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The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini- Zuma in a press release on 17 December expressed her concern about the safety and security of the civilian population and urged the Government and leadership of South Sudan and all other stakeholders to exercise maximum restraint and avert any further escalation.

Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma also commend Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, in his capacity as Chair of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and Chair of the Union, for his timely initiative to dispatch a ministerial delegation to Juba, comprising Ministers and high level officials from Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, as well as the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), held its 409th meeting on 18 December 2013. The Council was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, and by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Sudan to the AU, on the situation South Sudan. The Council stressed the need to rapidly and effectively address the current situation, with a view to avoiding serious implications for the long - term security and stability of South Sudan, as well as for the neighboring countries.

A delegation of the Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) lead by Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Chairman of Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Dr Tedros Adhanom traveled to South Sudan Yesterday (December 19) to seek an end to days of fighting. Foreign Ministers of Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda as well as AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Special Representative of the Secretary General for United Nations Mission in Sudan and a representative from African Union High level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) included in the delegation are included in the delegation.

The Executive Secretary of IGAD Ambassador (Eng) Mahboub M. Maalim has expressed his profound concern regarding the current situation in South Sudan, calls upon the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and all concerned parties to exercise maximum restraint to avert further escalation. He also urges all parties to engage in dialogue and seek a peaceful solution to the crisis.

Ethiopia

French Foreign Trade minister, Mrs Nicole Bricq, arrived in Ethiopia (December 19) for a two-day visit aimed at strengthening the economic ties between the two countries. The minister said that the visit was under the framework of the extension of the Elysee summit on 'Peace and Security in Africa' held on 6 and 7 December in Paris. This is to strengthen the economic ties with a country that has recorded an average growth rate of 8% over the past few years and whose 2010-2015 five-year plan sets huge investments in terms of infrastructure, she said.

Ethiopia's Agriculture, Investment and Land Administration Agency availed 3.6 million hectares arable land to investors in the agriculture sector. The Agency announced that 470,000 hectares land has already been provided for Ethiopian and foreign investors for the cultivation of cotton, palm trees and sugarcane. The Ethiopian government is working to increase the private sector's participation in the agriculture sector, Agency said.

Ethiopian police arrested five more people suspected of plotting suicide bombings during Ethiopia's World Cup qualifying match against Nigeria in October, security officials said on Thursday (December 19). The planned attack failed when two Somali suicide bombers accidentally blew themselves up a few kilometers (miles) from Addis Ababa Stadium where soccer fans were gathering.

Djibouti

A two-day border Administrators meeting of Ethiopia and Djibouti was held in Semera town, the capital of Afar National Regional State and concluded on Wednesday (December 18, 2013). The meeting discussed various issues including illicit border trade and human trafficking. The two sides agreed to strengthen efforts in combating contraband trade and illegal trafficking of people.

Eritrea

A delegation group headed by Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Secretary General and Regional Director of UNDP/RBA, and Chairman of UNDG-ESA Mission visited Eritrea. Foreign Minister Osman Saleh told to the visiting UN delegation Eritrea's commitment towards ensuring safe neighborhood and cooperative regional environment.

Mr David Ward has been appointed as UK Ambassador to Eritrea. Ambassador Ward succeeds Dr Amanda Tanfield and will take up his appointment during May 2014.

Kenya

Chief prosecutor of the ICC, Fatou Bensouda, said in a statement (December, 19) that she needed time to gather new evidence since one key witness had recently said that he was no longer willing to testify and second witness admitted "giving false evidence" about a critical event in the prosecution's case. Ms Bensouda has applied to the Trial Chamber to adjourn Uhuru's case that was slated to start February 5, 2014.

Interior Cabinet Secretary Joseph ole Lenku says the government is closely monitoring the security situation in South Sudan after a failed coup attempt. Lenku says the government has put enough security measures to ensure communities living near borders are safe. "We take cognizance of the unfortunate development in South Sudan but again we have made the necessary preparation with security with regard to our borders," he said.

Somalia

Lieutenant General Silas Ntigurirwa of Burundi's National Defense Forces has taken the command of the military component of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), following a handover ceremony from Lieutenant General Andrew Gutti of Uganda. The handover ceremony was held in Mogadishu on Monday (December 16).

The European Union has announced on Tuesday (December 17) that the European Union Training Mission for Somalia (EUTM Somalia) will be transferred from Uganda to Somalia in early 2014. "In the first months of 2014, the mission is set to conduct all its advisory, mentoring and training activities in Mogadishu, Somalia," the statement said.

A project has been launched in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, to rebuild the country's national library. Work on the new complex is expected to be finished in six months' time at a cost of \$1m (£600,000). The Somali government as well as business people and civil society contribute for the project. "The building should restore Somalia's history for future generations," project director, Zainab Hassan said, adding that there was a need for knowledge among Somalis.

