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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union opens on Saturday (January 30). Among the guests will be UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon.

The 28th Ordinary Session of the AU Executive Council of Foreign Ministers opened on Wednesday (January 27) at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa for a two day session, under the theme: "2016: African Year of Human Rights with a Particular Focus on the Rights of Women". (See article)

The Executive Council of the African Union held its 3rd Ministerial retreat in Mekele, Ethiopia at the weekend. (See article)

The Executive Council of the African Union endorsed the candidature of Ethiopia for election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for 2017-2018. (See article) It also endorsed the candidature of Dr. Tedros Adhanom for the post of the Director General of the WHO in 2017. (See article)

In a briefing in advance of the 26th AU summit, the UN Economic Commission for Africa warned on Tuesday (January 26) that Africa, especially countries that have borrowed in foreign markets, was facing increased debt repayments. This could give rise to "imported inflation" and the ECA underlined the importance of policies that would allow countries to pay debts without compromising their macroeconomic climate.

The World Health Organizations warned on Friday last week (January 22) that the El Niño phenomenon would cause a major global increase in health consequences from emergencies this year. It believed the impact on public health is likely to continue throughout 2016, even after El Niño winds down. It said Tanzania, Kenya, Chad, Somalia, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Peru would be at greatest risk.

The International Organization for Migration says that five countries in the Horn of Africa, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan, experienced a marked increase in irregular migration, by land and sea, last year. The region was a major source of migrant arrivals in Europe and deaths in the Mediterranean in 2015 with Eritrea the leading country of origin for migrants arriving in Italy, with over 37,000 Eritrean migrants arriving in 2015 as well as 11,000 Somalis and nearly 9,000 Sudanese.

The 11th Council of Ministers for the Eastern African Power Pool (EAPP) has endorsed a master plan to inter-connect the region through energy. The East African Power Pool, set up in 2005, includes Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Libya and Tanzania with South Sudan and Djibouti expected to join soon. **(See article)**

The CEO of King Abdullah Economic City, a new port on the Red Sea, announced last week at the World Economic Forum that a non-profit policy think tank, the Red Sea Foundation, is being set up to develop a trade facilitation framework for the Red Sea region. It aims to significantly improve the flow of goods within the Red Sea region and foster growth and prosperity. The UN suggests population growth in the region will drive a threefold increase in regional GDP from \$1.8 trillion today to \$6.1 trillion by 2050 and an increase in trade from \$881 billion to \$4.7 trillion.

Ethiopia

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon announced last week that Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia will co-chair the UN's High-level Advisory Group for Every Woman Every Child, together with President Michelle Bachelet Jeria of Chile.

Prime Minister Hailemariam, speaking at a roundtable at the World Economic Forum in Davos, urged African countries to improve their energy supply for effective implementation of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. **(See article)**

On the sidelines of the AU Executive Council meeting, Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom met Danish Foreign Minister, Kristian Jensen, on Wednesday (January 27, 2016) who said Denmark was keen to work with Ethiopia on renewable energy development and cooperate with Ethiopia to address root causes of irregular migration. He also held discussions with Margot Wallstrom, the Foreign Minister of Sweden on how to deepen cooperation on issues of climate change, and irregular migration. A day earlier, Dr. Tedros held talks with the Polish Under-Secretary of State for Development Cooperation, Africa and the Middle East, Ms. Joanna Wronecka.

Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom on Thursday met with the UK's Minister for Africa, Caribbean, and the Overseas Territories, James Doddrige, who presented a letter from the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Philip Hammond. Dr. Tedros briefed Mr. Doddrige on the recent incidents surrounding the now withdrawn Addis Ababa-Oromia Special Zone Master Plan and on the consular access allowed to Mr. Andargachew Tsigie, a British citizen.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros Adhanom held talks with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Paolo Gentiloni on migration, economic cooperation and regional peace and security issues. Dr. Tedros also met with Portugal's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Portugal, Augusto Santos Silva. Ethiopia and Portugal are commemorating the 500th anniversary of their diplomatic relations this year.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie met with the State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Spain, Igancio Ybanez on Wednesday (January 27), and with Ms Tone Skogen, State Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway on Thursday (January 28). Ambassador Taye also met with Jeff Langley, Deputy Secretary of State of New Zealand, and with Ambassador Villa Hernandez, Director of Sub-Saharan Africa and Special Envoy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba on Thursday (January 28).

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-selassie met with the Singapore Ambassador to African Union, Ambassador T. Jasudasen on Tuesday (January 26). The State Minister also received a copy of the credentials of the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Ambassador Ghazi Abdulla Ashoor Al Mahri on Monday (January 25).

Save the Children UK has called on the United Nations to urgently raise the global alarm over Ethiopia's worst drought in 50 years. It says the international community urgently needs to immediately increase funding for the \$1.4 billion drought appeal, which is currently less than one third funded.

The Ministry of Trade said on Saturday (January 23) that the country has earned close to US\$1.1 billion from exports of agricultural, manufacturing and mining products in the first five months of this budget year, close to US\$789.4 million from agriculture and US\$146 million from manufacturing. This was 25% lower than the Ministry's aims and almost 8% lower than the comparable period of the previous year.

Eritrea

Eritrean President Isaias Aferwerki in an interview on Eritrean media on Saturday (January 23) dismissed concern about food shortages in Eritrea. The President stated that the country would not face any crisis despite the fact of reduced agricultural output because of the Government of Eritrea's "judicious policy and its approach to bolstering its strategic food reserves."

Ms. Kyun-wha Kaang, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations, paid a three day working visit to Eritrea this week (January 25-27). Discussions with the Foreign Minister and other ministers covered "the full range of challenges facing Eritrea, including human rights and the role of the UN and international actors in support of the Government efforts to meet basic needs and build resilience among the most vulnerable communities. **(See article)**

A report released last week by the British Immigration and Independent Advisory Group on Country Information has strongly criticized the UK Home Office's use of "misleading and biased" information to reject Eritrean asylum seekers from the UK. **(See article)**

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta, speaking on Wednesday this week (January 27) at a memorial service in Eldoret for the soldiers killed on January 15 at El Adde in Somalia, said the Kenyan Defense Forces will pursue Al-Shabaab terrorists “to their last hideouts”. “We will continue in Somalia to fulfill our mission.” Also present were Somali President Mohamud and Nigeria’s President Muhammadu Buhari.

