

News in Brief

The 25th Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government

President Kenyatta's official visit to Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam meets EU Ambassadors

Dr. Tedros makes working visits to Angola and South Africa

Addis Ababa and Khartoum Universities hold a Symposium on the Nile

Ethiopia has the potential to become a top international tourist destination

News in Brief

African Union

IGAD Heads of State met on Thursday (March 13) in Addis to discuss the details of a proposed stabilization and protection force for South Sudan. Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Djibouti and Burundi, have indicated they are ready to send troops to South Sudan. **(See article)**

The IGAD Council of Ministers met on Wednesday (March 12) in Addis Ababa in closed session to hear a report from Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chairperson of the IGAD Special Envoys on the ongoing mediation process for South Sudan. **(See article)**

The African Union on Friday (March 7) announced the team for the Commission of Enquiry to investigate human rights violations and abuses committed in South Sudan in mid-December last year. Headed by former Nigerian President, Olusegun Obasanjo, the other members of the Commission are Ugandan academic Mahmood Mamdani, Justice Sophia Akuffo, president of the African Court on Human Rights based in Arusha, Bineta Diop, AU special envoy for women, peace and security, and Professor Pacifique Manirakiza, a member of the African Commission on Human Rights.

Ambassador Girma Birru, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the US told African Ambassadors in Washington this week that all necessary preparations had been made to ensure the smooth running of the US-Africa Energy Ministerial to be held in Addis Ababa (June 3-4) under the theme "Catalyzing Sustainable Growth in Africa." The Ministerial will be co-hosted by the Governments of Ethiopia and the US and will deal with topics of critical energy policy, governance and investment, renewable energy, finance and Power Africa.

Ethiopia

President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya began a four-day State visit to Ethiopia on Monday (March 10). He held talks with President Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and other officials as well as addressing the Kenya-Ethiopia Business Forum. Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kenyatta, discussed the South Sudan conflict, agreed to work within the IGAD's framework on Somalia, and supported the agreement to establish a Joint Lake Turkana, Omo and Dawa Rivers Basin Commission. **(See article)**

The Ethio–Kenya Business Forum was held on Tuesday (March 11) in Addis Ababa. A 28 strong Kenyan business delegation led by President Uhuru Kenyatta met with Ethiopian business representatives from various sectors including tourism and agriculture. An agreement was signed between the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and its Kenyan counterpart.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, reiterating that the Nile River was a shared resource for all the countries of the Nile basin, said this week that the successful completion of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam hinged on the resolve of Ethiopians and not on the rhetoric of Egypt.

The Ministers of Communications of Ethiopia and Sudan discussed preparation of a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the field of communications and information technology on Monday (March 10).

State Minister Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos met the Norwegian Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan on Friday (March 14) to discuss South Sudan. Norway is a member of the Troika of the US, the US and Norway.

Ambassador Teshome Toga, Ethiopian Ambassador to the EU and accredited to the Netherlands, held a meeting with members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community living and working in the Netherlands at the weekend, briefing them on development efforts and the opportunities available for mobilizing and engaging them in Ethiopia.

Ato Alemayehu Atomsa, former President of the Oromia Regional State and Chairman of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization who died on Thursday (March 6), aged 45, was buried on Saturday (March 8) at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa. The funeral was attended by family and government officials including President Mulatu and Prime Minister Hailemariam. The House of Peoples' Representatives announced three days of national mourning.

The New Climate Economy was launched on Thursday (March 6) in Addis Ababa with the aim of promoting sustainable economic development and reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. It is the flagship project of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, founded by Colombia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Norway, South Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom. A report will be presented to the Summit on Climate Change in September.

Djibouti

Djibouti president Ismail Omar Guelleh met US National Security Adviser, Susan Rice on Saturday (March 8) for talks on bilateral relations and the fight against terrorism. Ms. Rice, on a visit to Djibouti and the UAE, thanked Djibouti for its cooperation with the US and met with officials from the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa at Camp Lemonier.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh met with visiting Puntland State of Somalia, President Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas who has been on an official visit to Djibouti this week. Talks focused on Puntland's current situation and ways of strengthening bilateral cooperation. Dr. Abdiweli also held discussions with Prime Minister Abdikadir Kamil Mohamed.

Eritrea

The Arab League Ministerial Council meeting in Cairo on Monday (March 10) urged Eritrea and Djibouti to implement the agreement they signed on 6 June 2010. This mandated Qatar to end the crisis that erupted in February 2008 when Eritrea attacked Djibouti, and arrange for the freeing of prisoners. It asked the League Secretary-General to follow developments.

The funeral of Major-General Gerezgher Andemariam ‘Wuchu’, Eritrea’s Chief of Staff, was held at the Patriots Cemetery in Asmara on Saturday (March 8) in the presence of President Isaias, Al-Amin Mohammed Seid, the secretary of the PFDJ, General Sibhat Ephrem the Minister of Defense and other senior officers and officials.

