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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

Mozambique’s President, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi, opened a two-day Ministerial meeting of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in Maputo on Thursday (August 24). The meeting is assessing progress on commitments made to advance African development made during the TICAD VI Summit in Nairobi a year ago. Japan’s Foreign Minister, Taro Kono, stressed TICAD was all about encouraging African ownership to realize resilient growth, combining efforts with international partners. Underlining the importance of private sector development as an engine of self-sustaining growth, he said Japan was currently working on negotiating 13 new investment treaties with African countries. TICAD VI concluded with the adoption of the Nairobi Declaration and the Nairobi Implementation Plan to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and African Union's Agenda 2063.

Following the two-day Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) ministerial meeting in Maputo this week, Japan’s Foreign Minister Taro Kono will also visit Addis Ababa to meet with officials of the African Union.

The AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry, Prudence Ngweny, opening a three-day Pan-African Youth Empowerment Conference on Tuesday (August 21) at AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, reiterated a call for concerted efforts to address youth unemployment challenges in Africa and the development of an Action Plan for African Youth Employability and Entrepreneurship. The conference, aiming to promote African youth participation and deepen engagement in the process of shaping the continent's employment, entrepreneurship and innovation trajectory, included youth from 47 African countries, as well as policy makers, employers and development partners. The African Development Bank recently calculated there were 480 million youth in Africa and there would be 850 million by 2050. About 10 million young people enter the job market every year, but only 3 million find wage employment. The conference was organized by the AU Commission and SOS Children's Village International, providing a platform for engagement between high-level officials and young people.

Representatives of 32 African political parties convened in the Sudanese capital Khartoum on Saturday (August 19) to discuss ways of bolstering political cooperation on the continent. Speaking at the opening of the 3rd General Assembly of the Council of the African Political Parties (CAPP), Sudan Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Salih called for the parties to work to achieve unity between African nations and urged African countries to strengthen their domestic efforts against "imperialism" and "neo-colonialism". Established in Khartoum in 2013, CAPP seeks to enhance political cooperation and unity between African countries.

Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome welcomed His Majesty King Letsie III, King of the Republic of Lesotho and United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO's) Special Ambassador for Nutrition, on Tuesday (August 22). His Majesty King Letsie III noted Ethiopia's experience in efforts to eliminate malnutrition, which he said showcased the government's strong political commitment. **(See article)**

President Mulatu opened the "2017 Acting on the Call" Health Conference on Thursday (August 24) at the African Union Commission Center in Addis Ababa,

under the theme: “Overcoming Critical Barriers to Maternal and Child Survival”. The two-day conference, co-hosted by the Governments of Ethiopia and India brought together ministers and high-level policy makers from both the public and private sectors from 24 countries. **(See article)**

President Mulatu, on behalf of the people and Government of Ethiopia, sent a message of deepest sympathy and condolence to the President and People of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and to the bereaved families of the victims, following the death of hundreds of people in last week’s landslide.

President Mulatu bade farewell to the departing Ambassador of Israel Belaynesh Zevadia on Tuesday (August 22). The departing Israeli Ambassador said the longstanding relationship between the two countries is steadily growing in various areas.

Prime Minister Hailemariam told Ambassador Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, Presidential Envoy and South Sudan’s Minister of Petroleum on Monday (August 21) that Ethiopia would continue its commitment to assist in bringing peace and stability to South Sudan. Ambassador Gatkuoth delivered a message from President Kiir on implementation of the High-level Forum. The Prime Minister urged the South Sudanese government to work towards the full restoration of peace and stability in the country and solve problems in a more inclusive manner. He said all-round public participation is of crucial importance in seeking a political solution to the current crisis.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen met with Mr. Rory Stewart, Minister for Africa in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom on Tuesday (August 22). The two sides discussed on the recurring drought in Ethiopia and the humanitarian support being given by the government to cope with its impact.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received Mr. Rory Stewart, Minister for Africa in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom on Monday (August 22). State Minister Hirut said Ethiopia had strong mutual understanding with the Government of the UK on regional and bilateral consular

issues. Mr. Stewart underlined the UK support for AMISOM work in stabilizing Somalia. Mr. Stewart also noted UK's cooperation with Ethiopia and its concern for the security of the country.

State Minister Hirut, during her meeting with the outgoing Israeli Ambassador Belaynesh Zevadia on Wednesday (August 23), said the cooperation between Ethiopia and Israel was gathering momentum. She said the long-standing relationship between the two countries is steadily growing in bilateral and multilateral fora as well as people-to-people ties.

State Minister Hirut met Graham Maitland, Director of Africa Division, Department of Political Affairs of the United Nations, on Tuesday (August 22). The State Minister underlined Ethiopia's significant role in the maintenance of peace and security in the Horn of Africa, and noted Ethiopia was also a key player in regional integration processes.

State Minister Hirut met Latin American Ambassadors accredited to Ethiopia on Thursday (August 24). Discussions focused on enhancing mutual understanding and strengthening relations as well as facilitating consular services.

Speaking at a consultative meeting on "Enhancing the volume and value of formal remittances to Ethiopia" held on Thursday (August 24), State Minister Hirut noted that remittances are key to economies of countries, adding that new research and policy initiatives were introduced by the Government of Ethiopia to further enhance and promote the engagement of the Diaspora. **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Haile Michael, headed the delegation to the TICAD Ministerial meeting in Mozambique this week (August 24-25).

Ethiopia and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) signed a project agreement on Thursday (August 24) to support enhanced management and enforcement of the country's protected areas. The agreement was signed by Admassu Nebebe, State Minister for Finance and Economic Cooperation and Mrs. Louise Chamberlain, UNDP Ethiopia Country Director.

As part of the nation-wide remembrance of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi on the fifth anniversary of his death, African scholars and senior Ethiopian government officials attended a panel discussion at the UNECA on Monday (August 21) to discuss his contribution to transforming Ethiopia's socio-economic development. Presentations were given on Prime Minister Meles' works and his legacy to Ethiopia's development including Ethiopia's current national development path and the agricultural-led industrialization strategy that has brought double-digit growth for over a decade.

Ethiopia underlined the importance of full and speedy operationalization of the Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries established by the UN. Deputy Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga, speaking at a LDCs ambassadorial meeting in New York on Saturday (August 19) emphasized its importance for the LDCs. The UN General Assembly established the Bank in December last year. It is intended to help LDCs strengthen their science, technology and innovation capacities, foster the development of national and regional innovation ecosystems to attract outside technology and generate homegrown research. The UN Office of the High Representative for LDCs, as well as the LLDCs and Small Island Developing States support the initiative.

