

*Ethiopia inaugurated two more industrial parks at the weekend*  
*Dr. Workneh at Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS meetings in Washington*  
*Ethiopia expediting repatriation of citizens from Saudi Arabia*  
*The World Heritage Committee considers two sites in Ethiopia*  
*President Trump delays a decision on Sudan sanctions for three months*  
*South Sudan marks its sixth anniversary without celebration*  
*Somalia's National Security Council meeting.....*  
*.... and the IMF agrees a new Staff-Monitored Program for Somalia*  
*EU MEPs repeat criticisms of the Ethiopian government*  
*EU parliamentary resolution demands action over human rights in Eritrea*  
*Drought continues to threaten millions in the Horn of Africa*

## News in brief

### **Africa and the African Union**

U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday (July 7) promised \$639 million for people affected by drought and conflict in Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen. His pledge came during a working session of the G20 summit of world leaders in Hamburg. This new funding brings to over \$1.8 billion the aid promised by the United States for fiscal year 2017 for the crises in these four countries.

The European Commission recently announced additional humanitarian assistance of \$68 million to help drought-affected people in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. This raised the EU's humanitarian aid to the Horn of Africa to nearly \$297 million since the beginning of the year.

UK Prime Minister May announced new measures to help Africa at the G20 Summit last weekend. These are aimed to provide a package of support to create new wealth in Africa, involving supporting African trade, investment and growth; creating millions of new jobs; and a commitment to work with others including the private sector to stimulate investment into Africa. This will involve a new London Centre for Global Disaster Protection to offer insurance, £60 million to help integrate Africa into global financial markets, by building a robust and transparent financial sector, £61 million to boost trade infrastructure in Tanzania, £30 to help build a functioning civil service in Somalia, and £35 million for Ethiopia and £11.8 million to Rwanda to help them attract private investment, create millions of new jobs and stimulate further investment.

IGAD opened a stakeholder engagement and orientation workshop on Regional Action through Data (RAD) on Monday (July 10) in Addis Ababa. RAD, funded by USAID, aims to improve "health outcomes in terms of saving lives and reduce mortality and morbidity of common health problems among the populations in the IGAD region". Ethiopia's Health Minister, Professor Yifru Berhane, opened the workshop.

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network said on Monday (July 10) that severe food crises were growing in Kenya and Somalia, as the Horn of Africa continues to receive below-normal rainfall. FEWS said 2.9 million people in Kenya and 3.2 million in Somalia were now experiencing Phase 3 crisis or higher on the network's five-tier warning scale. This represents

an increase of 800,000 in Kenya and 300,000 in Somalia since FEWS NET's last estimates in June. **(See article)**

## **Ethiopia**

President Mulatu Teshome received the outgoing Swedish Ambassador to Ethiopia, Jan Sadek at the National Palace on Tuesday (July 11). The President said Sweden has been an important partner to Ethiopia's development initiatives particularly in areas of agriculture, education and other investment sectors, further calling Swedish companies to invest in Ethiopia.

Prime Minister Hailemariam told Parliament on Friday last week that Ethiopia was working with IGAD and the African Union to find diplomatic solutions to the renewed crisis along the Eritrea/Djibouti border. He also emphasized that Ethiopia would like to see the diplomatic row between the Gulf countries resolved peacefully, adding that Ethiopia supported Kuwait's position in finding a peaceful solution to the standoff.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn along with other senior government officials on Sunday (July 9) inaugurated the Mekelle Industrial Park, built at a cost of 100 million US dollars in Mekelle town, Tigray regional state. The Premier said the development of industrial parks would strengthen economic transformation and reinforce the country's endeavour to become Africa's manufacturing hub. Earlier on Saturday (July 8), the Prime Minister inaugurated the Kombolcha Industrial Park, which was built at a cost of 90 million US dollars in Kombelcha town, Amhara regional state. **(See article)**