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta arrived in Ethiopia on a four day state visit on Tuesday (March 11). He was accompanied by a delegation including Kenyan Cabinet Secretaries Joseph Ole Lenku, Raychelle Omamo, Professor Judy Wakhungu, Engineer Michael Kamau, Davis Chirchir and Ambassador Amina Mohamed.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, on the third day of his State visit to Ethiopia, visited the Bishoftu Automotive Industry and Dejen Aviation Industry plants. He suggested Kenya and Ethiopia should cooperate in technology exchange to enhance their economic links.

The International Criminal Court trial of Deputy President William Ruto and Joshua arap Sang has adjourned its sittings to March 31. The next session will be held April 1 – April 16 before the court takes the Easter break.

Somalia

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Nicholas Kay, briefed the UN Security Council on Tuesday (March 11). He said the best hope for peace and stability remained a united, secure and federal Somalia, adding that the Federal Government was finalizing a detailed plan for formation of Federal States, a Constitution and democratization by 2016.

President Hassan Sheik Mohamud left Mogadishu for Japan on Tuesday (March 11) leading a delegation of cabinet ministers and other high ranking government officials. On a three day official visit, he met with Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Shinzo Abe and other officials for talks on strengthening bilateral relations and on Japanese assistance in fisheries and agricultural development as well as training. Mr. Abe pledged US\$40 million aid for development.

The Federal Government said this week it had deployed Deputy Ministers and Religious Scholars to launch stabilization processes in towns and districts in Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions, including the strategic towns of Rabdhure, Hudur, the regional capital of Bakool region, Wajid and Burdhubow, liberated last weekend.

AMISOM said on Wednesday (March 12) that an air raid by Kenyan planes on an Al-Shabaab camp at Bardera in Gedo region killed 32 Al-Shabaab fighters and wounded another ten as well as destroyed military vehicles

South Sudan

The UN Security Council held a session on the situation between Sudan and South Sudan on Wednesday (March 12). It reiterated its call for immediate redeployment of all forces from the Abyei region and urged the two governments to renew their commitment to the establishment of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and full operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism.

Last weekend, South Sudan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, met Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister, Nabil Fahmy, in Cairo to discuss economic ties and trade relations as well as water security in relation to the Nile. Mr. Fahmy emphasized the need not to harm the interests of any party while stressing "respect for international law and historical rights of the states." Mr. Marial underlined the importance of cooperation based on the principle of achieving gains for all countries in the Nile Basin.

The trial of Pagan Amum Okiech, former SPLM secretary-general, Oyai Deng Ajak, former army chief-of-staff, Majak D'Agoot, former deputy defense minister and diplomat Ezekiel Lul Gatkuot opened in Juba on Tuesday (March 11). The Government has asked for maximum penalties against the four accused of treason for allegedly attempting to depose President Salva Kiir in December. The trial has been adjourned for a week.

Sudan

The African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) meeting on Monday (March 10) requested the AU High Level Implementation Panel, chaired by Thabo Mbeki, to continue to assist the Sudan Government and the SPLM-N rebels to reach an agreement over the Two Areas by the end of April. It called on the two parties to continue their bilateral consultations to reach a better understanding and solution.

The Arab League Ministerial Council meeting in Cairo on Monday (March 10) welcomed the peace accord signed between the Sudanese government and the rebel Justice and Equality Movement/Bashar (JEM-Bashar) last April and emphasized the need for non-signatory rebel groups in Darfur to join the peace process.

UN Secretary-General, Ban ki-Moon and UN Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, said on Tuesday (March 11) they were deeply concerned by the recent escalation of violence and its impact on civilians in Darfur region.

A three day symposium on Eastern Nile Cooperation under the title "Opportunities for Regional Development", jointly organized by the Universities of Khartoum and Addis Ababa, opened on Monday (March 10) at the University of Khartoum in the Sudan. **(See article)**

The 25th Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government

The 25th Extraordinary Summit of IGAD Heads of State and Government to discuss South Sudan was held in Addis Ababa on Thursday this week (March 13), and preceded by the 51st Extraordinary Summit of IGAD's Council of Ministers. The Extraordinary sessions were called at the request of the IGAD Special Envoys for South Sudan for guidance on the way forward in the South Sudan peace negotiations.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, current chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers, opened the Ministerial session, commended the hard work of the Special Envoys that had led to the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities and the Status of Detainees Agreement. He said the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism was already in place and the deployment of Joint Technical Committee well underway. He noted, however, that despite the release of seven of the former SPLM leadership and resumption of the second round of negotiations, the failure to fully observe the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement had caused substantial fighting and displacement and suffering of civilians. He strongly urged both parties to respect the Agreement signed on 23rd January, 2014 and to fully cooperate with the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism.

The 21st Extraordinary Summit of the IGAD Heads of State and Government was attended by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Current Chairperson of IGAD, President Youweri Museveni of Uganda, President Salva Kiir of South Sudan, President Omar Al-Bashir of the Sudan, President Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmed Abdiweli of Somalia, Dr. Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Engineer Mahboub Maalim. The Summit had two main items to consider: consideration and adoption of the report of the Special Envoys on the South Sudan Mediation Process and the current situation in South Sudan and discussion on the upcoming deployment of civilian and military components for the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM).

