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News in Brief

African Union

The African Union Commission has condemned the decision by the Ngok Dinka community in Abyei to hold a unilateral "referendum" in the Abyei region last weekend as "illegal". Dr. Dlamini-Zuma, the Chairperson of the AU Commission said it was a unilateral act in violation of the decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council and could only heighten tension on the ground. (See article)

The African Union Contact group on the International Criminal Court met with the U.N. Security Council for discussions on Thursday (October 31), seeking a one year deferral of the charges against President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy, William Ruto. Ethiopian Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom, Chair of the AU Executive Committee, who led the delegation, said the deferral was necessary because of concerns that Kenya could become destabilized if its leaders are away at trial and not focused on domestic matters.

"Regional Integration in Africa" was the theme of this year's African Economic Conference in Johannesburg (October 28-30) to discuss the continent's major economic development challenges. Discussion focused on ways to overcome fragmentation and pool resources for industrialization and productive growth, on the basis of four pillars of integration: movement of goods and services; movement of capital; movement of people; and the role and impact of regional institutions.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam invited Canadians to invest in Ethiopia while holding talks with Canada's Deputy Minister of International Development, Paul Rochon on Wednesday (October 30). Mr. Rochon expressed the interest of Canada to work with Ethiopia in education, agriculture and food security areas as well as support in the training of entrepreneurs, particularly youth and women.

Egyptian Prime Minister Hazem al-Beblawy said on Wednesday (October 30) that the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam could be a source of prosperity for Egypt, for Ethiopia and for the Nile Basin

countries. The water ministers of Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia are due to meet in Khartoum on Monday to discuss the recommendations of the International Panel of Experts tasked with assessing the dam's impact.

The Government announced on Monday that it was implementing the National Human Rights Action Plan. This followed a consultative forum on Friday (October 25). The National Human Rights Action Plan aims at strengthening better implementation of human and democratic rights as stipulated in the Constitution and will provide for coordinated implementation of activities by government bodies. **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos held discussions on Tuesday (October 29) with Mihail Dobre, State Secretary of the Romanian Foreign Ministry on ways to strengthen bilateral relations and expand into new areas of cooperation.

State Minister Berhane met with a delegation of Danish Parliamentarians led by Mrs. Maja Panduro on Thursday (October 31, 2013) **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Dewano Kedir, met on Thursday (October 31) with a Russian delegation headed by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture of the Russian Federation, Mr. Ilya Shestakov. The two ministers discussed on agricultural cooperation within the framework of the outcome of the G8 group meeting and the new “alliance for food security and nutrition in Africa”.

A Saudi Arabian business delegation led by Sheikh Tarik Binladen, Head of Middle East Development met with State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dewano Kedir on Wednesday (October 30).

The departing Turkish Ambassador to Ethiopia, Uguru Kenan Ipek, took leave of Ethiopia's President Dr. Mulatu Teshome on Monday (October 28), telling the President that the number of Turkish investors engaged in Ethiopia was increasing and emphasizing that Turkey wished to further expand bilateral ties with Ethiopia.

The Norwegian Embassy in Ethiopia said on Monday (October 28) that 500 Eritrean refugees in Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps in northern Ethiopia had completed one-year vocational and skills training. The Norwegian Refugee Council plans to train over 1,000 refugees in three Eritrean refugee camps next year. The UNHCR says there are currently more than 77,000 Eritreans sheltered in 6 camps in the Tigray and Afar Regional States bordering Eritrea.

Indian mining firm May Flower Mining Enterprise Ltd is to invest US\$116 million in the Delbi Mining S.C.'s coal mine in south-west Ethiopia. The Delbi coal mine is located in Oromia Regional State, Jimma Zone, 400 km from Addis Ababa. The concession covers a 39.2 square kilometer area with an estimated coal deposit of 11.4 billion tonnes. Ethiopia's overall coal reserves, ranging from lignite to bituminous deposits, are estimated at around 376 million tonnes.

Djibouti

Djibouti's Minister of Interior, Hassan Mohamed Omar, warned on Tuesday (October 29) that Al-Shabaab was planning to carry out attacks in Djibouti.

A Chinese company, Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries, on Sunday (October 27) delivered a consignment of heavy port equipment to Doraleh Port in Djibouti, including two dockside cranes and eight yard cranes which will significantly improve the container terminal's operational capacity.

Kenya

The Hague-based International Criminal Court announced Thursday that it has agreed to a three-month postponement to the start of President Kenyatta's trial which had been due to begin November 12. It will now start on February 5.

The Appeals Chamber of the International Criminal Court on Friday (October 25) ruled that Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto can only be excused from attendance during his trial under "exceptional circumstances" and said that any decision to excuse the Deputy President from parts of his trial must be taken on a case-by-case basis and absence must not be the rule.

Somalia

The United Nations Security Council held a special session on Somalia on Wednesday (October 30) to discuss a proposed package of increased logistical and non-lethal support to the Somali National Army and an increase in the number of African Peacekeeping troops for AMISOM. **(See article)**

The UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ambassador Jan Eliasson, visited Mogadishu on Saturday (October 26) and held meetings with President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, the Speaker of the Federal Parliament, Mohammad Sheikh Osman Jawari, and Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon. Ambassador Eliasson also opened the headquarters of the new United Nations Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) in Mogadishu.