Opening the first regular meeting of the Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Council on Wednesday (July 12), Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said researches and satellite launches were key to enrich the country's capacity in space science and technology, which he said was vital to advance the national agenda thereby improve the livelihoods of the people. Ethiopia is set to launch a satellite by 2019.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu attended the meeting of the Coalition's Working Groups on Counter finance, Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Stabilization Support and Communications on Thursday (July 13) in Washington DC. The Foreign minister also spoke at the meeting, and members of the delegation also attended different cluster meetings. Ethiopia has officially joined the Global Coalition to Counter IS over the week. **(See article)**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu briefed US Congress Staffers and employees in Capital Hill on Ethio-American relations, and developments in Ethiopia and the region on Wednesday (July 12) in Washington DC. The Minister's briefings focused on Ethiopia's foreign policy directions and priorities, its success in achieving sustained economic growth, ongoing major infrastructure projects in the country, and of efforts for regional integration, as well as the country's strong track record in the maintenance of Regional peace and stability.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mrs. Hirut Zenebe led the Ethiopia delegation to the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee in Krakow, Poland over the last week at which two of Ethiopia's World heritage sites were on the agenda. **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene bade farewell to the outgoing US Charge d’Affaires, Peter H. Vrooman on Monday ( July 10), and noted that Ethiopia and the US have enjoyed a long-lasting and strong diplomatic relationship and commended the developmental and humanitarian support that the US has extended to Ethiopia. The two parties expressed their commitment to further boost the bilateral relationship with the view to enhancing business cooperation and strengthening the people-to- people ties. They have also agreed to continue to work more closely on regional and international issues.

120,000 undocumented Ethiopians have now registered voluntarily to return from Saudi Arabia, and some 50,000 have already returned to their own communities in Ethiopia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson has emphasized that “collective efforts are being exerted to bring back the citizens and reintegrate them with (their) community”. The deadline for return runs out at the end of the month. **(See article).**

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission’s outlook for Kiremt 2017 suggests normal onset over much of seasonal rain-benefiting areas and early onset across west, southwest and central parts of the country. An increased likelihood of normal to above normal rainfall over north-western, western, south-western and central regions; and an increased likelihood of near normal over north-eastern, eastern and southern highlands. The drought is less likely to be severe and intense; and south and south-eastern parts of the country are expected to have enhanced rainfall in late summer with an early onset of *Bega* rainfall. Overall, the seasonal rainfall is expected to be largely in the near normal category. 120,000 undocumented Ethiopians have now registered voluntarily to return from Saudi Arabia, and some 50,000 have already returned to their own communities in Ethiopia. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson has emphasized that “collective efforts are being exerted to bring back the citizens and reintegrate them with (their) community”. The deadline for return runs out at the end of the month. **(See article).**

Thirty-eight Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), including Ms. Ana Gomes, wrote to the EU High representative for Foreign Affairs, on Friday last week (July7). The letter criticised Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and complained about the Government’s refusal to allow an “independent probe” into last year’s protests. (See article)

150 Members of the self-declared Benishangul People Liberation Movement (BGPLM), a group based in Eritrea, laid down their arms and defected to Ethiopia. The group left Eritrea where they had spent the last ten years in the Harina training center. 95 of them have now reached Ethiopia via the Sudan and surrendered to the Ethiopian government.

The UK’s DfID announced £90 million of support for family planning in Ethiopia on Tuesday this week (July 11). The program over the next four years will work with the Federal Ministry of Health to provide 13 million women access to modern, voluntary family planning services across the country, as well as support 6 million currently using family planning. It will also establish facilities at referral and general hospitals. This was announced at the London Family Planning Summit at the beginning of the week, co-hosted by the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Priti Patel, Melinda Gates (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and Natalia Kanem (UN Population Fund – UNFPA).

The head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation to Ethiopia handed over training materials to the Ethiopian police on Monday (July 10). These included reference books and a training video to serve as teaching manuals on international human rights and humanitarian principles. The ICRC has provided training and seminars in international

human rights and humanitarian principles and the training of trainers to over 35,000 police and security members and officers in the last 15 years.

The Tendaho geothermal project in eastern Ethiopia, supported through the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund, has acquired an additional \$8.6 million from the French Development Agency, Agence Française de Développement (AFD). This is to be used for the drilling of additional deep wells for the project and to define and start development. The Government's target in the medium term is development of 100MW of capacity at the site.

## **Djibouti**

China officially dispatched the first military personnel to help set up its first-ever overseas base in Djibouti on Tuesday (July 11). The facility will provide basic support as well as allow for "military cooperation, joint exercises, evacuating and protecting overseas Chinese and emergency rescue, as well as jointly maintaining security of international strategic seaways." Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said it would help "maintain [China's] growing overseas interests."

