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Ethiopia

On a visit to West Africa, to Ghana and to Guinea, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn held talks with Ghana President Mahama and with President Conde of Guinea from whom he received the Grand Croix award the highest honor that the country awards. The Prime Minister said his six day visit to West Africa was part of Ethiopia's drive to strengthen partnership in the areas of peace and security as well as to promote Africa's integration agenda (**See article**)

Prime Minister Hailemariam met with a Qatari delegation led by Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani, former Prime Minister of Qatar on Thursday (April 14). He called on Qatari investors to invest in Ethiopia.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom met the Minister of Agriculture of Djibouti, Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Awaleh on Thursday (April 15).

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros received President and CEO of the Washington Woodrow Wilson Center, Jane Herman (April 13) at his office. Jane Harman thanked the Ethiopian government for hosting the Munich Security Conference being held for the first time in Africa.

Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade visited Ethiopia this week meeting President Dr. Mulatu and holding talks with Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros as well as opening the Ethio-Hungary Business Forum on Tuesday (April 12). (**See article**)

Dr. Tedros chaired African Union's Open ended Committee of Ministers of Foreign Affairs on the International Criminal Court at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, on Monday (April 11, 2016).

Dr. Tedros met the Minister of Commerce and Industry for Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy on Monday (April 11). An Omani Products Exhibition (Opex) was held this week (April 11-14) in Addis Ababa's Millennium Hall.

Dr. Tedros met with Australia's Special Envoy for Human Rights, Phillip Ruddock this week. Stressing the constantly growing relations between Ethiopia and Australia, Dr. Tedros hoped that Ethiopia would continue to engage consistently with Australia. Mr. Ruddock also briefed State Minister Ambassador Taye on Australia's interest to run for election to the UN Human Rights council for the term 2018-2020 and requested Ethiopia's support.

State Minister Ambassador Taye met the State Secretary of the German Federal Foreign Office, Markus Ederer, on Wednesday (April 13). Discussions covered national and regional issues.

Ambassador Taye received Djibouti's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mr. Mohammed Idriss Farah in his offices on Monday (April 12). Ambassador Taye congratulated the people and the Government of the Republic of Djibouti on their peaceful, free and fair presidential election.

Ambassador Taye received Kenyan Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ms. Catherine Muigai Mwangi on Tuesday (April 12). Ambassador Taye noted relations between the two countries had been strengthened by the implementation of the cross border integrated program.

The Munich Security Conference which brings together political, academic, business and civic society leaders to discuss key issues of international security policy with a special emphasis in Africa was held in Addis Ababa on Thursday and Friday (April 14-15) (**See article**)

The fifth Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa will be held this weekend (April 16-17) in Bahr Dar, the capital of the Amhara regional state, under the theme "Africa in the Global Security Agenda."

Ethiopia has prepared a draft proclamation of the regulation of cyber crimes (April 13). The draft proclamation will be referred to the Standing Committee of the House of Peoples Representatives (HPR) following wider discussions.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh has won a fourth five-year term as president of Djibouti in the election held on Friday (April 8). The President secured 87% of the votes cast, according to the provisional results announced by the country's interior minister. (**See article**)

Djibouti port's director general, Saad Omar Guelleh and the vice-president of China's Qingdao port Cheng Xinnong, signed a partnership agreement on Wednesday (April 13) to reinforce Djibouti port's human resource capacities and logistics.

Kenya

Kenyan officials arrived in Kampala on Tuesday (April 12) for a three-day meeting to continue discussions on the possible three options for the proposed crude oil export pipeline. A report on the options for the US4 billion project, through Lamu, Mombasa or Tanga will be presented to the Heads of State and adopted at the 13th Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP) Summit due in Kampala on April 23.

Somalia

The National Leadership Forum met in Mogadishu from April 9 to April 12 to agree details and modalities for the electoral process for the August election. Participants included President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Speaker. Mohammed Sh. Osman Jawari, Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali of Puntland, President Ahmed Mohamed Islaan of Jubaland, President Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan of the South-West, and President of Abdulkarim Hussein Guled of Galmudug. Somalia. (**See article**)

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud opened the 8th session of the 9th Somali Parliament on Monday, the last session of the current Parliament before the elections later this year. He told Parliament the government had failed to uphold the one-man-one vote electoral principle but it was committed to holding credible elections.

UNOCHA says an estimated 1.7 million people, nearly 40 percent of the 4.6 million people living in Somaliland and Puntland are in need of humanitarian assistance and livelihood support. OCHA says the forecasts for the Gu rains (April to June) “are less than favorable,” and it has appealed for \$105 million to urgently scale up “critical, life-saving” aid and to build resilience in these areas.

The German cabinet has agreed to the continued deployment of German troops in the EU anti-piracy mission off Somalia. Troops have been engaged in this mission since 2008.

South Sudan

The government chief negotiator, Nhial Deng Nhial, had told reporters after a meeting attended by President Kiir and the head of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Festus Mogae, that President Salva Kiir will swear in first vice president designate, Riek Machar, when Dr. Machar arrives in Juba on Monday (April 18).

The South Sudan army (SPLA) has agreed to allow the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) to visit their military sites and verify the demilitarization of Juba as required by the August 2015 peace agreement. The Mechanism reports to the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission which oversees agreement.