The Nigerian Government plans to hand over management control of Arik Air to Ethiopian Airlines under an agreement aimed at resurrecting Arik as Nigeria's national carrier. Nigeria's Minister Plenipotentiary in Addis Ababa, Godfrey Odudigbo, said negotiations were continuing between the Government of Nigeria and Ethiopian Airlines over the process by which Ethiopian would manage Arik Air on a contract basis.

A Kenyan delegation of representatives from industry associations, research institutes and private companies involved in leather production visited Ethiopia this week. They met with the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations to exchange experiences. The delegation also explored collaboration between Ethiopia and Kenya in terms of trade and investment, as well as technology transfer, partnerships and participation of the private sector.

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission said on Tuesday this week (August 22) that Ethiopia needed US\$487 million for nutritional services, provision of animal feed and construction of health facilities. The Government has already provided US\$22 million of this for six months of drought relief as well as providing 120 thousand metric tons of emergency wheat supplies in July and 46 thousand metric tons of emergency wheat supplies in August.

Round 5 of relief food distribution is now taking place in the Somali Regional State targeting 3.3 million Relief and PSNP food beneficiaries. The regional government's emergency response plan for the second half of the year involves distribution of food to 47 woredas and transfer cash to 45 woredas for Round 5. From Round 6 onwards, there will be a gradual shift to more cash transfers with the ultimate result of supporting woredas with food and with cash with WFP providing top-ups of pulses and oil to the cash-receiving woredas on case-by-case basis.

The World Future Council and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification awarded a gold medal to the Tigray Regional State on Tuesday this week (August 22) for a major project to restore Tigray's drylands. The drylands, home to more than 4.3 million people, are being restored on a massive scale, with villagers mobilized to build terraces, irrigation projects, stone walls on mountains and hillsides, and other projects. As a result, groundwater levels have risen, soil erosion has reduced, and people's ability to grow food and gain an income has improved. Since 1991, the region has improved soil and water conservation, and closed off 1.2 million hectares of land to allow plants to regrow. The World Resources Institute said the region was now greener than it has ever been during the last 145 years, not because of any increase in rainfall, "but due to human investment in restoring degraded land to productivity."

Djibouti

Djibouti and Somalia have reached an agreement on capacity sharing of the submarine optic fiber cable, the Djibouti African Regional Express. Djibouti's Minister of Telecommunications, Abdi Youssouf Sougueh and Somalia's Minister of Telecommunications, Abdi Ashur Hassan, signed on behalf of their respective

countries at the end of a four-day working visit by the Somali Minister to Djibouti. According to the agreement, the Djibouti African Regional Express will connect Djibouti to Mombasa, and will have several landing stations in Somalia. The agreement also covers promotion and strengthening of cooperation in regional interconnection, terrestrial fiber optics, cyber security, ICT regulation, and cross-border signaling problems. Minister Hassan said, "Djibouti is a strategic partner that can help Somalia truly begin its digital development."

Eritrea

A delegation led by Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh, and including Yemane Gebreab, Head of PFDJ Political Affairs and Hagos Gebrehiwet, Head of PFDJ Economic Affairs, attended the swearing-in ceremony of President Kagame on August 18. They took a message of congratulation from President Isaias to President Kagame, and held talks with President Kagame on bilateral relations, regional issues and the future of the African Union.

The Canadian mining company Nevsun Resources announced this week that it was halving the life of its Bisha mine in Eritrea. **(See article)**

The EU announced on Wednesday (August 23) that the new head of the European Union delegation to Eritrea will be Josep Coll I Carbo. He will also be the EU Ambassador to Eritrea. He was previously EU Ambassador to Benin.

Kenya

The Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission submitted 54,000 documents of electoral material to the Supreme Court on Tuesday (August 22) in response to the petition of the opposition National Super Alliance challenging the re-election of President Uhuru Kenyatta. The documents include all the original forms used in the elections and for the declaration of results. The court will hold a pre-trial sitting on Saturday for all parties to agree on how the case will proceed. The court has 14 days from Friday (August 18) to reach a determination. If the petition is accepted, Kenya

has to hold a general election in 60 days; if it is thrown out President Kenyatta will be sworn in on September 12.

Kenya will be hosting a regional dialogue conference on the World Trade Organization (WTO) from August 28 to August 30 in Nairobi. Four countries that are in the process of acceding to the WTO, Comoros, Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan, will attend meeting. Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary, Ms. Amina Mohammed said the dialogue would offer a platform for states to exchange experiences and lessons learned from the accession process, reflect on ways in which the WTO membership can foster regional integration and co-operation and mobilize support for facilitating member states. Other countries invited include China, Liberia, Oman, Yemen and the Seychelles, which recently joined the WTO. The conference is co-hosted by Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the University of Nairobi.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi on a visit to Egypt met with President El-Sisi and other officials in Cairo and also visited Alexandria where he met Somali students. **(See article)**

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, visited Somalia this week and met with President Mohamed Abdullahi, Prime Minister, Hassan Kheyre; the Speakers of the Upper House and the House of the People; the Minister for Constitutional Affairs and the Chairperson of the National Independent Electoral Commission, Halima Ibrahim. He said his visit was to shore up support for the country's political progress and demonstrate UN support for the people and government of Somalia. He said he sensed real forward momentum in terms of political developments, reforms and transparency and of things moving forward to a one-person one-vote electoral system for the next parliamentary elections.

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Kheyre urged foreign ambassadors in the country to support Somalia's economic growth and job creation. Meeting envoys in Mogadishu

on Wednesday (August 23), he called for strengthening of cooperation and support in creating jobs especially for young people.

The Prime Minister appointed Engineer Sadiq Abdullahi Abdi as the new minister for Public Works and Reconstruction on Tuesday (August 22). He replaces the late Abbas Abdullahi Sheikh Siraji, who was shot dead by one of the bodyguards of the former Auditor General Nur Farah Jimale in Mogadishu on May 3, 2017.

The UK's Minister for the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development, Rory Stewart, on a visit to Mogadishu this week, described the situation in Somalia as "utterly desperate and harrowing" and called for collective action to stop more people dying. He said the international community must step up efforts to build long-term resilience and stability, in order to break the cycle of humanitarian catastrophes.

