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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The 28th Ordinary Session of the African Union Heads of State and Government began on Sunday (January 22) at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa with the three day meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee (January 22-24). The theme of the Summit is: "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investment in Youth." (See article)

The 30th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union's Foreign Ministers opened on Wednesday (January 25). It was chaired by Moussa Faki Mahamat, Foreign Minister of Chad and Chairperson of the Executive Council, and considered the draft agenda and draft decisions and declarations for the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union taking place on Monday and Tuesday next week (January 30 and 31). (See article)

The AU Commission's Women, Gender and Development Directorate together with civil society and UN partners convened the 9th AU Gender Pre-Summit meeting this week (January 22-27).(See article)

The United Nations launched the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2017 report on Thursday (January 26) at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa. The report notes Ethiopia remained one of the top ten economic performers in terms of real GDP growth in 2016. It achieved this despite marked deceleration in real GDP growth rate in Africa and the world at large, with its economy mainly driven by huge government investment on infrastructure coupled with the growing role of the private sector.

The IGAD Secretariat presented the IGAD draft Treaty, the proposed IGAD organizational structure, the IGAD Budget provisions 2017 and the IGAD Operation Plan 2017 to the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors on Saturday (January 21). The Committee, chaired by Ambassador Shamebo Fitamo Adeba, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Djibouti, reviewed the documents which

will be presented to the next IGAD Council of Ministers' meeting for endorsement. The Committee of Ambassadors was also briefed on the newly established IGAD Centre of Excellence to Counter Violent Extremism in Djibouti.

The WHO Executive Board selected three candidates to be presented to World Health Assembly in May as nominees for the post of Director-General of WHO. The three candidates are Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, (Ethiopia), Dr. David Nabarro (UK) and Dr. Sania Nishtar (Pakistan). WHO Member States will choose among the 3 nominees by vote at the World Health Assembly and the new Director-General will take office on 1 July 2017.

Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome received Salvador Valdes Mesa, the Vice-President of the Council of State of Cuba, on Friday (January 27). Vice President of Mesa arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday for a two-day official visit to Ethiopia. They exchanged views on strengthening the historic relationship between Cuba and Ethiopia and extending the existing range of cooperation in areas of business, investment, health, education, technology and knowledge transfer. Vice-President Mesa delivered a message of fraternity and friendship from the President Raul Castro of Cuba and said Cuba looked forward to raise its relations with Ethiopia to a higher level. He also met with Prime Minister Hailemariam.

Prime Minister Hailemariam attended the 16th Ethiopian Pastoralists' Day celebrated in Jigjiga, the capital of the Somali Regional State on Wednesday (January 25) under the theme: "Pastoralists' Enhanced Peace and Development Participation and Benefit for Our Renaissance!"

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu met Egypt's Foreign Minister for talks on Friday (January 27) and discussed ways to strengthen ties between Addis Ababa and Cairo.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh held discussions with the Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mr. Leonard SHE Okitundu, on Friday (January 27, 2017). They discussed ways to increase cooperation in aviation, development, fighting regional terrorism, human trafficking and climate change and collaborate in harnessing natural regional resources for mutual growth.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh met with Ms. Karen Elleman, Minister for Equal Opportunities and Nordic Cooperation of Denmark and Special Representative for the Danish Candidature for the UN Human Rights Council 2019-21 on Thursday (January 26). Dr. Workneh stressed that Ethiopia's interest to work with Denmark in the areas of technology transfer, knowledge and experience sharing in all areas of cooperation. They agreed to enhance bilateral relations in the development, climate change, green economy, migration and refugee management.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh met with the Australian Minister for International Development and Pacific. Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wellsin on Thursday (January 26). Dr. Workneh underlined the importance of further strengthening bilateral cooperation and attended the inauguration of the Australian Embassy later in the day. Ethiopia, Slovenia agree to establish diplomatic relations

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh met Zambia's Foreign Minister Harry Kalaba on Friday (January 27) and exchanged views on economic cooperation and people-to-people relations. Dr. Workneh thanked Mr. Kalaba for cooperation over the release and repatriation of Ethiopian prisoners to Addis Ababa. They agreed the two countries should work closely on issues of mutual interest.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh met Burundi's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alain Aime Nyamtwe, on Friday (January 27) for discussions on bilateral and regional issues. They have agreed to implement various bilateral agreements signed earlier and to continue to work together on common regional and multilateral agendas as well as collaborate further in harnessing natural regional resources for mutual growth.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh hosted a reception for the African Union's Executive Council of Foreign Ministers on Wednesday (January 25).(See article)

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, met with Ms. Laila Bokhari, Deputy Foreign Minister of Norway on Friday (January 27) and called for expanded ties in trade and investment. Deputy Foreign Minister Bokhari underlined the need to expand relations in health and education, gender equality, violent extremism and migration. Norway, she said, would continue to work with Ethiopia's centers of excellence in improving climate smart agriculture development.

State Minister Hirut Zemene held talks with the head of the African Branch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Mahamane Cisse Gouro on Friday (January 27). They discussed areas to help strengthen co-operation and encourage promotion and protection of Human Rights.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael, met with Ambassador Mtjaz Sinkovec, non-resident Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Ethiopia, in his office on Thursday (January 26). They agreed to start a political dialogue to establish diplomatic relations.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael, met with a Japanese Business Delegation led by Yoshiaki Kobayashi, Honorary Consul of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Osaka, Japan on Wednesday (January 25).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Spokesperson, Tewolde Mulugeta, in a statement on Monday (January 23) said that there were no diplomatic problems between Ethiopia and South-Sudan. He dismissed as false and baseless social media reports claiming that "Ethiopia has decided to cut its diplomatic relation with South Sudan". He said: "The reports are wrong. The two countries are cooperating on their common agendas. We have a good relationship."

The House of People's Representatives endorsed a supplementary budget of over 18.2 billion Birr last week while adopting the Paris Climate Accord. The supplementary budget will cover support for those affected by the impact of the El Niño drought as well as provide for the establishment of the Youth Revolving Fund and strengthen implementation of the country's Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy.

Dr. Girma Amente, Minister for Public Enterprises, said this week that Ethiopia would stop the import of sugar as of the coming fiscal year. He said the newly constructed Omo Kuraz I and II factories as well as the Beles I sugar factory were scheduled to commence production this month. He also emphasized that the Ministry was revising its plan to avoid further delays in the construction of other new sugar factories.