Dr. Riek Machar has promoted General Taban Deng Gai, the chief negotiator of the SPLM-IO and leader of the advance team in Juba, and General Alfred Ladu Gore, the deputy chairman of the SPLM-IO to the rank of 1st Lt General.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir will take part in the fifth Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa to be held this weekend on Bahr Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State. Over 200 participants will attend the Forum including a number of African Heads of State and Government, academics, representatives of NGOs and officials of regional, continental and international organizations.

The United Nations Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Sudan, Aristide Nononsi, arrived in Khartoum on Thursday (April 14) for a two week visit to Sudan. During his visit to assess the efforts of the government to comply with its international human rights obligations, he will also visit Darfur and South Kordofan.

Darfur residents began voting on Monday (April 11) in a three day referendum on whether to reunite their region into a single state. Darfur is currently made up of five states. The referendum is an element in the peace plan agreed in 2011 in Doha, but the major rebel groups have never signed up to the plan.

Prime Minister Hailemariam pays an official visit to the Republic of Ghana...

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn paid a three day official visit to the Republic of Ghana at the end of last week (April 7-9). The Prime Minister was accompanied by First Lady Roman Tesfaye and other senior government officials, including the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tedros Adhanom. The Prime Minister was welcomed on arrival, by Mr. Kwesi Amissah-Arthur, Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, and later attended a state dinner in his honor, hosted the President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama. Welcoming the Prime Minister to Ghana, President Mahama appreciated what he called Ethiopia's sustained effort towards achieving the ideals of Pan-Africanism. He recognized Ethiopia's contribution to the fight against colonialism, its unbending determination to achieve continental integration and its continued engagement in peace-keeping around the world. President Mahama also reiterated Ghana's support to Ethiopia's current bid to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council.

On the second day of his visit, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Mahama held bilateral discussion and agreed to forge partnerships in counter-terrorism operations, cooperate in the mining sector and work together in the development and maintenance of hydropower systems. Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed investment from Ghana for the establishment of tertiary educational institutions.

President Mahama noted that Ghana's relationship with Ethiopia was being transformed into a new chapter, opening further areas of engagement in development, trade and investment. He said Ethiopia's efforts in stabilizing Somalia and ensuring peace and stability at home set a good example to other countries. Ghana, he said, was keen to learn from Ethiopia's experience in fighting terrorism. He mentioned that his country would be sending security officials and other personnel to Ethiopia to emulate the country's best experience in foiling acts of terrorism. Underlining his appreciation for Ethiopia's economic growth and, in particular, the rapid transformation of Addis Ababa, President Mahama said any visitor to Addis Ababa should be impressed with the giant strides being made in the modernization of the city, notably the recent launch of the light rail transport system. He said Ghana would closely follow Ethiopia's progress as it went into second phase of the Growth and Transformation plan, designed to lead Ethiopia into middle income status by 2025.

Prime Minister Hailemariam hailed Ghana's unmatched role in promoting a pan-African agenda, and emphasized the excellent political relations the two countries have enjoyed ever since Ghana achieved its independence in 1957. However, the Prime Minister also noted the limited economic ties between the two countries and underlined the need to strengthen and diversify bilateral economic relations. He expressed his belief that to continue and expand the political gain achieved so far, the two countries should also augment their efforts in the economic sphere. Failure to do this, he said, would "imperil the political gains achieved so far".

The two leaders expressed their satisfaction with the longstanding cordial relations between the two countries and emphasized the need to enhance their economic relations. They reaffirmed their strong commitment to strengthen and diversify their cooperation in various issues of mutual concern. Later in the day the Prime Minister laid a wreath at the tomb of Ghana's first President Kwame Nkrumah, in the Kwame Nkrumah Memorial. The Ethiopian Delegation also visited the Cocoa Toton Producing Plant, a company that produces 30,000 tons of processed cocoa and exports to countries in Europe, USA and the Middle East. The Prime Minister Hailemariam noted that the factory was "a good lesson for the African continent to help boost manufacturing and industrialization." The Prime Minister also visited the Akosombo Hydroelectric Power Dam, the largest single investment in Ghana's economic development. Built in the 1960's during the Presidency of Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the dam currently produces 1,020 megawatts of electricity. The Prime Minister hailed Ghana's effective dam management practices and underlined that Ethiopia was keen to draw lessons in this area.

During the Prime Minister's visit to Ghana the two countries also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to work in close cooperation on peace-keeping operations, and on peace-support and peace-building missions. Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Tedros Adhanom and Ms. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Ghana's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration signed the memorandum for cooperation between the Koffi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) and the Ethiopian Peace Support Training Center (EPSTC). The MoU is expected to serve as a legal framework for the exchange of information and experience-sharing between the two countries. The agreement followed Prime Minister Hailemariam's visit to the Koffi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center in Accra where he underlined the importance of twining the two peace-keeping centers. He noted that both Ghana and Ethiopia have assumed key roles in regional and global peace-building efforts. The KAIPTC is one of three institutions designated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as a regional Centre of Excellence for the delivery of training and research in the areas of conflict prevention, management and peace-building. The KAIPTC has, to date, offered over 230 courses in diverse aspects of peace support operations for over 11,000 military, police and civilian personnel. Trainees from the Eastern African Region make up 6% of the total population of military, police and civil personnel at the Centre.