Prime Minister Hailemariam thanked the leaders for attending this Summit, and commended the work of the Special Envoys, Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin of Ethiopia, General Lazaro Sumbeiyu of Kenya and General Mohammed Ahmed Mustafa El Dabi of Sudan, for their untiring efforts. He also appreciated the support of international partners to the IGAD-led mediation process. Stressing the extreme urgency of the situation in South Sudan, the Prime Minister said that despite the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement being signed more than six weeks earlier, the situation on the ground left much to be desired. The lack of trust between the parties was a source of real concern. The process set in motion under the leadership of IGAD faced problems and would continue to do so. IGAD should be prepared to take difficult decisions in the interest of peace and saving lives. It should encourage good-faith and reject zero sum politics. Negotiations, he said, were about the readiness to give and take. He said it was his hope and expectation that the IGAD leaders would bring coordinated influence to bear on the parties to the negotiations so that these will contribute to lasting peace and stability in the region.

Engineer Mahboub Maalim said the financial assistance afforded by international partners had been a vital factor in the IGAD mediation efforts including the political dialogue and the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. Support had been provided by the EU, the Netherlands and Sweden, Turkey, the UK and Japan and the US had committed military hardware and helicopter support. Dr. Dlamini Zuma stressed that the combined efforts of the African Union and IGAD should stop the carnage in South Sudan and coordinate humanitarian activities and peace building. She reaffirmed the AU's firm stance on unconstitutional changes of government, and noted the African Union Peace and Security Council's meeting in Banjul to set up an enquiry into human rights abuses in South Sudan. This is to be headed by former Nigerian President Obasanjo.

The US Special Envoy to South Sudan and the Sudan, Ambassador Booth, on behalf of the Troika of the US, the UK and Norway, called for the release of the remaining four political detainees in Juba and for reforms of governance, political and constitutional nature and changes within the SPLM. He expressed support for the deployment of the MVM through the stabilization mechanism. The Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, Xie Xiao Yan, supported the IGAD-led mediation process to promote dialogue and negotiations. Alexander Rondos, Representative of the European Union, said the three priorities of the peace process should be inclusiveness, the role of women and respect for the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. He warned of the danger of famine if people are unable to plant. Giuseppe Mistretta, Ambassador of Italy, co-chair of IGAD Partners Forum, said political dialogue should be based on inclusiveness and good faith. He said the Partners Forum supported the AU's inquiry commission and the political dialogue.

The report of the Special Envoys was delivered by Ambassador Seyoum who noted that the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, signed on January 23 had not been taken seriously by either side. Fighting had continued. Numbers killed could not be estimated. Some 900,000 persons had been displaced, 167,000 of whom had crossed into neighboring countries. Over 77,000 persons were living in overcrowded conditions in UNMISS facilities. Some 3.7 million people face different levels of food insecurity. A start had been made to put the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) into operation with the Joint Technical Committee set up and both sides signing implementation modalities. The monitors would need a Protection and Deterrent Force from the region and Ambassador Seyoum called for UN and AU to provide all the necessary support. He said the Parties must agree to an inclusive dialogue as this was the key to reach a settlement that could hold. The need for inclusivity he said was why the mediation had included the formerly detained SPLM leaders in the consultations.

Ambassador Seyoum said the mediation consultations had resulted in the development of three documents: the Declaration of Principles; the Framework for Political Dialogue ; and the Modalities for negotiations. The first comprised a broad set of principles to underpin the peace process and the issues for discussion. The Government, the SPLM/A in Opposition and the SPLM leaders/former detainees were in general agreement on this but the Government delegation declined to accept the participation of the former detainees. The Framework for Political Dialogue set out seven thematic areas: social and humanitarian issues; security and safety, peace-building, national reconciliation and healing; governance, democracy and human rights, economic and development and implementation mechanism of the peace agreement.

There was broad agreement that these were appropriate, but key differences in approach. The draft Modalities provide for a two track negotiation. One an inclusive political dialogue towards national reconciliation and healing, and secondly a review and self-assessment process by the SPLM leadership. All sides were in agreement with the holding of a separate review and self-assessment process by the SPLM leadership.

The Envoys made clear their belief that the principle of inclusivity and the need for all to negotiate in good faith were of critical importance. They also underlined the importance of the Government of South Sudan handling the case of the four remaining detainees in a manner that contributed to national reconciliation and healing, and in accordance with the Agreement on the Status of Detainees. The Envoys report said that “South Sudan could do better. Its leaders were at a crossroads. Rejection and failure to take opportunities marks the low road to nowhere. But they can take the high road – of inclusiveness, of accommodation and genuine reform; and in so doing can save their country.”