Members of the African Union's Peace and Security Council on their first field visit to Mogadishu called for an extra 6300 troops and police for AMISOM as well as enhanced engineering capabilities and force multipliers including military utility helicopters and armored personnel carriers.

The President of the Federal Government of Somalia, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, arrived in Kismayo on Thursday (October 31) for a two day visit to Kismayo. He will be holding talks with the Leader of the Jubba Administration, Sheikh Ahmed Mohamed Islam Madobe and other Jubba officials. Discussions are covering the implementation of the agreement signed by both sides during their talks in August in Addis Ababa.

The Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilianne Ploumen, accompanied by a Dutch business delegation visited Mogadishu at the beginning of the week, meeting President Mohamud, Prime Minister Shirdon and other officials and the Somali Chamber of Commerce.

On Monday (October 28) Somalia Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon launched the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Facility to enhance coordination of external assistance in a transparent manner and bind the Somali government and international partners to adhere to a donor code of conduct as the first step in implementing the New Deal Compact agreed in Brussels in September.

A Kenyan Defense Forces' Spokesperson announced on Thursday (October 31) that Kenya had carried out an aerial strike against an Al-Shabaab training camp in Somalia. Four military vehicles and a weapons store were destroyed but there was no estimate of casualties among the estimated 300 fighters in camp.

The Somali Cabinet on Sunday (October 27) endorsed an agreement with Al Bayrak, a Turkish company, to manage Mogadishu seaport for a twenty years. Al Bayrak will also be responsible for reconstructing, modernizing and developing the port. Another Turkish owned company, Favori, has been given a ten year agreement to take the lead in managing and handling services at Mogadishu's Aden Abdulle Airport.

Puntland President, Abdirahman Mohamed Farole, has dissolved the Puntland parliament to pave the way for the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections.

South Sudan

Foreign Affairs ministers from Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya and Rwanda signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for a customs union on Monday (October 28) in Kigali, Rwanda. The occasion marked the launch of the single customs territory for the four states, and will facilitate the easy movement of goods and services from the Kenya port of Mombasa to Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan.

Sudan

Addressing the opening of the 8th session of the National Legislature on Monday (October 28), President Al-Bashir announced government plans to establish a National Peace Council, renewed his call for armed movements to join the peace process in accordance with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur, and said the next elections would be held in early 2015.

The United Nations Security Council meets to consider increasing AMISOM's strength

The United Nations Security Council held a special session on Somalia on Wednesday (October 30) to discuss a proposed package of increased logistical and non-lethal support to the Somali

National Army and an increase in the number of African Peacekeeping troops for AMISOM. The Council was addressed by Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson who had just returned from a visit to Mogadishu. Mr. Eliasson said that the promise of a new Somalia emerging from decades of violence and instability remained fragile and while it was hard to ask for additional resources in the present difficult financial environment, he warned that “it is my duty to advise this Council that, without increased support, our present, and indeed past, investment in peace, and that of millions of Somalis, may be lost.”

The Deputy Secretary General said it was “essential that security efforts proceed hand in hand with the political, peace-building and development efforts. He said he had seen “hope and determination” during his latest visit to Somalia and he had emphasized during talks with national leaders the importance of building institutions, as well as ensuring the rule of law and respect for human rights. He noted that the African Union and the United Nations had established a unique and heartening partnership in the country, he said, praising the all-round commitment to peace and unity. Equally, he cautioned the moment of hope was fragile. 18 months of operations had uprooted Al-Shabaab from the major cities but now the campaign by AMISOM and the Somali forces had ground to a halt. Al-Shabaab, on the other hand, was training and recruiting substantial numbers of young men to carry out attacks like the recent atrocity in Nairobi last month.

In these circumstances, he said, the Secretary-General and the African Union jointly recommended a significant and temporary boost to maintain the basic security required for peace-building, as well as allow for a response to the evolving threat from Al-Shabaab. Providing non-lethal and logistic support to Somali forces would enable them to operate effectively alongside AMISOM until the national police could take over. The Deputy Secretary General also noted the recent surge in attacks against United Nations personnel posed a serious obstacle to the implementation of resolutions mandating the Secretary-General to establish an enhanced presence in Somalia. Following the attack on June 19, the UN agencies had a severely restricted capacity to plan and deliver programs. AMISOM’s present assets and competing priorities did not permit a substantial increase in protection for United Nations installations and operations. The creation of a temporary United Nations Guard Unit to protect UN personnel and installations was therefore necessary. He therefore requested the Council to authorize the deployment of a guard unit until national forces could assume that responsibility.

The Secretary General’s recommendations are that AMISOM be boosted by 2,550 combat troops and 1,845 ground-support troops for the next 18 to 24 months. Another 1,000 troops should be provided for a U.N. guard force as well as a further 840 police officers. The recommended enhancements for AMISOM also include helicopters and other force enablers which would, said Mr. Eliasson, allow AMISOM forces to regain the initiative against the insurgency and to recover strategic locations that are exploited by Al-Shabaab to generate revenue, and to recruit and train combatants.