Agreements were signed on Friday (January 20) for the construction of three industrial parks, to be built at Kilinto on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, the second at Bole Lemi Phase-II and the third at Jimma in the Oromia Regional State. They will be built at a cost of 10.5 billion birr over the coming year.

The Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa Secretariat announced this week that the President of the Republic of Liberia, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, will be the keynote speaker at the sixth Tana Forum to be held on 22-23 April 2017.

Kenya

President Kenyatta, addressing a rally in Isiolo at the weekend, announced a ban on maize exports from Kenya until the drought ends. He also ordered the arrest of any traders found hoarding maize to make "abnormal" profits.

President Kenyatta expressed optimism that US President Donald Trump would strengthen his country's relationship with Kenya and the African continent. Speaking on Sunday (January 22), President Kenyatta said: "We expect a continuation of the very good and solid relation that has existed between Kenya and the United States of America since our independence," adding that he hoped that it would see consolidate "the already good partnership in security and development."

President Uhuru Kenyatta, speaking at the end of a three-day voter registration mobilization campaign in Murang'a, Meru and Isiolo counties, pledged to peacefully hand over power to the Opposition should his Jubilee Party lose the next elections. He stressed he would respect the will of Kenyans and abide by their decision.

The US Defense Security Cooperation Agency has agreed to provide 14 aircraft to Kenya in a deal worth \$418m. The 12 Air Tractor AT- 802L turboprop planes offer intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and light attack capacity. Two AT-504 trainer aircraft are also included in the deal as well as weapons, technical support and program management. The AT-802L is an aircraft "capable of using precision munitions and cost effective logistics and maintenance". A US State Department statement said this would improve the security of a strong regional security leader "undertaking critical operations against Al-Shabaab and a troop contributor to AMISOM."

Somalia

The presidential election committee, set up on Tuesday this week, announced that the presidential election by the joint Houses of Parliament would take place on February 8. (See article)

The Senate, the Upper House of the Parliament, elected a Speaker and deputy speakers on Sunday (January 22). This was last major step necessary before holding the election of the president who will be chosen by a joint session of the two houses of Parliament. On Thursday, Parliament announced that the presidential election would be held on February 8. (See article)

The international community on Sunday (January 22) congratulated members of Somalia's tenth parliament for completing the elections for speakers and deputy speakers. It stressed the paramount importance of conducting a transparent, clean and credible presidential election whose outcome will be widely accepted by the people of Somalia and the international community.(See article)

The Military Operations Coordination Committee for AMISOM, meeting in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (January 24) called for deployment of 4,000 additional troops in Somalia and for the UN and the international community to provide support for these forces to allow for the conduct of offensive operations. (See article)

The Qatar Red Crescent Society has sent a delegation to Somalia to make a "needs assessment" to prepare for assisting victims of drought and conflict in Galkayo, divided between the states of Puntland and Galmudug. The Qatar Fund for Development will be providing funding for relief, development, and health projects.

Jubaland State security forces, together with AMISOM troops captured Badhadhe, an Al-Shabaab stronghold in Lower Juba region about 160 kilometers from Kismayo, on Tuesday (January 24). Al-Shabaab fighters fled ahead of the attack on the town at dawn.

Two car bombs hit the Dayah hotel near the Somali Parliament compound in Mogadishu on Wednesday(January 25) killing 28 and wounding scores more. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility.

Somaliland's President Ahmed Silanyo, together with party leaders and the national electoral commission, announced this week that the Somaliland presidential elections will take place in October. They also agreed that parliamentary and municipal elections would be held simultaneously in October 2018.

South Sudan

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission overseeing the implementation of South Sudan's peace agreement has urged the U.N Security Council to quickly deploy the 4,000 extra troops it authorized late last year. The United Nations Security Council on Monday called for an

end to the fighting in South Sudan as well as immediate deployment of the planned Regional Protection Force. (See article)

President Salva Kiir's Presidential advisor on security affair, Tut Kew Gatluak said on Monday (January 23) that South Sudan was no longer hosting any Sudanese rebels in its territory. He said the issue of security along the common border had been addressed and a joint monitoring and verification team was being set up.

Sudan

President Omer Hassan al-Bashir arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday (January 23) for an official visit. In a meeting with King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud he discussed bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region. The two sides also signed an agreement for Saudi Arabia to fund a rural water project in Sudan. Sudan currently provides 850 troops for the Saudi-led "Decisive Storm" coalition against the Houthis in Yemen.

First Vice-President, Lt. General Bakri Hassan Salih, on Monday (January 23) attended the 34th session of the Khartoum International Fair. About 600 companies from 19 countries are participating in the fair. At the opening, the Minister of Trade, Salah Mohamed Al-Hassan, said the lifting of the US economic sanctions would help Sudan integration in the world economy and enhance its external relations and commercial exchanges

Opposition leader, Sadiq al-Mahdi, 82, returned to Khartoum on Thursday (January 26) after more than two years outside the country. He said he looked forward to a serious and inclusive dialogue to reach an inclusive and comprehensive solution for Sudan.

The 28th Ordinary Session of the AU Summit....

28th Ordinary Session of the African Union Heads of State and Government began on Sunday (January 22) at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa with the meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) of the African Union. The theme of this year's Summit is "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in the Youth," and the 33rd session of the Permanent Representatives Committee prepared the agenda of the summit with recommendations for consideration by the AU Executive Council, of Foreign Ministers, which held its 30th Session this week (January 25-27). According to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, there will be some 4,000 people attending the Summit, with at least 37 Heads of State and Government, three Vice-Presidents, three Deputy Prime Ministers and some 49 foreign ministers.

This week there are also meetings of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), including the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons on Wednesday, and a Summit of the APRM Forum on Saturday. The Committee of the African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) will meet on Saturday and there will also be a session of the Peace and Security Council at Heads of State level the same day. The Heads of State and Government will hold a

retreat on Sunday before the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union is held on Monday and Tuesday next week (January 30-31). The Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) is also holding its meetings during the week and its general assembly on January 31. The official launch of the Africa Center for Disease Control will also take place on Tuesday next week.

The Summit will also see the election of a new Chairperson of the AU Commission. The five candidates for the post of Commission Chairperson are Agapito Mba Mokuy, 51, Foreign Affairs Minister of Equatorial Guinea; Amina Mohamed Jibril, 55, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Moussa Faki Mahamat, 56, Foreign Minister of Chad; Pelonomi Venson Moitsoi, 65, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana; and Abdoulaye Bathily, 69, from Senegal, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa.

