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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

Sudan spoke on behalf of African states at the celebration marking the 70th anniversary of the first meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, “the Parliament for all people”, held in New York on Monday (January 11). Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft said the General Assembly had become the “single most representative, deliberative body in the world” and highlighted achievements of the past year, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. President Lykketoft said “we must also expand the spirit of cooperation of 2015 into every area of work of the General Assembly in 2016.”

Ethiopia

An Ethiopian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom, made an official visit to the European Union in Brussels this week (January 12-14). During his visit he held discussions with Madame Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union and Vice President of the Commission, the EU Commissioner for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, and the anti-Terrorism Coordinator as well as a number of Members of the European Parliament. **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie, in a conversation with the Khaled Mabruk Alkhaled, Charge d’Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Addis Ababa, expressed his sadness over the attack on the Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Teheran and its consulate in Mashhad in Iran. Ambassador Taye noted the attack was a clear violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Diplomatic negotiations, he said, remained the internationally accepted ways to solve problems and called for continued and positive engagement between the two countries for peace and stability in the region.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie received copies of the letters of credence on Thursday (January 14) of the Ambassador of the UK to Ethiopia, Ambassador Susanna Morehead; of the Ambassador of Gabon, Ambassador Marie Edith T. Ye Doumbenery; and of the Ambassador of Namibia, Ambassador Monica Ndiliawike Nashandi.

The State Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Damene Darota, speaking at a panel discussion on the implementation of the Overseas Employment Proclamation on Tuesday (January 12), said the law would safeguard the rights of Ethiopians who work abroad as well as tackle the problems of human trafficking. It also defines responsibilities of agencies providing jobs overseas.

The Government on Tuesday (January 12) released a National Emergency Operational Plan for Drought Response in 2016. This lays out the sector plans in advance of the 2016 Humanitarian Requirements Document and identifies the relevant bodies for response. These include Government plans to import 627,639MT of relief food, WFP 23,980MT of food and JEOP 115,190MT of food to cover the needs of 10.2 million people affected by drought. The Plan also lays out the logistics for delivering relief to beneficiaries and ways to address possible bottlenecks as well as detailing a monitoring system.

Ethiopia and the World Bank on Tuesday (January 12) signed a loan agreement of US\$300 million to finance an urban productive safety net project. The project, to be implemented over five years at a total cost of US\$450 million, aims to improve incomes of urban poor households and establishing urban safety net mechanisms through provision of cash transfers and financial and technical support as well as build institutional capacity to deliver support. The Government will contribute 150 million dollars of the cost of the project which will support over 600,000 beneficiaries in 11 cities.

The Ethiopian Media Council, a self-regulatory body for media practice and professionalism for journalists in Ethiopia, was formally established at a conference held in the UN Economic Commission for Africa on Tuesday (January 12) this week. **(See article)**

A three-day Workshop on Environmental Diplomacy, co-organized by the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network (HoAREC&N) of Addis Ababa University has been held at the Gulele Botanic Gardens in Addis Ababa. **(See article)**

The Central Committee of the Oromo People's Democratic Organization passed a resolution to abandon the Addis Ababa and Finifine Surrounding Oromia Special Zone integrated development Master Plan on Wednesday (January 13).

Kenya

Kenyan authorities said Wednesday (January 13) that they had restored security along the border with Somalia in Mandera County by deploying Kenya Defense Forces (KDF), paramilitary police and members of the Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU). The enhanced security follows the recent killing of three security officers and two passengers in a bus last month.

Somalia

The National Consultative Forum meeting in Kismayo was opened by President Mohamud on Thursday (January 14). The meeting to decide on the processes for the election later this year is being attended by the Speaker of the Federal Parliament, the Federal Prime Minister, the

regional presidents, political leaders, government officials and international representatives (**See article**)

US President, Barrack Obama has appointed a new ambassador to Somalia, Stephen Michael Schwartz, who has worked with the US department of Foreign Affairs in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands and has also served as head of the West African desk in the State Department.

The European Union on Wednesday (January 13) said it was “deeply concerned by reports of at least four executions in Somaliland on 11th January and with reports of an execution in Mogadishu on 3rd January.” A statement from the Heads of Missions of the European Union and Member States called upon Somalia and Somaliland authorities to immediately halt the executions of death sentences as a first step towards adopting appropriate legislation to abolish the death penalty.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said 1 million people face food insecurity in Somalia and another 3.9 million remain highly vulnerable to shocks in Somalia. UN Agencies will launch an appeal next week for the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan which is requesting for 885 million dollars to reach 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, while at the same time linking humanitarian action and durable solutions.

A two-day national conference on Somalia media strategy development ended in Mogadishu on Tuesday (January 12) as participants reviewed and agreed on the implementation of a “Somali Media Development Strategy” for the next five years. Organized by the Federal Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, the conference also discussed the implementation of the new media law signed by President Mohamud at the weekend. Media organizations have expressed concerns that the law concentrates on restrictions on media activities, and fear it will mean censorship of criticism.

The UK’s Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant General John Lorimer, on a visit to Mogadishu assured Somalia of UK support against militancy after talks with Defense Minister, Abdikadir Sheikh Ali Dini.

Chief of Police, General Mohamed Sheikh Hassan who is on an official visit in Turkey has held high-level talks with senior Turkish security officials, urging Turkish police to help Somalia in its struggle to rebuild its army and security forces. Turkish officials expressed support for the request.