## **Eritrea**

The African Union said on Tuesday this week (July 11) that the planned visit of the AU Peace and Security Commissioner to meet government officials in Asmara had been postponed. This was at the request of the Eritrean Government, which had earlier refused to allow an AU fact-finding mission to the Djibouti-Eritrea border into Eritrea. Eritrea said it still recognized Qatar as a mediator between Eritrea and Djibouti although on June 14 Qatar withdrew its troops and said it was no longer involved in the mediation that followed the attack of Eritrean troops on Djibouti in 2008. Following the withdrawal of Qatar troops, Djibouti formally asked the A.U. to deploy observers along the disputed border.

The European Parliament passed a damning and detailed resolution on the EU's relations with Eritrea on Thursday last week (July 6). It supported the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea, demanded Eritrean Government action to implement democratic reforms, release prisoners, respect human rights, and called for close controls to ensure any EU funding did not benefit the Eritrean Government. It also called on the Council to reassess the relationship between the EU and Eritrea as well as its development aid assistance to the country in response to the country's poor human rights record. (See article)

The city of Asmara has officially been inscribed as a World Heritage site by the UNESCO. The decision has come following the 41st Session of the UNESCO held in Krakow, Poland over the past weekend. Eritrea's Ambassador to France and permanent representative to UNESCO, Hanna Simon, hailed the World Heritage victory stating that it was a victory the world had to celebrate.

## **Kenya**

Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Internal Security and Coordination, Joseph Nkaissery, collapsed and died on Saturday (July 8). Leaders from all parties mourned the loss of General

Nkaissary who was leading Kenya's counter-terrorism efforts.

Kenya launched a Special Economic Zone project that is expected to attract millions of dollars of foreign investment on Friday (July 7). Phase 1 of the project will provide a 700-acre industrial park that will house firms for agro-processing, chemical and construction. Phase 2 will target technology firms, while Phase 3 will focus on the hospitality sector. Deputy President William Ruto said the project was a joint venture between the Kenyan-based Africa Economic Zone and China's Guangdong New South Group. Mr. Ruto said Kenya intends to use the Special Economic Zones to expand job creation and wealth creation opportunities especially among the youth.

The Salaries and Remuneration Commission announced in Monday (July 10) that it had cut the salaries of various State officers including the President. President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Deputy William Ruto will now earn monthly gross salaries of Sh1.4million and Sh1.2million down from Sh1.650 and Sh1.40million respectively., Members of Parliament also see their salaries cut; the cut will also affect the salaries and allowances for 2,222 Members of County Assemblies, 349 MPs, 67 senators, 47 governors and for Cabinet Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries and other government officials. In his final State of the Nation address in March, President Kenyatta hinted at his intention to cut the country's wage bill.

## **Somalia**

President Mohamed Abdullahi opened the second parliamentary session of the Upper House of the Somali Federal Parliament on Wednesday (July 12) with a call for the two houses of parliament to cooperate in the on-going review of the provisional constitution, as well as avoid "personal, groups or clan interest." The President also emphasized parliament's role in defining the sharing of powers and responsibilities between the central government and the federal states.

Somalia's National Security Council met in Mogadishu last week, July 5-10 with President Mohamed Abdullahi in the chair and the regional state presidents and other government officials present. **(See article)**

The IMF after completing its first Staff-Monitored Program with Somalia between December and June, has now agreed to a second program for 2017/2018. **(See article)**

AMISOM officially handed over the Somali National University to the Federal Government. AMISON forces took over the university in 2007, originally using it as a small Forward Operating Base, and later as a Battalion headquarters. Ambassador Madeira, the AU Special Representative for Somalia and Head of AMISOM said the handover was a demonstration of the solid progress being achieved by AMISOM, the Government and Somali National Security Forces in their joint efforts to stabilize the country. The takeover of security responsibilities of the university premises by the Somali security forces was also an important step in AMISOM's transition and drawdown.

Experts from the Organization of Arab Electoral Management Bodies and other countries in Africa met this week in Nairobi to advise Somalia's National Independent Electoral Commission to help the country prepare to move to "one person, one vote" elections in 2020; one recommended first step was to register political parties.

Somalia's Minister of Constitutional Affairs, Abdirahman Hosh Jibril arrived in Baidoa, the interim capital of Southwest State on Sunday (July 9). During talks with the Southwest

officials, the two sides agreed to open a wider consultative forum to debate on the constitutional review process, attended by Southwest officials and civil society members.