...the meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee...

The opening ceremony of the PRC at the weekend (January 22) took place in the presence of the Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission, Erastus Mwencha, AU Commissioners, representatives of the diplomatic corps, the international community, civil society, private sector and invited guests. Addressing the opening session, AU Commission Chairperson, Dr. Dlamini Zuma quoted Emperor Haile Selassie, in his statement to the 1963 Conference that founded the Organization of African Unity: What we require is a single African organization through which Africa's single voice may be heard, within which Africa's problems may be studied and resolved. We need a single institution, to which we all belong. She emphasized that the AU, guided by the 50th anniversary pledge to silence the guns, was determined to resolve the conflicts in Mali, South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, and Central African Republic; and to face the common threat of terrorism and extremism. Acting together, "we worked to avert a crisis in The Gambia" and, she added, "We pay tribute to the resolute and decisive leadership of ECOWAS, and the Peace and Security Council."

Dr. Zuma noted the progress made in the modernization of agriculture and agro-processing; in tackling backlogs in energy, transport, water and sanitation and in making sure that Africa was not bypassed in the information highways and knowledge economy through investing in ICT. She said the Agenda 2063 Ten Year Implementation Plan provided the goals to work towards - to push the African skills revolution, to build vibrant cities, to empower women and youth, and to ensure access to health for all, including adequate nutrition, water, sanitation and food security. She noted the task this year to adopt the African Continental Free Trade Area, and stressed that this, along with "our industrialization program, the Commodities Strategy, and work on the blue oceans economy", were critical to resolving the African paradox of a continent with virtually every natural resource at its disposal but whose people remained poor and marginal to global production.

Dr. Zuma said the work with Member states, RECs and organs to domesticate Agenda 2063, was proceeding very well but in spite of the achievements, a lot still needed to be done. She stressed the importance of espousing and upholding the values of Pan Africanism, which, she said, "include putting Africa first; the commitment to the African people, their dignity and aspirations; and our passion for democracy, peace, integration and development. We must build unity of

purpose even in the face of difficult challenges, within ‘a single institution to which we all belong’.” She said the Commission must be more efficient and effective, and its leadership and staff, diligent, prudent and Pan African in their outlook. Just as the Commission should be Pan-African in the execution of their duties so should the Permanent Representatives Committee. Africa, she said, must therefore be “resolute in working towards our Agenda 2063 so we can bequeath to our future generation a peaceful, prosperous Africa.”

...and of the Executive Council of Foreign Ministers....

The Executive Council’s meeting, opened on Wednesday (January 25). Over the three days it examined various issues related to the agenda of the 28th African Summit, notably the issues of economic, peace and security integration in Africa. Other matters considered included the funding of the African Union and the elections for the Chairmanship of the AU Commission. It deliberated on, and adopted, the report of the 33rd Ordinary session of the Permanent Representatives Committee, the Annual Report of the Chairperson of the Commission for the period January to December 2016, the reports of the Specialized Technical Committees concerning the ministerial meetings organized by the AU Commission during the previous six months, and considered the nominations for AU Commissioners. The Executive Council also considered the draft agenda and draft decisions and declarations for the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, and adopted the decisions of their 30th Ordinary Session.

The Council’s three-day meeting, chaired by Moussa Faki Mahamat, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Chad and Chairperson of the Executive Council, opened with statements by the Chairperson of the AU Commission, the UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UNECA, and the Chairperson of the Executive Council. In addition to the members of the Executive Council, AU Commissioners, leaders of intergovernmental organizations and ministers, officials, representatives of Civil Society and members of the Diplomatic Corps, attended the opening session.

In welcoming them, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr Dlamini Zuma reminded the Ministers that they were building Africa’s future in a fast-changing world with contradictory trends. She referred to global changes and instability and said citizens’ confidence in political systems was at an all-time low: “The world feels more insecure, as violent extremism of all kinds, acts of terrorism, and international crime impact on all our security, with no country that is exempt.” She spoke of movements of people across the world, conflicts, economic insecurity and climate change, and threats to the social compact of inter-generational solidarity. Dr. Zuma said Africa must revive and strengthen the values and spirit of Pan Africanism, in which she included putting Africa first; commitment to the African people, their dignity and aspirations; and Africa’s passion for democracy, peace, integration, development and building unity of purpose even in the face of difficult challenges and within ‘a single institution to which we all belong’. It must remain dedicated to its integration and development agenda to unlock the potential, energy, creativity and talents of Africa’s youth. It must strengthen democracies, governance and human rights, and operationalize Africa’s Governance Architecture.

Dr. Abdalla Hamdok, Acting Executive Secretary, of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, stressed the relevance of the Summit theme. This, he said, was at the heart of the

political, economic and social issues shaping the debate on Africa's development. He spoke of key challenges and opportunities for Africa's development: the imperative of promoting good governance, peace and security; the theme of the AU Assembly; the development policy framework needed to accelerate investment in youth and promote development; regional cooperation and policy coordination in a fast changing world. Africa, he said, must focus on governance, democracy, peace and security as a prerequisite for development. He noted that Africa's employment challenges and inequalities were inextricably linked to demographic factors. Leveraging the demographic dividend for future growth and prosperity was a critical challenge; it needed articulation and implementation of long-term development plans "championed by visionary leadership. Dr. Hamdok also underlined the importance of regional cooperation and policy coordination.

In his opening speech, Chad's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Moussa Faki Mahamat stressed that the 30th Executive Council was being held against the backdrop of significant changes happening at the African Union Commission including the AU reforms requested by Heads of States at Kigali last year and the pending AU elections which would, he stressed, be important for the organization's overall development and its ability to meet its obligations to the citizens of Africa. The Minister commended the excellent leadership of the AUC Chairperson and her Commission in championing Africa's development through the promotion of Agenda 2063. He also noted that the current session would be marked by the assessment of the reform proposals of the pan-African organization, underlining that the election of a new executive and the reform of the Union "will undoubtedly be a determining factor in the functioning of the organization." He ended his speech by officially declaring the 30th Executive Council session open.

...Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh stresses the importance of youth....