After its deliberations, the Summit urged the Parties to fully comply with and implement the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and its Implementation Modalities and show political will and commitment to end the fighting. It implored the Parties to urgently address the humanitarian crisis, provide unrestricted humanitarian access and delivery of humanitarian assistance in coordination with local and international humanitarian organizations. It authorized the prompt deployment of a Protection and Deterrent Force from the region with a clear mandate and operational guidelines as part of the IGAD Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in South Sudan and called upon the UN Security Council and the African Union to provide all necessary support. It reiterated its call to all parties to ensure the progressive withdrawal of all armed groups and all allied forces invited by either side in line with the IGAD Assembly of the Heads of State and Government on January 31.

The IGAD Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that the SPLM (Former Detainees), other political parties and representatives of civil society organizations should be included in discussions as deemed necessary by the Mediation Process. They stressed the need to recognize the Former Detainees as positive contributors to the peace process. They reminded the Parties to negotiate in good-faith, guided by the spirit of tolerance and accommodation and to reject the politics of zero-sum-game. They agreed all IGAD Member States might participate as observers in the on-going negotiations and in the MVM. They thanked the international community for its continued political, diplomatic, humanitarian and financial support, and appealed for this to be enhanced and sustained. They condemned all acts driven by tribalism and ideological bankruptcy and called for an immediate end to targeting of noncombatants as this amounted to war crimes; and condemned all human rights violations committed in South Sudan since the outbreak of the conflict. They welcomed the setting up of the African Union Commission of Inquiry headed by former Nigerian president Obasanjo, to investigate alleged human rights violations as the start of a genuine process of accountability, reconciliation, and healing. The Summit reiterated IGAD’s commitment to facilitate a quick and lasting resolution of the South Sudan crisis.

The Summit also took the opportunity to consider the situation in Somalia. It noted with appreciation the progress made by Somali National Army and AMISOM in the fight against Al-Shabaab. It strongly condemned the killing of civilians by Al-Shabaab and other militias. It

called on Troop Contributing Countries to coordinate their operations to ensure operational efficiency. It requested IGAD member states and the international community to assist the Federal Government of Somalia in its efforts to establish administrative units in liberated areas; and urged both member states and the international community to support the speedy establishment and strengthening of a professional Somali National Army, as well as the need to provide humanitarian services to communities in liberated areas.

President Kenyatta's official visit to Ethiopia

President Uhuru Kenyatta was on a three day official visit to Ethiopia this week (March 10-12) at the invitation of Prime Minister Hailemariam. He was accompanied by a high level delegation of senior officials, including several Cabinet Secretaries (Joseph Ole Lenku of Interior and Coordination of National Government, Raychelle Omamo of Defence, Professor Judy Wakhungu of Environment, Water, and Natural Resources, Engineer Michael Kamau of Transport, Davis Chirchir of Energy and Ambassador Amina Mohamed of Foreign Affairs), as well as other officials and private sector business leaders. During his visit, President Kenyatta held talks with Ethiopian President Dr. Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Hailemariam and other officials. He also attended the Extraordinary IGAD Summit on South Sudan held on Thursday (March 13) as well as visiting a number of Ethiopian businesses including Ethio Leather Industries plc, the Metal Engineering Technology Corporation, Ethiopian Airlines and the Bishoftu Automotive Industry and the Dejen Aviation Industry plants. An Ethio-Kenya Business Forum was held on Tuesday (March 11) attended by both President Kenyatta and Prime Minister Hailemariam. The 28 strong Kenyan business delegation met with Ethiopian business representatives from various sectors including tourism and agriculture to explore trade and investment opportunities. The leaders witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ethiopian and Kenyan Chambers of Commerce. They welcomed the positive outcomes of the Forum including the setting up of a Joint Business Council.

Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kenyatta's talks covered bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. They hailed the warm and cordial relations which continued to flourish between Ethiopia and Kenya and agreed that this state visit by President Kenyatta offered a prime opportunity to deepen and expand the scope of collaboration between the two countries. They welcomed the elevation of the Joint Ministerial Commission into a biennial High level Commission, and looked forward to the coming into effect of the Special Status Agreement signed in 2012. They agreed this would provide an effective framework for economic relations between Ethiopia and Kenya and for elevating their economic relations and increasing trade and investment. A necessary first step was the formation of the Joint Technical Committee. Given the importance of the SSA in boosting economic ties between Ethiopia and Kenya, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kenyatta directed the relevant ministers to hasten its implementation. The two leaders also reviewed the status of implementation of the Lamu Port and Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, the region's largest infrastructure project, and they noted that the political goodwill shown by both countries had contributed to the progress made so far. They reaffirmed their commitment to encourage

infrastructure development as a key for realization of ideals of shared prosperity and of the huge untapped economic potential of both states.