The Deputy Secretary General also referred to the Secretary-General’s report on piracy and armed robbery off the coast of Somalia, emphasizing the need for greater efforts to address its underlying causes. Despite the fall in pirate activities, he said the international naval presence remained vital. He called on Member States to expand efforts to develop Somalia’s Maritime

Resource and Security Strategy, and stressed the importance of coordinated international action and of the self-protection measures developed by the global shipping industry.

Somalia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Fauzia Yusuf Haji Adan, also addressed the Council, referring to the "immense opportunity" now available as Somalia emerged from its fragile political transition. It was, she said, committed to establishing a national democratic Government that would pursue fair and inclusive development, uphold individual human rights and strengthen international partnerships on the basis of mutual respect. "Somalia is no longer a failed State," she said. She welcomed the international community's commitment, as shown in the New Deal framework signed in Brussels, but said the country remained vulnerable and needed sustained support to beat back the threat posed by extremist groups. Enhanced non-lethal and logistical support would allow Somalia to create the security conditions central to sustainable peace and development. The Deputy Prime Minister said the suspension of AMISOM's operations was providing Al-Shabaab with an opportunity to regroup. She requested the Council to act swiftly to prevent the unraveling of recent gains. Closing the serious gap between the pledges of support to AMISOM and the tempo of its operations, she said, was critical to discouraging and defeating the terrorists, to enhancing Somali institutions and public safety, ensuring effective governance and holding general elections in 2016.

Strong criticism of an "illegal" unofficial referendum in Abyei

The situation in the disputed region of Abyei is again causing concern, following the unofficial referendum organized by the Ngok Dinka community in the region over the weekend. Ngok Dinka leaders said they had been "forced to take this action" by the "inaction" of the African Union and its failure to hold the planned referendum suggested by the African Union High Level Panel. Organizers of the unofficial referendum subsequently claimed that 99.89 % of the over 63,000 who voted had chosen to join South Sudan. In response, two days later, the Misseriya announced that they planned to hold their own unilateral referendum to determine the fate of the disputed area. The Misseriya Paramount Chief, Mukhtar Babu Nimir, said the Misseriya would organize a similar referendum: "If the result of their referendum was in favor of joining the South, we will organize a referendum to join the North", he said.

There was immediate rejection of the unofficial referendum. Both the Governments of South Sudan and the Sudan distanced themselves from it. The Government of South Sudan said it did not support the unofficial referendum and rejected any unilateral action in Abyei. The Sudan Government called the vote "illegitimate" and "worthless", and said it would not be recognized by governments, or regional or international organizations. Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ali Karti, added that no institutions in Abyei could be formed on the basis of such a vote, stressing that the process of forming institutions in the region something to be conducted by the two governments as they had agreed at their most recent summit. Sudan's co-chair of Abyei steering committee, Al-Khair Al-Faheem, said on Wednesday that Khartoum did not support any unilateral referendum whether it was organized by the Ngok Dinka or the Misseriya.

The AU Commission was equally dismissive. The African Union Commission Chairperson, Dr. Dlamini-Zuma strongly condemned the Ngok Dinka community's unilateral "referendum" referring to it as "illegal". She stressed that this "unilateral act" was unacceptable and irresponsible, pointing out it was in violation of the relevant decisions of the AU Peace and Security Council and could only heighten tension on the ground and further complicate the search for a mutually acceptable solution within the framework of existing commitments. She also said it could also put members of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) peacekeepers in a very dangerous position. The Chairperson also called for the expeditious implementation of the Agreement on Temporary Administrative and Security Arrangements for the Abyei Area, and she further urged the Abyei communities to exercise utmost restraint and give maximum cooperation to UNISFA in order to ensure the maintenance of peace and stability in Abyei. The Chairperson of the Commission also called for the expeditious implementation of 20 June 2011 Agreement on Temporary Administrative and Security Arrangements for the Abyei Area.

The AU Chairperson underlined the AU's position on the issue of Abyei which includes acceptance of the Proposal submitted by the AU High-Level Implementation Panel on Sudan and South Sudan (AUHIP) on 21 September 2012. The AUHIP proposal was for a referendum to be held in October this year in which only the Ngok Dinka should vote. This was rejected by Sudan which said it ignored that the eligibility of the Misseriya to vote. Sudan also demanded that the public administration and institutions of the referendum commission, legislative councils, civil and security institutions, and other administrative arrangements should all be established before any vote could take place.

The AU Peace and Security Council had planned to visit Abyei last weekend. However, their visit was postponed by the Government of Sudan which said it did not want that the trip to coincide with the preparations of the unilateral referendum held by the Ngok Dinka for security reasons. Sudan's Foreign Minister Ali Karti, said the timing was not right.