United Nations envoy to Somalia has strongly condemned the killing of six people during an attack on a medical convoy outside Mogadishu on Wednesday (December 18). Nicholas Kay in his statement said "Somalia, still struggling to build up its health services, relies on the goodwill of NGOs [non-governmental organizations] and medical personnel who work in incredibly difficult conditions to save Somali lives". He condemn the attack and those who continue to seek to halt the country's progress; urged the Federal Government of Somalia to thoroughly investigate this heinous crime and bring those responsible to justice.

South Sudan

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he was “deeply concerned about reports of fighting between members of the (Sudanese military) in Juba and about the risk of targeted violence against certain communities.” He urged the country’s military leaders to “impose discipline on their forces and to exercise maximum restraint in the use of force.

On Thursday (December, 19), armed youths breached a U.N. compound in Jonglei state, causing an unknown number of casualties. "Unfortunately, just this very morning (December, 19) such militia groups have targeted and killed three soldiers from India in South Sudan," India's U.N. Ambassador Asoke Mukerji told a U.N. meeting on peacekeeping Thursday evening. It was the first announcement of U.N. personnel killed in this week's upsurge of violence.

South Sudan's military says it no longer controls a key town in the rural state of Jonglei, where fighting has spread in the aftermath of what the government says was an attempted coup mounted by soldiers loyal to a former deputy president. The government said on Wednesday (December, 18) that at least 500 people, most of them soldiers, had been killed since the alleged coup attempt on Sunday. At least 700 more have been wounded, according to the information minister, Michael Makuei Lueth.

Sudan

Sudan’s ambassador to Ethiopia Abdul Rahman Sir-al-Katim said Sudan’s support to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project is not politically driven. “We fully support the project because it benefits Sudan”, ambassador Abdul Rahman told reporters in Addis Ababa. “We are not playing a political role”, he said, adding that “Sudan genuinely supports the project”.

The World Bank and the Government of Sudan signed Thursday (December 19) a US\$7.73 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to support the country’s efforts to promote the adoption of sustainable land and water management practices through the Sudan Sustainable Natural Resources Management Project (SSNRMP).

Sudan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Ali Karti stressed Sudan's keenness on stability in South Sudan, saying Sudan proceeds with the implementation of cooperation agreements with the former, as well as it was working to remove any obstacles in the way of achieving that.

The Sudanese Russian Ministerial Committee for Economic and Trade Cooperation has concluded its session in Khartoum on December 19 and signed an economic and trade protocols.

Four MoUs were also signed between Sudanese Ministry of Minerals and Russian Ministry of Natural Resources in the fields of Minerals and Geology, Roads, Dams, Electricity, Health.

A Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for IGAD

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) launched a Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP), on December 9, in Nairobi. President Uhuru Kenyatta formally launched the Plan, covering the period 2013 – 2023, at a two-day meeting attended by Tourism Ministers and Ministry representatives from across the IGAD member states, namely Kenya, Uganda, the Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Eritrea. The Plan has been developed through a consultative process over nearly three years. This has involved in-depth interviews with key tourism stakeholders from IGAD states, regional workshops, a team of experts and private and public sector interaction at national and regional levels, as well as a peer review and high level validation.

The Master Plan is also the culmination of technical work by the Economic Commission for Africa on the basis of the suggestions that countries had to address the various challenges that impede tourism development and adopt appropriate strategies to enhance each country's respective competitiveness. The Plan is now expected to serve as an instrumental blueprint for the IGAD region as part of the process of enhancing regional integration in Eastern Africa and improve choice of regional tourist destinations and their competitiveness. The Plan is also designed to provide a regional framework for sustainable tourism development with a view to contributing to general socio-economic development, upholding 'green' principles, increasing local community participation, operating as a tool of poverty alleviation and promoting regional integration.

Globally, the tourism industry is now correctly identified as a key driver for socio-economic development, generating over US\$1 trillion or close to US\$3 billion a day. It contributes about 5% of global GDP. Its current importance varies considerably within IGAD, contributing 3.8% at the lower end of the scale for Sudan, and 10.7% and 11.4% respectively at the higher end for Ethiopia and Kenya. Indeed, in Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, the tourism industry continues to be a major source of foreign exchange earnings. Overall, the tourist industry contribution for most IGAD members to their foreign exchange earnings has steadily grown in importance and now plays an important role in their balance of payments. The industry is also an important source of both direct and indirect employment and attracts investors in the IGAD region, both internal and external. International tourist arrivals to the IGAD region have been on a growth trajectory over the past two decades. The total number of international tourist arrivals in 1995 was 1.5 million visitors; and the numbers peaked in 2007 at 3.2 million visitors. Projections suggest an optimistic future for the industry. Overall, Africa is regarded as one of the fastest growing tourist markets, generating 27.5 million arrivals in 2010.