President Kenyatta congratulated Prime Minister Hailemariam for his stewardship of the African Union during his tenure as Chair of the continental body. He said it was during this period that the African Union had reinforced its role as the voice of the continent in the multilateral arena. The two leaders discussed the situation in South Sudan and expressed concern over deteriorating security there. They resolved to continue their engagement with all parties through IGAD and stressed that all parties in the conflict should recommit themselves to dialogue and cessation of hostilities to give peace a chance. President Kenyatta commended Prime Minister Hailemariam for his support to the mediation process between Sudan and South Sudan. They reviewed the situation in Somalia and reiterated their commitment to work under IGAD's framework to assist the people of Somalia in their quest for lasting peace and stability. They agreed that stability in Somalia was vital for success in the fight against terrorism and urged the international community to support peace initiatives there. They also reiterated their commitment to safeguarding security, common values and fundamental interests of the region and underlined their resolve to address challenges to peace and stability, including drought, climate change, , terrorism, piracy, money laundering, human and drug trafficking.

President Kenyatta and Prime Minister Hailemariam praised the work of the Joint Border Administrators/Commissioners of Ethiopia and Kenya for their effective work along their common frontier and welcomed the ongoing inspection and maintenance work carried out by the Joint Technical Boundary Commission along the border. They reiterated support for the proposals to put in place a Cooperative Framework Agreement establishing a Joint Lake Turkana, Omo and Daua Rivers Basins' Commission to manage the conservation and exploitation of their resources consistent with international conventions. The two leaders reiterated the commitment of their governments to the Nile Basin Initiative and welcomed Kenya's imminent anent ratification of the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement. Emphasizing that the Agreement provided a framework for equitable and reasonable utilization of the Nile water resources, they urged the other riparian states which have not yet signed the Agreement to consider signing it and ratifying it as soon as possible.

President Kenyatta extended an invitation to Prime Minister Hailemariam to visit Kenya at a mutually agreed date; and the Prime Minister accepted.

Prime Minister Hailemariam meets EU Ambassadors

Prime Minister Hailemariam met the Heads of Missions of the EU Member States for discussions on Wednesday last week (March 5). The meeting was conducted under an Article 8 Cotonou Agreement dialogue which allows for the parties to engage in a comprehensive, balanced and wide ranging political debate. The Prime Minister stressed that he appreciated the partnership with the EU and its member States and welcomed frank, open and transparent discussions which reflected the essence of that partnership. The Ambassadors acknowledged the impressive performance of Ethiopia's economy overall and its benefits regionally and expressed

their wish to see relations grow further through mutual understanding and dialogue. They noted mutual interests in peace and security, trade and investment. The dialogue focused on domestic political issues including the forthcoming elections and economic and foreign policy issues.

Prime Minister Hailemariam emphasized that democracy was where people participated in all aspects of their own lives and that of the country. An election was an element in this in which people expressed their democratic rights and Ethiopia's democratic system was a people-centered democracy which, by definition, included social and economic development. Ethiopia's health and agricultural extension programs, he said, had become bench-marks for Africa and like everything else in the country had democratic processes built into them. The Prime Minister stressed that elections should be democratic, free and credible and for that the focus should be on the process and not the result. Judging the credibility and democratic nature of the election by the results alone was flawed. Elections should be free, fair, democratic and credible, and should be seen to be so firstly by the people and then by our partners. Ethiopia would do everything to make them credible, he emphasized. To that end, he said, opposition parties should work through the Code of Conduct designed with the support and experience of the UK, the US, Germany and Sweden. The Government was committed to the Code and he called on opposition parties that had not yet signed the Code to do so and commit themselves to play by the rules. Referring to election observers, the Prime Minister recalled Ethiopia's past experience with some individuals underlining that observers must not take sides. Nevertheless, he said, Ethiopia would discuss the issue of election observers at the appropriate time. Overall, the Prime Minister emphasized, building a fully-fledged democracy was a long-term process that needed a democratic culture to be built within the society. It was necessary to start at the bottom, providing civic education in schools, which, he pointed out, was being done.

The Heads of Missions welcomed the adoption of the National Human Rights Action Plan describing it as an important step forward in the Government's commitment in respect of human rights in Ethiopia. The Prime Minister said the action plan was a pillar for all government activities in this area, pointing out that human rights are an essential element of Ethiopia's constitutional democracy. There was, he added, an in-built monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure full implementation of the action plan. Regarding prison conditions, he said the Government was anxious to get support for improving these as well as improving the capacity to investigate cases of allegations of human rights abuse, though these, he added, were certainly not systemic.

The Prime Minister noted that civil societies were organizations which represented sectors of society: workers, women, youth, teachers associations, and others. These organizations represented a total of nearly 18 million people in the country. They were different from international NGOs which did not represent any section of Ethiopian society. It was therefore appropriate that the civil societies should be allowed to be involved in politics rather than the NGOs. Political processes and advocacy need commitment and this was why they were open only to Ethiopians.