The East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) has expressed its solidarity with Kenya following the Al Shabaab attack on the Kenyan troops at El Adde. The Assembly observed a minute’s silence for those killed on Monday (January 25). Speaker Daniel F. Kidega said the Assembly condemned “in the strongest terms possible, the recent attacks by Al Shabaab terrorists.” It also urged the International community “to equally stand with Kenya and Somalia to fight against these evil forces.”

Somalia

Political leaders in Somalia agreed on a framework for holding elections in August this year after a three day meeting in Mogadishu that ended on Wednesday (January 27). The agreement was welcomed by the UN Security Council and the international community. **(See article)**

AMISOM’s Acting Force Commander, Major General Nakibus Lakara, during visits to El-Adde, the base attacked eleven days earlier, and other Forward AMISOM Bases in Sectors 2 and 3, reiterated AMISOM’s commitment to ensuring the destruction of terrorist groups in Somalia. He also called on people to “reject and extract Al Shabaab terrorists from their midst. Only by doing this, will they rid themselves of terror. This cannot be left to AMISOM only.”

Swedish Land Forces Commander, Brigadier General Stefan Andersson paid a visit to Mogadishu on Tuesday (January 26). He held talks with Somalia Army Commander, General Mohamed Aden Ahmed on the military support Sweden is providing for the rebuilding of the national army.

South Sudan

A joint statement issued by the Troika member countries, the United States, the United Kingdom and Norway, expressed “deep concern” after the parties to the peace deal signed in August 2015 failed to form a Transitional Government of National Unity on Saturday (January 22). The statement noted that “the Presidential Decree establishing 28 states has created an obstacle to consensus.”

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Monday (January 25) issued a statement calling on IGAD and the African Union to save the peace process and address “the political impasse that is impeding the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity”. He said the formation of the transitional government was an essential step in implementing the peace [agreement] and laying the foundation for peace and stability in South Sudan.

The UK Minister for Africa, James Doddrige, said on Wednesday (January 27) there should be no further delay in forming South Sudan's Transitional Government of National Unity in accordance with the August 2015 peace accord to end the war and alleviate the suffering of the people. He was on a visit to Juba where he met President Salva Kiir, Foreign Affairs Minister, Barnaba Marial Benjamin and the Chief Negotiator of the SPLM-IO, Taban Deng Gai.

Michael Makuei Lueth, Minister of Information and Broadcasting said on Wednesday (January 27) that legal requirement might mean the Transitional Government of National Unity could not be formed before mid-March. He said the constitution had to go to the Ministry of Justice; then to the Cabinet, and then to Parliament to be considered for a month and then sent to the President for assent and signature.

A report on South Sudan from the United Nations Panel of Experts, issued on Monday (January 25), said President Salva Kiir and SPLM-IO leader, Riek Machar, should both face sanctions since they control forces that have committed atrocities against innocent civilians. The panel said there was "clear and convincing evidence that the majority of acts of violence committed in the course of the war have been directed by or undertaken with the knowledge of senior individuals at the highest levels of government and within the opposition."

Riek Machar, head of the SPLM-IO, visited Kampala on Sunday (January 24) for talks with President Yoweri Museveni. He said he would be trying to persuade Uganda to play a key role in convincing President Kiir to reverse the order of expanding the number of states in South Sudan from 10 to 28.

Sudan

The Government and a joint delegation from the Sudan Liberation Movement- Minni Minnawi and the Justice and Equality Movement issued a statement on Monday (January 25) after a three day meeting in Ethiopia, agreeing to continue informal discussions under auspices of the African Union High Level Implementation Panel. They also reiterated their seriousness to reach a negotiated solution to end the conflict in Darfur.

Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, told the Security Council on Monday (January 25) that the political process to resolve the conflict in Darfur through dialogue remains fragmented with only limited progress. He hoped a strategic-level meeting among the United Nations, the African Union and the Government of Sudan would take place on the margins of the African Union Summit.

The 28th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union ...

The 28th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union's Foreign Ministers took place on Wednesday and Thursday this week (January 27-28) in Addis Ababa. Held under the theme of this year's AU Summit "2016: African Year of Human Rights with a particular focus on the Rights of Women", the session considered the reports of various AU Committees, and set recommendations for consideration by the Summit of the Heads of State and Government at the weekend, emphasizing the importance of upholding human rights, especially women's rights, in Africa. In attendance were the AU Foreign Ministers, the AU Commissioners, leaders of intergovernmental organizations, ministers and duly designated authorities of member countries. Among the guests were the United Nations Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Carlos Lopez, and ambassadors to the African Union.

The 28th Ordinary Session considered the report of the Permanent Representatives' Committee which held its session from Thursday (January 21) to Saturday (January 23); and the Annual Report of the Chairperson of the Commission for the period January to December 2015. It also considered and adopted the revised AUC budget for the 2016 Financial Year. The Executive Council considered the reports of the ad-hoc Ministerial Committee on the Scale of Assessment; the Ministerial Committee on African Candidatures in the International System; the progress report of the Ministerial Committee on the Challenges of Ratification and Implementation of the OAU/AU treaties; the follow-up Committee on Agenda 2063; and the report of the Ministerial Committee on Elections of the Members of the Commission in June /July 2016.

Another function of the Executive Council was the election of the members of the African Union Peace and Security Council and of the one member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). These took place on Thursday (January 28). The fifteen members of the Peace and Security Council that were elected are: South Africa, Botswana, Rwanda, Uganda, Chad, Burundi, Algeria, Niger, Togo, and Sierra Leone for two year terms, and Kenya, Zambia, Congo, Egypt and Niger for three year terms. The Executive council also considered and adopted the election and appointment of a member of the African Committee of Experts on ACERWC. .