The decision to produce a Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for the IGAD Region came after the realization that the tourism sector could also be one of the solutions for addressing the growth in the numbers of jobless, a chronic problem that affects many countries in Eastern Africa. The Plan is guided by the aims, objectives and principles of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development which defines its main aim concisely as to: *“expand the areas of regional cooperation, increase the members' dependency on one another and promote policies of peace and stability in the region in*

order to attain food security, sustainable environment management and sustainable development.” The Master Plan is also informed by the Africa Union Minimum Integration Program, an instrument geared towards achieving the wider goal of the creation of the African Economic Community. In addition, the African Union, through the New Partnership for Africa’s Development 2004 Tourism Action Plan Africa, recognizes the important role that tourism can play in socio-economic development and poverty alleviation. It also notes that tourism, through trans-boundary activities, can be an effective vehicle for regional integration. The Plan was also influenced by the strong recommendations for a regional framework for tourism development in the region, made at the 15th Intergovernmental Committee of Experts meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa Sub-Regional Office for East Africa, held under the theme: “Towards a Sustainable Tourism Industry in East Africa.”

IGAD's Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP) now seeks to: outline the importance of tourism development in the region; analyze in detail the prevailing scenario of tourism development; and provide a detailed roadmap for the implementation of relevant strategies and actions. The STMP is guided by a number of underlying principles: tourism development should be sustainable, providing both inter-generational and intra-generational equity; it should provide a vision for tourism development in the region, and enhance the competitiveness of the IGAD region as a tourist destination; tourism development strategies should be in line with wider national, regional, continental and international development initiatives and economic development plans; and tourism development should be guided by sound research.

The Plan also deals with such crucial issues as the need to harmonize the policies and regulatory frameworks of the member countries in which tourism is acknowledged to be at different development stages. Connectivity among member countries by air, visa regulations, foreign exchange limitations and a range of national restrictions placed on travelers and broad security issues are seen as some of the main obstacles preventing tourist development. A total of nine action points and strategies were outlined in the STMP, aimed to start a process of experience sharing and extending support from the region’s tourist 'power houses', Kenya and Uganda, towards other member states which need sound tourism policies, effective regulatory and legal frameworks, tourism-related infrastructure, human resource development levels in terms of training facilities and skills, and not least accounting mechanisms to collect necessary data.

According to a report of the United Nations World Tourism Organization, Ethiopia’s average annual growth in international tourist arrivals was 15.4% for the period of 2001-2008. The industry is an important sector for Ethiopia, with the industry’s share of exports peaking in 2008 at 33.69%. It is currently a major source of employment. The country is well endowed with some spectacular land-formations, and nature-based tourism products continue to play a key role in tourism development. However, alternative tourism products, such as heritage tourism resources, for which Ethiopia has been ranked globally at the relatively high position of 38, have remained essentially under-exploited. Despite its ranking, Ethiopia draws only small number of tourists compared to other countries with high heritage site ranking. This suggests substantial potential for heritage tourism development in Ethiopia. Equally, as tourism has the capacity to assist in the on-going effort to eliminate poverty and accelerate development in a sustainable manner providing the country's attractions are appropriately developed, it has been included as one of the means of implementing the Growth and Transformation Plan. To consolidate scattered

activities and ensure coordination of efforts by the Federal and Regional governments, the private sector, communities at tourism destinations and to create a conducive environment , it became necessary to issue a tourism development policy. This focuses on guiding the private sector within a broad based development framework, developing existing and new tourist attractions and products, expanding the necessary infrastructure and tourist services so vital for the growth of the sector, ensuring the country is sufficiently competitive in the international tourist market, and trying to solve the serious capacity limitations of the industry.

At the signing ceremony in Nairobi, the representatives of the IGAD states committed themselves to the implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan, under which they agreed that the usefulness of the regional framework would only be expanded if its key tenets are mainstreamed and implemented at national level. The Sustainable Tourism Master Plan for the IGAD Region will go a long way to address the challenges facing member states with respect to the development and growth of their tourist industries.

International Human Rights Day: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

International Human Rights Day is marked all over the world on December 10th. This year the day marked the 65th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, passed by the UN General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948, heralding a new era for human rights as inalienable rights for the dignity and equality of mankind. The process that led to the adoption of the Declaration was the direct outcome of the shock of the war and the demonstration never to witness again such grave violation of human rights as those committed by Nazi Germany.

The Universal Declaration of the Human Rights was a founding document that has given rise to binding legal instruments dealing with a wide range of human rights. These include both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It is perhaps worth noting what the Declaration itself actually says, as all-too-often self-appointed organizations, claiming to speak on behalf of peoples human rights, ignore or fail to remember that the Declaration actually covers social, economic and cultural as well as political rights.