South Sudan

A statement from the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission on Tuesday this week (January 12) said the Parties had “committed to naming their ministers for the Transitional Government of National Unity by 14 January, and the Transitional Government of National Unity would be formed by 22 January 2016”

President Salva Kiir registered the SPLM with the Political Parties Council in Juba on Wednesday (January 13) a necessity for participation in future elections and appealed to his supporters to mobilize votes for him in the elections due to be conducted in 2018.

Sudan

Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour delivered a message from President Omer al-Bashir to Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah El Sisi on Sunday (January 10). Mr. Ghandour, who said Sudan was “sure about the safety” of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, underlined the common interests of the three countries as well as Sudan’s commitment not to harm Egypt's water rights.

Foreign Affairs Minister Ibrahim Ghandour, on a two day official visit to Cairo at the invitation of Egypt’s Foreign Minister Samih Shokri, held talks on ways to develop bilateral relations. The two ministers co-chaired a meeting of the Sudanese/Egyptian Joint Political Consultation Committee and discussed preparations for the upcoming meeting of the Joint Egypt-Sudan Presidential Committee in Cairo.

Minister of Justice Awad al-Hassan al-Nour said on Monday (January 11) that Sudan was ready to receive the UN independent expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan, Aristide Nononsi, who is due to assess the situation of human rights in the country particularly in Darfur and South Kordofan. The Minister said “Sudan has met much of its national obligations towards promoting human right.” It is due to present its report to the UN Human Rights Council in February for discussion in May,

The Darfur referendum commission announced this week that a referendum on the administrative status of Darfur will be held during three days from 11 to 13 April on whether or not the region will keep its five states or reunite as one entity with a semi-autonomous administration. The referendum is a requirement of the July 2011 Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. Voter registration will begin on February 8.

The Sudanese Ministry of Information said on Monday (January 11) that it soon plans to launch a centre to monitor news and reports broadcast on the Internet. Information Minister Ahmad Balal Osman said this was dictated by the need to deal seriously with the lies of the electronic media.

Dr. Tedros leads an Ethiopian delegation to the EU

An Ethiopian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom, made an official visit to the European Union in Brussels this week (January 12-14). The visit started with a meeting with Mr. Neven Mimica, Commissioner for Development Cooperation of the European Union. The discussion covered various areas of bilateral and regional partnership, Ethiopia’s progress on different social and economic frontiers and ways to expand this, development cooperation frameworks and regional cooperation. The two sides reiterated that the EU-Ethiopia cooperation framework is comprehensive, advanced and strategic, and that it addressed all major frontiers of development and political partnership. This was reasonable and essential. Dr. Tedros

in using the opportunity to underline the value of Ethiopia/European Union relations commended EU support for the success of Ethiopia's First Growth and Transformation Plan and expressed the certainty that it would play a significant role in the success of the Second Growth and Transformation Plan launched last year.. Dr. Tedros noted that the EU-Ethiopia partnership has produced notable accomplishments in a score of development areas and had continued to encourage change, bring growth and tackle barriers to development in the Horn of Africa.

Mr. Mimica emphasized that the European Union appreciated and recognized the achievements of Ethiopia in social and economic development and said the EU would continue to support this. He noted that Ethiopia was among the highest beneficiaries of the EU fund among the ACP countries. Mr. Mimica said that the EU would further boost its development partnership with Ethiopia following the 2015 year review of the previous year's activities. The two sides also discussed humanitarian cooperation, the implementation of the EU Trust Fund and cooperation on migration. Ethiopia is receiving 745 million Euros from the Fifth EDF which carries through to 2020. It has so far effectively utilized 200 million Euros and has submitted financial implementation agreements for another 250 million Euros to the Commission and requested the Commissioner to expedite the release of the funds.

Dr. Tedros also met with Mr. Gilles de Kerchove, European Union anti-Terrorism Coordinator with whom discussions focused on peace and security and anti-terrorism efforts, as well as Ethiopia's role in peace and stability in the region. They reviewed the current cooperation in peace and security and associated areas between the European Union and Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa, and agreed on further strengthening and boosting cooperation between the two in the years ahead. Mr. de Kerchove and his delegation commended Ethiopia's significant role in maintaining peace and stability in the Horn of Africa as well as on integration. Mr. de Kerchove expressed solidarity with Ethiopia and the fight against fundamentalism and terrorism. He also briefed the Ethiopian delegation on the challenges of terrorism in Europe as well in events of the last year. Since Ethiopia is a stable country in a chaotic and unstable region, the EU is looking to consider cooperation in the intelligence area. Dr. Tedros shared ideas about terrorism and fundamentalism, which he described as a mutual concern for both Europe and Africa, and he underlined the volatility of the Horn of Africa. He emphasized the importance of starting counter-terrorist activities in advance of the open challenge of terrorist attacks. The Minister said that although Ethiopia had a culture of tolerance between its peoples, nevertheless cooperation in the region was demanding as the region was a hotspot of problems. The delegations also shared ideas on the current crises in the Middle East and the spillover effects in the Horn of Africa, before reaching a comprehensive understanding on future cooperation on anti-terrorism and on fighting destabilizing agents in the region.

The same day the Ethiopian delegation met with the European Union Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, Mr. Christos Styliandes to discuss humanitarian affairs, the problems of recovering from the El-Nino-induced drought-affected areas in Ethiopia and support for the reestablishment of refugees. Mr. Styliandes said that Ethiopia was doing well in regard to humanitarian and refugee problems, and he described Ethiopia as a stable and hospitable island in the region. Raising the issue of the recent drought, he noted that the El-Nino phenomenon needs quick responses as it might need resettlement. He mentioned that the EU was looking for an up-to-date assessment of the situation to allow for quick response. The Commissioner also

noted Ethiopia's important role in peace negotiations and stabilization efforts in South Sudan and Somalia, without which humanitarian conditions would have been much worse.