In his directions to the Council, Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister, the Chair of the Executive Council, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, stated that the Council would "receive updates on the restructuring of the AU Commission and other AU organs and institutions, and on the evaluation of our partnership." Among the issues he emphasized was the fact that the new scale of assessment would inevitably place heavy demands on our economies, but, he added, this was "the price that we have to pay for our Union to be self-reliant and reduce dependence on external funding." Mr. Mumbengegwi also noted that the Council's "discussions, decisions and recommendations, of necessity, have to always take cognizance of the principled policy pronouncements by our principals." This, he added, was meant to ensure ownership and control of the African Union, its processes and programs by the Member States." The Chairperson also emphasized that the Council had directed the AU Commission "to take all the necessary measures to popularize Agenda 2063 and invite Member States and Regional Economic

Communities to domesticate the agenda in their internal systems and processes to speed up regional and continental integration”

Addressing the Executive Council at the opening ceremony, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma reiterated the AU vision to build an Africa that is driven by its citizens. She stressed the relevance of this to the theme of the “African Year of Human Rights with a particular focus on the Rights of Women”. The Chairperson recalled the African Union’s aim of achieving “an Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of the African people especially its women, youth and caring for children”. This is aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063. The Chairperson emphasized that Agenda 2063 was not just the program of the African Union. It was for all the diversity of Africa, people from all walks of life, poets, singers, dancers, youth, women and girls, private sector business people, farmers, entrepreneurs, the children of Africa and all African citizens, men and women, young and old, urban and rural as well as the Diaspora. The AU Commission Chairperson recalled that the report from the Executive Council Retreat in Mekele on the critical skills needed for Agenda 2063 had highlighted a huge skills gap. She called for discussions with Africa’s private sector on industrialization, agriculture, and infrastructure development, the movement of goods, and on people and services. Referring to the theme of the Summit on Human Rights with particular focus on the rights of women, Dr. Dlamini Zuma said that since the launch of the first African Gender Scorecard, countries had been taking steps to do better. She said that in 2016, the gender score card would focus on indicators related to human rights.

...preceded by the 3rd AU Ministerial Retreat held in Mekele...

In preparation of the 26th African Union Summit and for the Executive Council meeting opening on Wednesday this week, the AU Commission organized a ministerial retreat for the members of the Executive Council in Mekele, the capital of the Tigray National Regional State of Ethiopia on Sunday and Monday (January 24-25), 2016. The idea of the retreat was first proposed by Ethiopia two years ago to allow AU Ministers of Foreign Affairs or External Relations and other ministers or authorities designated by their Governments to brainstorm and exchange views on the implementation of Agenda 2063. This time the retreat was intended to work on identifying approaches on the strategic moves necessary to achieve the key items and how to implement the “flagship” projects of Agenda 2063. These flagship projects include the integrated high speed train network; an African virtual e-University; formulation and establishment of a commodities strategy; establishment of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) by 2017; the African passport allowing for the free movement of people; implementation of the Grand Inga Dam project; the Pan-African e-network; silencing the guns; an African outer-space strategy; a single aviation market; African financial institutions; and a focus on the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan.

The President of the Tigray National Regional State, Abay Woldu, delivered welcome remarks at the official opening, underlining “The vision of our Union that aims to create an ‘integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa,’ and indeed the agenda of this retreat, has significant meaning to this region of Ethiopia.” Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Ethiopia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressed how important such ministerial retreats could be to the implementation of Agenda 2063 and disclosed the programs to be convened in the next sessions. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma,

Chairperson of the African Union Commission in her remarks, congratulated the people of the city of Mekele for hosting this important Pan-African gathering and recalled the agreed core interests of the Executive Council at their first retreat at Bahir Dar two years ago: mechanization of agriculture; silencing the gun; youth unemployment; effective management and the use of African resources to affect transformation, inclusive growth and industrialization; effective and visionary leadership with political commitment; accelerated regional integration; and accountability. Similarly, in his opening statement, the Chairperson of the Executive Council Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister, Simbarashe Mumbengegwi, stressed the significance of a single aviation market and the conservation of the flora and fauna of Africa to realizing implementation of Agenda 2063.

During their sessions, the retreat discussed the issue of free movement of people, Africans having free access to all African countries. This is an enduring project of Pan-Africanism and African integration. The retreat identified benefits of the free movement of people as a facilitator for tourism, intra-African investment and trade, for people-to-people integration and cooperation, and for circulation and utilization of skills in the continent. It welcomed the lessons from countries such as Rwanda and from the Regional Economic Communities on free movement and recommended the adoption of a Protocol on Free Movement of People by January 2018.

Tourism and Wildlife Conservation was another major focus of the discussions of the retreat. Presentations on wildlife conservation were made by the Minister of Tourism of Zimbabwe on African tourism and branding, by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Executive Secretary of United Nations Environment Program. The presenters noted that despite Africa's huge potential for tourism, it attracted a negligible percentage of global tourist arrivals and revenue. The consensus of the presentations was that given the huge potential of tourism for job and wealth creation, Africa needed a concerted strategy to promote tourism across the continent.

The retreat noted the progress report of the African Commission on the flagship projects and made observations on the plans to conduct a pre-feasibility study on the Pan African High Speed Rail Network, on the progress of the legal and institutional framework for the Grand Inga Project in the DRC and on the commendable job made by the thirteen countries that have signed up to "Solemn Declaration" to make a "single aviation market" a reality by 2017, as well as numerous other issues.

.... Dr. Tedros' paper to the Council on "Capacities for implementation of Agenda 2063"

Ethiopia, Dr. Tedros said, had identified ten key areas of critical importance for implementing its national development agenda. These key areas were: leadership, commitment and ownership; the design of the right policies for each priority sector; capacity building strategies based on goals and related strategies and specialized sectoral institutions to take these forward; domestic resources to finance national priorities and the use of development aid; changing mind sets; education and training with a focus on critical technical and high level skills for the development of the country or the continent; capacity building linked to value addition and beneficiary strategies; performance management and building capable state institutions; the role of the Diaspora and building knowledge networks; and the role of Regional Economic Communities.

On leadership, commitment and ownership, Dr. Tedros stressed the role of leadership in enhancing state-capacity, financing mega projects and underlined the comparative advantage of the state in many areas. He said that at early stages of the country's development and democratic process, the role of the government remained very important. He said: "in our case, this involves continuing to keep and run the commanding heights of the economy," adding "this would help counter market failures." These commanding heights, the Foreign Minister also said, help the country finance its mega projects: "in effect these sectors are money printing machines."