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu hosted a reception on Wednesday (January 26) for African ministers attending the 30th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union. Welcoming participants to Addis Ababa, he assured them the people and government of Ethiopia would do their utmost to provide customary Ethiopian hospitality to ensure their stay would be pleasant and productive. He said that he himself as a new member of the Executive Council welcomed the opportunity to join one of the principal organs of the Union. He assured his listeners of his commitment and readiness to work with all of them to achieve the aspirations and objectives of the Union.

Dr. Workneh praised the theme of the Summit. "Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through investment in youth" was, he underlined, a timely topic to achieve sustainable development. He noted that Ethiopia was already giving due emphasis to the topic. He said "We, in Ethiopia understand the critical importance of engaging the youth in the socio-economic as well as the political sectors." Indeed, the Foreign Minister noted, the government of Ethiopia was already working on structural transformation aiming to ensure inclusive growth by creating jobs to the youth. Reminding his listeners of the retreat for the Executive Council held in Addis Ababa last month, he emphasized that both the Chairperson and the acting Executive Secretary of the ECA had underlined that the Continental 50 year Agenda, Agenda 2063, could only be successful if it effectively unlocked "the potential, the creativity and the talents of our young women and men".

He added that Africa's future lay in its youth, and they must therefore be given greater voice in decision-making and in realization of the continent's renaissance.

Dr. Workneh noted that the Executive Council meeting earlier had included consideration of the annual report of the Chairperson of the AU Commission on the State of the African Union and the activities of the African Union Commission. He took the opportunity to thank most strongly Dr. Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union and Mr. Erastus Mwencha "for their passion, dedication and relentless work in advancing the laudable causes of the Union". He also thanked the AU Commissioners for their commendable work for the Union.

Dr. Workneh expressed his appreciation of the African Members of the World Health Organization's Executive Board for supporting Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Africa's sole candidate, in his bid to become Director General of the WHO. The WHO Executive Board on Wednesday selected three candidates to be presented to World Health Assembly in May as nominees for the post of Director-General. The three candidates are Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, (Ethiopia), Dr. David Nabarro (UK) and Dr. Sania Nishtar (Pakistan). Dr. Workneh concluded by hoping that the deliberations during the week and the Summit and in all the attendant meetings would be fruitful and rewarding.

....and the 9th Gender Pre-Summit meeting

The AU Commission's Women, Gender and Development Directorate together with civil society and UN partners convened the 9th AU Gender Pre-Summit meeting this week (January 22-27). The meeting focused on the theme of the AU Summit, "Harnessing the Democratic Dividend through Investment in Youth", with additional concentration on "Empowering Young People, especially Young Women, for Leadership and Civic Participation." The meeting was part of the follow-up to the AU Assembly's requests for development of a roadmap for the four thematic pillars developed for "Harnessing the Democratic Dividend" This concentrated on Human Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment, using a rights-based approach to young people's leadership and effective participation in governance and other civic processes. The other pillars are Employment and Entrepreneurship; Education and Skills Development; and Health and Wellbeing.

Young people constitute a large and rapidly growing proportion of the population in most African countries. They can be a creative force, a dynamic source of innovations, and they have undoubtedly, throughout history, participated, contributed, and catalyze important changes in political systems, power-sharing dynamics and economic opportunities. They have the power to transform their communities and the continent. Investments made today in the youth will determine the development trajectory of Africa in the future. Equally, young women's participation in politics and governance and access to decision-making can serve as a key indicator of gender equality and respect of human rights in democratic societies. They are still seriously under-represented in civic spaces in politics, economy, social affairs, cultural development and science and technology.

In fact, unemployment, poverty and lack of economic opportunities remain key impediments to young people's participation and development. According to the World Bank, youth account for

60% of all Africans unemployed. To foster the development of civic engagement and leadership skills, young people must be provided an environment where there are opportunities for active participation. They can take the lead in defining the policies and programs that promote inclusive civic engagement. The most essential element is the need to build the capabilities of young people and ensure the freedom to achieve their potential. Africa must work take advantage of the growing pool of talent, and create opportunities for them to succeed. Investment in youth, particularly in education, fosters opportunities for developing a skilled labor force. It allows young people to learn skills to take on higher-quality jobs in a changing and growing economy.

The overall objective of the Pre-Summit was to identify strategic areas of action, define critical priority areas of investment in young people, harness Africa’s demographic dividend through leadership and civic participation, identify concrete strategies, including policy intervention, to empower youth, adopt the “Call for Action” for greater participation in leadership and civic life. It provided an opportunity for intergeneration dialogue on how best to harness the abilities of young people, especially young women, to participate more effectively in leadership and civic processes, learn from each other’s experiences, solve problems and design strategic interventions to strengthen young people’s participation in civic life.

The Gender Pre-Summit hosted the 2017 edition of the AU Kwame Nkrumah Regional Awards, to honor outstanding African Women Scientists for their scientific achievements, discoveries and innovations. West Africa had two recipients with East, North and Southern Africa one each. The awards, of US\$20,000 each, went to Professor Jane Catherine Ngila from Kenya for research in Analytical-Environmental Chemistry on water resource management; Dr. Lamia Chaari Fourati from Tunisia for work on conception and validation of new protocols and mechanisms for quality of service provisioning over emerging networks technologies; Associate Professor. Celia Abolnik from South Africa for research in avian respiratory viruses, especially those that effect chicken and ostrich production in Africa; Professor Rokia Sanogo from for research in Pharmacognosy with a particular focus on Traditional Medicines; and to Professor Olu-Owolabi Bamidele from Nigeria for work on development of sustainable alternative materials for water treatment.

On Thursday (January 26) 2017, the AU International Centre for Girls and Women’s Education in Africa hosted a High Level Dialogue on Gender Equality and Education. This aimed to promote internationally agreed development goals including Agenda 2063, the SDGs, and Continental Education Strategy for Africa. It also wanted to encourage the rights to education for girls and young women, as well as greater inclusion of all advocates for education, women’s rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women in national and international policy dialogue and decision-making processes. The AU Commission also convened an Africa Pre-Commission on the Status of Women consultative meeting to support efforts to strengthen the consensus for a common Africa position on gender equality and women’s empowerment as well as help to ensure that Africa can speak with one voice when engaging at the global level.