The Declaration notes that recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world and emphasizes that human rights, political, social and economic, should be protected by the rule of law. It says that all human beings are entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, whether of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Among its provisions are that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person, that no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, that all are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law and that no one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; equally, everyone has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state; to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution; and to own property. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; to freedom of opinion and expression; to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; and to take part in the government of his country,

directly or through freely chosen representatives. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, to be expressed in periodic and genuine elections.

The Declaration states that everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights as well as the right to work, to equal pay for equal work, as well as the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security. Education should be free and directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It should promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. The Declaration also notes that everyone has duties to the community and that in the exercise of rights and freedoms, everyone should be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition of and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

Despite the fact of continuing major violations of human rights in the genocide in Rwanda or the mass killings in Yugoslavia, since the Declaration it has led to palpable changes. The notion of human rights now forms a central part in the discourse of many, indeed most, countries and forms part of constitutions and legislation around the world. Regional and international mechanisms for the enforcement of rights have encouraged a rise in observance of human rights. The United Nations itself established the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 1993 with the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action to push for the better observance of human rights across the globe and a renewed commitment for their implementation.

The advent of the African Union with the associated changes, exemplified in its decision to provide for the right to intervention in cases of grave human rights violations, was a milestone in African human rights, as was the African Human Rights and Peoples Charter and the establishment of the Commission and the Court to give full effect to the Charter. In his International Human Rights Day message this year, UN Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon underlined the centrality of states in ensuring respect for human rights. He said “Promoting human rights is one of the core purposes of the United Nations, and the organization has pursued this mission since its founding. Then, as now, the key to success is the political will of Member States.” He added that the UN would continue to improve its structure and institutions, and its responsiveness to catastrophe, to help avert the grave human rights violations that the world has still witnessed since the launch of the Vienna Program of Action.

Ethiopia, as a founding member of the United Nations, was one of the 48 countries that voted for the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despite this and its acceptance of various legal instruments, its observance of human rights remained poor under an aging monarchy and the subsequent 17 year rule of the military junta. This changed sharply with the enactment of the 1994 constitution which dedicated a third of its provisions to individual and human rights and ushered in a new era for the country. As a result, during the past two decades despite challenges associated with legislative and institutional weakness, Ethiopia has witnessed

a flourishing press, competitive elections and more importantly the observance of self determination in the form of self-rule for the Nations and Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia. The country has waged a war against poverty which prevented the poor of the country from the exercise of social and economic rights. The notable successes in the Millennium Development Goals especially in primary education and health underline the success in achieving the rights to education and health among other areas.

The 65th anniversary of Universal Declaration is being celebrated in Ethiopia at a time when the country is implementing its Human Right Action Plan. This national plan drawn up as part of Ethiopia's commitment to the Vienna Declaration and the Program of Action has now been finalized with an extensive list of actions, providing detail for the activities of the relevant government bodies and a timetable of the specific tasks deemed necessary to improve practices to promote the observance of human rights by the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government. It also outlines specific measures to be taken to improve the rights enshrined in the constitution, going into specific details as for example in improving respect for the rights of the accused with reference to defense council, provision of court interpreters, prison standards and enforcement of judgment.

This year, International Human Rights Day was celebrated in Jigjiga, the capital of the Somali National Regional State. It followed the colorful celebration of the 8th Nations and Nationalities and People's Day which was also took place in Jigjiga. On the occasion, Ambassador Tiruneh Zena, Commissioner of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, noted that the advent of the Constitution was a particularly historic act as for the first time it had declared the equality of all Ethiopians. Now, as Ethiopia prepares for its second Universal Periodic Report, the celebration of the 65th anniversary of the Universal Declaration also underlines the major and incremental changes in the observance of human rights that have taken place in the country over the past two decades.

"Coup Attempt" in South Sudan: International Community Seek Peaceful Resolution

South Sudan descended into conflict after "an attempted coup" was foiled on Sunday (15 December). The President of the republic of South Sudan, Salva Kirr, on Monday (16 December) gave a press statement announcing a coup led by the former Vice president; Dr. Riek Machar was attempted in the country. Salva Kirr in his statement said, on Sunday, " at about 6:30PM, during the closing of the SPLM National Liberation Council (NLC) meeting an unidentified person near Nykorun Cultural Center released gunshots in the air and escaped" . He also told the public that the incident was "followed later by an attack at the South Sudan Peoples Liberation Army head quarters near Juba University by a group of soldiers allied to the Former Vice President Dr. Riek Machar Teny and his group." Salva Kirr in his press statement also announced that his government from the outset was in full control of the security situation in Juba. The attackers fled and the SPLA forces are pursuing them, he said.