...and then visited Guinea where he received the Grand Croix award

Prime Minister Hailemariam followed his visit to the Republic of Ghana with a two day official visit to the Republic of Guinea. Upon arrival, the Prime Minister was welcomed by the President of Guinea, Alpha Conde who later presented him with Guinea's Grand Croix, the country's

highest award award, for the contribution Prime Minister Hailemariam has made to the process of strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries.

The visit aimed to rejuvenate and uplift the longstanding bilateral relations between the two countries and the Prime Minister held fruitful talks with the President Alpha Conde in which the under discussed on bilateral, regional and international issues of common concern. The two leaders underlined the need to renew the longstanding relation between the two countries, a relationship which dates back to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963

Prime Minister Hailemariam praised the enthusiasm shown by the people and Government of Guinea to maintain the momentum of the country's economic growth despite the unfortunate impact of the Ebola epidemic. He underlined Ethiopia's readiness to support the People and Government of Guinea. President Conde thanked the Government of Ethiopia for the support extended to his people during the fight against the Ebola epidemic, referring to the half million dollars and the more than 200 health professionals Ethiopia sent to help in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, the three countries most affected by the epidemic.

In their discussions, the two leaders also specifically looked at ways to strengthen their relations. The Government of Guinea proposed seven draft agreements for further consideration by Ethiopia, and the two leaders witnessed the signing of a General Cooperation Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding on Regular Diplomatic Consultations. Reiterating their firm and joint condemnation of terrorism in all its forms, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Conde also agreed to combine their efforts with a view to fighting this scourge which, they noted, was steadily interfering with the peace and security of the African continent.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti re-elected by an overwhelming majority

Djibouti's Minister of the Interior, Hassan Omar Mohamed announced on Saturday (April 9) the results of the previous day's presidential election. President Ismail Omar Guelleh had won the election on Friday (April 8) with an overwhelming majority. The President, who ran on the Union for a President Majority (UPM) party ticket, secured 87% percent of the votes. Despite some opposition parties calling for a boycott, as they had done on previous votes, turnout was reported to be 68% of the eligible voters. The Interior Minister said Omar Elmi Khaireh, a candidate from the opposition Union for National Salvation (USN) coalition, came second, with seven % (9,400 of the 133,356 votes cast). 3,844 ballots were declared invalid. The remaining vote was split among the four other candidates: Mohamed Daoud Chehem, another candidate from the divided USN coalition candidate, and the three independents Mohamed Ali Moussa, Hassan Idriss and Abdurahman Djama. Following his victory, the President spoke on national TV to say that he understood the hopes of the people of Djibouti who had again entrusted him with the state's highest office, adding "I will get back to work tomorrow."

The African Union has commended the Republic of Djibouti for the outcome of last Friday's presidential elections. The Head of the African Union Observer Mission, Soumana Sako, former

Prime Minister of Mali, told a press conference on Sunday that the vote was "free and sufficiently transparent for it to be considered a credible reflection of the will of the Djibouti people". The AU Mission had visited 124 of the 456 polling stations. The Mission had seen some minor irregularities: instructions for voters were not always publicly posted or signed by the electoral officers; some booths failed to systematically ratify voter registers which used indelible ink to ensure people voted just once; some ballot boxes had not been hermetically sealed; and some officials in polling booths had worn T-shirts with pictures of the president. The Mission also noted that some booths had no opposition officials present but said there was no sign of this being the result of action by the authorities. Some opposition candidates also complained that their representatives had been turned away from voting centers on polling day.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Election Observation Mission (EOM) which also deployed to observe the Djibouti Presidential Election concurred. The IGAD mission concluded, based on what it had been able to observe, that the 2016 Presidential election had been conducted in a transparent, peaceful, and orderly manner and in accordance with the Constitution and the laws governing the Republic of Djibouti.

President Guelleh has been in office since May 8, 1999 when he was first elected President in 1999 as the handpicked successor to his uncle, Hassan Gouled Aptidon, who had led Djibouti since independence in 1977. Prior to 2010, the president could be elected for a maximum of two six-year terms. The constitution was then amended in 2010 to remove the two-term limit for the president and reduce the presidential term from six years to five.

As he repeatedly reminded the voters during the campaign, since coming to power President Guelleh has overseen Djibouti's economic rise as it positions itself as an international port. There has been significant economic growth, driven by the expansion of Djibouti port and of its external relations, both through IGAD and towards the Gulf and more widely. Strategically located on the Gulf of Aden and the Bad el Mandeb Straits at the entrance of the Red Sea, one of the world's busiest shipping route, Djibouti has launched a series of major infrastructure projects aimed at turning it into a regional hub for trade and services. There are about US\$9.5 billion of energy and infrastructure projects under way including four more ports, two new international airports and two pipelines and the railway to Addis Ababa due to open shortly.