Prime Minister Hailemariam attends the World Economic Forum at Davos

The 47th World Economic Forum was held in Davos, Switzerland under the theme “Responsive and Responsible Leadership” last week (January 17-20). As usual, the meeting brought together top business leaders, global political leaders, economists, and journalists for up to four days to discuss the most pressing issues facing the world. In addition to representatives from over 70 countries, including all the G20 countries, the new Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, along with heads of key international organizations participated. President Xi Jinping of China opened the Annual Meeting 2017. The CEOs of over 1,000 companies were present. More than a third of the participants came from outside Europe and North America, and another third represented stakeholder groups outside business and government. The Forum’s website notes: “The World Economic Forum remains the foremost creative force for engaging the world’s top leaders in collaborative activities to shape the global, regional and industry agendas at the beginning of each year.”

In keeping with its theme of “Responsive and Responsible Leadership” the meeting focused on four critical leadership challenges for 2017: re-imagining global cooperation, revitalizing the global economy, reforming capitalism and preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Over half of the 400 sessions on the program at this addressed issues of social inclusion and human development. Professor Schwab, the Founder and Executive Chairman, World Economic Forum said: “The world around us is changing at unprecedented speed. At this tipping point, our traditional concepts of society, meaningful employment and the nation state are challenged, and many understandably feel insecure or even threatened. A new model of responsive and responsible leadership is needed to allow us to address the challenges the world faces, from security to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, with long-term, action-oriented thinking and solidarity on a national and global level.” Particular emphasis was laid on efforts to promote sustainable development, social inclusion and human development with an interactive discussion series connecting leaders with millennials from 20 cities around the world on subjects of critical importance to the young generation, and to ensure discussions related to the concerns of the young generation, social entrepreneurs and cultural leaders.

Overall, this year’s Forum aimed to rededicate leaders from all walks of life to achieve common goals and drive new initiatives. It called for the more agile, inclusive and collaborative responses that are urgently needed to address the complexity and uncertainty in people’s lives. It identified responsive and responsible leadership, both nationally and globally, as requiring a deeper commitment to inclusive development and equitable growth. This should also involve working rapidly to close generational divides by exercising shared stewardship of those systems that are critical to prosperity. In the end, leaders from all walks of life attending the Annual Forum must be ready to react credibly and responsibly towards societal and global concerns that have been too long neglected.

The World Economic Forum is often described as no more than a talking shop, but it is also a working meeting for dozens of different communities from all regions of the world, and for a wide variety of politicians and businessmen and women. This year, a new fund was launched to raise \$400 million and protect 5 million hectares in countries working to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. Backed by the Norwegian government, this is expected to lead to \$1.6

billion in deforestation-free agriculture investments, as well as job creation and economic growth. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations was officially launched to provide for fast reaction to epidemics by creating vaccines that can be released quickly. Signatories to the Forum's New Vision for Arab Employment project said they have helped to re-skill 250,000 people since 2013 and are now targeting 1 million current and future workers. 40 governments and businesses, including some of world's largest consumer goods, retailers and recycling firms, endorsed a plan to increase global reuse and recycling rates for plastic packaging from the current 14% to 70%. Some of the world's largest financial service providers, global IT and telecom companies and the international humanitarian community agreed on six principles to better enable digital cash payments in crisis-affected populations. And a 100 leading businesses signed the Compact for Responsive and Responsible Leadership. This was developed with the Forum's International Business Council and this will now develop a framework for measurement of a long-term approach to leadership.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn was one of the dozens of world leaders who attended the Forum. During his visit, he told journalists that Ethiopia's uninterrupted participation at annual meetings of the Forum over the last few years had helped the country to reflect seriously and usefully on its national and continental agendas. During his stay in Davos, the Prime Minister had a series of meetings with development partners and held fruitful discussions with the leaders of various countries including Switzerland, China and the United Kingdom. He also met with Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum; Ethiopia has offered to host the World Economic Forum on Africa for 2018.

The Prime Minister's meeting with President Leuthard of Switzerland focused on bilateral business and investment ties between Ethiopia and Switzerland and also on Ethio-EU cooperation. They also discussed pressing continental and global issues including migration. President Leuthard commended Ethiopia's role in working for peace in the Horn of Africa in particular and the continent in general. Underlining Ethiopia's efforts to become a climate-resilient middle-income country by 2025, Prime Minister Hailemariam called on Swiss investors to take advantage of Ethiopia's favorable investment climate. President Leuthard promised to extend support to Ethiopia's green-growth strategy.

The Prime Minister also met with investors and representatives of international companies and held discussions focusing on four major areas: the creation of more jobs through modernizing the agriculture sector; developing locally manufactured products to substitute for imported pharmaceutical products; encouraging companies to engage in the ICT area; and attracting companies engaged in health activities to work especially in tertiary health services. He said Ethiopia had been able to take advantage of the Forum to attract more companies in these priority areas and had reached consensus with various leaders to further enhance investment and development ties. A number of participants at the Forum had expressed readiness to invest in Ethiopia in power generation, tourism and other sectors. He described his discussions with potential investors as fruitful.

Ethiopia participates in the UN Security Council's Open Debate on the Middle East

Ethiopia, now a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, participated last week in the open debate on the situation in the Middle East with a particular focus on Israel/Palestine on January 17. Nickolay Mladenov, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, briefed the Council on overall developments in the Middle East and stressed the urgent need for both sides to create the conditions for launching direct final-status negotiations. Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the UN, taking note of the briefing, emphasized that the state of the peace and stability of the Middle East region affected the maintenance of international and regional peace and security more widely. It was, he stressed, an obvious truth that developments in the Middle East region has a strong effect on the peace and security of Africa and in particular of the Horn of Africa region, because of the close geographical proximity of the two regions.