In a communiqué issued over the weekend, the Peace and Security Council reacted strongly to the postponement. It said the Sudanese authorities "must refrain from obstructing its work", and demanded that they "extend full cooperation in support of the AU's efforts to manage and resolve the situation in Abyei". It expressed "its deep disappointment and regret" that it had been unable to visit to Abyei, as planned, on 26 and 27 October 2013. The Council said it considered "this to be an obstruction to the discharge of its responsibilities". It reiterated "its deep concern at the prevailing situation in Abyei, and stressed the need for active and continued African involvement in support of the efforts aimed at addressing the challenges" there. The PSC said its visit was "aimed at defusing tension on the ground, including averting any unilateral actions, and creating a conducive environment for the peaceful resolution of the final status of Abyei." It added that "those who obstructed its visit should bear full responsibility for any resulting negative development in the Area."

The PSC also welcomed the full cooperation of the Government of South Sudan and urged it to continue to demonstrate restraint. It said it recognized the frustrations arising from the delay in organizing the Abyei referendum, but it reiterated its earlier decision over the region and in particular its full acceptance of, and support for, the AUHIP Proposal. It strongly urged the UN

Security Council to extend its full support to this which it described as the best way forward in addressing the challenges. It called on both countries “expeditiously to implement the 20 June 2011 Agreement on the Temporary Administrative and Security Arrangements for the Abyei Area, including the immediate establishment of the organs in charge of the management of the Area. In this respect, the Council welcomed the decision reached by the two Presidents during their Summit meeting of October 22. The Council reiterated that Abyei should be a weapons-free zone and its request that the Sudanese Police Force stationed in Diffra should be withdrawn without further delay. The Peace and Security Council further requested the implementation of a disarmament program in the Area. It concluded by demanding that “Sudan must refrain from obstructing its work and extend full cooperation in support of the AU’s efforts to manage and resolve the situation in Abyei. In this respect the Council reminds Sudan of its obligations under the Peace and Security Council Protocol”, and commended the work of UNISFA in maintaining security in the Area.

The PSC has now agreed to visit Abyei from 5 to 6 November 2013

Eritrea’s worsening human rights situation forces youth to flee “en masse”

Last week, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Situation to Eritrea, Sheila B. Keetharuth, made a presentation to the Third Committee of the General Assembly on the current situation of human rights in Eritrea. The presentation was followed by an interactive dialogue in which the representatives of the United States, Switzerland, Australia, and European Union delegation, Norway, Djibouti, Sudan and Cuba were among participants.

The presentation of the Special Rapporteur summarized and reinforced the report submitted to the UN Human Rights Council in May, 2013. The Special Rapporteur was appointed in November last year following a decision of the UN Human Rights Council to appoint a Rapporteur. The appointment was made by consensus with the exception of Eritrea. The Council strongly recommended that the Eritrean Authorities should cooperate with the Special Rapporteur, however, the Council’s repeated calls were ignored during the course of preparation of the report. When the Special Rapporteur’s report was issued on May 28, it revealed grave violations of rights in Eritrea and the absence both of normative institutions and of any political commitment to uphold the rights and freedoms enshrined in the international human rights instruments to which Eritrea is a signatory.

Special Rapporteur Keetharuth told the Third Committee last week that as evidenced and detailed in her report “extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and incommunicado detention, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture, inhuman prison conditions, indefinite national service, as well as lack of freedom of expression, opinion, assembly, association, religious belief and movement” were committed by the government security forces against their own people. She added that excessive militarization and endless national service posed a threat to the very fabric of society and to family life as men and women conscripted for unlimited periods of time instead of the official period of 18 months of National Service. These and other human rights violations were "triggering a constant stream of refugees to neighboring countries." She said

extended periods of incommunicado detention seemed to be used as a technique for obtaining information or as a punishment. Detainees, she added, were vulnerable to abuse, and lacked access to family members, doctors, lawyers and judges.

The Special Rapporteur said the UNHCR statistics for 2013 indicated that 285, 000 refugees and 20,511 asylum seekers had originated from Eritrea, which was a staggering figure given the fact that the entire population was estimated at less than five million. Various other UN reports, in addition to the report of the Special Rapporteur, unequivocally indicate that hundreds of “Eritreans including unaccompanied minors flee the country every month, despite shoot-to-kill orders implemented by border guards and the extreme dangers along escape routes”. Referring to the recent Lampedusa boat tragedy in which over 350 Eritreans died and other similar incidents, the Special Rapporteur said “even though the escape route is fraught with dangers including shoot-to-kill at borders [those fleeing] make irreversible decisions to flee since life inside is intolerable.” She noted the fact that people between the ages of 18-51 are conscripted for a national service for indefinite period of time, without adequate remuneration or demobilization, exacerbated the mass exodus of Eritreans of all ages including minors. She said “2000-3000 Eritreans are leaving the country every month”, adding that “7,504 Eritrean (as well as 7,557 Syrians) have arrived in Italy by sea between January 1st and September 30th this year.” In summary, the Special Rapporteur described the current human rights’ situation in Eritrea, as bleak. It was a situation in which people felt trapped, unable to see any end, and in which excessive militarization had created an atmosphere of fear within the country.