The Foreign Minister strongly emphasized the design of the right policies and strategies. He stressed Ethiopia's experience in designing the right policies begun years earlier with the adoption of its "Agricultural Development Led Industrialization". This draws on the fact that the population of Ethiopia, like that of Africa as whole, predominantly derives its livelihood from agriculture and the fact that this policy could enable the country to create linkages with industry through a specific industrial policy. On capacity building enablement, Dr. Tedros stressed that in the field of agriculture, the country had established widespread agriculture extension services and agricultural research centers as well as an agricultural mechanization agency. He also noted that for "industrialization capacity building" the country had established a Textile Development Institute and Leather Research Institute as well as most recently an Industrial Zones Development Agency. On "self-financing", Dr. Tedros noted that once one was clear on the policies and strategies, it was necessary to decide on the priority projects. Ones that were identified as transformative needed to be financed from a country's own resources. He pinpointed a number of important projects in Ethiopia which could be mentioned in this regard; the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the National Rail Network Program, the Urban Development and Construction Program, the Education and Training Program and the Rural Electrification and Telecommunication Program.

On public mobilization and ownership strategy, Dr. Tedros said, "We did that by engaging all stakeholders, that is the public, the private sector and different segments of the society by involving them in the draft policy and strategy documents for discussion and obtaining their feedback." This, he said, had also enabled the public to develop 'can-do attitudes' at all levels. Dr. Tedros stressed the importance of accelerated enrolment in higher education to address the problem of 'brain-drain'. He said, "We opted to address the root cause of supply and demand through flooding," providing the Universities with the necessary students. . Regarding value addition and its benefits, he mentioned the role of the Metal and Engineering Corporation (METEC) in accelerating the country's industrialization and technology transfer, adding: "so far, METEC has been able to source locally about 60 per cent of the value of its industrial products such as buses, cars and tractors. METEC is also playing a key role in know-how and technology transfer in the area of rail construction and building hydro dams."

Dr. Tedros' paper also revealed Ethiopia's designs for comprehensive civil service reform through Business Process Re-engineering and Performance Management Systems. Referring to engaging the Diaspora and knowledge sharing, Dr. Tedros stressed the importance of asking how to establish a knowledge-exchange network so that countries could connect the qualified Diaspora with African universities and research centers. He added, "I also think that we can develop a targeted advisory service to be rendered by the Diaspora." In conclusion, the Foreign

Minister recommended the importance of emulating the performance of the Northern Corridor of the East African Community as an example of “how RECs can work to achieve Agenda 2063.”

Following the presentation, the retreat discussed the “capacity for implementation of Agenda 2063” on the basis of these key areas, drawing upon Ethiopia’s experience. Its conclusions were included in the final outcome of the retreat. Participants described the 3rd Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union as “successful”. It allowed many ambitious ideas to be raised and brainstormed and it demonstrated increasing commitment to find ways to solve challenges. Those attending urged the AU Commission to organize another retreat on the basis of “the Africa we have, the Africa we want” to allow for more in-depth discussions on the paradox of ‘rich Africa, poor Africans,’ ‘changing mindsets’ and other issues raised during the debates. Such Pan-African gatherings could provide another major step forward for Africa and its future.

The retreat elected a Ministerial Follow-Up Committee composed of five countries, one from each region of the continent, to serve for two years. The members are Algeria, Namibia, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Rwanda, joined by the Chairpersons of the RECs, the outgoing and incoming Chairperson of the Executive Council, the AU Commission Chairperson, the CEO of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, the President of the African Development Bank, and the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa. The Ministerial Follow-Up Committee was established on the recommendations of the Bahir Dar Ministerial Retreat and it is reviewed every two years to allow rotation and regional balance.

Ethiopia’s Candidature for Non-Permanent Membership of the Security Council

In 2015, the Government announced Ethiopia’s bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council for 2017–18. It was an announcement that underlined Ethiopia’s renewed commitment to middle-level diplomacy and its ambition to actively develop its regional and global policy agenda. The United Nations Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council has fifteen members consisting of the five permanent members, the United States, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom, with veto power and ten non-permanent members, elected for two year terms. The world’s pre-eminent crisis management forum, the Security Council plays an increasingly visible and authoritative role in global politics. Empowered by the United Nations Charter, the Security Council holds the authority to impose sanctions and exercise the use of force in response to threats to international peace and security, an authority that it has been exercising with increasing regularity. It is also mandated with the power of establishing peacekeeping operations, enforcing international sanctions, and authorizing military action in certain cases. A seat at the Security Council provides the elected states with the opportunity for developing countries to have a voice in shaping global agendas and to respond to global issues, to engage and negotiate with the major international powers on a regular basis, and raise their own international profile and standing. Ethiopia has an excellent track record in the promotion of peace and stability in continental and global for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council is something that aligns closely with its international interests both in its neighborhood and in Africa generally.

Ethiopia has, therefore, shown its interest in being elected to the Security Council again. It is, of course, a founder member of the United Nations, one of the only two African founding members of the United Nations Organization set up following the end of the Second World War, the other being Liberia. It has been a non-permanent member of the Security Council on two previous occasions, in 1967/1968 and 1989/1990. From the outset, it has demonstrated real commitment to the United Nations, as it did to its predecessor, the League of Nations, and to the principles of collective security anchored in the UN Charter. Indeed, it has a long and proud history of promoting international peace and security, starting in the 1950s with the Korean War. When North Korea crossed the border to invade South Korea, Ethiopia joined a multinational UN peacekeeping force of 16 countries to restore the status quo. In the three-year conflict, 121 of its troops were killed and another 536 others wounded. Surprisingly, Ethiopia was the only country which had no troops taken prisoner in the conflict. The heroism, discipline and commitment of the Ethiopian contingent has been a model for all subsequent Ethiopian involvements in peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations.

Ten years after that first major involvement in a UN authorized peacekeeping mission, Ethiopia's commitment to global peace and security was further underlined by its involvement in the UN operations in the 1960 war in Congo. The performance of the Ethiopian contingent in this second peacekeeping operation was once again commended, and the Ethiopian forces were able to restore peace and order in their area of operations, notably in the Orientale Province of Congo, in a remarkably short period of time, and win the confidence of local communities. Subsequently, Ethiopia has been involved in UN peace keeping in Rwanda and Burundi and Ethiopian military personnel, mission experts and police force are currently engaged in observing regional peace and security in various UN authorized peacekeeping missions. These include the UN Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), UN Mission in Liberia (UNML), UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), and UN Operations in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) as well as the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in which Ethiopia is providing all of the 4,400 troops deployed in Abyei, between Sudan and South Sudan. Ethiopia is now the second largest contributor to UN peace keeping operations and the largest in Africa. In addition, Ethiopia is also a major contributor to the African Union Mission on Somalia (AMISOM) and is an active participant in the establishment of the East African Standby Force, to which it is contributing one of the five contributions to the 5,000 strong unit.

