for expanding their links. He also said that as Ethiopia is a member of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, it had strong and transparent investment protection and guarantee laws in the sphere of investment and business practice.

The Forum helped Omani investors to explore areas of investment and trade opportunities in Ethiopia and introduced them to the true picture of Ethiopia. It aimed to rejuvenate the historic and long-standing friendship tied between the two peoples and provided the opportunity to both countries to review the past and map the way forward to open up new horizons for expanded business and investment ties.