In conclusion, the Special Rapporteur described Eritrea’s situation as extremely worrisome. She called on the international community to put the country under strict scrutiny, to focus on the human rights situation in Eritrea and in line with obligations under international law, increase efforts to protect refugees and support them in what she called their “perilous journey” as they leave their country. She said the current situation could not be improved through taking small steps. Eritreans, she said, should be able to rely on functional institutions that worked on principles of the rule of law; they should be free from fear of detention without due process of law and be able to achieve their dreams of a better future without the fear of indefinite national service. "All Eritreans should be able to claim and enjoy their human rights, be it civil and political or economic, social and cultural," she said, adding that this would “require innovative ideas to address those issues perceived by Eritrea as hostile, as well as constructive engagement with Eritrea and neighboring countries to improve the situation of human rights in the country."

The Special Rapporteur recommended the re-creation of independent media outlets, the freeing of political prisoners, and for Eritrean authorities to respect the rights and freedoms of the people of Eritrea as important steps to improve the situation in Eritrea. She also reiterated her call to the Eritrean Government to cooperate with her mandate which offers a "frank and open dialogue" on the theme of human rights and allow her access to the country. When the Special Rapporteur was appointed by the UN Human Rights Council last year, Eritrea immediately rejected the appointment claiming it politically motivated and refused to accept the Rapporteur’s mandate.

Eritrea’s Ambassador to the UN described the Rapporteur’s report and the mandate of the Special Rapporteur as a work of “political machination”. He said that Eritrea objected to human rights’ issues being “used as a tool of political pressure,” adding that it was difficult to accept a mandate “evidently designed for political purposes”. The Ambassador said the Special Rapporteur’s mandate had not been created with human rights objectives at its core, and claimed

no situation in Eritrea warranted the attention of the Human Rights Council. He rejected all the concerns of the Special Rapporteur over the human trafficking of Eritreans, the shoot-to-kill policy and the refugee exodus resulting from endless national service.

In a press briefing after the presentation and interactive dialogue, Special Rapporteur Keetharuth made it clear that her appointment was not political and that her mandate was solely concerned with improving the human rights situation in Eritrea. She emphasized again that Eritrea still refused to grant her access to the country. She reiterated that "the current human rights picture [in Eritrea] is desperately bleak. People feel trapped in a long hopeless situation as they see no end to it to the point that they take the irreversible decision to flee, forcing them on the road to exile."

Ethiopia's National Human Rights Action Plan launched

Ethiopia formally introduced its National Human Rights Action Plan on Friday (October 25). The Action Plan aims at strengthening better implementation of human and democratic rights and within this framework includes the Civil and Political Rights, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Rights of Vulnerable Groups, all of which are enshrined in the Constitution, and in addition Environmental Rights and the Right to Development. The Action Plan provides for the creation of a conducive environment for coordinated implementation of activities in support of these rights by the various relevant government bodies. It is to be implemented in tandem with the Growth and Transformation Plan, and is intended to better realize human rights in a comprehensive and structural manner, as well as accelerate the process of building of good governance and democracy and ensure the sustainability of economic development.

Prime Minister Hailemariam, addressing a consultative forum on the Action Plan held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa, underlined the various activities the government is already undertaking to ensure human and democratic rights in Ethiopia. The Action Plan, he added, would help to address any gaps in good governance that have challenged the full implementation of human and democratic rights in the country.

The National Human Rights Action Plan is the first of its kind, bringing together all the separate efforts planned and implemented in the various different government departments. It is in fact specifically aimed to encourage the administration and nation to carry out all elements of human rights protection and the promotion of these activities in an effective and coordinated fashion. It also provides the opportunity to demonstrate the Government's determination to make sure that all existing plans in these areas are put properly into practice and in turn serve for the better and more effectual protection and promotion of human rights. It should be underlined that the Action Plan specifies the activities by government organs along with relevant development partners, civil society associations and other stakeholders as an important part of the five years Growth and Transformation Plan.

This current development to adopt a National Human Rights Action Plan is the first time for Ethiopia to put this into practice. It was following the Universal Periodic Review session in 2009 at which Ethiopia was reviewed that the idea of a National Consultative Workshop for the

Development of a Human Rights Action Plan was raised. The workshop was organized in March 2010 by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in collaboration with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' East Africa Regional Office. At the conclusion of the Consultative Workshop a roadmap to guide the development of a National Human Rights Action Plan was adopted. Following this roadmap, a resolution was adopted at the end of another Consultative Workshop. Following the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review session, this laid down that the process of developing a National Human Rights Action Plan should be supervised by a National Coordinating Committee, composed of federal and regional government authorities.

The project of developing the National Human Rights Action Plan was officially launched in August 2011 in Addis Ababa following the decision by the Office of the Prime Minister to set up a Steering Committee to organize the process. The Steering Committee, chaired by the Minister of Justice, was composed of representatives from the Ministries of Federal Affairs, of Finance and Economic Development, of Communication Affairs and of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. The Human Rights Commission was designated as the technical advisor for the process of developing the Action Plan and as host for the Secretariat Office of the Committee.

The next stage was for the Steering Committee to set up the National Coordinating Committee chaired by the State Minister of the Ministry of Justice to include senior representatives of the Federal and Regional Government and of Non-Governmental Organizations. The Committee has an executive sub-committee made up of representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Communication Affairs, the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, and the Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs. The Committee works closely with the Coordinating Office of the National Action Plan.