While appreciating economic developments, the EU Ambassadors raised a number of issues associated with transport and logistics, including bottlenecks at the Customs Authority, pointing out that delays and costs of transport were harming Ethiopia's competitiveness and levels of

export. Similarly, problems with telecommunications, electricity black-outs and internet difficulties were hampering businesses and manufacturing activities. The Prime Minister said the Government recognized the need to improve the business environment and was trying to improve the situation. He said the recent measures against corruption had encouraged people to support legality, and he promised the Government would continue with this campaign. On logistics, he said, the Government would be encouraging companies from the EU to bid for management contact to run operations, and he believed the transport problem would be resolved in two years time when the railway project was finished. To strengthen the manufacturing sector, industrial zones were being built. He asked the Ambassadors to encourage more investment in floriculture, where 4,000 hectares of land were prepared for use, and other areas. He was pleased companies like Tesco, Unilever, H&M were present and others including Ikea were planning to come. With a number of projects underway in the telecom sector, he hoped the services would be improved in Addis Ababa within six months and across the country within 2 years. He said the problem of power distribution was caused by old transmission lines which were unable to accommodate the current demand. The process of providing new lines was under way and the problem would soon be resolved, he said.

The Prime Minister said the process of accession to the World Trade organization was proceeding well and the negotiations were continuing. He said these had to be approached in the right way. He emphasized that Ethiopia hoped to accede to the WTO without necessarily opening the service sector. He said “we will open up this sector before we become a middle income country. The faster we become a middle income country, the quicker the opening of the service sector will be,” he added. In this respect, the Prime Minister noted there was sound economic rationale for not liberalizing the telecom sector and this situation would be maintained.

The major issues relevant to foreign policy that were discussed included the intransigent behavior of Eritrea, the current situation in South Sudan and the question of the Nile. The Prime Minister once again reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to implement the decision of the Boundary Commission over the border with Eritrea, underlining that dialogue was imperative in order to implement the decisions fully and normalize relations. Ethiopia, he said, was still refusing to be provoked, but he cautioned its patience has limits. “Our restraint should not be misinterpreted”, he said, “it is because we want peace.” The Prime Minister said negotiations in South Sudan had been continuing even though the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was not yet being implemented. He underlined the importance of stopping all external support to both sides. He stressed that unless comprehensive support from the EU and other partners was fully achieved, there was a real threat of regional conflict.

On the Nile, he reminded the Ambassadors that the Comprehensive Framework Agreement had been signed by 6 countries so far and others would soon join. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project was not new. It had previously been called the Border Dam project; and in the past Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan had discussions within the Eastern Nile Subsidiary Program. Now, he said, the issue was how to implement the recommendations of the International Panel of Experts. These included the water system modeling study, especially the dam-filling strategy and secondly the social and environmental impact study. He stressed that neither of these had anything to do with the building of the dam itself. Ethiopia had agreed to do these studies and he pointed out that the experts of all 3 countries could perfectly well do the modeling study.

Ethiopia, he noted, has already proceeded to implement the Panel recommendations that referred to Ethiopia exclusively.

The Prime Minister reiterated that Ethiopia and the European Union had established a very long and solid relationship with the aim of benefiting from an equal partnership. Europe remains Ethiopia's main export destination. The two sides have established strong partnership for peace and security both regionally and more widely. This periodic Dialogue serves to enable both sides to understand each other and the complexities of our region more fully and to widen and deepen the relationship.

Dr. Tedros makes working visits to Angola and South Africa

Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros Adhanom, carried out a five-day working visit to Angola and to South Africa last week (March 5-9). Arriving at Luanda on Wednesday last week (March 5), the Minister and his delegation were met by Angolan Foreign Ministry officials. Ethiopia and Angola have always enjoyed excellent political relations on the political level though economic relations have hardly developed sufficiently and both sides acknowledge they fall short of existing potential possibilities. Dr. Tedros's visit was therefore intended to extend the scope of bilateral relations to economic areas. The current economic environment in Ethiopia and Angola is seen as conducive for fostering closer economic links as both countries have been experiencing robust economic growth over the past ten years, creating substantial trading and investment opportunities for their respective business communities. One of the possible areas for closer ties is development of bilateral air services between the two countries. Air transport of course can play a crucial role in facilitating economic relations. It also has the important effect of strengthening African integration.

The day after his arrival, Dr. Tedros presented President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos a message from Prime Minister Hailemariam concerning the development cooperation in increasing bilateral air service links between Ethiopia and Angola. President dos Santos agreed that economic relations between Angola and Ethiopia should be developed further, to a level commensurate with the excellent political relations that existed between the two countries. However, he noted that Angola was currently involved in a major airport infrastructural expansion project that would be completed in the next few years. He said Angola was prepared to make attempts to meet requests for increased air services to Angola but the completion of this project would be instrumental in fully accommodating any requests for expanded air services with Ethiopia and other countries. Dr. Tedros told the President that Ethiopia was considering opening an Embassy in Luanda in order to facilitate and enhance bilateral cooperation. He said he had been impressed to observe the fast pace of development taking place in Luanda. This was a testimony, he said, to the realization of the vision of the founding father of Angola, Dr. Agostinho Neto as well as of President Dos Santos. The meeting was attended by Angola's Foreign Minister and members of the Ethiopian delegation. During his visit, Dr. Tedros and his delegation also visited the Antonio Agostinho Neto Memorial Center. This contains a Mausoleum and monument, a library and a public park created as a memorial in honor of Dr.

Neto, the founding father of Angola and one of the best known African freedom fighters of his generation.