## **South Sudan**

The sixth anniversary of independence was not marked by any official celebrations. President Kiir said: “We did not feel that it was appropriate to spend whatever little funds we may have to celebrate when our people are hugely affected by the economic crisis that has made it difficult for many people to afford even one meal per day.” He also appealed to the international community and others to support the National Dialogue process. (See article)

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir on Sunday (July 9) said he rejected the idea of renegotiating the peace agreement, noting that doing so would be unproductive as the 2015 peace agreement and the reunification agreement of the SPLM served the basis of the existence of the transitional government of national unity. He added, “We have the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan as well as the SPLM Reunification Agreement. These agreements form the governing framework of the Transitional Government of National Unity. In light of this, it is our considered opinion that any further renegotiation of these agreements would be counterproductive.”

The Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) for South Sudan peace, Festus Mogae held discussions with President Salva Kiir and the First Vice President Taban Deng Gai on Tuesday (July 11, ) during which he urged the two leaders to propose concrete measures for a sustainable ceasefire. Describing the meeting as very cordial and productive, cabinet affairs Martin Elia Lomuro said the revitalization of the Peace Agreement does not amount to renegotiation but a way to explore the opportunities to speed up the implementation of the Peace Agreement. (See article)

## **Sudan**

US President Donald Trump has delayed on any decision US sanctions on Sudan for another three months. Sudanese foreign minister Ibrahim Ghandour on Thursday (July13) said the delay of permanent sanctions relief will not affect relations and contacts between the two countries. A US interagency team led by the State Department had been assessing the progress made but the President’s executive order said the delay was needed to better assess the "policies and actions of the Government of Sudan, including additional fact-finding and a more comprehensive analysis of the Government of Sudan’s actions". (See article)

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## ***Ethiopia inaugurated two more industrial parks at the weekend***

The aim of the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) is to raise the contribution of the manufacturing sector to GDP to 25% from the current 5%. A central element in this is developing the agricultural sector and integrating it with industry through the expansion of agro-industrial development to improve the productivity of the majority of the population in

rural areas who rely on agriculture. One effect of this has already been seen in moving the economy from virtually low economic growth to a double-digit growth for more than a decade and in sparking off significant agro-industry development.

Another central factor in this is the plan to expand industrial activity by building a number of large-scale industrial parks. These are largely designed to boost export and are therefore designed mainly for textile, manufacture, garment production and agro-industries. The parks are being built as a central part of the government's plans to expand industrial development to play its role in realizing the country's aspiration to become a manufacturing hub for the continent. A sign of the progress being made was visible last weekend, with the inauguration of two industrial parks in the northern part of the country, Kombolcha Industrial Park on Saturday and Mekelle Industrial Park the following day.

The first phase of the Kombolcha Industrial Park in Amhara Regional State, constructed with a total of US\$90 million, was inaugurated on July 8 in the presence of Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn. In his remarks, the Prime Minister noted the importance of industrial parks for the ongoing economic transformation of the country. He stressed the completion of Kombolcha Industrial Park was a big step forward, demonstrating the country was on the right track, and he noted the country's emphasis on development of industrial parks followed the effective and fruitful experience of various Asian countries. Prime Minister Hailemariam, who also underlined the importance of the development of the industrial parks in the government's plans for manufacturing growth, said the construction of the second phase of the park would be launched following the commencement of production by companies that settled there. Kombolcha is expected to attract companies engaged in textile and garment production and for export. 70% of the facilities would be dedicated to foreign anchor companies, while 30% would be occupied by local companies. The first phase of the Park covering 75 hectares of land was built in nine months and it contains production facilities as well as a shopping center, health, fire and emergency facilities and the necessary maintenance services.

The CEO of the Industrial Parks Development Corporation, Sisay Gemechu, said that companies occupying the nine factory spaces constructed in the first phase of the Park would provide jobs for more than 20,000 individuals. He said companies from the U.S., Korea and Italy had requested facilities in the Park. Among those which have expressed interest are Carvico S.p.A, an Italian company known for its knitted fabrics used in swimwear and sportswear; Trybus, a US-company engaged in the production of men's suits and Pungkook Corporation, a South Korean company engaged in the manufacturing of bags. The site of the Kombolcha Industrial Park was selected for its proximity and its access to the port of Djibouti for export, the availability of infrastructure and the hospitality of the people to investors. It is expected to attract the attention of many global anchor companies.