In all these peacekeeping missions, Ethiopia has received substantial continental and international recognition and commendation for the effective execution of ongoing peace keeping and peace-building operations. It regards this a major contribution to the promotion of regional, and continental, peace and security, one of the most important elements of its foreign policy aims. Ethiopia has consistently over the last two decades underlined the importance of regional peace and security as a necessity for regional development, another pillar of its foreign policy.

Ethiopia also believes there are a number of areas in which reform is required to further invigorate the UN's role in addressing the current challenges to such issues as world security, climate change and the global economic problems. Ethiopia strongly believes that the voice of Africa in the UN and its institutions, including the Security Council, deserve to be heard more

prominently. It strongly supports the establishment of a permanent seat for Africa in the United Nations Security Council. The United Nations, the only supra-national organization enjoying the membership of virtually the entire world, is far better placed than any other body to effectively address the challenges that face humanity today.

Following Ethiopia's announcement of its candidature for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council, both Kenya and the Seychelles abandoned their possible candidature in favor of Ethiopia, allowing it to become the sole candidate to representing the African continent and its fifty-four member states. Ethiopia's bid was endorsed by the African Union's 28th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council on January 28 and is expected to be endorsed by the Assembly of the African Union at the weekend's Summit.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom's candidature for the post of WHO Director General

The Executive Council of the African Union on Friday (January 29) endorsed the candidature of Dr. Tedros Adhanom for the post of the Director General of the World Health Organization. His candidature is expected to be endorsed by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government at the weekend. The election is scheduled for May 2017 during the 70th session of the WHO Assembly.

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus took up his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in November 2012. Prior to that, he served as Ethiopia's Minister of Health from October 2005. Dr. Tedros also served in a number of expert and leadership positions in both federal and regional government, including the position of State Minister in the Ministry of Health and Head of the Tigray Regional Health Bureau.

After joining the health sector in 1986, Dr. Tedros dedicated his career to public service and scientific research on health concerns. A globally recognized researcher on Malaria, Dr. Tedros has co-authored numerous articles on the subject in scientific publications, including *Annals of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology*, *The Lancet*, and *Nature and Parasitologia*. He published a study of malarial incidence among children living near dams in northern Ethiopia, a key contribution to the field, in the *British Medical Journal* in 1999. This seminal contribution earned him the distinction of the 'Young Investigator of the Year' award from the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. In 2003, the Ethiopian Public Health Association (EPHA) recognized his important research work through its prestigious "Young Public Health Researcher Award". Dr. Tedros was also the first non-American recipient of the "Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Humanitarian Award", in 2011. This is an award conferred by the US National Foundation of Infectious Diseases to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to improving the health of mankind. In March 2012, he received the 2012 Honorary Fellowship from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. This is the highest honour bestowed by the School and goes to those who have achieved exceptional distinction in international health or tropical medicine.

In addition to his specific work on disease and malaria in particular, Dr. Tedros has also been recognized for his leadership in the rapidly evolving field of global health, working to enhance Ethiopia's active engagement in a number of major international forums. In May, 2009, he was elected to represent Ethiopia as the Chair of the Fourth Conference of Ministers of Health of the African Union. In July, 2009, he was elected Chair of the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, for a period of two years. Previously, he served as Chair of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership, as Chair of the UNAIDS Programme Coordination Board for 2009, and as Co-Chair of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health from 2005 until December, 2009. He has also served as a member of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization Board as well as of the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. In 2009, he was also a member of the High-Level Task Force for Innovative Financing for Health Systems, co-chaired by World Bank President, Robert Zoellick, and UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. Dr. Tedros co-edited "The Labor Market for Health Workers in Africa: A New Look at the Crisis" in 2014. This widely acclaimed book challenges established views on migration of doctors from Africa.

In his career as Health Minister, Dr. Tedros oversaw the rapid expansion of primary health care in Ethiopia. It was as a result of this that Ethiopia was able to meet most of health-related Millennium Development Goals. In recognition of his extraordinary achievements in expanding preventive health care in Ethiopia, the UK-based Wired Magazine included him in its annual 'Smart List 2012' of the 50 "people who will change the world."

Since taking up the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros has also served as chair of IGAD'S Council of Ministers, the regional economic community for Horn of Africa. As chair of the Executive Council of the African Union in 2014, he oversaw the successful adoption of the first 10 year plan for the AU's Agenda 2063. Under his leadership, Ethiopia successfully hosted the 50th anniversary conference of the OAU/AU. During his chairmanship of the Executive Council of the African Union, he also chaired a ministerial contact group that voiced the concerns of Africa over the International Criminal Court and worked for the deferral of the ICC cases against President Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto in 2014. Astute diplomacy led to withdrawal of President Kenyatta's case and procedural amendments to the Rome Statute. In September 2015, Dr. Tedros was elected again as the chair of the Open-ended Ministerial Committee on the ICC, to follow up on the cases of President Al-Bashir of Sudan and Deputy President Ruto of Kenya. Equally, as co-chair of the main committee of the Third Finance for Development (FFD3), he played a key role in by bringing together polarized positions on the future of the global development finance architecture. The FFD3 ended with the adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

As Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros played the leading role in brokering the Addis Ababa Agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia and Jubaland politicians which led to the formation of the Interim Jubaland Administration, providing for the return of normalcy in Kismayo and its environs. The successful implementation of the Addis Ababa Agreement has turned it into a model for regional state formation in Somalia. Dr Tedros has been the leading diplomat in the successful negotiations between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan over Ethiopia's Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, leading to the signing, last year, of the Declaration of Principles that helped ease tension and pave the way for dialogue. In April 2014, he authored an

article titled “The Nile is Symbol of Cooperation and Collaboration” in which he made the case for the importance of cooperation for the mutual and equitable benefit of the Nile Riparian States from the river. Recently, honoring his efforts as Ethiopia’s top diplomat, the leading African magazine, New African, chose him as one of the 100 most influential Africans for the year 2015.