The main objective of the National Human Rights Action Plan is clearly specified: to develop comprehensive and structural mechanisms to advance the respect, protection and fulfillment of the human and democratic rights guaranteed by the constitution. The Action Plan reviews the present situation of human rights of the country, identifies potential and actual problems, and lays out feasible solutions. The explicit and detailed objectives of the Action Plan include provision of strategic guidelines to promote human and democratic rights in the country, setting out comprehensive, structural and sustainable strategies to respect and protect human rights over the next three years, define ways and means to raise public awareness of human rights and in addition indicate the strategies by which the Government can work in collaboration with the NGOs legally allowed to work on human and democratic rights, developing partners, civil societies and other international stakeholders to implement these activities.

The responsibility to implement the National Human Rights Action Plan, paired as it is with the Growth and Transformation Plan, lies with the Federal Government, the State Governments and the City Administrations. The implementation of the Action Plan will be carried out in accordance with five associated mechanisms: inclusion in the performance plans of the implementing institutions; a process for the creation of awareness of the Action Plan; collaboration with development partners and civil associations together with public participation;

utilization of the existing national human rights' institutions; and a program of human rights' education.

The Minister of Justice, Getachew Ambaye, pointed out during the consultative meeting that the necessary structures were already now in place at federal and regional levels to implement the Action Plan. He said the office of the Action Plan had been organized and was operational under the Ministry of Justice to oversee the process. The UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia, Eugene Owusu, commended Ethiopia for preparing the Action Plan on human rights and for undertaking this side by side with its economic development. He assured the National Coordinating Committee of the support of the UN for the implementation of the Action Plan.

A temporary ban on overseas employment for Ethiopian workers

Last week the Government issued a ban on domestic workers from moving overseas for employment. This followed reports that Ethiopian domestic workers, many female, in a number of countries were being subjected to emotional and physical abuse, poor working conditions, low pay and discrimination. There are many overseas employment agencies and Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Ambassador Dina, said last week many agencies lured Ethiopians into working abroad illegally and in appalling conditions. This exodus, he said, was pushed by illegal human traffickers, and created immense problems for the country, and its image. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs said that 200,000 women had left the country last year seeking work, mainly in the Middle East. Ambassador Dina added that the government was taking measures to address the issue. In the meantime, he said, employment agencies operating illegally would be shut down in order to help put a stop to human trafficking. The ban is expected to last for six months.

Human trafficking, often referred to as modern day slavery, is becoming a major socio-economic and political problem for a number of countries. The United Nations defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception for exploitation purpose including sexual, forced labor and servitude qualifies as trafficking. Human trafficking, in fact, is a corrupt mode of migration, a complex phenomenon that is often driven by social, economic, cultural and other factors. Indeed, evidence suggests it is the fastest growing crime and the third most lucrative criminal activity after drugs and illegal arms trading. The 2012 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report indicated that people from 136 different nationalities were trafficked. A recent International Labor Organization report estimated that global annual profits reached US\$32 billion.

Trafficking in human beings is not a new problem, but it recently appears to have expanded significantly in many parts of the world and now affects every country of the world, either as places of origin, transit or destination, or even a combination of all three. It often arises from less developed countries where people become vulnerable to trafficking by virtue of poverty, conflict or other conditions. Over the years human traffickers have utilized various ways to deceive their victims, giving false promises to innocent citizens and then literally exposing them to all sorts of problems, often including loss of life. It is one of the worst developments linked to increasing global mobility in the modern world. While human trafficking has now become a global problem, Ethiopia is one of the countries that has been worst affected. People migrate from

Ethiopia to many parts of the world, but one of the closest destinations is actually one of the most hazardous to approach: the Arabian Peninsula. Separated from the Horn of Africa by a relatively narrow strip of water, it is the clear choice for those without resources to travel further.

Ethiopia has ratified major relevant UN conventions, as well as a number of ILO conventions that deal directly or indirectly with trafficking in persons and labor exploitation. It does not have a specific and comprehensive national legal framework responding to the problem of human trafficking, but the Constitution's Article 18 (2) is very clear: "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude. Trafficking in human beings for whatever purpose is prohibited." Similarly, the revised Criminal Code further incorporates provisions that criminalize trafficking in persons, particularly of women and children for various purposes. Articles 597–598 and 635 deal with trafficking in persons, and article 596 covers enslavement.

In fact, despite this, and other existing legal frameworks at national, regional and international levels, as well as various efforts by stakeholders, the problem persists. Thousands of Ethiopians are trafficked to different countries including the Sudan, South Africa, and the Middle East. Women from all parts of Ethiopia are subject to involuntary domestic servitude throughout the Middle East and other states, many transiting Djibouti, Egypt, Libya, Somalia, or Yemen as they migrate to further destinations for work. Many face severe abuse, including physical and sexual assault, denial of salary, sleep deprivation, confinement, incarceration, and murder. Many are driven to despair and mental illness, some have committed suicide. Numbers of Ethiopian men also migrate to Saudi Arabia, the Gulf States, and other African nations looking for work. In some cases they have been subjected to forced labor. According to a study conducted by the International Organization of Migration in April 2004 in Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon, 87% of all Ethiopian migrants who had left their country for employment and other purposes were illegally trafficked.