Djibouti hosts Camp Lemonier, the only permanent US base in Africa as well France's largest military presence abroad. France and Djibouti still have a military agreement under which France guarantees the defense of Djibouti. There is also a Japanese base as well as Spanish and German soldiers in the EU anti-piracy force based in Djibouti. China is building its first overseas military facility in Djibouti. Djibouti has in fact been laying a major role in hosting forces engaged in dealing with the menace of piracy off the coasts of Somalia and in operations against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. In addition, Djibouti is a major strategic partner for Ethiopia and the two countries have long worked closely together on political, economic and security matters. The port of Djibouti provides Ethiopia's main external link and with the advent of the new railway shortly the transit time between Djibouti and Addis Ababa will be cut from days to a matter of hours.

The Munich Security Conference Core Group Meeting in Addis Ababa

The Munich Security Conference is an annual conference on international security policy which has been taking place since 1963. In addition to its annual flagship conference in Munich, the Munich Security Conference (MSC) Foundation regularly organizes high-profile events around the world. In order to cover region-specific topics, the MSC also links up with national governments and prominent local partners to host 'Core Group Meetings' in capitals around the world. This year, the Munich Security Conference hosted its first Core Group Meeting on the African continent in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from April 14 to 15. This year's Core group Meeting of the Munich Security Conference brings together political, academic, business and civic society leaders to discuss key issues on international security policy with a special emphasis in Africa. The joint fight against violent extremism, the crises in Northern and Eastern Africa, as well as the dangers posed by epidemics and climate change have been among the central topics of the two-day event in Addis Ababa.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom, who welcomed participants, expressed his delight that the MSC should hold its first Core Group Meeting in Africa here in Addis Ababa. The Foreign Minister shared his thoughts on the "Issues of Emerging Global Challenges and their Implications to Africa." The Minister noted that the ever increasing advancement in information flows and other technological progress in the transportation sector as well as the easy flow of knowledge made inter-linkage between countries more solid than ever. Dr. Tedros added that climate change, population growth, pandemics, global terrorism, the fragility of state institutions and the growing strength of non-state actors complicated the already complex situation. He added, "Our futures are extremely intertwined and therefore we share common destinies." So, dialogue, exchange of venues and understanding are pertinent, and necessary.

In this regard, Dr. Tedros underlined the importance of asking the crucial questions: on how the regional integration agenda should respond to the aspirations of our youth? How can we redefine the African Peace and Security as well as governance architecture to respond to the newly emerging security threats? How can we strengthen the African Union Commission and our regional mechanisms to spearhead the continental transformation encapsulated in Agenda 2063? What mechanisms should we devise for Africa to benefit from technological advancements in various areas? In my view, he said, the institutional responses that we give to these questions will largely define our success over the next decade.

Dr. Tedros stressed that "despite the many challenges we are still facing, today's Africa is different from the 1980s and 1990s. It has, he said, made "significant progress and showed remarkable resilience," particularly in crisis management, adding that "Africa has become far more ready to shoulder its responsibility in conflict resolution." Indeed, conflict prevention and management would not be possible without Africa taking the lead. In the discussion, participants emphasized the high burden African states are carrying in international peacekeeping efforts, not least in the AMISOM mission in Somalia. They also debated the chances of cross-Red Sea cooperation to create regional conditions conducive to stabilization. One participant warned: "The jugular vein of the world economy, from the Horn of Africa through the Red Sea, now has a knife to it," adding that "The area has never been less secure." Discussants, however, disagreed whether collaboration across the Red Sea was at all feasible under current conditions.

At the main discussion session on “Safeguarding Peace: Conflict Dynamics in Eastern Africa” General Abdulkadir Sheikh Ali Dini, Minister of Defense of the Federal Republic of Somalia, briefed participants on how the Government of Somalia is endeavoring to strengthen the Somali National Armed Forces. The Defense Minister defined the challenges and proposed solutions that the international community should take into account. Uncoordinated and disconnected efforts only made the operations in Somalia less effective, said the Minister. He said, “We need to focus on being proactive than reactive”. The problems that arise from security coordination and lack of unity of command were also reiterated by the State Secretary for the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, Markus Ederer. The State Secretary also stressed the importance of informing the global community on the financing for AMISOM. The European Union (EU) provides resources needed for the payment of troop allowances and other related expenses within the framework of the African Peace Facility (APF). Alexander Rondos, the EU’s Special Representative for the Horn of Africa analyzed the ways people gave “unhealthy” allegiance to their ethnic and religious identities when they lose faith in the state or nation states.

The session also underlined the importance of Africa's development to the world. This should be self-evident, yet despite the high stakes, Europe, and the international community more broadly, have failed to devote the attention and resources that the issue merits. Today, more than ever, it would be extremely unwise to allow this situation to continue. A stronger partnership between Africa and Europe can make a real difference.

The second discussion session covered “The Rise of Violent Extremism: Implications and Counter Strategies.” This covered internal problems arising from mal-administration, corruption and the lack of response to the basic demands of people. These were identified as major reasons for violence in the global arena. It agreed on the critical importance of concerted efforts by the global community to proactively engage with governments and institutions to build up their capacity to deal with such root causes for violence.

Other roundtable discussions covered the themes of “Answering Wake-up call: African Responses to High Level Panels on Global Health Security” and “Cyber Security: More connected, less secure? Protecting Africa’s digital transformation”. The “Answering Wake-up call: African Responses to High Level Panels on Global Health Security” Roundtable noted the recent response to the Ebola epidemic as an example of a case where logistics and the capacity to mobilize resources fast was as important as funding. It was also made clear that increasing domestic resource allocations were key to overcome finance challenges in making health systems resilient in Africa.