Ambassador Tekeda said the Horn of Africa had witnessed growing threats from terrorism and violent extremism with the possibility of ISIL/Daesh and Al-Qaeda establishing links with Al-Shabaab in Somalia. With the emerging geo-political shifts in the Middle East and the Red Sea region, new trends were emerging to define and shape the peace and security dynamics of the Horn of Africa region. In addition to the new developments visible in these regions, Ambassador Tekeda noted the collapse of state institutions as well as the escalation of sectarian violence coupled with the adverse impact from the crises in the Middle East. He also strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks in Israel. These were the realities and the overall context that encouraged Ethiopia to advocate and strongly support the principle of peaceful resolution of Middle East conflicts and most particularly the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

Ambassador Tekeda, who made clear Ethiopia's support for Israel's right to exist in peace and security, as well as the inalienable right of the Palestinians to self-determination, stressed that it was only the two parties that can resolve the conflict, adding "the Council cannot be a mere spectator". He emphasized that the Council must "nudge, prod and encourage the parties" to ensure that the two-State solution remained viable. Ambassador Tekeda further highlighted the fact that the expanding terrorist influence in the region and the rising sectarian violence was a warning that the absence of any meaningful progress would be a recipe for disaster. It would increase radicalization and create conditions in which extremists thrive. Ambassador Tekeda reiterated that it was imperative for both sides to resume direct and meaningful negotiations to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Besides the Palestinian question, the Security Council also discussed on January 18 the Secretary-General's second report on the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran's nuclear program. Ambassador Tekeda in his remarks in the Council noted that the Iranian Nuclear Deal represented "a significant achievement of multilateralism, tackling one of the most pressing peace and security issues of our time." He expressed his satisfaction at progress made in implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and said that "one year after the start of the Implementation Day, we are encouraged by the progress made in the implementation of this landmark agreement which contributes to the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime and the promotion of international peace and security." He stressed the need for all participants to continue to display the same spirit of cooperation to address the challenges

encountered in the implementation of the agreement and the importance of ensuring the agreement could achieve the desired objective.

IGAD's Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative meeting...

IGAD's Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) held an extraordinary general assembly meeting in Addis Ababa last week (January 19-21). It included a meeting of the IDDRSI Steering Committee as well as the launch of IGAD's Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa Region project.

IDDRSI's 7th Steering Committee meeting was attended by IGAD ministers and by IGAD's Executive Secretary, Engineer Mahboub Maalim, as well as representatives of partners including the Head of the European Union Delegation to Djibouti, Ambassador Adam Kulach. The meeting reviewed progress made in implementation of drought resilience initiatives throughout the IGAD region, examined the challenges and the opportunities, and discussed proposals and recommendations on the way forward. The mid-term review of the first phase of the implementation of IDDRSI (2013-2017) took place last year and this meeting provided the opportunity to follow-up the progress being made.

Executive Secretary said meeting needed to take stock of the review in order to propose ways forward. He emphasized that while significant progress had been made, the region was still in emergency mode when it came to responding to drought effects, pointing out that "This meeting is coming at a time when many parts of our region are suffering the effects of drought". He underlined that pastoralists were the major victims of drought disasters, and noted that bringing sustainable assistance to deal with the current drought situation was critical. He instanced an example of the kind of innovative approach to deal with drought as provision of hay bales to assist the 8 million camel population in the IGAD region for 6 months at a cost of \$3.6 billion. He said the meeting should adopt the recommendations of the mid-term review for the "improvements in planning and implementation of IDDRSI". These he said mostly required action from IGAD and from IGAD member states.

The Head of the EU Delegation to Djibouti, Ambassador Kulach, expressed the willingness of the EU, and of various development agencies from EU member states such as Germany's GIZ, to continue to work with IGAD in its efforts to relieve the region from the effects of drought build up resilience to drought and the effects of climate change.

The Inter-Agency Working Group, a regional network of professionals working to strengthen effective humanitarian and development activities in East and Central Africa produced a paper for the IGAD meeting. Entitled "Lessons learned? An Urgent Call for Action in Response to the Drought Crisis in the Horn of Africa", the report notes that the failure of the 2016 October-December rains across parts of the region has led "to a devastating drought in Somalia, south-eastern Ethiopia, and northern and eastern Kenya. More than 15 million people in these three countries are facing food and water shortages, and famine is now a possibility in Somalia." It notes many of the affected areas have seen the failure of successive rains, with cumulative

impacts that have exhausted the coping strategies of vulnerable communities. It also stresses that forecasts suggest that the next rains in affected areas, due in from March-May, may also be below-average. The result is that in Somalia, 5 million people need humanitarian assistance; in Ethiopia, 5.6 million people need emergency food assistance and 9.2 million require safe water; in Kenya, 1.3 million people are facing food shortages.

It also points out that other countries within the IGAD region have been affected by these climatic shocks. In Eritrea, for example, where 80% of the population is vulnerable to recurrent drought, 2 million people are now in need, 1.2 million children. In south-eastern Uganda, 55-85% of crop land is drought-affected in some areas, and 390,000 people are already food insecure. South Sudan and Sudan also have huge food assistance needs as a result of conflict and insecurity.

After the drought in 2010-11 in the region, much work was done to limit the worst impact of drought, but, the report concludes, “in the face of overwhelming climate shocks, humanitarian interventions are still urgently needed.” It says governments, donors and the international community must act quickly on the lessons earlier to protect the hard-won gains of recent years. It notes there have been “some admirable efforts to build resilience in the region”, including the creation of IDDRSI and the efforts of governments to “build up response capacity, expand social protection programs, strengthen access to sustainable water and implement early warning systems.” Despite this, however, the drought triggered by the 2015-2016 El Niño, one of the strongest ever recorded, had now been followed by the strongest Indian Ocean Dipole for fifty years and a weak La Nina as well.

The report offers a series of urgent recommendations, calling for IGAD and the UN to lead and coordinate resource mobilization through the IDDRSI platform, including the new Multi-Donor Trust Fund that is being established. It suggests making special efforts to engage new donor countries in the Middle East and Asia. Governments and humanitarian actors should work to ensure urgent access to water through the provision of vouchers or cash to vulnerable people, and where necessary water trucking. They should scale up social protection mechanisms, and work with market forces to implement cash-based intervention in response to urgent food, livestock and livelihood requirements, and where necessary, provide direct food assistance and emergency support for livestock. They should support the recovery of those who lost their assets as a result of the 2015-16 El Niño and donors should deliver urgent funding to provide life-saving aid as well as support recovery for people who lost their assets through immediate expansion of social protection mechanisms.

In the short term, IAWG also called for effective, evidence-based and costed national response plans to be updated and fully implemented, for an increase in cross-border programming because of the inter-connected nature of the region, and the regular trans-border movements of pastoralist communities in search of water and pasture as well as the potential for conflict over resources. Governments and humanitarian actors should implement measures to provide sustainable water, drilling and rehabilitating boreholes, creating reservoirs and irrigation systems, constructing hand-pumps and implementing water-harvesting schemes. It suggests governments should waive debts held by vulnerable, drought-affected people. Donors should increase provision of flexible development funding as well as encourage cooperation between affected countries through

shared objectives and planning processes. All actors should work together to develop mechanisms for the free movement of pastoralists and their livelihoods assets, and coordinate cross-border humanitarian intervention. They should also work to increase cooperation on funding with a wider pool of stakeholders, including private-sector actors, to address the huge funding gaps in the most affected countries.