The Government of Ethiopia has been taking various measures to curb the problem for some time. As part of these efforts, a national committee has been set up to organize a grass-root national movement against human trafficking. This involves representatives from 13 line ministries, various administrative bodies, federal institutions, the media, and religious institutions. The main objective of this committee is to raise awareness among potential victims and families as well as ensure legal actions in case of violation of rights and unlawful employment exchange operations. Other government efforts have been made to collect information of illegal activity, and to research the root causes and patterns of human trafficking, as well as creating appropriate legal, policy and institutional frameworks to deal with the problem, including the signing of bilateral labor agreements to ensure better treatment of workers overseas.

The recent efforts by the Government to raise public awareness about the dangers of illegal migration and human trafficking have underlined its determination to protect citizens from the dangers of illegal human trafficking. It was a part of this effort to prevent the continuing flow of abuse and exploitation of Ethiopian migrants, that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 25th 2013 announced the temporary freeze on citizens traveling abroad for employment. The ban is intended to remain in force until legal, administrative and institutional gaps in foreign employment have been fully addressed. The Ministry also announced that foreign employment agencies have had their licenses suspended for an indefinite period. The Ministry said these

measures had become necessary because previous efforts by the National Committee and task force to educate the public and caution illegal human traffickers and to further ensure the rights of Ethiopian workers abroad, had failed to achieve their aim of stopping human trafficking.

State Minister Ambassador Berhane receives a Danish parliamentary delegation

State Minister Berhane met with a delegation of Danish Parliamentarians led by Mrs. Maja Panduro on Thursday (October 31, 2013), and underlined Ethiopia's desire to further broaden and deepen the broad and strong bilateral relations the countries enjoyed. The delegation, citing Prime Minister Hailemariam's participation at the recently concluded 3rd Global Green Growth Forum in Copenhagen, expressed its admiration for Ethiopia's commitment to green growth. It noted that Danish businesses had been impressed with Ethiopia's potential during meetings with Prime Minister Hailemariam at the margins of the conference, and referred to the huge opportunities for Danish businesses in Ethiopia and the potential for Ethio-Danish cooperation.

The subsequent discussion covered issues related to Ethiopia's role in the African Union, the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and on ways to realize regional integration in Africa. Ambassador Berhane explained that Ethiopia as current chair of the AU was working for a stronger continental body that could effectively address peace and security matters, sustain the growth momentum of the continent and boost intra-Africa trade while emphasizing a focus on agricultural development. He said that as current chair of the AU "we have successfully hosted the 50th anniversary of the OAU/AU and played important role in mapping out the e 2013-2017 Strategic Plan of the AU Commission. With regard to IGAD, Ambassador Berhane explained that IGAD was evolving into an important sub-regional organization and it had accomplished commendable work in peace and security as well as regional integration. He pointed out that it had now become "a pillar organization within the sub-region."

In relation to regional integration, he noted the increasing inter-connections of the region through road links, telecom fiber lines, electricity connections, air transport links and increasing people-to-people relations. All this was laying the foundation for robust regional integration. At the same time, Ambassador Berhane said that there were problems associated with policy harmonization, trade facilitation and political security issues that still hindered regional integration efforts. These needed to be reduced before it would be possible to fully realize a strong and economically integrated sub-region. On a positive note, he pointed out that IGAD and East African Community were now working to come up with a minimal platform to work together. This he said, would help IGAD to learn from the East Africa Community as Kenya and Uganda were members of both organizations, and the EAC had, of course, managed to create a common market and created a strong relationship. He added that Ethiopia was working along with other members of IGAD to further strengthen both its secretariat and the organization as a whole in all aspects. Ambassador Berhane said that Ethiopia believed it could "contribute a lot by fighting poverty at home and by setting exemplary performance from which others can learn."

Questioned about the interplay between the sub-regional bodies and the African Union, Ambassador Berhane emphasized that since the founding of the OAU, Africa had made it clear that sub-region bodies should be considered as the building blocks for continental integration and the AU continued to work working along those lines. It realized he said that “continental integration can only be met if, and only if, sub-regional bodies are effectively mobilized.” Ambassador Berhane said that, unlike the EU’s approach where a few counties led the process and later other joined, Africa had charted out a gradual process of integration working through the Regional Economic Communities and then moving to the continental level.

The members of the Danish parliamentary delegation, expressing Denmark’s respect for the concept of “African solutions to African problems”, affirmed the Danish government’s desire to assist Africa and its acceptance of helping Africa on the basis of Africa’s own priorities. They also acknowledged the central role of the African Union in this respect. Ambassador Berhane outlined two significant areas where Denmark could help Africa. One was capacity building for Africa’s young labor force; the other was by increased investment in a continent which, he pointed out, had undoubtedly shown that it was going to be the next growth pole. He said that increasing job opportunities in Africa would both provide a panacea to Europe’s temporary economic crisis and help to bring an end to the growing problem of illegal migration. It would therefore be of mutual benefit to both continents.