On the second day of the conference, held at the African Union Conference Center, discussions also “Mega trends, Mega problems, Mega chances: the Ambiguity of progress in Africa” and “Keeping peace: the Future of Africa’s security Architecture.” The first session debated on urbanization, suggesting that conflicts were lessening but at the same time underlining the worrying gap in inequality, and need for new and concerted efforts to tackle climate change and other major challenges. The session also stressed the importance of getting back to basic African values including the sanctity of life and respect for women.

Hungary's Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister in Ethiopia...

Mr. Péter Szijjártó, Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister of Hungary has been on an official visit to Ethiopia. During his visit he met President Mulatu Teshome, Foreign Minister, Dr. Tedros Adhanom and other high-level government ministers and sector representatives as well as participating in the Ethiopia-Hungary Investment Forum on Tuesday (April 12).

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome received Mr. Szijjártó at the Jubilee National Palace on Tuesday and they discussed bilateral, regional and global issues. President Mulatu noted the long-standing relationship that existed between the two countries, and underlined the need to further strengthen their partnership in economic, diplomatic and other multi-sectorial fora. The President, mentioning the convergence of ideas and outlook regarding the special attention both countries paid to business and economic diplomacy, said they should both make the effort to explore and exploit further opportunities for mutual growth and interest. Dr. Mulatu emphasized Ethiopia's commitment to acquire more Foreign Direct Investment and called on the Minister to encourage Hungarian investors to come and explore the investment potential of Ethiopia. He said Ethiopia was a convenient investment destination where business could be profitable while at the same time supporting Ethiopia in its moves towards industrialization.

Foreign Minister Szijjártó said that Hungary's new model of "Southern Opening" provided for diplomatic engagement for enhanced bilateral and political relationship with Africa and Latin American countries. He noted that "Ethiopia is one of the most rapidly thriving economies in the world and we cherish Ethiopian people's achievement in development". He said it was no accident that Hungary had decided to engage with Ethiopia in trade and investment activities. It was attracted by the country's booming economy and the prospects of success. The Foreign Minister mentioned his support for Ethiopia's policy shift towards industrialization which he said would provide inputs for bringing about better economic growth and development. Referring to Ethiopian Airlines as the largest and most successful carrier in the continent, the Foreign Minister suggested that it should start flights from Addis Ababa to Budapest and on the other destinations.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom later met with Mr. Szijjártó for discussions on areas of cooperation in migration, refugees, development and investment. The two sides also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on MOU on "establishing regular political consultation" to help pilot agreements on avoidance of double taxation, mutual protection of investment and the waiving of diplomatic and service visas in the future. Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, who expressed Hungary's support for Ethiopia's candidature for a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council, praised Ethiopia for its unparalleled contribution to collective peace and security in the region. He underlined the "common heritage" of Ethiopia and Hungary in terms of "the fact that we both share a religious civilization" and "have common enemies like terrorism and migration." The Foreign Minister said the two sides had to augment their commonalities in many different arenas. Discussing the migration and refugee agenda, Mr. Szijjártó recalled the 400,000 migrants who had crossed Hungary's borders and the 800,000 emigrants Ethiopia hosted. He said this was why Hungary was a strong promoter of the EU's support for Ethiopia. The EU has allocated USD\$745 million and US\$1.4 billion for economic and humanitarian assistance respectively. Mr. Szijjártó said the two countries had significant potential to cooperate in a

number of sectors including IT, food processing, manufacturing, agriculture, education and e-commerce. He disclosed that The Minister disclosed that the Hungary Exim Bank had allocated US\$28 million to take the joint venture flagship project, METEC-DANUBIA, to the next level of mass production.

Dr. Tedros noted “Hungary and Ethiopia are on the same page since their strategic engagement gave emphasis to trade and investment”. Ethiopia, he said, would actively engage with Hungary, particularly in the areas of e-commerce and the digitalizing of commerce, since this was very crucial in handling the business sector effectively. He welcomed the Hungarian government’s allocation of funds for tram manufacturing and expressed his hope for more mutual support and cooperation.

...and the Ethio-Hungarian Investment and Business Forum

Foreign and Trade Minister Péter Szijjártó also attended the Ethiopia-Hungary Business and Investment Forum held at the Intercontinental Hotel on Tuesday (April 12) at which the two countries signed a MOU to facilitate investment and business ties, trade and business information and encourage links between their respective business people. The forum was attended by high level government officials, diplomats, representatives of the business sector of both countries including more than 20 Hungarian investors, and invited guests. Opening the Forum, Mr. Szijjártó emphasized that Hungary had recently reformed its foreign policy, giving priority to economic cooperation. He stressed that Africa was emerging and that Hungary “would like to forge trade and investment ties with this continent.” He said that Ethiopia was Hungary’s most important partner in Africa. It had one of the best performing economies in the world today, and Hungary had opened a trade relations' office in Addis Ababa. The Hungarian Embassy had been tasked with the creation of economic ties with Ethiopian partners. He said Hungary was ready to strengthen business and investment relations with Ethiopia and transfer technologies in areas including water technology, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, digital and electronic communication, food-processing, and higher education.