Dr. Arkebe Oqubay, Board Chairman of the Industrial Parks Development Corporation, said the construction of the first phase of the industrial park had been completed within an impressive nine months. Built on 75 hectares of land, Kombolcha Industrial Park has 13 industrial sheds and will create jobs for 20,000 people. In the future, Dr. Arkebe said, expansion projects will be carried out on up to 1,000 hectares of land, and the second phase of the park will include other zonal areas, including the nearby Dessie town. Dr. Arkebe also noted that there were plans to finalize the construction of three other parks in the Amhara Regional State, at Bahr Dar next April, and at Arerti and Debre Berhan in June 2018.

The following day, the Prime Minister attended the inauguration of the Mekelle Industrial Park further to the north in Tigray Regional State. Built with an outlay of US\$100 million USD. The park is located five kms outside the regional state capital of Mekelle. The Prime Minister again underlined the importance of the industrial parks for paving the way for the renaissance of the country. The parks, he said, were already becoming the engine of the country`s economic transformation. When fully developed, the parks would enable Ethiopia to become one of the world`s top textile and garment producing countries. The Prime Minister emphasized that in addition to ensuring the park was fitted with the necessary infrastructure, the government would provide the necessary support to address any bottlenecks in the manufacturing and export sectors.

The Deputy Chief Administrator of Tigray Regional State, Ambassador Dr. Adisalem Balema, said the regional state was working to strengthen the park by establishing a special industry enrichment center. In order to provide efficient services for investors, he said, implementation of new systems had been launched, including the establishment of a one-stop shop. Dr. Adisalem also noted the construction of the Awash-Woldia-Mekelle railway would help investors supply their products to global markets with ease. The first phase of the Mekelle Industrial Park, built by the China Communications Construction Corporation, has 15 sheds and covers 100 hectares and is expected to provide jobs for at least 20,000 people. Another 1,000 hectares of land has been identified for future expansion projects. Dr. Arkebe Oqubay also emphasized the role that the Mekelle Industrial Park would play in promoting technology transfer and economic integration.

In Ethiopia, developing special economic zones in different parts of the country is part of the policies to sustain the country`s double-digit economic growth and realize the planned economic and structural transformation. Overall, the government has commissioned construction of 15 industrial parks across the country. In addition to the Kombolcha and Mekelle two more are expected to be inaugurated at the beginning of the next Ethiopian year in September. These are at Adama in Oromia Regional State and at the city of Dire Dawa in the east both on the new Djibouti to Addis Ababa railway route. They are being constructed, at a cost of US\$190 million and US\$125 million respectively, by the China Civil Engineering Construction Company.

The parks are laying a significant foundation for industrial development. The concentration on textiles and garment production in several of the parks is already attracting a variety of celebrated international firms. With the government`s efforts to create an enabling environment to maximize the influx of investors there is little doubt that the sector will soon become a centre for industrial development. In the first eleven months of the last fiscal year, the textile sector secured hard currency revenue of US\$81 million. Overall, the textile industry is beginning to witness rapid growth, with a growing number of multinational firms as well as domestic companies becoming engaged in production of textile, garments and apparel for domestic and global markets. So far, there are some 194 medium and high-level textile and apparel manufacturers operational in the country, employing a total of around 90,000. The numbers can be expected to increase rapidly in the next few years. Ethiopia's ambitions to be a textile and garment-manufacturing hub earning the country US\$1 billion in exports by 2020 and providing ample employment opportunities is on track.

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### ***Dr. Workneh at Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS meetings in Washington***

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS was formed in September 2014 and the Coalition's 72 members are committed to tackling ISIS (Daesh) on all fronts, to dismantling its networks and countering its global ambitions. The Coalition is committed to the military campaign in Iraq and Syria, and also to tackling Daesh's financing and economic infrastructure; preventing the flow of foreign terrorist fighters across borders; supporting stabilisation and the restoration of essential public services to areas liberated from Daesh; and exposing Daesh's delusional narrative including its claims to statehood, military success and the group's false religious narrative. The Global Coalition meets regularly to coordinate and enhance combined efforts to counter ISIS. The last meeting, of foreign ministers, took place in Washington, in March this year.

This week the US has been hosting meetings of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. On Tuesday (July 11), the Coalition's Working Groups on Counter Finance, Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Stabilization Support, and Communications met to assess their progress and discuss ways to intensify pressure on ISIS in these critical areas. On Wednesday, the full 72-member Coalition met for discussions on how to accelerate Coalition efforts to defeat ISIS in the remaining areas it holds in Iraq and Syria, and maximize pressure globally on its branches, affiliates, and networks. Then in Thursday, the Coalition's Small Group met to synthesize the previous days' meetings and discuss priorities to build on the progress in Mosul and Raqqa to set ISIS on an irreversible and lasting path to defeat. The Small Group invited representatives from a number of African countries, the African Union, and the Multi National Joint Task Force to attend a special session about the ISIS threat in the Lake Chad Basin region in West Africa.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu attended the meeting of the Coalition's Working Groups on Counter finance, Foreign Terrorist Fighters, Stabilization Support and Communications on Tuesday. The Foreign minister also spoke at the Thursday meeting, and members of the delegation also attended different cluster meetings. Now that Ethiopia has officially joined Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, making the number African countries to ten.