From Angola, Dr. Tedros and his delegation proceeded to South Africa where he met with President Jacob Zuma on Friday (March 8) in Pretoria. Discussions centered on bilateral relations and on the situation in South Sudan. The two sides emphasized the need to continue to work towards strengthening cooperation in a number of different areas. Dr. Tedros briefed President Zuma on the efforts being undertaken by the regional organization, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) to stop the civil war in South Sudan and bring back peace and stability to the country. President Zuma praised IGAD's mediation efforts and reaffirmed South Africa's position that the civil war in South Sudan must stop and a peaceful resolution found to the conflict. He assured Dr. Tedros that South Africa would cooperate in efforts to bring peace to South Sudan.

In Pretoria, Dr. Tedros also met with members of the South African business community who were interested in exploring possibilities of investing in Ethiopia in agriculture and agro-processing sectors, and briefed them on the opportunities available. He assured them of the government's support and said he would be happy to see them on pre-investment visits in Ethiopia. He directed the Ethiopian Embassy to provide assistance to facilitate meetings with the relevant authorities in Ethiopia.

During his visits to Luanda and Pretoria, Dr. Tedros also met with representatives of the Ethiopian communities in Angola and South Africa. He thanked the members of the Diaspora for their financial contributions to the construction of the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam (GERD) and briefed them on its progress. He also responded to questions ranging from details of investment legislation and tax privileges for Diaspora businesses to Egypt's recent diplomatic activities in relation to the construction of the Dam. Dr. Tedros explained that investment laws and tax privileges applied equally to activities of all business people whatever their origin. He said the Ministry was closely following Egyptian diplomatic activities to try to influence other countries to put pressure on Ethiopia to scale down GERD construction. He stressed Ethiopia's commitment to constructive engagement with Egypt remains unchanged and he repeated that the construction of the Dam would not harm the downstream countries, Sudan and Egypt, as the report of the International Panel of Experts had confirmed. He underlined that the establishment of the Panel had been Ethiopia's initiative and it was specifically meant to allay any fears the downstream countries might have over the construction of the Dam. The Panel had confirmed that the Dam would provide significant benefits to downstream countries by ensuring a constant flow of water, preventing siltation and significantly reduce evaporation.

Addis Ababa and Khartoum Universities hold a Symposium on the Nile

A three day symposium was held this week in Khartoum, Sudan, under the title "The Eastern Nile Cooperation: Opportunities for Regional Development". The symposium (March 10-12) was jointly organized by the University of Khartoum's Faculty of Engineering and Addis Ababa University's Institute of Water Resources. The topics of the symposium covered five major

themes under which more than twenty papers were presented and on which discussions were held. The themes were: Water Resources of the Nile; Eastern Nile Geology; Trans-boundary Water Resources Management, Challenges and Opportunities for Cooperation in the Eastern Nile; Gaps in the Scientific Research and Capacity and the Role of Universities in filling these gaps; Bridging the Gaps between Policy and Research for Sustainable Management of Water Resources.

Opening the symposium, Sudan's Higher Education Minister, Professor Abukashawa, said that the emphasis on trans-boundary cooperation was timely and represented a priority at the global, regional and national levels. She added that Sudan and Ethiopia could play important roles in the development of irrigation and in hydropower generation potential both for their own benefit, and for the benefit of all their sisters and brothers within the Eastern Nile area and the Nile Basin at large. The Minister stressed the need for universities work diligently together to provide the scientific knowledge-base and appropriate capacity in order to assist decision makers to develop sustainable cooperation that could lead to the development of 'win-win' targets for all.

Ethiopia's State Minister of Education, Dr. Kabba Urgessa, stressed that Ethiopia fully supported promotion of scientific cooperation for the sustainable development, equitable utilization and the management of the Eastern Nile basin through and enhanced knowledge base and the capacity to manage water resources sustainably for the benefits of both Ethiopia and Sudan and for the riparian countries as a whole. He noted that the involvement of scholars and researchers from all the countries within the area of the Eastern Nile cooperation could be used as a platform for implementing the principle of equitable and reasonable use of water resources. This could also enhance the broader regional collaboration in socio-economic and environmental management that would lead to wealth-creation and improvement in the livelihood of peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan, and of Egypt. The Minister applauded the two universities for taking a key role in bridging the gap between policy and research for sustainable management of water resources. Dr. Kabba said that Sudanese and Ethiopian cooperation on working for the mutual benefit from the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam project was a real example to all Nile riparian countries.

Addis Ababa University's President, Dr. Admasu Tsegaye, said that Sudanese and Ethiopian scholars had been engaged in a collaborative search through interactive problem-solving mechanisms in the Eastern Nile Basin. They had produced the idea of expanding opportunities of mutual development of the shared waters of the Nile rather than quarrelling for exclusive control. He emphasized that the two universities should now focus on producing information and results which would have the effect of maximizing existing opportunities for development, assisting in the eradication of poverty, promoting cooperation and finding pathways for long term bilateral and regional integration. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Khartoum, Professor El Siddig A. El Sheikh, noted that the two universities were now cooperating in various scientific areas which could benefit their peoples and the entire region.