A new battle group of the Burundi National Defense Force (BNDF) arrived in Somalia on Sunday (August 20) to begin a one year tour of duty with AMISOM. The 45th battalion commanded by Lt. Colonel Philbert Hatungimana, replaces Battalion 39. It will be based in Jowhar, the capital of HirShabelle state.

This week Al-Shabaab confirmed the death of Sheikh Ali Mohamed Hussein 'Ali Jabal', its commander in Mogadishu, three weeks ago. Until his death from a missile fired by a US drone on July 30, Hussein had been in charge of Al-Shabaab's activities in Mogadishu for nearly ten years. The Somali government said, "His (Hussein's) removal disrupts Al-Shabaab's ability to plan and conduct attacks in Mogadishu and coordinate efforts between Al-Shabaab regional commanders."

Federal Interior Minister Abdi Farah Saiid said on Sunday (August 20) that the decision of the HirShabelle State Assembly to remove the HirShebelle President, Abdullahi Osoble, last week, was the prerogative of the Assembly. He called for the election of a new president within 30 days from August 14, the day the president lost a no-confidence motion. He said the Assembly should elect 'a trustworthy electoral committee supervised by the Federal Ministry of Interior and Federalization' which could offer technical support.

Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe attended the inauguration of Governor-elect Ali Korane in Kenya's Garissa County on Tuesday (August 22). Other guests included UN officials from the Dadaab refugee camp, as well as officials from Ethiopia and Somalia's federal government.

Galmudug's President Ahmed Duale Geelle appointed a council of ministers this week, with 22 Ministers, 22 deputy ministers and 8 state ministers. Galmudug Parliament elected President Gelle in May.

Mogadishu held its second annual Book Fair last week (August 17-20). It brought together authors, poets, academics, playwrights, motivational speakers and literary scholars from across the Somali region and around the world, showcasing more than 3,000 books. The Book Fair was sponsored by USAID and those participating included authors Abdi Latif Ega from Los Angeles, Somali-Canadian novelist Hassan G. Santur, Mohamed H. Ingiris from Oxford and former BBC journalist, Andrew Harding, author of the "Mayor of Mogadishu."

South Sudan

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, El-Ghassim Wane, briefing the UN Security Council on Thursday this week (August 24) described the conflict in South Sudan as "a man-made conflict for which the leaders of South Sudan bear a direct responsibility." (**See article**)

President Kiir underlined his concerns over the UN authorized Rapid Protection Force again last weekend, underlining that its deployment had to be approved by the government and should complement the efforts of the government. (**See article**)

Sudan

Defense Minister Awad Ibn Ouf met with Egyptian President el-Sisi on Monday (August 21). Also present was Egypt's Minister of Defense and Military Production, Major General Sadqi Subh. They agreed to hold a meeting of the Joint Military Committee to promote cooperation and coordination on border control. A

spokesperson said the meeting discussed ways to enhance security and military coordination. President el-Sisi underlined the need to continue to encourage cooperation between the two countries and strengthen ties in various fields. The two ministers also held talks to discuss regional developments and the implications for regional security and stability.

Commissioner of Refugees Hamad al-Gizouli said on Monday (August 21) that Sudan now hosted 2,000,000 refugees, including 1,300,000 from South Sudan. He called for the international community to increase its support for these refugees as international assistance only covered 22% of the needs. According to the UN, more than 410,000 South Sudanese, nearly 90% of them women and children, have fled to Sudan since the outbreak of civil war.

The planned meeting of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) for August 16 called by the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel failed to take place. **(See article)**

The Ministry of Water Resources, Irrigation and Electricity in Sudan said on Monday (August 21) that the Blue Nile had recorded its highest level of water in the last 100 years, surpassing the flood levels of 1946. The level of the White Nile and Blue Nile was reported at 17.14 meters in Khartoum, a record high due to heavy rain in Ethiopia. The Ministry warned of the danger of serious floods during the week in areas of Khartoum and 12 other states in the north and center of the country.

King Letsie of Lesotho, FAO Special Ambassador for Nutrition, visits Ethiopia

King Letsie III of Lesotho arrived in Addis Ababa for a four-day official visit to Ethiopia and to the African Union on Monday (August 21). The King, who was appointed the Special Ambassador for Nutrition for the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) last year, is also the AU Nutrition Champion, appointed by the AU Heads of State and Government in 2014. On arrival he was welcomed by Dr. Kaba Urgessa, State Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

During his visit he held talks with President Dr. Mulatu Teshome and with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn as well as with the AU Commission Chairperson.

In his talks with President Mulatu, King Letsie noted Ethiopia's best experience in the course of eliminating malnutrition, which he said showcased the government's strong political commitment. In this regard, he said, Ethiopia could also be a model to other countries. He also commended Ethiopia's efforts for the successful activities registered in FAO, which were helpful to save the lives of children and other needy people in the country. President Mulatu said King Letsie's visit would further strengthen the relationship between Ethiopia and Lesotho as well as enhance cooperation with FAO. The President emphasized since malnutrition was one of the main indicators of poverty, the Government of Ethiopia had focused on ensuring inclusive and sustainable development in the country, thereby improving the nutritional status of all its citizens. King Letsie also met with Prime Minister Hailemariam and congratulated Ethiopia on the remarkable results achieved from the efforts made to ensure food security and improve the nutritional status of the people.

During his visit the King also visited the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State where he saw the child feeding program underway in Arbogona district, in Sidama zone. He also visited the Bole Lemi industrial park in the outskirts of Addis Ababa and Ethiopian Airlines Aviation Academy, and was briefed by representatives of FAO about the organization's activities in the Horn of Africa.

In his capacity as AU Nutrition Champion, King Letsie visited AU Headquarters and met with AU Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat on Tuesday (August 22). He called on African leaders to invest in nutrition in order to address the chronic hunger and malnutrition challenges in Africa, pointing out that Africa was the only region in the world where the number of stunted children had actually increased over the past 20 years. He noted this underlined "the urgent need for increasing resources to improve nutrition as a vital ingredient to social development", adding, "Ending malnutrition and giving children the best start in life requires more integration and sustainable investment from different sectors of our society." The King reiterated his commitment and determination to continue advocating adequate investment for the nutrition sector in Africa.

AU Commission Chairperson Mahamat agreed that improving nutrition status was a priority area which, he said, required urgent policy attention to accelerate socio-economic development across the continent. He noted that that malnutrition was still prevalent widely in Africa and it remained a severe threat to Africa’s socio-economic development. He pledged that food security and nutrition would remain high on the African Union agenda.