Dr. Tedros holds a Doctorate of Philosophy in Community Health from the University of Nottingham in the UK in 2000. He obtained a Master of Science degree in Immunology of Infectious Diseases from the University of London (UK) in 1992, and completed his undergraduate studies in Biology at Asmara University in 1986. Dr Tedros is married and has four sons and a daughter.

Somali leaders finally reach agreement on modalities for elections in August

Political leaders in Somalia have agreed on a framework for holding elections this year in a move widely welcomed by the international community. The agreement came after Somali leaders opened their third round of talks on the divisive issue of the electoral process on Sunday (January 24), a week after the two sides had failed to narrow the gap between them at the second round of the National Consultative Forum held in Kismayo. Although the Kismayo meeting broke up without agreement, some Somali officials and representatives of the international community attending the talks continued expressed optimism that the country’s stakeholders would be able to resolve their differences, revolving around whether the elections should be based on the controversial 4.5 formula or on a constituency model. Puntland and Jubaland made it clear they would prefer to see an essentially constituency-based method of electing the MPs; Puntland had indicated its support for the Lower House to be based on districts and the Upper House on regions in a position paper. The Galmudug and Southwest State administrations wanted to continue with the current 4.5 model.

The meeting in Mogadishu was attended by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud; Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke; the 2nd Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Mahad Awad; President of Puntland’ Abdiweli Ali Gaas; President of Jubaland, Ahmed Mohamed Islam; President of South-West, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan; and President of Galmudug, Abdikarim Hussein Guled; as well as Ministers and respective delegates from the Federal Government and Federal Member States and observers from the international community. At the opening session, President Mohamud said that the Federal Government’s position was that the Lower House of 275 MPs should be established on the basis of the 4.5 formula and the Upper House of 54 members should be on the basis of equal representation from the federal states with the addition of three extra members for Puntland and three to Somaliland because they had been established longer. In fact, Somaliland which declared its still unrecognized independence from the rest of the country in 1991, has shown no interest in the process of elections in Somalia and rejected any suggestions that it be involved in any way. There was some concern that the President’s statement might pre-empt discussion and regional leaders held a series of talks with international community representatives and with Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke before agreement was reached and a communiqué issued on Wednesday.

The agreement provides for 275 seats in the Lower House, to be allocated according to the 4.5 formula. A minimum quota of 30% of the seats in the Lower House of Parliament will be reserved for women. Voting and counting will take place in each of the capitals of the existing and emerging Federal member states. It adds that there will be special arrangements for Somaliland which has made it clear it is not participating in any way in this process. The Upper House is to be established before the formation of the Lower House of Parliament and to have 54 members. 48 of these will be distributed equally among Somalia's existing, emerging and prospective Federal member states, identified as Somaliland, Puntland, Galmudug, Hiiraan/Middle Shabelle, South-West and Jubaland. The remaining 6 members will be divided equally between Somaliland and Puntland, reflecting both their political status and maturity and the fact that they include the largest numbers of regions. A minimum quota of 30% of the seats in the Upper House of Parliament will also be reserved for women. The Members of the Upper House will be elected by caucuses of the regional assemblies in each existing and emerging Federal member state. The communiqué gives no dates for the elections but the current mandates for Parliament and President run out in August and September respectively. Once Parliament has been formed, it will choose a president to succeed President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.

In a statement on Wednesday (January 27), Somalia's international partners welcomed the framework and commended Somali leaders for reaching a compromise. The UN, AMISOM, IGAD, the EU, Ethiopia, France, Italy, Qatar, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America all expressed their support. In a statement, they welcomed the decision, and commended the leaders of Somalia's existing and emerging federal member states for the serious efforts they made, over several months, to reach a compromise. The statement said the international community recognized that this model required compromises from all parties, and it called on all people in Somalia to put the interests of the country first and avoid conflict in the electoral process. It said that the decision demonstrated "the determination and commitment of Somali leaders to respect the constitutionally mandated term limits of the legislature and the executive and to conducting an electoral process in 2016". They also pledged to support the immediate next political and practical steps needed to ensure the implementation of the decision and "the measures required to make progress towards a qualitatively better electoral process and political dispensation in the future." The international community also intends to make sure that a detailed plan of action is produced for the period between 2016 and 2020 to make a one person, one vote, election possible in 2020.

The UN Security Council has also welcomed the agreement reached by Somali political leaders on the electoral model to be used in the parliamentary elections due to be held in August this year. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, Michael Keating, told a meeting of the Security Council on Thursday (January 28) that the agreement, reached the previous day was the culmination of almost six months of intense consultations, adding that "it may be a watershed moment, marking the growing political maturity of a federal Somalia". UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon also congratulated the Somali leadership on their decision, noting that it paved the way to a timely transition at the expiry of the current term of the Parliament. A statement said the Secretary-General particularly applauded the commitment to representation of women and minority groups, including that women will comprise 30 per cent of the next Parliament, in line with the Mogadishu Declaration of December 2015. It also reiterated the

urgency of establishing a political roadmap towards universal suffrage in Somalia by 2020, to ensure continued momentum in the country's transition to democracy.

Some uncertainties still remain, as implementation of the process has yet to take place, and much as to be done within the next six months. This includes the holding of the Hiiraan and Middle Shebelle state formation conference, and Puntland and Galmudug still have to resolve their differences which include disagreement over the allocation of the extra seats in the Upper House. However, there was general relief that the main issue of the modality for the election process had been agreed and that the elections for Parliament and the Presidency would now be able to go ahead in August and September as planned.

Prime Minister Hailemariam at the World Economic Forum in Davos

The 46th World Economic Forum Annual Meeting last week (January 20-23) was held under the theme: "Mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution". It categorized this as a fusion of technologies, blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres, and building on the Third Industrial Revolution, the digital revolution using electronics and information technology to automate production that has been gathering strength since the middle of the last century. The First Industrial Revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production; while the Second used electric power to create mass production. Now we are moving into a Fourth Industrial Revolution and over 40 Heads of State and Government, and more than 2,500 leaders from business and society attending to consider the future.

The Forum recognized that the world stands on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work, and relate to one another. Responses must be integrated and comprehensive, involving all stakeholders of the global polity, from public and private sectors to academia and civil society. It covered the multitude of critical current challenges facing the world, including security, climate change and the "new normal" global growth and commodity prices, all of which need to be addressed. The Ethiopian Delegation led by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn also took part in many debates and discussions covering such areas as Global Trade and Investment, Future Global Financing, the Internet, Gender Equality, Inclusive Growth, as well as considering how a Fourth Industrial Revolution would impact on Africa, a continent which is home to nine of the world's fifteen fastest growing economies.