All the papers presented were given through and detailed discussion. The scholars of both universities demonstrated a strong sense of commitment and responsibility towards policy makers, encouraging them to make proper and detailed use of the ample opportunities that already exist in the Nile basin, and take full advantage of the results of existing scientific research as well as future results.

The symposium produced a common vision was set out for future cooperation between the two universities in scientific research and capacity building. It was made clear this would provide for the sustainable management of the water resources of the Eastern Nile Basin and enhance academic networking between the related institutions throughout the Eastern Nile Basin region. Last December, Addis Ababa University and the University of Khartoum signed a memorandum of understanding to promote international cooperation in education and research. This week's symposium in Khartoum was one of the first stages in the implementation of the agreement.

Ethiopia has the potential to become a top international tourist destination

Tourism is one of the best 'green' options for addressing poverty, employment and economic diversification initiatives in developing countries. Sustainable tourism, in particular, has the potential to create new jobs, reduce poverty and increase export revenues. It is therefore of particular interest that recent research indicates that Ethiopia has the potential of becoming one of the world's major tourist destinations, and in three specific areas: cultural tourism, natural resource tourism, and business and conference tourism. A report by the W. Hospitality Group shows that Ethiopia features among the top five countries in sub-Saharan Africa whose hotel sectors are expected to be the recipients of substantial investment in the future. The research identified Ethiopia as one of the key investment destinations for global hotel chains which are scouting for opportunities in the region. It also forecasts that in Sub Saharan Africa growth in the hospitality industry will be much faster than in the developed economies, providing a 23% increase compared to the developed economies which are struggling to exceed 2%. Africa, in fact, is positively booming and in an industry which is as labor intensive as hotels this is very good news for job creation and for poverty alleviation.

Indeed, for sub-Saharan Africa, more than at any other time, this appears to be the moment for pursuing tourism as a dynamic development option. Tourism is one of the key industries driving current change on the continent, and tourism could clearly be a transformative tool within the growing economic expansion. According to a report from the World Travel and Tourism Council, from the small base of just 6.7 million visitors in 1990, sub-Saharan Africa countries have steadily attracted greater numbers of visitors, reaching 33.8 million visitors in 2012. Continental receipts from tourism in 2012 amounted to over US\$36 billion and directly contributed 2.8% to the region's GDP, and the total GDP contribution, direct and indirect amounted to 7.3%. The tourism industry also energizes an economy, and countries with tourism assets have accordingly been prioritizing tourism as a major tool for development.

Ethiopia is one of the countries with great potential to develop itself as a tourist destination. It has nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites, it is firmly identified as the home of the earliest of fossil hominids and the place of the "origin of mankind" as well as the country from which coffee originated. Realizing that the hospitality industry can provide a catalyst right across the economy in terms of production and employment and so in poverty reduction, the Government has formulated a strategy for the sector within the overall development strategy. The aim is to optimize existing tourism resources as a driving force of economic growth for the whole country.

The promotion of sustainable tourism in Ethiopia is also in line with the government's vision of becoming a middle income economy with minimal carbon growth by 2025. The Government is therefore playing a major role in coordinating different public sector agencies involved the relevant private profit and non-profit entities, and in encouraging local community activity. In addition, the guiding principle of economic diplomacy on which the country's policy and strategy for foreign affairs and national security is based, aims at increasing the numbers of tourists, promoting tourist attractions, building up a positive image of the country and drawing in more foreign direct investment.

In the five year Growth and Transformation Plan (2010/11- 2014/15), the Government set targets for the creation of 3 million new job opportunities, of which 1.8 million or 60% percent are expected to come from the tourism sector alone. The number of tourists expected to visit Ethiopia has been predicted to reach one million by the end of 2015. Equally, by the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan, the country is expected to be earning up to US\$3 billion annually from the sector. In fact, as a result of a decade of successive and sustainable economic growth as well as the durable peace and security that have prevailed in the country, tourist numbers have been increasing. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism more than US\$1.38 billion in tourist revenue was earned from tourism in the first half of this Ethiopian budget year.

In addition, in its quest to become one of the five major tourist destinations on the African continent, the Government has put in place a number of legal and institutional frameworks and incentives for priority sectors. These include duty free schemes, tax holidays and bank loans in order to enhance investment in tourism sector all of which assist the hospitality industry which includes lodgings, restaurants, event planning, theme parks, and transportation. Indeed, today Friday (March 14) the Government launched the Tourism Transformation Council. The Council will be chaired by Prime Minister Hailemariam, and the Minister of Tourism will be secretary. Ethiopian Airlines CEO, heads of regional administrations and the mayors of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa will be members of the Council. The Council is to provide leadership and set directions for the development of tourism and marketing initiatives; give instructions to concerned bodies to deal with impediments and challenges to the tourism sector, and ensure their implementation as well as provide directions for implementing activity and setting strategic directions.