Africa leaders, with the view to eliminating hunger, malnutrition and famine from the continent, have adopted a series of declarations and strategies, including the establishment of the African Task Force on Food and Nutrition Development and the Comprehensives’ African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) under the NEPAD initiative. Through these platforms, they have committed themselves to earmark 10% of their respective national budgets to agriculture. The Africa Renewed Initiative for Stunting Elimination (ARISE) also lays down an enabling instrument to put nutrition high on the continent’s development agenda though reinforcing awareness on the subject and fostering political commitment as well as mobilizing resources.

Amira El Fadil, the AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, highlighted the role and work of the AU Nutrition Champion and presented the 3-year Work Plan for the Nutrition Champion, which she said aims to advance implementation of the revised Africa Regional Nutrition Strategy and provides a roadmap for its implementation. The AU Nutrition Champion is meant to promote the AU’s Africa Renewed Initiative for Stunting Elimination (ARISE) and advocate for increased investment in nutrition, allowing private sector engagement in nutrition initiatives. The AU Champion also provides support to the AU Commission Chairperson’s initiative to address nutrition in areas of conflict and the Commission’s “Sustainable School Food and Nutrition Initiative” in order to scale up continental school feeding programs in partnership with FAO, as well as assist with humanitarian needs.

Ethiopia to assume the UN Security Council Presidency for September

Ethiopia became a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2017-2018 on January 1, 2017. It is the third time Ethiopia has been a member of the Security Council. Its latest bid for a non-permanent seat got overwhelming support from United Nations member countries, with the support of 185 out of 190 votes in the election held in June 2016.

As a non-permanent member over the last eight months, Ethiopia has concentrated on a number of issues. These have included:

- Advocating multilateralism
- Supporting Peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction endeavors
- Promoting effective Regional and International Coordination to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism
- Strengthening the role of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations
- Promoting enhanced partnership between the United Nations and Regional and Sub-Regional Organizations such as the Africa Union
- Consistently advocating and encouraging the unity of members of the Security Council and the international community at large in addressing regional and security challenges

Ethiopia will take the Presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of September 2017. Its Presidency will coincide with the United Nations General Assembly in New York, underlining the importance of the revolving leadership for Africa.

There are a number of major events being planned during Ethiopia's presidency in September. These include a High-Level Open Debate on the reform of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and the 11th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting of the UNSC and the AUPSC.

The High-Level Open Debate on the reform of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations will be held on September 20. Faced by the changing global security environment, the need to reform UN peacekeeping, for it to evolve and adapt itself to

the new realities, has long been recognized. The aim of the High-Level Open Debate is to provide an opportunity to discuss the reform of UN Peacekeeping and push forward implementation and follow-up of peacekeeping reforms which should form an important basis for strengthening UN Peacekeeping to make it fit for its purpose in the 21st century. Ethiopia is one of the leading troop contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping and it attaches great importance to the reform and strengthening of UN Peacekeeping.

Another event scheduled under Ethiopia's presidency is the 11th Annual Joint Consultative Meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC), and the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), to be held at the African Union headquarters, in Addis Ababa on September 7 and 8. The joint meeting will discuss African peace and security issues and is expected to produce a communiqué underlining future cooperation.

A number of other briefings and consultations on peace and security issues will also be discussed by the Security Council during Ethiopia's presidency.

The steady growth and further prospects to expand Ethio-Sudan relations

Prime Minister Hailemariam made a highly successful official visit to the Sudan last week, a visit underlining the spirit of co-operation and co-ordination, consolidating their strategic partnership. President Al-Bashir praised their constructive and fruitful Parliamentary co-operation, underlined the importance of exchanges of visits, business fora and the role of public diplomacy. Their joint mechanisms, he said, allowed Ethiopia and Sudan move towards completion of joint projects in railways, banking and economic integration.

Prime Minister Hailemariam described the existing relationship as exemplary and said their cooperation enabled the promotion of peace and security in the region. He particularly appreciated the cooperation and understanding regarding the Grand

Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, emphasizing the need to enhance cooperation on development of the water sector through the Ethio-Sudan Technical Advisory Committee. He also noted the role that their various joint committees played in encouraging these relations.

Speaking at Khartoum's Hall of Friendship, Prime Minister Hailemariam outlined the importance of regional integration and security for the Horn of Africa, a strategic center linking Asia, the Middle East and Europe as well as being the source of the Nile. Regional integration had the potential for integrated infrastructural development, to provide for gradual harmonization of trade, customs and taxation policies, for food self-sufficiency, and protection of the environment and natural resources as well human and institutional capacity-building on a large scale. It would help countries successfully repel the menace of neo-liberal prescriptions and resist undue interference of external players. Other dimensions covered cooperation over a whole range of issues: the promotion of regional peace and stability, conflict prevention, management and resolution, in mediation, in conflict early warning and response mechanisms, the fight against terrorism and extremism, and dealing with cross-border crimes and migration. He concluded Ethiopia and the Sudan were tied closely together by a multitude of common interests and a shared destiny. Their links went far beyond political contacts and amounted, he added, to a clear demonstration of the political will and readiness for meaningful integration.

Indeed, Ethiopia and the Sudan are also linked by a strong bond of historic relations from the time of Axum and Merowe, two ancient civilizations that tie the two countries in culture, language, tradition and way of life. Both countries are also eternally linked by the River Abay/the Nile. Ethiopia and the Sudan have achieved strong cooperation based on good neighborliness, mutual trust and respect. Cooperation between the two countries in peace and security matters is indeed exemplary. They have achieved strong trust and understanding enabling them to tackle issues and resolve any that might cause problems in their relationship.

Ethiopia and the Sudan are now interconnected in numerous ways, through ever-growing infrastructure schemes, with road links, the use of ports power and telecommunications connections. These provide clear demonstration of the political

will and readiness of both countries to move to meaningful integration, to help the stability and prosperity of the region. The recent launching of cross-border public transport between the two capitals is a clear sign of the ever increasing connectivity between Ethiopia and the Sudan. It is an excellent example of the efforts to encourage the movement of people and will help expand socio-economic and cultural interaction. The increasing volume of trade and enhanced co-operation in investment is already demonstrating the value of the development and providing solid ground for mutual benefits.