The President in his press statement reiterated "my government is not and will not allow the incidents of 1991 to repeat themselves again" and condemned what he called "criminal actions" in the strongest terms possible. Kirr also told South Sudanese "Your Government led by the SPLM has articulated the ideals of democracy in the party as well as in the Government and I will never deviate from them at any cost."

The SPLM is fully committed to the peaceful and democratic transfer of power President Kirr said, and warned that he will never allow political power to be transferred through violence. Following the December 15 incident, curfew was declared in Juba which was to be observed from 6PM to 6AM with immediate effect from December 16, 2013. The curfew would last until further notice.

President Kiir, accused a "group of soldiers" who associate themselves with the former vice-president, Riek Machar, though this was denied on Wednesday (December 18) by Mr Machar. He said, the fighting started after a "misunderstanding between presidential guards" on Monday. "It was not a coup attempt," he said, it was reported. The fighting on Wednesday spread beyond the capital, reaching towns about 150km north from Juba and so far it claimed the life of between 400 and 500 civilians.

Toby Lanzer, deputy special representative of the UN in Juba, said 10,000 people have sought refuge at the UN's camp in the capital. There is "palpable sense of fear", he said. Although he added that outside the UN base, the capital was "calmer" than on Tuesday, when heavy fighting raged for hours.

The United Nations Security Council in its press statement after an urgent meeting on December 18 also expressed its serious concern over the fighting in Juba and other areas in South Sudan "that has reportedly resulted in large numbers of casualties, as well as over the risk of targeted violence against certain communities."

"The members of the Security Council urged all parties to immediately cease hostilities, exercise restraint and refrain from violence and other actions that could exacerbate tensions" underscoring the vital importance of protection of all civilians, "regardless of their communities of origin, and called for all authorities to respect the rule of law and human rights."

While calling the Government of South Sudan to engage in dialogue with its opponents and to resolve differences peacefully in order to prevent any spread of the current violence, the Council members commended the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in its provision of shelter, protection and humanitarian assistance to the affected people of South Sudan and to open the dialogue between key leaders to bring a resolution to this crisis.

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr.Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, said (December 17) in a press release that she " is following, with deep concern, the situation in South Sudan, marked by an outbreak of fighting in parts of Juba, since the evening of Sunday December 15. The Chairperson said she is particularly concerned about the safety and security of the civilian population and urged the Government and leadership of South Sudan and all other stakeholders to exercise maximum restraint and avert any further escalation. She also called for

peaceful resolution of the differences, with due respect for the rule of law, human rights and constitutional legality.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU), at its 409th meeting held on 18 December 2013, was briefed by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, and by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of South Sudan to the AU, on the situation in South Sudan. The "Council noted with deep concern the fighting that broke out in Juba and other locations in South Sudan, arising from disagreements within the leadership of the ruling Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)." It also expressed deep concern at the serious humanitarian consequences on the civilian population, as the fighting has claimed hundreds of lives and displaced thousands others. It stressed "the need to rapidly and effectively address the current situation, with a view to avoiding serious implications for the long - term security and stability of South Sudan, as well as for the neighboring countries, bearing in mind the prevailing situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) and other peace and security challenges in the region."

All concerned South Sudanese stakeholders should place the interest of the people of South Sudan above any other consideration, the Council urged and appealed to the leadership of South Sudan and all other stakeholders to exercise utmost restraint, and refrain from any action and statement likely to further exacerbate the situation and seek solutions to the current problems through dialogue and reconciliation.

"Council, recalling the relevant AU's instruments, emphasized the rejection by the AU of the use of force to settle political differences, as well as the critical importance of respect for human rights, the rule of law and constitutional legality." the statement said.

Furthermore, the Council endorsed the statement issued by the Chairperson of the Commission on 17 December 2013 that stated AU's readiness to assist in finding a peaceful solution to the challenges at hand.

The statement also noted Councils' appreciation for the steps taken by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to assist South Sudan in addressing its governance and democratization challenges, as part of its mandate and the overall efforts to help build a viable state at peace with itself and its neighbors. Council encouraged the AUHIP to pursue and intensify these efforts.

President Barack Obama called Thursday for an immediate end to the fighting in South Sudan, warning the country stands at the "precipice" of civil war. He also warned that "recent fighting threatens to plunge South Sudan back into the dark days of its past." Fighting to settle political scores or to destabilize the government must stop immediately. Inflammatory rhetoric and targeted violence must cease," the president added in his statement. "All sides must listen to the wise counsel of their neighbors, commit to dialogue and take immediate steps to urge calm and support reconciliation , "South Sudan's leaders must recognize that compromise with one's political enemy is difficult; but recovering from unchecked violence and unleashed hatred will prove much harder" President Obama noted.