Mr. Elias Geneti, President of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Organizations, said Ethiopia was glad to welcome the first high-level business delegation from Hungary. Ethiopia, he said, would like to build credible, valuable, and reliable business partnerships; and it was working to guarantee incoming investment on a lasting basis. The Investment Forum included presentations on investment and trade potential and the opportunities available in a number of sessions.

Ethiopia’s Investment Commissioner, Mr. Fitsum Arega, described the country’s vision and the links to investment, investment opportunities, the path to middle income status, infrastructure development, market access, investment policies and incentives, as well as summarizing the main reasons to invest in Ethiopia. He underlined that Ethiopia, the second most populous country in Africa, had been registering an 11% average growth rate for the last 12 years. It had 74 million hectares of arable land. To achieve middle income status by 2025, GDP was expected to grow by 11% every year. Developments in the manufacturing sector and in the creation of industrial parks were well underway to make the country the leading manufacturing hub in Africa. It was also engaged in massive investment in infrastructure and people’s skill

development. Mr. Fitsum also elaborated on the priority sectors and the manufacturing industries currently being promoted. These included light manufacturing industries with basic and import substitution sectors as priorities. The major areas were textile and garment, production leather, agro-processing, industrial park development, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, metal engineering and construction materials. The Commissioner identified the main reasons for investing in Ethiopia including its fast and sustainable economic growth and development, a stable economic and political environment, access to international markets, availability of and abundant and wage-competitive labor force, fast growing infrastructure and very cheap, green, energy, as well as transparent investment policies aligned with GTP Targets, attractive investment incentives, naturally conditioned weather along with the government's clear strategy as in its Growth and Development Plan II and its continuous support.

Somalia's National Leadership Forum agrees further details for the electoral process

Following on from the agreement between the Federal Government and the Puntland State Administration on Sunday (April 3), the National Leadership Forum met in Mogadishu from April 9 to April 12 to agree details and modalities for the electoral process for the August election. Participants included President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Speaker. Mohammed Sh. Osman Jawari, Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmaarke, President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali of Puntland, President Ahmed Mohamed Islaan of Jubaland, President Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan of the South-West, and President of Abdulkarim Hussein Guled of Galmudug. Opening the session President Mohamud called on the country's political stakeholders to make concessions and engage in political harmony. He said Somalia had made 'impressive' political strides on security and rebuilding and added that "As we move towards achieving greater goals, it's very important for us to promote a political solution and making concessions."

The National Leadership Forum welcomed the agreement reached between the Federal Government of Somalia and Puntland State on April 3 and noted that it paved the way for the implementation of the 2016 electoral process, as well as for preparations for universal (one-person one-vote) elections in 2020. The Forum also reiterated the commitment that there should be no extension of the constitutionally mandated term limits of the legislative and the Federal Government. It called on all relevant entities to ensure the expeditious preparation and timely implementation of the 2016 electoral process and requested the assistance of international partners in this regard.

In a communique at the end of the meeting, the National Leadership Forum said the electoral process allows for a two-level structure, of a Federal Electoral Implementation Team (FEIT) and State-Level Electoral Implementation Teams (SEITs) in each of the existing and emerging Federal Member States. The FEIT will be composed of 17 Members, five appointed by the Federal Government and two by each of existing and emerging Member States. Each SEIT will comprise of 11 members, eight appointed by the Federal Member States and three appointed by the Federal Government. These teams will be set up as soon as possible and undertake all relevant preparations for the electoral process. Their terms of reference will be developed and

agreed upon by the Forum. The Forum will also set up a Dispute Resolution Mechanism for the electoral process.

The Upper House will be established before the elections of the Lower House. 30% of seats specially reserved for women candidates. The State executives will nominate at least two candidates for each seat and the state assemblies vote for each seat individually. The States will adopt their own formula for distributing seats among its communities or regions in a balanced and inclusive manner, ensuring adequate representation of the minorities. All voting will take place on the same days across all Federal Member States.

For the Lower House, the list of the 135 Traditional Elders will serve as the base of the electoral process after updating. These 135 Traditional Elders will select the Electoral Colleges in consultations with their relevant and respective elders. Each candidate will be elected by an Electoral College of 50 members. The total electorate will therefore be $275 \times 50 = 13,750$. The electors will be drawn from the sub-clans sharing the seat and will represent the diversity of the relevant community, including civil society and youth. Each Electoral College will contain a minimum of 30% women. The communique notes that in the absence of Somaliland's participation, representatives who are from Somaliland. The distribution of the 275 Members of Lower House of the Federal Parliament will be based on the clans/constituencies party to the formation of each existing and emerging Federal Member State.

The communique notes that the electoral processes will be conducted in the state capitals or respective seats of Federal Member States and Emerging Federal Member States. The 2016 electoral model and its implementation mechanism shall be tabled in the Federal Parliament for final endorsement.

The National Leaders Forum also announced a Constitutional Conference would be held in Garowe in the next few weeks and this would be preceded by a meeting of the Forum to agree on political and constitutionally contentious issues to advance the review process. The Forum expressed its appreciation to the International Donors and Partners for their commitment to the electoral process. It also expressed its deep concern about the behaviour and the practices of the Somalia Eritrea Monitoring Group, suggesting the targeting of Somali citizens was hindering the process of state building.