Dr. Tedros underlined Ethiopia's appreciation for the EU's support in various areas, not just in quantity but also in quality and expertise. It was not, he said, taken for granted. Referring to the issue of drought-affected people and the needed rehabilitation, the Minister underlined the gap between what was required and what had been pledged. For the 10.2 million people in need of aid, requirements stood at US\$1.4 billion. He said that the Government had so far spent some \$300 million USD and a similar sum had been pledged by donors. The gap was therefore about US\$800 million and this needed to be filled. Dr. Tedros also pointed out that Ethiopia hosted the largest number of refugees, and this was increasing daily. More due concern and cooperation was needed.

Dr. Tedros met with the Chairperson of the Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Development, Linda McAven on Tuesday and discussed environmentally sustainable development and regional integration partnerships. Dr. Tedros briefed Ms. McAven on Ethiopia's determination to develop an environmentally friendly and green development path and sustainable growth, noting the massive reforestation that the country had accomplished. Ms McAven shared her recognition of Ethiopia's achievements in development, peace and security and in the hosting of refugees. She hailed its green economy strategy and accomplishments and said the EU would continue its close cooperation with Ethiopia in areas of strategic partnership.

On their second day in Brussels, the Ethiopian delegation also met with a number of other EU policy makers and high level officials including Louis Mitchel, former European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, and Madame Federica Mogherini, High Representative and Vice President of the Commission. In the meeting with Mr. Mitchel, Dr. Tedros discussed the buildup of parliamentary friendship, Ethiopia's economic performance in development fund implementation and on possible cooperation to enhance Ethiopia's media sector as well as the promotion of regional peace and security. Reflecting on Ethiopia's economic performances Dr. Tedros noted that a number of international rating institutions had rated Ethiopia's economic performance rating up to B+ and the country's economy was now the fourth largest in sub-Saharan Africa. He said Ethiopia's development fund implementation was well recognized, adding that the country had successfully accomplished its First Growth and Transformation Plan and was now heading into the Second Plan. He emphasized the importance of the discussions for further enhancement of the partnership with the EU for the implementation of the Second GTP. Mr. Mitchel, who praised Ethiopia's economic performance as well as its ongoing efforts to maintain regional peace and stability, hailed Ethiopia as a model in proper development fund implementation. He said he had been following its progress for more than a decade and he praised Ethiopia, and Rwanda, as two countries which had put in place successful systems for a proper implementation of development funds. He said the European Parliament was ready to enhance its cooperation with Ethiopia on a wider scale and that economic as well as parliamentary partnerships should be bolstered further.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros and his delegation also held a successful meeting with the European Union High Representative, Vice-President Fredrica Mogherini, on Wednesday (January 13). The EU press release issued after the meeting underlined that the European Union

would continue the EU strategic engagement with Ethiopia and would remain Ethiopia's first partner in its reforms for development and the promotion of social and economic growth through its development cooperation programs. An EU-Ethiopia Business Forum will be organized later this year. It noted that Ethiopia also benefits from humanitarian support to help local populations affected by two consecutive droughts and the current El Nino phenomenon. The High Representative and Dr. Tedros discussed the follow up of the signature of the EU-Ethiopia Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility in November last year on the margins of the La Valletta Summit. It was agreed that the EU and Ethiopia would "work together to tackle irregular migration, including return, and to better take advantage of the opportunities provided by well-managed migration." High Representative Mogherini recognized Ethiopia's significant effort in hosting more than 700 000 refugees and she and Dr. Tedros welcomed the fact that the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa had already started financing projects in Ethiopia. The press release noted the importance of a strong civil society in Ethiopia, and the importance of freedom of expression and association and inclusive politics was also discussed as well as the recent unrest in Oromia and Amhara regions. The situation in the Horn of Africa and the wider Red Sea region was also on the agenda, including the situation in South Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia, and the press release noted that Ethiopia was playing a crucial role in the region in terms of peace and security. The EU would continue to support these efforts.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and progress in South Sudan

Since its first meeting, (27 November 2015), the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) established to oversee the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan has been playing a key role in monitoring the progress of the peace agreement and of the work of the ceasefire monitors. The JMEC, organized by the IGAD monitors, includes representatives of all the groups that signed the peace agreement, and also representatives of the international community and neighboring countries and also civil society and religious leaders. It is chaired by Festus Gontebanye Mogae, former President of Botswana.

The mandate of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission is clear. It is responsible for monitoring and overseeing the implementation of the Peace Agreement and the mandate and tasks of the Transitional Government of National Unity, including the adherence of the Parties to the agreed timelines and implementation schedule. It also oversees the work of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (and its successor mechanism, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM,)), the Economic and Financial Management Authority (EFMA), the Strategic Defense and Security Review Board (SDSRB), the National Elections Commission (NEC), and all other transitional institutions and mechanisms created by the Peace Agreement and established as part of the Transitional Government. Following the setting up of the Transitional Government, the JMEC will also negotiate with the Government and define functions that the Government can cede to JMEC to break deadlocks and ensure implementation. The JMEC is expected to hold regularly monthly meetings. It reports to the AU, the IGAD Chair and to the UN Security Council and is expected to provide three monthly progress reports.

On Thursday last week (January 7), the JMEC announced that South Sudan's Government and the SPLM-IO had agreed on how to share the country's ministerial positions for the proposed Transitional Government of National Unity. The parties to the Peace Agreement, signed in August last year to end 21 months of violent conflict in South Sudan, had selected their respective quotas in dividing up 30 national ministerial positions in accordance with power sharing agreement between the South Sudan Government, the SPLM-IO, the SPLM (Former Detainees) and other non-armed political parties.