In a bid to seek political solution for the conflict in South Sudan, the first high-level delegation from the region travelled to Juba yesterday (December 19). The delegation was led by Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Chairman of Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Dr Tedros Adhanom, and comprised Foreign Ministers of Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. Also AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Special Representative of the Secretary General for United Nations Mission in Sudan and a representative from African Union High level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) included in the delegation. Dr. Tedros before his travel to Juba said, "We will travel to Juba to gain first-hand knowledge of the situation on the ground, and discuss ways to seek a political settlement to the crisis". The delegation was received by South Sudan Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Barnaba Marial Benjamin in Juba.

The delegation met President of the republic, Salva Kiir at his office and was briefed about the situation. The President assured the delegation that civil tranquility has been fully restored. Head of the delegation, Dr. Tedros told the President that the presence of South Sudan's neighbors in Juba shows their commitment for peace and stability of the country. Their presence, he said, was to understand the situation firsthand, to listen to the solution proposed by the President, seek amicable solution for the crisis and discuss the way forward.

UN Secretary General's Special Representative briefs the Security Council on Somalia

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, the Head of the UN Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), on Tuesday last week (December 10) presented Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon's latest report on Somalia to the Security Council and briefed the Council on the situation in the country. Speaking on a video link from Mogadishu, Mr. Kay told the Council that a "comprehensive political, military and development approach" was needed to tackle terrorism in the country, where, he added, despite challenges, the dawn of a new era was abundantly evident.

Mr. Kay said that on the military and security fronts the hard work of implementing resolution 2124 (2013) was under way. He commended the Council's earlier decision to reinforce AMISOM, the African Union Mission in Somalia, and he welcomed the "open and consultative way" in which the regional organization was generating additional forces, revising AMISOM's strategy and drawing up a new Concept of Operations for the military and police forces deployed in Somalia. He said preparations were now under way to restart major offensive operations against territory controlled by Al-Shabaab, but he added that the lack of military helicopters remained a major concern. He repeated again what he had said in his last briefing to the Council in September when he had warned that if Somalia remained a stronghold of terrorists, the impact would be felt "from Bamako to Bangui" and beyond. The tragic events at the Westgate Mall in Nairobi in September were, he said, a shocking demonstration of the point.

Mr. Kay acknowledged that progress on certain aspects was "chequered," and in this respect he identified human rights, transparency, good public financial management and the rule of law. At the same time, he underlined the fact "that Somalia's institutions have weathered several storms in the last months gives me confidence that our hopes are not misplaced." He believed "Somalia

will be a stable partner in the region and the world when it has strong state institutions, including accountable and professional national security forces and the firm consensus among Somalis about how they wish to manage their affairs and resources.”

He referred to two recent crises. He acknowledged that the resignation of Central Bank Governor, Ms. Yussur Abrar, was a blow to international donor confidence. At the same time, he thought it would lead to tighter financial oversight. The resignation had emphasized the need for robust public financial management, but, he said, the President had responded “rapidly and consultatively” to the challenge. In addition, Parliament’s decision on December 2, to vote for a non-confidence vote on Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon, was, said Mr. Kay, a severe test of parliamentary institutions but the episode had demonstrated Parliament's strength. The political disagreement that led to the removal of the Prime Minister had been settled by debating and voting rather than the conflicts and fighting on previous occasions. Overall, these two recent crises had posed serious challenges to State-building and international donor confidence, but they also gave cause for optimism.

Mr. Kay said the UN was actively and increasingly engaged in support of the Federal Government and in close collaboration with other UN Member States in all these areas. He said that UNSOM would become an integrated mission on 1 January, a change which he described as an important milestone. In addition, UN humanitarian agencies and partners had responded both to the tropical cyclone which hit the Puntland coast on November 10, and on the seasonal rains that had led to flooding along the Wabi Shebelli after the end of September.

Mr. Kay noted that since his last briefing the Somalia New Deal Conference had been held in Brussels. Co-hosted by the European Union and the Somali Government, the Conference had endorsed the Somali Compact, pledging support to enable its implementation and re-committing to the Somali political process. The Secretary-General in his report urged “partners to honour the pledges made in Brussels and to align activities with the priorities of Somalia.” He stressed that the Compact provided “a comprehensive and innovative framework for international efforts” in support of Somali-owned and Somali-led efforts.