The Forum referred to existing and emerging states and this emphasizes that it expects that the process of state formation in Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle will be completed in time for these to participate fully in the electoral process. No mention was made of Benadir, the area around Mogadishu, but the Government has said previously that this will receive special consideration. The State Formation Convention for Hiiraan and Middle Shebelle reopened on Wednesday (April 13).

A Policy Note on Eritrea's refugee crisis and the international community

Last month, the Nordic Africa Institute produced a Policy Note written by Redie Bereketeab a Senior Researcher at the Institute, on “Eritrea’s refugee crisis and the role of the international community”. It’s a curious, even contradictory, paper in which Professor Bereketeab admits the reality of great deal of the current comments on the Eritrean regime but then tries, as so many defenders of Eritrea have done, to blame both Eritrea’s internal and external activities and policies largely on Ethiopia and on the international community.

Professor Bereketeab, who identifies Eritrea as “one of the world’s fastest-emptying countries,” said expectations were high that the successful liberation movement would, after 1993, also prove successful at post-liberation democratic state-building. Ignoring the specific autocratic role and behavior of President Isaias, he suggests that the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) and its successor the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) government subscribed to “a model of guided democratization involving popular participation, rather than a liberal multiparty system.” In the early years there was also, he says, “promising progress was made in areas such as education, health, road reconstruction and telecommunications, and annual economic growth reached 5-6 per cent.”

Professor Bereketeab claims the turning point with the war of 1998-2000, though he carefully refrains from mentioning, as the UN Claims Commission subsequently specified, that it was Eritrea which launched the war by its invasion of Ethiopian administered territory in May 1998. Eritrea’s defeat certainly interrupted any positive developments, and “plunged the emergent state into a spiraling crisis,” though it was already clear earlier that President Isaias was never going to countenance many of the suggestions in the proposed constitution. Subsequently, as Professor Bereketeab correctly notes, the economy collapsed into “deep recession, with immense human and social consequences.” As a result, “More and more Eritreans were forced to look beyond the borders for better conditions, [and] the period of mandatory national service, which prior to the war was 18 months, was extended indefinitely.” Then came the Warsay-Yekealo development program in 2002, under which virtually every able-bodied person is required to serve, and “the effects of this initiative on education, family life, earnings and meaningful private activities have been drastic. Indeed, in some cases people have been unable to pursue any of these objectives.” He goes on: “In Eritrea freedom of speech is suppressed, there is no independent media, human rights violations are common and national service draftees are still forced to provide involuntary labor. People are risking their lives to flee the country *en masse*.”

All this is an accurate, if condensed, summation of the reality of Eritrea as described by the many thousands who have fled the country in recent years. However, it is at this point that Professor Bereketeab decides to repeat the usual Eritrean claims that it was “Ethiopia’s rejection of the Boundary Commission ruling, its constant threats to overthrow the Eritrean government and its concerted efforts to isolate Eritrea” that have led to the government’s recourse “to coercion to achieve security and to give effect to its nation-building vision”, or in other words it was the supposed threat of an Ethiopian attack that led to the tight control of citizens, intolerance of deviant views, closing of private media, and the divisions within the leadership in 2001 which were “also harshly dealt with.” Everything, he suggests, was geared towards safeguarding the nation and so “Eritreans have sacrificed their individual rights in order to preserve their

collective national rights, which the liberation struggle was fought to ensure.” They realized that “they could only achieve their collective rights if they voluntarily suspended their individual rights, at least temporarily.” The key word here is, of course, “voluntarily”, something that can hardly be substantiated by even the most superficial look at Eritrea’s recent history.

Professor Bereketeab goes on to claim that international and particularly US geostrategic interests dictated support for Ethiopia over the Boundary Commission decision because “Ethiopia is an important ally in the global War on Terror.” Indeed he even repeats the Eritrean claim that US officials “resorted to blackmail by accusing Eritrea of supporting terrorism and of jeopardizing international security and stability.” He also repeats Ambassador Herman Cohen’s allegation that all other Security Council members wanted to lift the sanctions in 2014, but the US vetoed the move. This is not a claim confirmed by members of the Council. Ambassador Cohen’s additional allegation that difficulties in relations between the US and Eritrea are “of a personal nature, involving President Isaias Afwerki and Ambassador Rice” is similarly inaccurate.

As other supporters of Eritrea have repeatedly tried to do, Professor Bereketeab tries to tie all this into the failure to resolve the impasse over the Algiers Agreement. As always, this totally ignores the fact that Ethiopia has entirely accepted the Boundary Commission’s delimitation and has repeatedly called for dialogue to provide for demarcation of the border. Eritrea has, as consistently, refused to hold any dialogue over the border or over any other issue including normalization of relations. It also ignores Eritrea’s repeated violations of the Algiers Agreements which culminated in the expulsion of the UN Mission (UNMEE), set up to oversee the border demarcation.

Professor Bereketeab similarly ignores Eritrea’s numerous incursions into Ethiopia since 2002 and its open and very public support for armed Ethiopian opposition movements, preferring merely to note what he calls “Ethiopia’s frequent military actions against Eritrea, for example in Dankalia in 2012 or near Badime the following year.” Those, the only two such episodes, in fact followed major Eritrean incursions into Ethiopia. He also refers to “repeated threats to overthrow the Eritrean government,” threats that have never been made, though Ethiopia has certainly said it reserved the right to respond to Eritrean provocation.