The increasing cooperation of the two countries is also being institutionalized through a number of different platforms, which can monitor, encourage and expand the relationship. The most important of these is the Higher Committee of the two countries. Jointly chaired by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the President of the Republic of the Sudan, this is the most significant with its main objective to guide and develop overall relations between of the Sudan and Ethiopia.

The second platform includes the Ethio-Sudan Steering Committee, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Vice-President of the Republic of the Sudan; and the Joint Technical Committee, chaired by the State Minister of Industry of Ethiopia and the State Minister of Finance of the Sudan. Both countries place significant emphasis on these Committees which are working towards establishing a Trans-boundary Special Economic Zone in the North-Western Ethiopia and North-Eastern Sudan Corridor, stretching up to Port Sudan. This will allow for enhanced and expanded utilization of the port. It is in the best interest of both countries and peoples to implement the already existing agreements sooner rather than later, as a matter of priority.

The third platform is the Ethio-Sudan Joint Border Development Commission. This provides the opportunity for the border administrators of both countries to discuss issues of mutual interest. Indeed, the border administrators, governors and representatives on both sides of the border have held several meetings in the past few months and made decisions on issues of common concern that will certainly contribute to the betterment of the lives of the people along the common border.

There is no doubt the ever improving and expanding infrastructural interconnections will have an enormous impact and offer substantial benefit to the people on both sides of the border. They will also contribute to further developments for greater co-operation. Earlier this year, when President Omar Al-Bashir visited Ethiopia, he called for the creation of a Horn of Africa economic community. Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed the idea, and both Somali and Djibouti have responded positively to the proposal. Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour recently underlined Sudan's wish for this to become a reality, emphasizing that "economic collaboration means collaboration on everything." "This organization," he said, "can work to ensure that we are better connected by road, rail and there is free movement of people and goods."

UN calls on South Sudan leaders to show genuine political will for peace ...

Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, El-Ghassim Wane, briefing the UN Security Council on Thursday this week (August 24) by video link from Juba, said the "conflict in South Sudan is a man-made conflict for which the leaders of South Sudan bear a direct responsibility," adding that those "same leaders can also bring the country back from the impending abyss." He said that the dire economic situation and continued conflict in the country had combined to create a dangerous and precarious situation for its citizens, but all that was needed was genuine political will to halt military operations, peacefully negotiate and make the necessary compromises. He also urged the Security Council to make its position clear: "It is critical that the leaders of South Sudan hear the international community's unified demand of what is expected of them." Friday marks the second anniversary of the signing of the South Sudan Peace Agreement between the two sides that formally ended the fighting.

Festus Mogae, Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, told the Security Council that "little meaningful progress" has been achieved in the implementation of the agreement. It had been hindered by lack of compromise. More than ever before there was a critical need for continued and close coordination, he

said, between IGAD, the AU, the UN and the international community to leverage collective influence to bring an end to the suffering of the civilian population and help put South Sudan on a more positive trajectory. In July, 136 incidents were reported by the humanitarian community, the highest number recorded in any one month since December 2013. Incidents of looting also spiked during July, with 15 incidents reported. Of particular concern was the looting of warehouses and trucks in transit leading to the loss of 670 metric tons of food meant for vulnerable communities in Eastern Equatoria, Lakes, Upper Nile and Warrap. The JMEC Chairman underlined the importance of the Revitalization Forum, recalling it had been established with three objectives: first, to implement the ceasefire agreement; second, to oversee the full and inclusive implementation of the Peace Agreement; and third, to establish a revised and realistic timeline for elections in South Sudan. He emphasized the importance of speaking “with one voice” to the country’s leaders, putting in place “clear consequences for spoilers and secure adequate financing for the revitalization process.”

Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Sudan and South Sudan, also expressed concern about the security situation and the trajectory and depth of the crisis. Calling for a clear commitment to an inclusive and credible peace process, he described several recent international and regional support efforts. He emphasized the growing momentum of the IGAD effort to convene a High-Level Forum to revitalize the peace accord, in which both the Government and opposition groups were participating.

South Sudan’s representative, Ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal, reiterated that it was not, and never would be, the Government’s policy to hinder or impede access to any humanitarian organization. What was lacking was honest, open dialogue and understanding between the Government and the humanitarian agencies. Recalling President Salva Kiir’s unilateral ceasefire declaration, he warned that the ceasefire was not a blank cheque for the rebels to continue their attacks. Regarding the Regional Protection Force, he pointed out that the Government had agreed to work closely with the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD for the smooth implementation and operationalization of its mandate in South Sudan.

During his briefing Mr. Wane said the deployment of the Rapid Protection Force was under way and UNMISS continued to regularly engage with the Government in order to expedite it. The Head of UNMISS, David Shearer, said recently that the Bangladesh construction engineering company had partially deployed and the Nepalese high readiness company was fully deployed to Juba. The Rwandan infantry battalion began arriving in South Sudan in early August, while the Ethiopian troops who are also part of the Rapid Protection Force would be deployed soon.

...while government continues to express concern over the Rapid Protection Force

President Kiir again underlined his concerns over the Rapid Protection Force last weekend. The 4,000 strong Force was authorized by the UN Security Council in August last year following a request by IGAD after the renewed outbreaks of violence in Juba in July. The aim was for a force to secure Juba and allow greater flexibility for the operations of other UNMISS forces elsewhere in the country. The UN said the force would provide protection to key facilities in Juba and the main routes into and out of the city. It would also be deployed to strengthen the security of UN protection of civilians' sites and other UN premises. The South Sudan government was initially reluctant, raising concerns over the role of the force and its membership. The Transitional Government of National Unity only finally confirmed its unconditional consent to the deployment of the regional forces in a communiqué to the UN Security Council at the end of November last year. Since then, the government and President Kiir have raised a number of different concerns causing further delays to the force's deployment.

The latest problem came last weekend when President Kiir was quoted as telling a meeting of security and intelligence officials in Juba that the government might have to reconsider its decision on the deployment of the Rapid Protection Force. He said elements of the force had arrived but the way they were behaving "is already becoming a matter of concern. They want to deploy at the airport. They also want whatever they bring into the country not to be checked." The President said that if the UN didn't want to cooperate "we have the right to cancel the deployment [of the regional forces]." The President also said the UN Mission had not renewed their flight permits. He said he had told the Defense Minister that if the UN did not apply

for renewal of permits then there should be no UN flights. He said: “They want to talk to me. I have nothing to discuss with them about this. If they want to fly, let them apply for permits”. President Kiir reiterated that the Rapid Protection Force was being allowed into the country on the understanding that they would play a role in providing escort and securing major supplying roads to and from Juba, especially those which have experienced disruptive armed and banditry activities. He emphasized yet again Rapid Protection Force deployment had to be approved by the government and should be confined to complement the efforts of the government.