The Government was allocated the positions of Ministers of Finance and Planning, Defense and Veterans' Affairs, Justice and Constitutional Affairs Information, Communication Technology and Postal Services, the Office of the President, Trade and Industry, Wildlife, Conservation and Tourism, Roads and Bridges;, Parliamentary Affairs, National Security, Health, Culture, Youth and Sports, Gender, Child and Social Welfare, General Education and Instruction, Livestock and Fisheries and, Environment and Forestry. The SPLM-In-Opposition (SPLM-IO) have acquired the posts of Ministers of Petroleum, Interior, Water Resources and Irrigation, Labor, Public Service and Human Resources Development, Federal Affairs, Higher Education, Science and Technology, Energy and Dams, Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Land, Housing and Urban Development and Mining. The SPLM (Former Detainees) took Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Transport; and Cabinet Affairs and Agriculture and Food Security were assigned to the other non-armed political parties.

In an interview with the Sudan Tribune, the spokesman of the opposition leadership, James Gatdet Dak said "I wouldn't say we are satisfied with the selected 10 ministerial positions. But we have accepted them and we are okay with the outcome." He added that "the consensus was a giant step towards formation of transitional government of national unity." Dak also said that Riek Machar would announce the names of the ministers assigned for those ten positions towards the end of the week. The leader of the Democratic Change party, formerly the SPLM-DC party one of the non-armed parties, welcomed the agreement on the allocation of ministerial portfolios by parties to the conflict. Dr. Lam Akol described the consensus as a positive agreement. "It means that the implementation of the peace process is beginning and it means that one step towards forming the transitional government of national unity has been taken." Indeed, this was a decisive and necessary move towards forming the Transitional Government and towards the deployment of the Joint Integrated Police and Military Forces. It was one of the preconditions listed by the SPLM-IO before its leaders would consider returning to Juba.

The next step is the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity, and the Chairperson of the JMEC has stated this will be done by January 22. After a meeting on Tuesday this week (January 12), which agreed to allow unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of the country, the JMEC issued a statement that the parties had not yet nominated their officials to fill the selected positions but the Parties had "committed to naming their ministers for the Transitional Government of National Unity by 14 January, and that the Transitional Government of National Unity would be formed by 22 January 2016, as provided for in the implementation calendar issued earlier by JMEC." Former vice-president and first vice-president designate, Riek Machar, is expected to return to the national capital, Juba, for the formation of the government. The statement added: "Additionally, the Parties committed to the expeditious

convening of the Strategic Defense and Security Review Board, to begin the vital process of security sector reform and transformation provided for in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.”

The Transitional Government will operate for thirty months as a coalition government before elections take place at the end of the transitional period in 2018. On Wednesday this week, President Salva Kiir handed the necessary documents for the registration of the SPLM to the Political Parties Council (PPC), and said that when the time came for the elections people should mobilize and called on his supporters to increase their numbers and give all the votes to my box. All political parties have to be registered by January 15 in order to participate in the electoral process at the end of the Transitional Government’s period in office. There are over 20 political parties in South Sudan but it is not clear how many have yet registered.

The creation of the Transitional Government of National Unity will, in turn, have the job of resolving some of the more contentious and controversial matters remaining. These include the Presidential creation of 18 new states, making a total of 28 states rather than the current constitutionally recognized 10 states. During an interview in Juba, the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission noted that the creation of twenty eight States in South Sudan has been a complicated matter and it needed to be discussed further as it was a breach of the Peace Agreement, signed when there were only 10 states. Mr. Mogae said he would rather focus on formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity for the moment and leave the issue of the states for the time being. He said: “the states are a complicating factor for now... but we are going to be concentrating on the positive side on the implementation of formation of transitional government of National Unity”. The debate on whether to form the Government of National Unity before resolving necessary and needed amendments to the constitution, including the number of states, is still hanging. Originally, the Government rejected calls to create more states during the two-year of peace negotiations in Addis Ababa with the opposition factions, and refused an SPLM-IO suggestion to create 21 federal states in the country.

Ethiopia’s Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom met with the JMEC Chairman on Wednesday last week (January 6) to discuss the various challenges and opportunities offered by the August Peace Agreement. Mr. Mogae emphasized his belief that despite apparent differences the two parties would manage to resolve the conflict, set up a Transitional Government of National Unity and bring a sustainable peace to South Sudan. Mr. Mogae praised IGAD leaders and all other partners in the IGAD-PLUS for their demonstration of unity of purpose and commitment to bringing peace to South Sudan. Dr. Tedros commended Mr. Mogae for accepting the responsibility of monitoring the implementation of South Sudan's peace deal and hailed the role the JMEC was already playing to promote peace and stability in South Sudan. Dr. Tedros repeated the assurances given by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desselegn, Chair of IGAD, and himself, that Ethiopia remained committed to support every effort that aimed at bringing a lasting peace and stability to the peoples of South Sudan.

Somalia’s National Consultative Forum meets in Kismayo

The National Consultative Forum officially convened on Thursday in Kismayo, in Somalia's Jubaland State. The opening ceremony was presided over by Federal President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and attended by the Speaker of the Federal Parliament, Mohamed Osman Joweri, Federal Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, the different regional presidents, political leaders, government officials and international representatives. The previous meetings of the National Consultative Forum have been in Mogadishu and this latest meeting in Kismayo is expected to be the final session, and produce an agreed process for election later this year. At the last meeting, last month, no decision was reached over the roadmap for the elections for parliament due in August.