He said that in the aftermath of the attack on the UN Compound on June 19, there had been extensive security reviews carried out and additional measures put in place. Equally, he said, “Mogadishu remains a risky place to work and Al Shabaab has shown a consistent intent to target international partners, including the UN. That intent still exists.” He said that he welcomed the request by the Security Council in resolution 2124 that it should be given “detailed proposals for an additional UN Guard Unit to be deployed to protect UNSOM in Mogadishu.” He acknowledged that formal relations between the autonomous Puntland State of Somalia and the Federal Government remained suspended, even as Puntland continued with its preparations for its indirect presidential elections in January 2014. In Somaliland, he noted that differences had developed between the governing authorities and the opposition.

Mr. Kay went on to say that the priority was now to establish a new Government quickly. It needed to be one that brought all Somalis together and at the same time had the skills and integrity to deliver peace, jobs and public services. Federalism, he said, was under way, but it must also be accelerated. It was crucial not to lose momentum in the Jubbaland Process, as

defined at the Addis Ababa Agreement in August. He detailed a number of what he called “peaks to be climbed” in the way forward to complete the constitutional process and prepare for credible, free and fair elections in 2016. He itemised these as “First, the need for wide-ranging national and local reconciliation; secondly, a redrawing of Somalia’s political map of 18 regions into a lesser number of federal member states; thirdly, the finalising of a new and permanent constitution; and fourthly, democratic elections in all Somalia in 2016, the first for nearly 50 years.”

On Thursday last week (December 13), President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud named Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed as his new prime minister. The President said “We have found Abdiweli Sheikh the most suitable man to become Somalia's prime minister,” adding that he hoped he would now “move Somalia forward”. Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed is, like his predecessor, Abdi Farah Shirdon, from the Marehan and from Gedo region. Relations between the President and Abdi Farah Shirdon broke down over the issue of ministerial appointments and the formation of a new cabinet.

Mr. Ahmed, aged 54, left Somalia when the civil war began in 1991 and the state collapsed. He studied economics in Canada and has worked for a number of international bodies, among them the World Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, European Union, USAID, Bank of Canada, African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) where he was a senior advisor, and for the last three years as the Senior Economist at the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah.

Parliament was due to vote on the President's nomination of Mr. Ahmed on Wednesday this week, but the debate was postponed until Saturday (December 21). Once accepted by Parliament, the new Prime Minister will have thirty days to appoint a new cabinet. This also has to be approved by Parliament. After forming a new government, Ahmed is expected to renew political ties with the Federal states including Puntland which withdrew cooperation from Mogadishu-based central government in August. His other main priorities will be security and the need for more robust public financial management and transparency. His economic credentials will be welcomed by donors concerned over recent reports of corruption and the need to build a functioning financial system.

The Special Representative of the African Union to Somalia, Mahamet Saleh Annadif, on Monday, welcomed the appointment of the new Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, saying he applauded “the move by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to fast track the appointment of a new Prime Minister, avoiding any leadership vacuum. The position of the Prime Minister is very crucial in the running of the Federal Government especially at this critical point in Somalia's political process,” he said. Ambassador Annadif said in a statement that the Prime Minister-designate “has what it takes run the office of Prime Minister for Somalia” and that he will be able to “propel the country during this critical political process to the future.” He reiterated the commitment of AMISOM to support the government and promised to work with the new prime minister, adding that he hoped the Parliament would move quickly to approve the nomination. Meanwhile, the meeting of the political and cultural leaders of Digil and Mirifle, the Rahenweyne, has continued in Baidoa and discussed the formation of a state. There has been no consensus yet over what the outcome should be with discussion continuing over which areas

might be incorporated into any such regional state. One group led by the former Speaker of Parliament, Sharif Hassan, favours the formation of a regional administration based on the three regions of Lower Shebelle, Bay and Bakool. Another group, reportedly supported by the current Speaker of Parliament, Mohamed Osman Jawari, espouses the idea of a six-region administration to also include Gedo, Middle and Lower Jubba regions, though these are not areas inhabited by Raheynweyne clans. These last three areas, largely inhabited by Darod clans, were, of course, formed into the Jubba Administration in August after an agreement was reached in Addis Ababa between the Jubba administration and the Government in Mogadishu.

Substantial achievements in infrastructure expansion

Economic growth and social development require policies that cover a wide range of economic, social and institutional issues, as well as successful and sustained implementation over a considerable and defined span of time. For economies, particularly in those starting from a low base of development and capital accumulation, the requirement is as much about setting engagement priorities as it is about adopting an effective and relevant policy mix. A higher standard of living, free mobility of goods and people, guaranteed access to health services, full social protection and security and all the other ideals of an advanced economic polity are essentially the results of successful completion of a carefully structured order of development tasks. Laying the foundations of the basic infrastructure is thus a major task of far reaching influence.

Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan (2010/11-2014/15) places expansion of the country's infrastructure as one of the central pillars of its economic development agenda. It expressly highlights the crucial contribution such an expansion would make to economic growth, employment creation, social welfare and the expansion of the industrial sector. It is on the basis of such policy premises that the Plan has committed huge amounts of investment for further expansion of infrastructure services, to build on the foundation for long-term sustained growth and development.