The Cabinet Affairs’ Minister, Martin Elia Lomouro, however, said on Tuesday (August 22) that misunderstandings at the weekend had been resolved. He said he and the Minister of Information had convened a meeting with the diplomats and heads of international organizations as well as some senior members of the United Nations and briefed them. He explained that UNMISS had accepted to relocate the forces according to the agreement with the government. He stressed a government security meeting, chaired by the President, had expressed concern over the manner in which the deployment was made without the knowledge and approval of the government. However, the government had now come out with a clear map to resolve the matter and the issue had been resolved amicably. He also stressed that flights of UNMISS had resumed after they obtained clearance. He said: “They are now allowed to fly to wherever they want to go. They resumed flying out and into Juba on Monday.”

The Abyei Joint Oversight Committee fails to meet in Addis Ababa

The African Union High-Level Implementation Panel called for the Sudanese and South Sudanese members of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee (AJOC) to meet in Addis Ababa last week (August 16). It also asked for the traditional leaders from the Ngok-Dinka and Misseriya communities to meet the following day. In advance of the meeting, a tripartite delegation of the African Union, United Nations and the UN Security Council was in Khartoum on 10 August to discuss the need for an agreement on Abyei Joint Administration and the implementation of the joint border patrols due to be supported by United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). After

meeting the delegation, a Sudan Foreign Ministry Spokesperson stressed the keenness of the Government of Sudan to make the expected meeting successful. He reiterated Khartoum's full commitment to the provisions of the agreement of June 20, 2011, particularly the establishment of administrative mechanisms. He also underlined Sudan's concern to activate the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and implement all the agreements and arrangements related to border security, including operationalization of the buffer zone and the deployment of the joint border forces with the support of UNISFA.

The AJOC meeting in Addis Ababa, however, did not take place as South Sudan did not send a delegation to Addis Ababa. South Sudan's Foreign Minister Deng Alor Kuol said on Monday (August 21) that the South Sudan delegation had been unable to attend because of administrative and logistical issues, adding that there had been a lack of a clear agenda. He said the agenda required input from both parties so there were now consultations going on through the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel. In Khartoum, the head of the Sudanese side of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, Hassan Ali Nimir, expressed his disappointment of the "repeated absence of the South Sudanese side from the Abyei meetings". Sudan claims it is ready for the implementation of a joint administration and of joint border patrols, but claims South Sudan is obstructing both the joint administration and the implementation of the security arrangements agreed in September 2012.

South Sudan's co-chairman of the AJOC, Kuol Alor Kuol, told Sudan Tribune that the failure of the parties to establish an administration in the area, define the borders, and satisfy obligations related to security, the distribution of wealth, delivery of basic services, and the return of internally displaced persons and refugees was becoming a major concern. He said the Ngok Dinka were "getting worried about the future of the area and they are asking us the leaders about what the two parties are doing, especially the conduct of the community referendum which clearly reflected the will of the people. They overwhelmingly voted in favor of returning to the South. ...The international community should actually have recognized the result. "Kuol was referring to the unilateral referendum organized the Ngok Dinka community of Abyei in October 2013. This was held without the participation of the Misseriya community

and without the support of Khartoum or Juba. Subsequently, neither Khartoum or Juba, nor the African Union or the international community recognized the outcome.

The Ngok Dinka have since refused to participate in the formation of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee. Currently the two communities are running separate committees, one for the Misseriya, another for the Ngok Dinka. One of the nine Ngok chiefs claimed this week that local people rejected the formation of any joint administrative bodies in Abyei with the Misseriya. He claimed the African Union should not ignore the views “of the people of Abyei”. He said: “If they really want the two countries to live in peace, [the African Union and the international community] should recognize the outcome of [our] referendum.”

The failure of the two sides to agree on who are the residents of the disputed area and who should have the right to participate in a vote for self-determination has prevented the organization of an acceptable referendum on the permanent future status of Abyei: to remain part of the Sudan or to join South Sudan. The proposed joint administration was seen as a temporary situation to ensure security and provide the local population with services until a decision was reached.

As South Sudan was preparing to formally declare its independence from the Sudan on 9 July 2011, Abyei was the scene of considerable violence with clashes that drove more than 100,000 people from their homes. Under a deal, brokered by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, the two sides agreed on the need for a third party to monitor the border and the disputed area. They also agreed to the ‘Temporary Arrangements for the Administration and Security of the Abyei Area’, withdrawing their respective forces and allowing Ethiopian peacekeepers in Abyei. The Security Council then established the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) under resolution 1990 (2011). UNISFA was tasked to monitor the border, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, and use force in protecting civilians and humanitarian workers.

Established originally for six months, UNISFA’s mandate has been repeatedly renewed, most recently in May this year when the Security Council adopted resolution 2352 (2017), renewing the mandate of UNISFA for another six months,

until 15 November. However, the Security Council also reduced UNISFA' strength from 5,326 to 4,791, and warned the two countries to solve the dispute within six months, comply fully with their obligations, or have all the troops withdrawn this November. The resolution said the extension of support for the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JBVMM) would "be the final such extension unless both parties demonstrate through their actions clear commitment and steadfast guarantees for its implementation." It requested the Secretary-General to report on the status of whether the mechanism had reached full operating capability by October 15.

In the meantime, UNISFA continues to maintain law and order and a measure of stability, though it has recently reported an increase in criminal activity, including cattle raiding and, in May, a grenade attack in a market. UNISFA has encouraged talks between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities to defuse tensions. It has also continued to carry out disarmament activities. It has, however, achieved no progress in the removal of armed Sudanese police from the Diffra oil facility, as required by the Security Council resolutions demanding the demilitarization of Abyei. The only exception to this will be Abyei Police Force – when it is established.

The Security Council has yet to agree on a way forward if the parties continue to fail to demonstrate any clear commitment to resolve the current situation. It does, however, appear to recognize that the situation in Abyei and the wider border-related issues between Sudan and South Sudan cannot be resolved in isolation from the internal conflicts in both countries. This suggests the Security Council needs to continue to keep the Abyei situation under constant consideration.