Somalia's Provisional Constitution lays down a number of state building tasks to be completed before the country's political transition is complete. These were included in the Government's Vision 2016 document which categorized the tasks under the headings of a Constitutional Review, the establishment of the Federal System and democratization. The Government announced last July that it would not be possible to organize a one-person one-vote for the election due in August 2016 because of continuing security concerns. It set up a National Consultative Forum, made up of the leaders of the federal government, the regional administrations and civil society to organize public consultations on possible alternative options for the election. The Forum presented four electoral options for consideration to the public in a series of consultations around the country and then discussed the responses. The National Consultative Forum meeting in December found that the regional consultations produced no overall agreement though the most popular options were either district-based or clan-based models for the election. It therefore produced a "Mogadishu Declaration" and said the decision over the election should take place at the Kismayo meeting in January.

In the "Mogadishu Declaration" the Forum concluded that, given the divergent views on the four electoral models, only a model combining the elements from each of them could ensure an electoral process that reflects the preferences and critical conditions stipulated by the Somali people. It welcomed the spirit of compromise and agreed several principles: that Parliament as a whole should have representation based on balance between the constituency and clan; and that electoral colleges, with representation from women, youth and civil society, would convene and vote in the Federal member state capitals. There should also be a minimum fixed number of seats reserved for women in both houses of Parliament and enhanced representation of youth and marginalized groups. A political roadmap should be developed and agreed for the period from the present until implementation of the electoral process in 2016, and also from 2016 to 2020 to deliver universal suffrage elections in 2020. This should be an integral part of the final agreement on the electoral process for 2016.

Criticisms have been raised over all the various options which include the current clan-based model and a district-based option. The current model offers no link between MPs and geographic constituencies and is accused of providing opportunities for corruption in the selection of MPs though it does guarantee representation of minorities and small clans in the legislature. A district-based electoral model would inevitably keep smaller clans out of parliament as the dominant communities in a district would take all the district seats for themselves. An "Enhanced Legitimacy" model has also been suggested, a hybrid of the 4.5 clan-based formula and a district system of allocating parliamentary seats. A third alternative is for a one-year

extension of the current Parliament, though the Federal Government and the international community have repeatedly ruled out any extensions. The final alternative is the suggestion of a region-based allocation of parliamentary seat with 15 or so seats for each of the 18 regions identified by the draft constitution and with each region required to allocate agreed seats to minority groups.

The central element in all this remains the need to reach agreement between the Federal Administration and the emerging and existing Federal States as well as to accommodate and balance the interests of the electorate in the election process.

The National Consultative Forum in Kismayo was due to start at the beginning of the week but its opening was delayed until Thursday because President Mohamud officially opened the state formation conference in Jowhar for the creation of a state from the two regions of Hiiraan and Middle Shebelle on Tuesday (January 12). The state formation conference is expected to run for the next three months and culminate with the election of a state president preceding the establishment of a parliament from the two regions. The conference has drawn delegates from all across the two regions and in his opening remarks, the President called on the delegates and all stakeholders of the process to put their minds together in the coming weeks to achieve a result which will take into consideration the views and aspirations of the people of the two regions. He said "I call on the people of Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle to take a unified approach towards the formation of a state which will be home to the people of these two regions. I also appeal to investors to take part in building these cities and making them investments hubs in central Somalia." The President said the Federal Government would "spare no efforts to complete this process to enable the formation of an administration for the two regions," and called on the elders from Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle regions "to burn the candle at both sides and form a unanimous federal state for both provinces."

The state formation process was supposed to start in September last year but was put off after differences emerged between elders over the choice of the proposed state capital and choice of presidential candidates. Hiiraan elders had demanded their region's capital be picked as the proposed state's capital and as the conference's venue as the price for endorsement for the formation of an inter-regional state with Middle Shabelle. Those suggestions were rejected by Middle Shabelle. It was only after a series of consultations with the Federal Government that agreement was reached to have the headquarters of the state in Bulu Burde, Hiiraan region, and for the state president to come from Middle Shabelle. The state formation conference was then able to go ahead Jowhar but the opening session in Jowhar was boycotted by some Hiiraan elders. Some elders and politicians in Belet Weyne in Hiiraan also held their own conference on Tuesday this week, emphasizing the complexities surrounding the state's formation process, underlining the lack of consensus and the rivalry among clans in the two regions.

The World Bank's Global Economic Prospect Report for 2016

Over the last two decades, Ethiopia's rapid economic growth and associated developments have made real progress towards the ambitious aims for the country's renaissance. They have

encouraged a real belief that this can be achieved and a middle-income economy reached within the next decade or so, offering real prospects of winning the war on poverty. With international and regional organizations regularly beginning to highlight the turnaround in Ethiopia's economic performance, even the normally reluctant western media has started to address the positive reports about the country. Indeed, the rising number of positive reports and the number of major projects now visible on the ground have encouraged both the media and international organizations and groups to examine Ethiopia's progress more closely.

The latest World Bank Group's report on the global economic prospects is a case in point. The Global Economic Prospect Report for 2016 was released on Wednesday last week (January 6). This flagship report of the World Bank is a study offering a detailed outlook for the global economy and for each of the world's emerging market regions for the next year. The Report analyzes a number of themes of particular importance to policy makers in emerging markets as well as in other areas. These themes include consideration of how the slowdown in major emerging markets affects the rest of the world and covers the different regions and their neighbors. The Report also examines capital controls and other strategies that countries with different exchange rate regimes can use to shield themselves more effectively from financial turmoil.