Certainly, it is not possible to imagine meaningful economic and social development without an adequate development and provision of infrastructure that can at least satisfy the basic and justifiable demands of a large section of society. The availability of infrastructure, providing services in transport, energy, communication, access to water and others needs, must be measured in terms of accessibility and of the impact for the whole of the society. Transport, for example, is one of the primary examples of the multi-faceted, cross-cutting importance of infrastructure. Access to transport services is a *sine qua non* for provision of basic services, economic growth, and social development; and the viability of the transport infrastructure in particular is heavily influenced by the size of the population it is intended to serve. .

In this context, road and railway networks expansion are playing a key role in the transport sector development of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). In road infrastructure the GTP affirmed the government's recognition of the importance of road transport to the country's economic and social development and gives improvements to road infrastructure a suitably high priority. Starting with consideration of the indispensability of development of the road network for other critical sectors including agriculture, industry,

mining, tourism, education and health, the Plan insists the direction of road development strategy is inseparably associated with the objectives, strategies and programs of the sectors' development.

To meet the country's demand for an expanded road infrastructure the government by 2012/2013, managed to put more than 85,000 Kms, a huge leap from 26,550Kms in 1996/97, of all types of road in place with the length of asphalt roads, only 3542 Kms in 1991/92, reaching 11, 301 Kms. The expansion has significantly decreased the time it takes to reach an all-weather road across the country to an average of 2.4 hours and equally increased accessibility to roads throughout the country. By the mid-term of the GTP period, the proportion of roads in good condition had also increased to 87% of the total road network. This, in fact, already surpassed the final target set for the end of the Plan in 2014/15.

The achievements of the Plan in road infrastructure have not been limited to expanding the road network. Capacity building efforts in both road construction firms and regulatory and implementing agencies have achieved significant results in efficiency. The Ethiopian Road Authority, the federal implementing agency, has gone a long way towards resolving previous problems associated with standards, delays and cost efficiency. In improving the capacity of domestic contractors, the government has also actively provided local firms with technical training, investment incentives and long term loans, resulting in improved participation and management capacity. Committing a considerable share of public expenditure to infrastructure development has also had the effect of creating a large number of jobs in the road construction sector. Indeed, the ambitious road expansion initiative of the GTP can be credited with providing employment opportunities for more than 50,000 people; and even by 2011/2012 those jobs had generated more than 1.5 billion birr of income for those employees.

There is no doubt that the road expansion program has had a positive impact on the rapidly growing economy of Ethiopia; but at the same time the pace of the development has made an additional, alternative, nation-wide transport network system a necessity. The current size of the economy and its expected, continuing expansion in the coming years has made reliance on a road network alone simply untenable. To fill that gap and to meet the expected demand for an extensive transport network capable of moving large numbers of people and greatly increased volumes of goods, the government has decided on the building of a national railway grid as a major strategy for transport infrastructure development during the GTP.

While the long-term target is defined as the construction of nearly 5000 Kms of railway across the nation, more than 2,400 Kms of the railway network are expected to be completed within the GTP period. Among the projects laid down for this period is the rail line to connect Addis Ababa with Djibouti, the central part of the rail network linking central Ethiopia with the most important port outlet for the country. The Addis-Djibouti line, extending more than 600 Kms, is also an example of regional collaboration as it is being undertaken by the Governments of both Ethiopia and Djibouti. The line, with 20% of its construction now complete, will, of course, provide significant economic benefits once operational, halving travel time between the two countries and providing substantial transport capacity from and to the port of Djibouti.

The railway transport infrastructure planned for the GTP also includes the Addis Ababa Light Rail Transit Project. Intended to provide a modern, fast and convenient mass transport system that can accommodate the demands of a booming capital city, the Light Rail Project covers a total of 34.25 Kms on a north-south and an east-west axis. The double-track system, with 43 % of the work currently complete, will significantly improve transport services for the growing population of the city and contribute to its rapid modernization.

There is also an industrial development effect directly attached to the railway construction effort. The massive engineering, metal and metallurgy and related inputs required to build the rail lines will definitely help develop sub-sectors associated with the construction. And that is precisely what the GTP puts as objectives of the railway transport development strategy. It intends to continuously improve local capacities of civil engineering construction firms, metal and electro-mechanical industries and facilitate optimal transfer of technologies of the subsectors.

Overall, in fact, the country's very substantial and broad-based economic development, delivering sustained growth over the past decade, has included a very substantial investment in infrastructure expansion that has targeted service provision for the largest possible number of the people; its success is a tribute to the effectiveness of the GTP.