The two sides also exchanged views on security and Ambassador Berhane briefed the delegation on the ways Ethiopia was helping to resolve conflicts in the region and strengthen a culture of dialogue and peaceful resolution in relation to Sudan and South Sudan and in Somalia. He cited Ethiopia’s assistance in the form of administrative expertise and scholarships to South Sudan to help build up institutional capacity there as part of Ethiopia’s effort to help its neighbors.

Wind and geothermal developments diversifying Ethiopia’s energy portfolio

Ethiopia’s energy portfolio has been provided with significant diversification in the last few days with the inauguration of the Ashegoda Wind Farm last week, and a few days earlier the agreement with Reykjavik Geothermal, an Iceland-US company, to develop geothermal energy at the Corbetti Caldera in the Rift Valley south of Shashemane. The Ashegoda Wind Farm in Tigray Regional State will have a total installed capacity of 120mw; while the Reykjavik Geothermal agreement will eventually produce 1,000mw. It will be the largest such development in Africa. Together these two events represent an important step in Ethiopia’s plans to generate 10,000mw by the end of its Growth and Transformation Plan in 2015.

The country’s energy sector has come a long way from its state a decade ago when the entire hydroelectric generating capacity was limited to a mere 714 mw. Following the launching of the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), the Government set the development of the energy sub-sector as one of the priority areas. It managed to raise this to 2000mw of generating capacity by the end of the PASDEP period, allowing it to implement the rural electrification access program during this period. This resulted in a massive increase in the number of towns and villages with access to electricity.

Building on the achievements of the PASDEP, the Growth and Transformation Plan set even more ambitious targets, to massively increase energy production and extensively expand the areas of cover. The Plan puts an important premium on increasing agricultural productivity, on industrial transformation and on infrastructure development. This also premises that energy will play an important and indeed indispensable role in achieving the objectives of the Plan in these areas. Under the strategic directions of developing renewable energy and expanding the energy infrastructure, the Plan aims to generate 10,000mw of electricity by the end of the period, to allow for the provision of adequate and reliable energy. This will significantly reduce the disparity between demand and supply, greatly increase per capita consumption, and generate substantial quantities of surplus power for export.

These goals, however, are not the only aim and measure of Ethiopia's efforts to jump the energy divide. Its leadership in issues of climate change negotiations is underlined by the demonstration of the government's commitment to invest in, and develop, clean and renewable energy sources not only for the domestic market but also for regional consumption. These objectives are set out in the country's Green Development Strategy which aims to consistently reduce carbon emissions steadily until it achieves a carbon-neutral economy by the year 2025. By inextricably linking the 'green growth' initiative with the energy development plan, the strategy ensures that the country's efforts to build its generating capacity to meet domestic and export demands will revolve around renewable energy sources, both traditional hydropower and alternative options. This can be expected to slash energy costs for neighboring countries as well as, more importantly, reducing carbon emission right across the region. Ethiopia's energy exports are also aimed at substituting much of the energy generation from non-renewable sources.

Among the renewable sources Ethiopia is developing, hydroelectric power plays a prominent role in the overall development plan of the country. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam alone, for example, is intended to generate 6,000mw of electricity out of the total 10,000mw planned by the end of the GTP period. At the same time, development and utilization of solar energy, biomass, biofuel, wind power and geothermal energy sources are all also included in the Green Development Strategy.

The recent agreement with Reykjavik Geothermal to develop the Corbetti geothermal energy site and the inauguration of Ashegoda Wind Farm should be seen within this 'green' economy framework. The planned geothermal plant in Corbetti is expected to cost US\$4 billion and will be financed through the Power Africa Initiative, the new Fund announced recently by the US President Barack Obama during his visit in Africa. The project, which is currently the largest geothermal development in the continent, will contribute both to Ethiopia's expanding energy capacity and more importantly to the diversification of its developed renewable energy sources. According to Reykjavik Geothermal the project will be one of the cheapest and the most technologically advanced in the world. On Wednesday (October 23) the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation signed an agreement to pay US\$630.7 million a year when the project is complete, with a tariff of 0.079 dollars per kWh for the first 500mw of the project; and 0.065 dollars per kWh for the second 500mw phase.

Equally, wind power possibly holds the biggest potential for Ethiopia. Prime Minister Hailemariam noted at the occasion of the inauguration of the Ashegoda Wind Farm that "various

studies have proved that there is potential to harness abundant wind energy resources in every region of Ethiopia.” Indeed, it is estimated that with an estimated generating capacity of 1.3 million mw of energy from wind, Ethiopia must be seen as one of the few countries where investment, both public and private, in wind power is bound to be favorable. The inauguration of Ashegoda Wind Farm is a testament to this potential. Ashegoda was built by the French company Vergnet SA, with the French bank BNP Paribas and the French Development Agency extending concessional loans for the project.

These two developments underline the committed efforts of the Ethiopian government to diversify its energy generation capacity and to develop alternative sources of renewable energy, to meet its goal of attaining a zero carbon, middle income economy by 2025. The size of the two projects also underlines the strong confidence that private investors and Ethiopia’s development partners have towards the country’s energy capacity and the strength of its overall strategic energy policy.