Overall, the Bank's Report suggests that after global growth disappointed again last year, slowing to 2.4%, recovery is expected to be slower than previously thought. It projects growth to reach 2.9% this year as 'a modest recovery in advanced economies continues and activity stabilizes among major commodity exporters.' It also notes that forecasts are subject to substantial downside risks and warns that a more protracted slowdown across the larger emerging markets could affect other developing economies and hold back recovery. It said "a broad-based slowdown across developing countries could pose a threat to hard-won gains in raising people out of poverty", warning that "Simultaneous weakness in most major emerging markets is a concern for achieving the goals of poverty reduction and shared prosperity because those countries have been powerful contributors to global growth for the past decade". It notes that a lack of growth in developing countries "poses a threat to hard-won gains in raising people out of poverty". Therefore, World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim, said with more than 40 percent of the world's poor living in the developing countries where growth slowed in 2015, they "should focus on building resilience to a weaker economic environment and shielding the most vulnerable." He added "the benefits from reforms to governance and business conditions are potentially large and could help offset the effects of slow growth in larger economies."

While growth in low-income countries generally remained robust in 2015, though slowing to 5.1% from 6.1% in 2014, as far as sub-Saharan Africa was concerned, the World Bank Group expected this to grow by 4.2% in 2016, up from 3.4% in 2015. This projection, however, is based on the assumption that electricity constraints will ease this year and commodity prices will stabilize. Many of these countries have limited exposure to the commodities that are experiencing the most severe decline in prices. Meanwhile, large-scale investment projects in energy and transport are ongoing, consumer spending remains robust, boosted by lower fuel prices, and despite low minerals prices, and mining output is set to rise in several countries. In fact, the prospects for economic growth were seen as particularly strong in several of the largest

low-income countries with public investment, rising farm output and mining investments providing the basis for growth.

Public investment, consumer spending, and mining production will help Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Tanzania sustain rapid growth in 2016 and beyond, with the Democratic Republic of Congo (8.6%), Cote d'Ivoire (8.3%) and Ethiopia (10.2%) having the highest increases. The Report suggests that these three countries and Niger will also have growth rates of 9% or over in 2017. With regard to Ethiopia, the 2016 Report noted that the country had registered substantive results for some years and anticipated it would continue to do so in the coming years. Indeed, according to the World Bank, Ethiopia's economic growth of 10.2 percent in 2015 was produced by good harvests, rising public investment, and booming manufacturing and construction. The Bank forecast that public investment, consumer spending, and mining production would help Ethiopia to sustain this growth. It also noted that in oil-importing countries, including Ethiopia and Rwanda, low commodity prices supported economic growth in 2015. In addition the Report said that the economies of Ethiopia, Mozambique and Tanzania were all getting substantial Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). It suggested that large-scale investment projects in mining, energy and transport, consumer spending, and public investment would help to further strengthen economic growth in Ethiopia, Mozambique and Rwanda specifically. Improvements in the power supply in Ethiopia and Rwanda were singled out as registering strong economic support.

The report commended Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania's effort for utilizing effectively large scale infrastructure investment, mineral development and consumer spending and demonstrated the potential these had to support their economies. These developments should be strengthened. The World Bank Report recommended that in a number of low-income, non-oil, commodity exporting countries like Ethiopia, governments should continue to invest heavily in energy and transport infrastructure in a bid to improve the operational environment for growth, drawing in part on the proceeds from bond issuance, public-private partnerships, donor aid and, in some cases, financing from Chinese entities. While it accepts debt levels may rise, the World Bank believes they will remain manageable in most low-income countries as growth has been, and will continue to be, robust.

Ethiopia is aiming to become one of Africa's top five tourist destinations

Ethiopia can be one of the five leading countries for tourist destinations in Africa, if it properly implements its Sustainable Tourism Master Plan by 2020, according to Dr. Ray Muntida, Advisor to the IGAD Sustainable Tourism Master Plan. Currently tourism in Ethiopia generates about US\$2.9 billion dollars for the economy annually, close to a million jobs and about 4.5% of GDP. The Government has made it clear it wants to increase the number of tourists during the Second Growth and Transformation Plan (2015/16 – 2019/20) significantly. In August last year, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced ambitious plans to triple foreign visitors to more than 2.5 million by 2020 to become Africa's top tourist destination by same year. Last financial year, 770,000 tourists visited Ethiopia and provided US\$2.9 million in revenue. The Ministry

hopes to increase the number of tourists to one million and the revenue to well over US\$3billion by end of this Ethiopian budget year.

Among the moves taken over the last year or two to revitalize and expand the tourism sector's infrastructure development have been the 'Sustainable Tourism Development Project' and the creation of a Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP), as well as the setting up of the newly established 'Ethiopian Tourism Organization (ETO), and then the creation of a high-level Tourism Transformation Council (TTC) chaired by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn. These along with a number of other initiatives and actions make it clear the sector is breaking out of its past inaction and the Government is taking the tourism sector seriously as a means of generating revenue for the nation. It had the aim of encouraging the sector to become one of the frontline activities in working to eradicate poverty.

Both numbers and revenue for the first quarter of this budget year showed an increase over the previous year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. With the infrastructure of the sector starting to transform itself this has helped to create a good impression for the outside world and international media outlets and tourism publications. A number of tourism guides have begun to list Ethiopia as a place to visit. Such widely acclaimed publications as Rough Guides and Lonely Planet rated Ethiopia last year as one of the most impressive tourist destinations. International organizations including the United Nations World Tourism Organization also has praised the country's efforts to upgrade the infrastructure and noted the untapped cultural and natural resources that are to be seen in Ethiopia.