Professor Bereketeab ascribes the use of sensational images such as ‘the North Korea of Africa’ or ‘garrison state’ to “neoliberal scholars and human rights activists” and claims they merely cite each other without really verifying and validating their sources, producing “tainted knowledge that will in no way serve to solve the problem.” He attacks the methodology of the UN Special Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea (COI) established to investigate the extensive violations of human rights violations, possibly “amounting to crimes against humanity”, as “deficient” as it depended on information from “disgruntled government opponents, asylum seekers and neighboring countries with serious disagreements with Eritrea.” The accusations of this kind should be open and transparent, he says. In fact, the COI’s account is a devastating and detailed account of torture and forced labor given by hundreds of those who have fled Eritrea. These accounts have not been confined to the Commission of Enquiry nor are they merely repeated citations. Many, indeed most, of the accusations made over many years now are open and transparent as well as extraordinarily detailed. There is no evidence that the

Commission might be politically motivated, and to suggest that the “international community is as responsible as the Eritrean government for violations of human rights”, is bizarre. Equally odd is the comment that “if the Eritrean government is violating the individual rights of Eritreans, the international community has violated their collective rights.”

Given his refusal to consider or accept so much of this publicly available evidence, it is hardly surprising that Professor Bereketeab describes UN Sanctions, in 2009 and 2011, as “unjustified.” They were, of course, imposed because of Eritrea’s support for Al-Shabaab and other extremist Somali opposition groups, and for its refusal to acknowledge or resolve conflict with Djibouti as well as its continued efforts to destabilize neighboring governments by training, arming and supporting armed opposition groups in the region, in particular in Ethiopia. The most recent Somali-Eritrea Monitoring Group (SEMG) report has said that the Monitoring Group found no specific evidence of Eritrean support for Al-Shabaab but its earlier reports certainly produced highly convincing detail of Eritrea’s backing of organizations such as Hizbul Islam, allied to Al-Shabaab, and its open support for Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and other extremist leaders. Sheikh Hassan, for example, spent a considerable time in Asmara as a guest of the Eritrean government, and subsequently received arms supplies from it. There is, in fact, plenty of “objective and valid evidence of Eritrean support” for Al-Shabaab and related movements. Equally, Eritrea’s consistent refusal to allow the SEMG access to Eritrean records has, not surprisingly, fueled suspicion that it has something to hide. It similarly denied its attack on Djibouti and for many years refused to acknowledge that it held a number of Djiboutian prisoners.

It’s hardly surprising that at the end of the Policy Note, Professor Bereketeab recommends the international community to resolve the boundary issue, stop using “unsubstantiated, non-verifiable, dubious data gathering methods”, stop using sanctions as a political instrument, and engage and encourage the Eritrean government as well as stop isolating and demonizing it.

However, the real oddity of this Policy Note is that Professor Bereketeab having detailed all these references to “tainted knowledge”, made these his allegations about the international community, US officials and neo-liberals, and ignored and misinterpreted much of Ethiopia’s actions, and pushed for engaging with Eritrea, is honest enough to demand that “the Eritrean Government should implement the constitution, reform the political system, time-limit the mandatory national service, reform the salary system, make life affordable, respect basic human, civil and political rights, restructure the economy, and allow economic plurality.” These comments, in effect, negate almost everything he said earlier, laying the problems of Eritrea at the feet of the international community and of the Eritrean-Ethiopian war.

In addition, he adds, the Eritrean government also “needs to make profound policy changes.” Yes, indeed. Professor Bereketeab, however, fails to see that the central problem of Eritrea’s refugee crisis and of its relations with the international community, and neighbors, is that Eritrea has consistently refused to change its policies in practice, external or internal. It has said it is going to limit national service, but has yet to do so. It has said it was giving all civil servants a pay rise. It has yet to be implemented. It has denied, repeatedly, that it has supported extremist movements or regional destabilization, but it continues to arm, train and support such groups.

Overall, the major problem with Professor Bereketeab's interpretation of events is that it takes no notice of Eritrea's continuing activity in attempting to destabilize the region and of its support for armed opposition movements in Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Sudan. Two months ago an Eritrean incursion across the border into Ethiopia led to the kidnapping of 80 artisanal gold miners, though they have now been released. This is only one of many similar actions along the border over the last several years. And indeed, the regime's commitment to continued violence, internally, was underlined on Sunday (April 3) when some conscripts attempting to escape from trucks taking them to the port of Assab, were reportedly shot and killed, with 11 killed and 18 injured. In its first official response five days later, the Government's Minister of Information, Yemane GebreMeskel, gave an oddly different account on Twitter. He said, "Two National Service members died last Sunday in Asmara from injuries received when they jumped and fell from military trucks transporting them," adding that "11 others were also injured in the same act and have been hospitalized." He said, without additional explanation, that "Police stabilized the situation by firing few warning shots into the air". His final Tweet was to add that "Eritrea's arch-enemies and hired guns have now gone into their usual frantic-mode to conjure up and recycle despicable lies of a sad incident."