The Forum emphasized that the Fourth Industrial Revolution would increase overall global productivity, but it also noted that power, a key enabler of this progress, a fundamental necessity for manufacturing and job creation, was lagging behind. More than one in six people around the world still lack access to electricity and one in three can't depend on the sources they have. This was particularly the case in Africa, where over 600 million people still lack access to any basic electricity resource and some 70% of businesses cite unreliable power as a major constraint in doing business on the continent. It was also underlined that the world's poorest often pay the most for what little electricity they do get. Lower oil prices might enable market reform; sustained lower oil prices might mean governments have the political space to wind down subsidies. Energy policy reforms are attracting investors to address the challenge of 'global

electrification', but this is a challenge that will require really massive investments and a renewed focus on energy by the Global Community. There is awareness of the need. The UN Sustainable Development Goals, adopted last year in New York provide for a specific goal to expand energy access. The COP21 in Paris last month reached a global climate agreement that recognized the need for the world's least developed countries to provide sustainable electricity to their people. There does, in fact, appear to be newfound momentum, driven by recognition of the importance of governments and the private sector working together, behind the goals of electricity access, efficiency, and sustainability.

This was very much the subject of the Africa Roundtable Debate: "Turning Africa into a Powerhouse!" in which CNBC's Bronwyn Nielsen was joined by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia, President Kagame of Rwanda and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo of Nigeria as well as other stakeholders from Africa. But there are other areas in which Africa needs all the support it can get.

Prime Minister Hailemariam looked back at the major challenges that Africa faced in working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Africa certainly needed transformation, but this also required effective and committed leadership. He spoke of the challenge of technological transfer and the lack of capacity and of the resultant logistical problems that countries like Rwanda and Ethiopia have. Infrastructure, particularly power, remained a problem. He detailed the necessity for power requirements for Ethiopia's economic growth. Ethiopia has been registering double-digit economic growth for over a decade but this meant energy requirements had increased by 32%.

The Prime Minister Hailemariam made it clear that accelerated, sustainable and inclusive growth was not an alternative for Ethiopia. It was a necessity. Ethiopia, therefore needed to step up its efforts to accelerate economic activity and to ensure that the benefits reached all the different Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of the country. It was this that was driving the imperative for its fast and double digit economic growth, despite the failure of the world economy to provide proper support. He said the global push for economic growth in recent decades had led to substantial increases in wealth for large numbers of people across the globe, but despite the huge gains in global economic output, there was no doubt that the current social, political and economic system was exacerbating inequalities, rather than reducing them. Ethiopia was, therefore, focusing on becoming a manufacturing hub, and the Prime Minister underlined that it needed to attract more investors, including major known companies. This needed power and Ethiopia had devoted substantial effort to produce just this, with its development of green, sustainable hydropower. Africa, too, he emphasized, also needed green and renewable energy. The importance of agriculture in Africa, a business that feeds over 60% of the globe, was also noted. These were among the factors that emphasized that Africa was now a place to invest and, indeed, it was a place where private investors were welcome. Prime Minister Hailemariam said there were two possible scenarios to describe Africa: Africa falling, or Africa rising. He was in no doubt that the latter was correct.

President Kagame underlined that the challenges were there and they would remain there. What mattered above all, he said, was political will. Of course there was political will but it needed to be driven by the necessary sense of urgency must be there. The starting point must be for

everyone to come together. Africans must consider the problems more seriously. He emphasized the importance of developing the current low levels of intra-African trade,. He also stressed the importance of energy for promoting special economic zones, to boost production and productivity and to create job opportunities.

The Vice-President of the Republic of Nigeria, Mr. Yemi Osinbajo, explained the new deal for Africa, looking at Nigeria's economy, the impact of the oil price reduction and the issue of security, with particular reference to Boko Haram which he said was now seriously degraded and no longer had the capacity to affect the activities of the government or the people of Nigeria, though it was still making efforts to distract. He emphasized that the government was concentrating on the mobilization of domestic resources. Domestic revenue, he asserted, was an absolute necessity to create effective and efficient development and allow for improved governance issues. Transparency was a key issue for government expenditure. Mr. Osinbajo underlined infrastructure, information and efficient public services as three of the most important factors He recognized that the oil price reduction really had a major impact on the country's economy and it might lead to budget deficits; however, this, he said, could be managed.

All the discussants were in agreement that the prospect of a Fourth Industrial Revolution was exciting. It had the potential to raise income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world, particularly in Africa. Technology has made possible new products and services that increase the efficiency and pleasure of personal lives; technological innovation can and does lead to increases in efficiency and productivity. It will continue to do so. Transportation and communication costs will drop, logistics and global supply chains will become more effective, and the cost of trade will diminish, all of which will open new markets and drive inclusive economic growth. It is enticing prospect, but it one that will also require determination, commitment and resources. It remains a challenge for everybody.

EAPP endorses master plan to inter-connect East Africa

The 11th Council of Ministers for the Eastern African Power Pool (EAPP) has endorsed a master plan to inter-connect the region through energy. The East African Power Pool, set up in 2005, is made up of Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Libya and Tanzania. South Sudan and Djibouti are expected to join soon. Its secretariat is based in Addis Ababa.

The Council of Ministers concluded its three-day meeting at the end of last week, finalizing and amending the new master plan that was drawn up by a Danish company, Energinet. Member states will meet in March to develop a strategic plan in line with the master plan. The 25-year master plan will enable all the countries in the region connect through regional power interconnections, providing a significant boost to economic development. All the member countries of EAPP, with the exception of Egypt, agreed on six points that will lead to the implementation of the master plan. The Egyptian delegate said that Egyptian claims had not been addressed and the plan paid insufficient attention to risk analysis and environmental assessments.

Ethiopia's Minister of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, Motuma Mekasa, said that the master plan would help countries to work together for the realization of rapid economic development in the region, including the development and utilization of natural gas resources in the region. The Minister said that the Government of Ethiopia would exert maximum effort to help implement the master plan, because of its benefits for the region.