Somali President Mohamed makes an official visit to Egypt

Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi arrived in Cairo for a two-day official visit on Sunday (August 20) and was warmly welcomed by President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. President Mohamed, heading a delegation which included the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, and Water and Minerals, the State Minister for Higher education and several MPs, praised Egypt's historic role in supporting Somalia at various times.

A statement from Villa Somalia said the two Presidents met privately to discuss strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation in the areas of education, economy and immigration. They also considered the launching of direct flights between Cairo and Mogadishu by Egypt Air, the easing visa requirements for Service and Diplomatic passport holders and the Egyptian government's establishment of a center to facilitate the training of Somali diplomats as well as an increase in scholarships for Somali students.

The Egyptian President underlined the distinguished and historical relations between Egypt and Somalia, and stressed Egypt's intention to continue to provide all support to Somalia during the next phase to build and to consolidate the institutions of the state, especially the Somali National Army. President El-Sisi also said the two countries would continue cooperation in programs and courses organized by the Egyptian Agency for Partnership for Development. The Agency, established in mid-2014, focuses on transferring technical knowledge and humanitarian assistance, organizing training courses and workshops, as well as contributing funding and mobilizing funds for development projects. President El-Sisi promised an increase in scholarships offered by Egypt and expressed interest in ensuring consolidation of various aspects of bilateral cooperation with Somalia, particularly in economics and trade as well as fishing and animal farming.

Egypt welcomed the establishment of the Federal Government of Somalia in August 2012 and since then has provided development cooperation mostly through the Arab League and the Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa. Egypt began to provide diplomatic training for Somali government officials in 2010, and Ministry of Defense engineers helped to reconstruct the Ministry of Defense offices in 2013. Egypt announced in 2014 that it would reopen its embassy in Mogadishu, and its Assistant Foreign Minister for African Affairs, Ambassador Mohamed Idris, laid the cornerstone for the new embassy in June last year.

During his visit, President Mohamed also met with students at Alexandria University and with Somali nationals working in Egypt. He called on students abroad to shun extremist violence and illegal immigration, appealing to them to focus on their studies and contribute to building the nation. He said students had the task of contributing to

rebuilding the country adding they should support each other to avoid extremism. The University of Alexandria pledged to increase by 50% the number of scholarships to Somali students. In a separate meeting with the President, the Imam of Alexandria Mosque, Dr. Al-Dayib, said the university would offer more educational opportunities for Somali students. The two leaders agreed to establish education centers in Somalia for the teaching of Arabic. Imams from the university would visit Somalia to advance awareness on fundamentalism, Islamic faith and culture. Dr. Al-Dayib also pledged to send a delegation of Islamic scholars to Somalia and invite scholars from Somalia to Egypt in order to cooperate in the eradication of extremist ideas.

Somalia's ambassador to Egypt, Ambassador Abdul Ghani Mohammed, describes the visit as "successful". He said the visit would translate into cooperation between the two countries in political, security, educational and many other areas to the fullest extent. He said the talks touched on ways to enhance various aspects of bilateral relations with the participation of concerned ministers from both sides. In response to questions after the visit, he said there had been no discussion about establishing any Egyptian military base in Somalia.

The "2017 Acting on the Call" Health Conference in Addis Ababa....

Hosted by the governments of Ethiopia and India, the "2017 Acting on the Call" health conference opened on Thursday (August 24) at the African Union Commission Center in Addis Ababa, under the theme: "Overcoming Critical Barriers to Maternal and Child Survival". The two-day conference brought together ministers and high-level policy makers from both the public and private sectors from 24 countries. It was designed to celebrate the progress so far made in ensuring maternal and child survival across the world and share best practices, lessons learned, and challenges encountered in the process as well as identify the key steps necessary to reach the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

Opening the conference, President Dr. Mulatu Teshome of Ethiopia underlined the need to employ joint efforts, firm commitment and clear directions and effective investment in the effort to end preventable maternal and child deaths. He noted that extraordinary progress had been achieved over the past five decades in ensuring healthy lives for children. Child mortality rates around the world had been cut in half. While President Mulatu stressed the achievements in improving maternal and child health, he also called for strengthened efforts to address the challenges remaining, especially those prevalent in developing countries. There were, he said, significant discrepancies even within countries.

Globally over 300,000 mothers and nearly 6 million children die each year. This includes the deaths of 2.6 million newborn children who die within a month, almost a million on their first day of life. Some 2.4 million maternal, prenatal, neonatal, and child deaths could be averted annually if the complete package of evidence-based intervention that could be provided at the community level reached all those who needed them.

The current conference follows the “2015 Call to Action Summit” held in New Delhi, India two years ago. The conference concluded in the signing of the “Delhi Declaration,” a call for ending preventable maternal and child deaths. Back then, Ministers of Health from 22 countries recognized the remarkable progress that had been achieved in reducing maternal, newborn, and child mortality and acknowledged the global partnerships, support and resources mobilized to achieve those gains, saving over 100 million lives since 1990. The conference decisions went well with the Post-2015 global agenda, under which nations embraced the UN’s universal and transformative sustainable development agenda leaving no one behind and aiming to ensure the health and well-being of all, particularly women, children and adolescents.

Countries also took note of the centrality of health and the well-being of women and children in shaping prosperous and sustainable societies. They committed themselves to accelerate efforts to end preventable child and maternal deaths in support of the ‘Every Woman, Every Child, Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s, and Adolescents’ Health.’ Subsequently, they also expressed commitments to make measurable improvements in reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent

health through their respective country health plans, and agreed, where needed, to develop focused country investment frameworks. They also agreed to put in place practical steps to prevent maternal, newborn, and child mortality; reduce preventable deaths from both infectious and non-communicable diseases; strengthen health systems, including delivery of routine services and resilience to cope with unforeseen events; end all forms of malnutrition, and seek to address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and children; prioritize universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services including for family planning; seek to create an enabling environment that fostered gender equality and the participation of all stakeholders including civil society, professional bodies, academia and the private sector; and ensure through appropriate laws, policies and entitlements the realization of the rights of every mother, newborn, child, and adolescent.

In this connection, given the need to mobilize the increased resources needed to accelerate progress and support the implementation of the Post-2015 development agenda, countries also had to commit themselves to developing a culture of evidence-based decision-making, strengthening accountability and align resources to those with the greatest need. They also had to hold themselves accountable to these commitments through regular monitoring of progress, and promote cross-learning, knowledge sharing and collaboration among parties to end preventable deaths of mothers, newborns and children, while also safeguarding and promoting their health and well-being.