.....and the launch of the Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas project

IGAD ministers in charge of drought resilience launched the Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa Region project on Saturday (January 21) by. Chaired by Ethiopia's Minister of Livestock and Fisheries of Ethiopia, Professor Fekadu Beyene, the meeting brought together the Minister of Livestock, Range, and Forest of Somalia, Said Hussein Iid; the Minister of Environment and Forestry of South Sudan, Josephine Napwon Cosmos; the Minister of Agriculture and Forests of Sudan, Professor Ibrahim Adam Ahmed El-Dukheri; the Minister of Disaster Preparedness and Refugees of Uganda, Musa Eweru Francis; the Minister, Head of Higher Council of Environment, Khartoum State, Sudan, General Omer Ahmed Ibrahim Nimir; the Permanent Secretary of Devolution and Planning of Kenya, Ms Josephta Oyiela Mukobe; and the IDDRSI Focal point and Technical Advisor of the Ministry of Agriculture of Djibouti, Ismael Elmi Habaneh, as well as IGAD Secretary, Mahboub Maalim, and Ambassador Adam Kulach.

The Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa Region project is aimed at developing cross-border areas between Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan within the implementation of IDDRSI. The First Phase of the proposed cross-border development projects is worth 63.9 million Euros and is being funded by the European Union.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Professor Fekadu highlighted the commitment of Ethiopia and of IGAD Member States to the implementation of drought resilience initiatives as well as to fostering cross border collaboration through development projects. Engineer Maalim welcomed the high level representation of member states underlining the sense of ownership of such projects. He also acknowledged the efforts of development partners, within the framework of the drought resilience initiative generally and the cross-border project in particular, providing support for the operationalization of IDDRSI.

Ambassador Kulach reminded the audience of the vulnerability of populations living in the IGAD border areas. He stressed such vulnerability offered an open door for radicalization of youth, all kinds of human trafficking, forced migration, and unwanted displacement. He said borderland populations sometimes lacked opportunities and were preyed upon by ill-intentioned people. At the same time, borderlands could be seen as areas of opportunities for people to connect and exchange. He said the Collaboration in Cross-Border Areas of the Horn of Africa Region project, which could not have been launched outside the IDDRSI framework, was an excellent example of this.

Somalia's presidential election date: February 8

A joint session of the new parliament chose a presidential election committee on Tuesday, with ten members from the House of the people and five from the Senate. The committee, responsible for organizing and coordinating the presidential election process, has separate sub-committees to deal with logistics and finances and with registration of candidates. The first act of its chairman, Abdirahman Duale Beyle, was to announce on Wednesday (January 25) that the election was to take place on February 8. He assured Somalis that the elections would take place on that date and that there would be no further postponements. The vote will come six months after the original date in August last year following delays in the election of the members of parliament because of clan disputes, fraud accusations and various challenges to the electoral process.

Registration of presidential candidates began on Mogadishu on Thursday (January 26) and continues until Sunday. Only candidates who pass the registration process will be allowed to participate and each will be required to deposit a fee of \$30,000. About 20 candidates are expected to register and they will be expected to face the public in an open debate, the first of its kind in Somalia. The presidential election committee and media organizations are finalizing the details. The debate is expected to be held next week, and at least 500 people, civil servants, students, youth, members of political parties and civil society will take part. All local TV and radios stations will transmit the occasion live.

The president will be jointly elected by the vote of the 275 members of the lower house of parliament, the House of the People, whose seats were distributed according to clan, and by the 54 members of the Upper House, the Senate, distributed by region. The number of Senate seats has been increased to 72 after complaints by some clans that they had been insufficiently represented in their regions, but this increase will not be implemented until after the election. In the meantime, the newly elected Speaker of the Somali Parliament, Mohamed Sheikh Osman 'Jawari', has assumed the powers of the President. In accordance with the federal constitution, President Hassan Mohamud is currently no more than a candidate in the election for the presidency. It is not the first time the Speaker has assumed the powers of the president, as he held the same position in August 2012.

These decisions followed the final steps in the parliamentary electoral process with elections held on Sunday (January 22) for the Speaker and two deputy speakers of the Upper House of Parliament, the Senate. The Senate elected Abdi Hashi Abdullahi as speaker for a four-year term by 43 votes out of a possible 52, defeating Mustaf Mohamed Qodah in the first round of voting. Abshir Mohamed Mohamud Bukhaari was elected first deputy speaker and Mowlid Hussein Guhaad the second deputy speaker. The Deputy Special Representative for the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia, Lydia Wanyoto, who witnessed the election, congratulated the senators for holding a peaceful and democratic exercise.

In a press statement issued the next day, the United Nations, African Union, European Union, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development, Ethiopia, Italy, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States congratulated members of Somalia's tenth parliament for completing the elections of their respective chambers' speakers and deputy speakers. It said the installation of the parliamentary leadership concluded an important phase of Somalia's electoral process and stressed that international partners wanted to see "swift formation of the Joint Ad Hoc

Committee on the election of the Federal President to facilitate the holding of a presidential vote by both houses of parliament as soon as possible.”

The partners stressed that the members of Somalia’s new parliament would face “a hefty and critical legislative agenda.” They said that the international community expected the two houses of parliament to maintain a positive working relationship between themselves and with the executive to accomplish the important task of building a better Somalia. The statement underlined that the constitutional review process should be completed without delay as a clear priority, as this underpinned among other things, the state formation process. It also contributed to the building of the key decisions needed on the structure of federal security sector institutions as well as promoting consensus-building and reconciliation among all Somalis. The statement said it would be important to review the legislation that the previous parliament was unable to pass, and develop the new legislation required for good governance. The members of the new federal parliament had a solemn duty to convert the achievement of their successful election into positive reforms that would expand opportunities for women, youth and minorities in Somali politics and society. Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia said: "At a time when Somalia is facing multiple challenges including the drought, joblessness and insecurity, parliamentarians have the opportunity to show leadership which responds to citizens' most basic needs."