Last week, Al Jazeera said in a piece entitled "Tourism and Natural Treasures to pull Ethiopia out of poverty" noted that "Key tourism factors such as easy and fast growing air access, personal safety and local hospitality, rapid economic growth and, above all, fascinating discoveries to be made, bode very well for rapid tourism growth". Much of this is already a reality in Ethiopia and there is a real focus developing on infrastructure and tourist destinations development. In these efforts, which Al Jazeera refers to as supporting factors for Ethiopia's tourism sector development, it suggests is the greatest strength for tourism in Ethiopia. The country, it says, still has so many diverse cultures, landscapes and wildlife areas that can be developed for tourist itineraries. It notes the Simien and Bale Mountains national parks; the forests of the South; the Sof Omar Caves; the Danakil Desert location where Lucy was found, lending weight to Ethiopia's claim to be the cradle of humanity.

Last year, among the growing recognition of its tourist potential and development, Ethiopia was also selected as "Best Tourism Destination" by the representatives of the 28 countries on the General Assembly of the European Council on Tourism and Trade (ECTT) . This Council evaluated a list of 31 candidates for the title of World Best Tourist Destination for 2015, and chose Ethiopia. This is one of the highest honors for achievements in tourism and is offered to countries that comply with the principles of the United Nations Tourism Division, UNESCO and ECTT on fair and ethical tourism, safety standards and preservation of historic and cultural sites and destinations. The ECTT President, Professor Dr. Anton Caragea, said that "the Government of Ethiopia is recognizing the importance of tourism as a key facilitator for the country development and international promotion, creating exemplary structures like its Tourism Transformation Council, investing in infrastructure and capacity building, creating a special team

under the Prime Minister’s leadership for destination promotion and management and protecting the cultural, natural and historical patrimony of the country.” He noted that the community-based, social-oriented tourism, promoted by Prime Minister Hailemariam, as a perfect way of sharing revenue, growing income and supporting marginal and rural community development. Professor Caragea concluded by adding that “Ethiopia is from today a perfect, safe and outstanding place to visit, the county’s gates are opened and all world tourism experts have expressed their confidence in the potential and future of tourism in Ethiopia.”

The report on the presentation of the award gave reasons for awarding the World Best Tourist Destination for 2015 Prize to Ethiopia. These were: “The excellent preservation of humanity landmarks such as: ruins of the city of Aksum- the heart of ancient Ethiopia, FasilGhebbi- the residence of the Ethiopian emperors during the 16th and 17th century, HararJugol- 82 mosques, 102 shrines, and unique interior design in the townhouses, Lalibela- holy site encompassing eleven medieval stone carved churches from the 13th century, Konso Cultural Landscape (containing 55 kilometers of stonewalled terraces and fortified settlements), Lower Valley of the Awash-where humanity made his first steps and where was found the Eve of all mankind- the Lucy fossils, the Lower Valley of the Omo also containing fragments pertaining to early humanity development and the fossils of Homo Gracilis.” It also noted that all these were recognized as being of world significance and registered as UNESCO World heritage monuments.

The report goes on to state that “the rich cultural and historical legacy of Ethiopia is not confined to the previous presented list, and new prominent landmarks such as the Sheik Hussein, religious, cultural and historical site; Melka Kunture, a Paleolithic site in the upper Awash Valley; the Gedeo Cultural and Natural Landscape; the Bale Mountains National Park; Sof Omar Cave, the longest cave in Ethiopia at 15.1 kilometers long and the longest system of caves in Africa, and sacred for Islam and for the local Oromo population were added.” It also noted that to fully grasp the potential of Ethiopia’s natural parks and reservations we must look at the potential of Simien National Park garnering mountain peaks, deep valleys, and sharp precipices dropping about 1,500 m. It said all these regions and national parks were a model of achieving ecological and green tourism that should be recognized throughout the world. It referred to Ethiopia as a perfect center for safari and adventure tourism, offering large areas suitable for this special kind of tourism. It had the necessary infrastructure to welcome the adventure seeker, as well as providing safety and peace, making the country, one of the world’s top adventure destinations.

The establishment of an Ethiopian Media Council

The Ethiopian Media Council was formally established at a conference held in the UN Economic Commission for Africa on Tuesday (January 12) this week. The Council is composed of the 18 print and broadcast media outlets which have signed up the Council’s Code of Conduct. The Council is a self-regulatory body for media practice and professionalism for journalists in Ethiopia. The Council is expected to create awareness about freedom of expression among the public and act as a mediator and arbitrator in cases where disputes and grievances with relation

to media arise. The Ethiopian Media Council Organizing Committee has been doing the groundwork to organize the conference for a year and a half, consulting with all relevant stakeholders in the sector and conferring with media experts abroad, among other things, to finalize the process of creating a Media Council.

The Council has an Executive committee of five members, two drawn from the print media (Reporter and Q'um Neger), two from broadcasting (EBC and private broadcasting); and one from the Ethiopian Journalists Association. The Assembly is made up of the 18 members which have signed the Code of Conduct, and these will make up the Council's Assembly which elects the members of the Council's Ombudsman's Office and its 18 member Ethics' Panel. Both these bodies are made up of outsiders. The Council hopes to get its finance from membership contributions, donations from domestic sources and fundraising activities. Publishers, broadcasters, professional journalists' associations and private and public journalists' schools can become members of the Council on a voluntary basis.