EAPP Council Chairperson, Burundi's Energy and Mines Minister, Come Manirakiza, said the master plan would enable countries in East Africa to jointly utilize resources and ensure mutual development. He underlined the importance of engaging in infrastructure development and said countries should extend the necessary support so as to get moving as fast as possible.

The steering committee's presentation to the Council of Ministers recommended moving on the proposed action plan as soon as possible. Until now regional interconnections have been largely limited to bilateral agreements. Ethiopia, for example, is providing power to Sudan and to Djibouti and service provision to Kenya. The next stage of integration promises much wider power networks with effective and streamlined integration between Ethiopia and Kenya, and the possibility of extending this to Tanzania by 2018.

Representatives of international partners of the EAPP members welcomed the master plan. They said the outcome of the discussions, and in particular the roadmap that "now provides a high-level tool for steering East Africa's power development and integration." The road map "is a tool for cooperation of member states of the EAPP and other African institutions; and it provides a framework for cooperation between the EAPP and international development partners." Overall, the master plan was described as "an integrated approach that aimed to speed up infrastructure projects and ensure the effective systems of operation, trade mechanisms, planning tools and regulatory environment."

The mandate of the East African Power Pool is to provide for the optimum development of energy resources in the region and to improve access to electricity power supply to all the peoples of the Eastern Africa Region through regional power interconnections. It aims to provide a framework for pooling energy resources, promoting power exchanges between utilities in Eastern Africa and reducing power supply costs through the development of an integrated master plan. This also involves optimizing the use of the energy resources available in the Region, working out regional investment schemes in power generation, transmission and distribution. This should allow power systems' interconnection and increasing power exchanges between countries and provide for reduced electricity costs across the Region. It should also mean efficient co-ordination between various initiatives taken in the fields of power production, transmission and exchange across the East African Region.

UN Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator visits Eritrea

Ms. Kyun-wha Kaang, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator of the United Nations, paid three day working visit to Eritrea this week (January 25-27). She met and held talks with senior officials and representatives of UN agencies to discuss

strengthening engagement and cooperation. Minister of Information, Yemane Ghebremeskel, told Ms. Kaang that U.N. agencies should not confine themselves to development programs only, but should also play their due part in helping “to lift the illegal sanctions imposed on Eritrea in contravention of international law.”

Ms. Kaang also met with Foreign Minister Osman Saleh to discuss development efforts as well as Yemane Gebreab, Head of Political Affairs of the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice and Presidential Advisor; Arfaine Berhe, Minister of Agriculture; Amna Nurhusein, Minister of Health; Semere Russom, Minister of Education; and Kahsay Gerehiwet, Minister of Labour and Human Welfare, and donor representatives. In a statement the UN said that discussions covered “the full range of challenges facing Eritrea, including human rights and the implementation of the [UN Human Rights Council’s] Universal Periodic Review recommendations and the role of the UN and international actors in support of Government endeavors to meet basic needs and build the resilience among the most vulnerable communities in the country.”

Last week, in a speech to the nation on January 22, President Isaias said that Eritrea would not face any food crisis this year despite the harvest shortfall that has affected the whole Horn of Africa region. The President said that because of the Government of Eritrea’s “judicious policy” and its approach to bolstering its strategic food reserves the country would not face any crisis despite the fact it had also had reduced agricultural output.

In a press release in Asmara at the end of her visit on Wednesday (January 27) Ms. Kaang urged broader support for the Government’s efforts to meet basic needs and build resilience of the country’s most vulnerable communities. She welcomed the growing opportunities for engagement between the Government and UN partners and for a fruitful collaboration in implementing the Strategic Partnerships Cooperation Framework (SPCF) 2013-2016 as well as calling for a speedy conclusion of the SPCF for 2017-2020.”

Ms. Kaang noted that “Programs that provide supplementary feeding, immunization and nutrition surveillance are vital to reducing malnutrition and building resilience; Eritrea has made significant progress in improving child and maternal health, and I urge partners to continue supporting national and international efforts. During her visit, Ms. Kaang visited two health centers and some elementary and middle schools to assess various health provisions for students and met with officials of the National Union of Eritrea Women to discuss progress in gender equality.

Report calls UK guidelines to return Eritrean asylum seekers “misleading and biased”

A report released last week by the British Immigration and Independent Advisory Group on Country Information has strongly criticized the UK Home Office’s use of “misleading and biased” information to reject Eritrean asylum seekers from the UK. The report says the two official documents, the Country of Origin Information and the Country Guidance Information, issued by the UK Home Office in March last year are largely based on the findings of a Danish report that has since been discredited. The documents have been used to justify the return of

hundreds of Eritrean asylum seekers.

The report by the Danish Immigration Service (DIS) published in November 2014 was used as grounds to reject a large number of Eritrean asylum applications to Denmark until it became the centre of a political dispute. It has since been discredited for its highly selective use of information. The DIS researchers declared that they were under pressure to deliver specific results and subsequently resigned.

While the report has not officially been retracted, it is no longer used as a policy reference in Denmark. The report was described as “more like a political effort to stem migration than an honest assessment of Eritrea’s human rights situation. Instead of speculating on potential Eritrean government reforms, host governments should wait to see whether pledges actually translate into changes on the ground.”

Despite this, the UK Home Office has continued to use the report and the IAGCI report criticizes the Home Office for increasingly blurring “the distinction between objective evidence and Home Office policy”. In effect it says that the Home Office is distorting evidence in order to reject Eritrean asylum seekers. The author of the report, Dr. John Campbell, says the Home Office cannot rely on the Danish report because the criticism of that report is justified and its findings are simply “not credible”. He noted, in particular, that despite the claims in the Danish report, there is still no evidence that a decision to limit national service to 18 months has been decided. One of the main reasons for the continuing flight of refugees from Eritrea, amounting to thousands a month, has been the indefinite conscription with many people serving for well over a decade, and even up to eighteen years. Although government officials have made statements in private that the system has been changed, nothing has been formally announced by the Government and there has been no indication that any such policy has been implemented. Nor is there any indication that those returning to Eritrea are safe from prosecution or persecution.

Last year, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea reported on the “systematic, widespread and gross” human rights violations that have been and are being committed under the authority of the Eritrean Government. It said that some of these abuses might constitute crimes against humanity. The Commission found that Eritrean citizens live under constant fear in a controlled state and are subject to abuse, exploitation and slavery. Other human rights bodies have documented similar abuses over many years.