The statement emphasized that Somalia’s international partners had played an important role in providing political, financial, technical and logistical support to Somalia’s electoral process from the beginning and they “looked forward to continued cooperation and collaboration with the new federal government and parliament in the coming months and years.” At the same time, the statement underlined “the paramount importance of conducting a transparent, clean and credible presidential election” whose outcome would be widely accepted by the people of Somalia and the international community. It said that the “abuses and malpractices that tarnished some of the parliamentary voting must be avoided at all costs”, adding that an open, orderly and fair presidential voting process would ensure the legitimacy of the new federal government at home as well as “foster a political climate conducive to the successful completion of the many pressing tasks awaiting it during its four-year term in office.”

AMISOM’s Military Operations Coordinating Committee meets in Addis Ababa

The Military Operations Coordination Committee for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) met in Addis Ababa, on Tuesday this week (January 24/January). The Chiefs of Defense Staffs of the AMISOM Troop Contributing Countries (Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda) or their representatives attended the meeting which was chaired by the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smaïl Chergui. Also present were representatives of the Somalia National Army, and partner countries including the United Kingdom, the United States, the European Union and the United Nations.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of the need to exchange views and agree on the way forward for expanded offensive operations by AMISOM and Somali National as well as the

urgent need to address AMISOM funding gaps. The Committee recalled the outcome of its previous meeting in November last year and reiterated its call for the deployment of additional forces and acquisition of key combat and stabilization capabilities in order to enable AMISOM and the Somali National Forces to carry out more extensive offensive operations. The meeting re-emphasized the urgency for the UN and the international community to provide support for additional forces of up to 4,000 troops, and to provide rations, fuel, and medical supplies, for a limited period in order to allow for more offensive operations in advance of AMISOM subsequent draw-down from Somalia.

The Military Operations Coordination Committee agreed that the AU Commission should convene a planning meeting in Addis Ababa, not later than the first week of February to finalize operational plans for the conduct of expanded offensive operations. It also agreed that all the Troop Contributing Countries should sign the addendum to the Memorandum of Understanding between the AU and TCCs, as an essential requirement to facilitate the payment of troop allowances for the period from January to September 2016. It expressed its appreciation to the Troop Contributing Countries for the sacrifices made in support of the people and Government of Somalia in their pursuit for sustainable peace and security.

The Committee welcomed the proposal by the AU Commission to convene an international consultative meeting on how to bridge the prevailing funding gap for AMISOM and called on the AU, UN and the international community to address the challenges to AMISOM funding as a matter of urgency. It said the AU Commission should raise the issue of AMISOM funding at the AU Summit in order to get guidance on the way forward. The Coordinating Committee welcomed the report by the Commission on the resolution of the payment procedure by the EU for the Burundian National Defence Force contingent in Somalia following the recent visit of the Commissioner for Peace and Security to Bujumbura.

The meeting reiterated the need for continued and enhanced support for the SN, especially in preparation for envisaged expanded offensive operations. It took note of the Commission decision to explore alternative means of providing some support to SNA forces through a combination of financial and in-kind contributions. It urged other international partners to consider providing additional support to SNA forces to facilitate offensive operations.

The Military Operations Coordinating Committee stressed that a comprehensive approach to security remained the most guaranteed approach to sustainable peace in Somalia. This would be anchored in a combination of critical and mutually reinforcing factors relating to the promotion of immediate security, the extension of state authority, local conflict resolution, building a capable Somalia National Security Forces and preventing violent extremism. The primary actors in this comprehensive approach and for implementation of this strategy must, of course, be the Federal Government of Somalia, AMISOM and the AU. The Committee therefore re-iterated the need to ensure that partners work in a coherent and collaborative way with the AU, AMISOM and the Federal Government as they seek to support Somalia's realization of a vision for a peaceful and prosperous country.

A briefing for the UN Security Council on South Sudan

The United Nations Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations, Herve Ladsous, briefed the 15 Security Council members on the situation in South Sudan at a scheduled closed-door meeting on Monday (January 23). Before hearing Mr. Ladsous, the Security Council also held an informal interactive dialogue with Festus Mogae, former President of Botswana and the chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, tasked with overseeing the implementation of the August 2015 South Sudan peace agreement.

Mr. Mogae made clear his deep concern about the situation in South Sudan. He said the security, humanitarian and human rights situation in South Sudan remained “dire”, amidst a faltering political process and ongoing concerns that inter-communal violence could spiral out of control. He said: “There have been concerns for several months now about the potential for mass atrocities to be committed in South Sudan. Fighting has been reported in several parts of the country, much of it along ethnic lines.” Mr. Mogae also gave an overview of the location and nature of ceasefire violations in recent months, as well discussed efforts to canton opposition troops.

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission chairman also told the Security Council that deploying the Regional Protection Force would help government to refocus on restoring law and order outside Juba. Mr. Mogae said strengthening the current 12,000 strong UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) would “provide a safe, neutral and secure environment in support of the peace process.” He said the national dialogue initiative announced by President Salva Kiir last year would be impossible if Juba was not secured to allow rival participants to engage in the process without being intimidated. The former Botswana president added that the Security Council must unite to push the South Sudanese government to accept the deployment of the Regional Protection Force authorized by the Security Council. He said a “spirit of determination, coordinated actions and uniform voices are critical for effective intervention in South Sudan.”

Earlier, the UN Secretary-General António Guterres spoke at length about South Sudan during his monthly lunch with members of the Security Council on 9 January. Among the key issues he raised on that occasion were the importance of revitalizing the political process; the need to deploy the Regional Protection Force, which the Council first authorized in August 2016, to protect UN staff, humanitarian actors and civilians in Juba and improve the security situation in the capital; and the importance of raising awareness of the risk of atrocities in South Sudan. All these issues were raised again at the briefing on Monday.

Following their briefing, the United Nations Security Council again called for a halt to fighting in South Sudan and for the swift deployment of Regional protection Force of 4,000 peacekeepers to boost the existing United Nations force in South Sudan. It also made it clear it backed Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' political efforts to reinvigorate peace efforts in order to prevent a deterioration of the security situation and beef up the 12,000-strong United Nations peacekeeping force. The Permanent Representative of Sweden to the U.N, current Security Council President, Olof Skoog, stressed that members of the Security Council strongly backed an “inclusive” national dialogue in South Sudan and supported efforts by regional countries as well

as the African Union to achieve a political solution. They also emphasized the need to establish a hybrid court in the country and urged full and immediate access for humanitarian aid.