The Head of the Government Communication Affairs Office, Minister Getachew Reda, opened the Conference with a key note speech welcoming the establishment of the Council and underlining the Government's wish to see a media that would be effective and competent to be able to influence Ethiopian society. This, he underlined, meant the need to hold a balance between freedom of operation and of responsibility. He said the Government believed that the formation of the Media Council would be an instrument to help the country's media do its job properly. The Government fully supported the idea of the Council and the activities of the Council and its members. Ato Getachew noted that it was important that the Council should fund itself as this would allow it to have the strength to allow it to operate independently and not be affected by others, whether Government, international organizations or private businesses. He said, "Partnership, not confrontation, within media houses is important. A flourishing and responsible media is important in pinpointing the weakness of the government." He noted the Government of Ethiopia was committed to constructively engage in the Council's organized efforts of forging national consensus and enhancing the process of democratization in the country.

Ms. Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, UN Resident Coordinator, also addressed the Conference., describing the occasion as a notable milestone and as a possible "true game changer in the history of Ethiopian media" She noted that in October 2014, the United Nations had the pleasure to host a national media consultation that generated passionate and detailed discussion that had helped refine the draft constitution and code of conduct for the Council. She commended those present for the determination they had shown in coming up with a workable consensus for the way forward.

She noted that the challenges in establishing a media council were not unique to Ethiopia, and she welcomed the fact that the members of the council had discussed and learnt from the experiences of other countries. Ms. Eziakonwa-Onochie stressed that the establishment of the media council in Ethiopia, was not, and could not be, an end in itself. "Today," she added, "actually marks the beginning of an exciting and challenging chapter." She underlined that research on the relevance and sustainability of media councils called for such a body to have "strong credibility with all stakeholders; continued broad consensus and support from all

stakeholders”. It also called for vigorous and imaginative management and for the Council to be “self- sustainable, proactively seeking reliable channels and forms of funding.”

Ms. Eziakonwa-Onochie pointed out that the media is a powerfully inquisitive tool that shines light on triumphs as well as failures “and even more importantly provokes deep reflection and dialogue.” She said it can be a powerful ally in the search for economic transformation and human development. “The Ethiopia Media Council”, she said “has the opportunity to be a beacon of hope for strengthening local media to play that role effectively.” She added that the United Nations in Ethiopia was committed to continue to support efforts to build a strong media council that would help promote ethical, professional and excellence in Ethiopian journalism. This would also promote dialogue that pushes forward the development of the country, and she concluded; “as 2016 ushers in a new development agenda, we count on men and women of the media world to keep us honest and to insist on balanced objective reporting in favor of poverty reduction.”

A Workshop on Environmental Diplomacy in Addis Ababa

A three-day Workshop on Environmental Diplomacy, co-organized by the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts, Boston and the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network (HoAREC&N) of Addis Ababa University has been held at the Gulele Botanic Gardens in Addis Ababa. The workshop, Regional Environmental Diplomacy Institute (REDI)-Africa, was the first of what is planned to be an annual series of workshops bringing together officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, and Members of Parliament from both Djibouti and Ethiopia as well as experts, practitioners and civil society advocates from Addis Ababa and from Boston. The aim of the training is to equip diplomats with the necessary skill-sets for environmental diplomacy, enhance interdisciplinary understanding and dialogue, and promote sustainable learning and future collaboration among participants.

Opening the Workshop, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie, noted that the session had been organized at an auspicious and opportune time given the major international developments of the last year. The international community had reached consensus on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda for Financing for Development, for the implementation of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, and had also reached an equally historic agreement at the Conference of Parties 21 in Paris. The State Minister emphasized Ethiopia's leading role in environmental negotiations and noted that it had successfully represented Africa's interests in several areas of global concern. The State Minister also stressed the importance of multilateral partnerships and co-operation for the implementation of national and global climate agendas.

Following Ambassador Taye's keynote address, Dr. Tewolde Berhan Gebregziaber advisor to the Ministry of Environments, Forestry and Climate Change spoke on climate change and its effects particularly on poor countries. He advised participants of the workshop of the importance of thinking broadly about the long-term consequences of collective actions when

dealing with environmental issues. Dr. David Cash, Dean of the John W. McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, University of Massachusetts, Boston, stressed the fact that climate change was being seen as more of an opportunity than a danger even though the impact of climate change across the planet was steadily becoming more apparent. He said that the COP21 Paris Agreement was a significant step forward in negotiating how to solve the very real global challenge of climate change.

Dr. Araya Asfaw, Executive Director of HoAREC&N, expressed cautious optimism about the Paris Agreement, noting that the negotiations in terms of financing, knowledge transfer, and implementation would continue. He said REDI-Africa would strengthen the Southern and Northern knowledge-partnership and support various government agencies in environmental governance and management by assisting them to align their respective policies to a uniform agenda. He detailed the outcome of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda negotiations, stressing sustainability, resilience and governance. He also noted that the international environmental governance system was not adequately fulfilling its objectives and functions and he, therefore, recommended environmental governance reform, including addressing the issue of environmental sustainability and other sustainable development goals. The newly introduced SDGs have placed resilience high on the agenda putting both rural and urban communities at the center of the debate.

The Workshop covered key concepts in the field of environmental governance, focusing on the structure, negotiation, and implementation of global environmental conventions. Participants discussed on the political, economic, social and scientific implications of the development and implementation of various environmental agreements. Dr. Maria H. Ivanova, Associate Professor of Global Governance and Director of the Center for Governance and Sustainability at the McCormack School, gave details of the highlighted the University of Massachusetts newly introduced Environmental Conventions Index, a new project initiated and managed by the Center for Governance and Sustainability. Its goal is to assess the level of implementation of global environmental conventions across all member states. The index is based on the Conventions on Atmosphere, Biodiversity, and Chemicals and Waste, and discussions on the structure of the conventions and their level of implementation in various countries were raised in different sessions of the workshop.