This was a very substantial agenda, and this week's "2017 Acting on the Call" conference is building on the previous "Call to Action" conferences. It is also specifically recalling the commitments made at the 2015 Delhi Declaration and looking at progress made as well as at the challenges that still remain in order to reach the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

... And a consultative meeting on increasing Formal Remittances to Ethiopia

A consultative meeting to discuss a report on "Enhancing the Volume and Value of Formal Remittances to Ethiopia" was held at Ellili International Hotel on Thursday (August 24). The research was proposed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of

Ethiopia and supported by The International Organization for Migration (IOM), in collaboration with the ACP-EU Migration Action Initiative, and the Forum was attended by a number of different stakeholders including representative of the National Bank of Ethiopia, Transaction agencies, Local Think-tanks, and MasterCard Ethiopia, as well as representatives from the AU, international partners and the IOM.

Opening the workshop, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, who thanked the author, Leon Issacs, the IOM Offices in Ethiopia and Kenya and the ACP-EU Migration Action for its technical assistance for supporting the Ministry's proposal, noted that remittances were a key element in the economies of countries. She underlined that through a range of different initiatives and approaches the Government of Ethiopia was harnessing the dividend of the Diaspora. The Government of Ethiopia had introduced new research and policy initiatives to further enhance and promote the engagement of the Diaspora in development. She noted the research had come up with important findings and recommendations.

The Chief of Mission and Representative of the IOM to the African Union, IGAD, and UNECA, Ms. Maureen Achieng, said the efforts of ensuring regular migration of citizens was key to ensuring the transaction of remittances through legal channels. Ms. Achieng, who commended the efforts made so far, also called on all stakeholders to further step up efforts to ensure the transaction of remittances through legal channels.

Director-General of the Diaspora Engagement Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Demeke Atnafu, explained the Ministry's mandate to coordinate the overall engagement of the Diaspora in Nation Building. This was, he said, a cross-cutting issue bringing together all regions, stakeholder institutions and international partners like the IOM. Remittances were playing a positive role at national, local and individual levels, he said. He noted that following the positive measures undertaken by the government the inflow of remittances had grown dramatically, increasing from US\$141 million in 2003 to US\$4 billion in 2016. This now amounted to 5.3% of the country's GDP, Mr. Demeke noted.

Mr. Isaacs, whose study noted that Ethiopia’s Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy had recognized the important role of the Diaspora in national development, highlighted the bottlenecks and difficulties in sending remittances through legal channels, pointed out the best practices from the experiences of other countries. He also indicated opportune areas for change, possible policy measures and areas demanding programmatic intervention. His research came up with a number of recommendations, including: the creation of a multi-stakeholder working group; implementation of a National Financial Inclusion Strategy Initiative to educate remittance stakeholders about financial transaction; introduction of recognition schemes about top performing remittance companies; promotion of methods for regular, legal migration; and expansion of access to formal remittance services. This last, the report suggested, should include introduction and utilization of international remittances through mobile money, with users storing, sending and receiving money electronically, using their mobile phones. The study also underlined that any illegal remittance transactions had an adverse effect on the ability of the government in tracking flows of money laundering and counter-terrorist financing.

Nevsun halves the length of life of the Bisha mine in Eritrea

Nevsun Resources operates the copper and zinc Bisha mine in Eritrea, owning 60%, with ENAMCO, the Eritrean State Mining Company, owning the remaining 40%. Bisha is one of the Eritrean government’s major sources of revenue. It began commercial operations in 2011 and between 2011 and 2015 paid income tax, royalties and payroll taxes amounting to US\$528 million to the government, plus another \$245 million to ENAMCO. Nevsun also says it spent another \$394 million for local supply of goods and services in those years. Income tax paid in 2016 amounted to another US\$30 million.

In February this year, when Nevsun reported its results for 2016, one of the highlights was its determination that the development of its Timok mine in Serbia represented the Company’s “best allocation of capital”, though it also noted that Bisha Mine in Eritrea remained an important cash flow generator. Bisha began with gold production,

then became a copper mine with some gold and zinc byproducts and has now been turning itself into a zinc mine with some copper and gold byproducts. Last year, it had trouble producing a saleable copper concentrate though this was apparently being resolved by mid-2017. However, the improvement in copper production seemed to affect its ability to produce zinc as zinc recoveries then fell.

In August, however, Nevsun's recently appointed CEO, Peter Kukielski, having completed a comprehensive strategic review which included several trips to Serbia and Eritrea, announced that Nevsun would only fund another four-years of open-pit mining at Bisha rather than the larger, eight-year operation, previously envisioned. Halving the life of Bisha made it clear the company felt the development of Timok in Serbia and the start of mining there in 2021 was its most important way forward. Nevsun will complete its 2017 exploration program at Bisha and regional exploration spending at Bisha will remain unchanged at \$9 million for 2017. Mr. Kukielski said he expected it would also continue to fund regional exploration in 2018. The decision to mine a smaller pit over four years means the Bisha operation now has a reserve mine life to mid-2021, previously 2025. It also means that proven and probable reserves at Bisha and at neighboring Harena have declined from 22.2 million tonnes to 9.6 million tonnes.

Mining analysts generally appeared to feel the decision to concentrate on Timok made sense. One noted that it seemed management, faced by the elevated risks and significant spending required for open-pit expansion at Bisha, was taking a more disciplined, risk-focused approach to ensure that Nevsun would be able to carry out developments at Timok more effectively. Others drew attention to the fact that Nevsun is currently facing accusations in a Canadian court that it relied on 'slave labor' from Eritrea's National Service conscripts in the development of the Bisha mine, raising the ethical problems of investing in Nevsun because of the issue of political risk and human rights abuses in Eritrea.

Haywood Securities said: "We rate Eritrea as one of the most socio-politically sensitive countries in the world for a mining company to operate in: The country is a one-party state in which national legislative elections have been repeatedly postponed, according to Human Rights Watch, and the Eritrean government's human rights

record is considered among the worst in the world.” It noted the June 2016 report by the United Nations Human Rights Council that “accused Eritrea’s government of extrajudicial executions, torture, indefinitely prolonged national service, and forced labour, and indicated that incidents of sexual harassment, rape, and sexual servitude by state officials are also widespread.” Tensions with neighbors remained high and “the potential for renewed aggression remains.” As a result, the report noted, “many investors have avoided Nevsun and will not invest in the stock for ethical reasons.”