Member states at the various meetings of the Global Coalition have firmly expressed their commitment to the goals of eliminating the threat the scourge of ISIS poses to global and regional peace. Members have already contributed to efforts to combat ISIS in every area. Areas of discussion include ways and means to sensitize member states on the military and non-military roles they can play and to consider the lessons from the latest developments in the defeat of ISIS in the Middle East. Meetings have also discussed the ways to intensify pressure on ISIS and its global affiliates and connections.

Ethiopia made the decision to join the Coalition because it also faces the threat of international and regional terrorism and extremism and it believes the Coalition can be a vital instrument in the pursuit of peace and global peace through collective security. Equally, Ethiopia has always been adamant about the need to fight terrorism in all its forms and shapes. This indeed has been the situation long before terrorism became a buzzword in the last few years. Since the early 1990s Ethiopia has been a target of terrorist elements such as Al-Islam Al-Itihaad, with building and transport links in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and other towns targeted, claiming lives of innocent people. Currently, the Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist group in Somalia, Al-Shabaab, though now on the run, remains a challenge to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

On the margins of the Global Coalition meetings, Dr. Workneh also met with various officials and members of Congress including Senator James M. Inhofe (Oklahoma), a true friend of Ethiopia in all seasons. Dr. Workneh also held successful discussions with Senator Bob Corker, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They discussed bilateral and regional issues of common concern. Dr. Workneh gave Senator Corker an in-depth briefing on the on-going socio-economic development in Ethiopia. He emphasized that Government was exerting unrelenting efforts to address the issues of

democracy and good governance and the challenges it had encountered. Dr. Workneh expressed the government's unwavering commitment to overcome any impediment and challenges. He also briefed Senator Corker Bob on efforts to assist in stability in the Horn of Africa, especially Somalia and South Sudan, underscoring the need for the USA to play a leadership role in the region. Senator Corker, who praised Ethiopia as a true friend of the US, commended its positive developments over the past few years. He described Ethiopia as an anchor of peace in the Horn of Africa.

During his visit to Washington, Dr. Workneh also met and briefed Congress staffers and employees about the partnership of Ethiopia and USA. He emphasized that the current foreign policy of Ethiopia was different from the past in many aspects. He gave details of the country's sustained economic growth over the last decade and more. This he attributed to a refined Foreign Policy and National Security Strategy. He stressed that the alpha and omega of Ethiopia's foreign policy was fighting poverty and bringing about all-inclusive and sustainable development. As a result, Ethiopia was now becoming a major destination of foreign direct investment.

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### ***Ethiopia expediting repatriation of citizens from Saudi Arabia***

By the beginning of this week, 120,000 undocumented Ethiopians had registered voluntarily to return from Saudi Arabia, and of these, some 50,000 had already returned to their families and communities back in Ethiopia. The original date for the start of the 90 day amnesty for undocumented foreign nationals to leave the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia without paying fines or facing legal measures started on 29 March and was due to end three months later at the end of June.

President Dr. Mulatu briefed Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Abdullah bin Faleh Al-Arjani, several weeks ago about Ethiopia's strenuous efforts to get the undocumented Ethiopian citizens living in Saudi Arabia back to Ethiopia. The President made it clear that Ethiopia was working on a number of possibilities including the establishment of a command post to coordinate and lead the repatriation efforts. These included opening offices in a number of Saudi Arabian cities to facilitate the safe return and integration of citizens. Since then, on various occasions, the Prime Minister and other high-government officials have underlined the importance of those Ethiopians, who have been reluctant to heed the call, responding and taking urgent steps to leave Saudi Arabia.

Just before the amnesty ran out, the Kingdom agreed to provide an additional one-month's extension. This in turn will run out at the end of July, and as Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh has already underlined at the beginning of the month the successful accomplishment of the repatriation of citizens in the given time still needs significantly "more collaboration, oblivious of political, religion and other issues".

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has deployed a number of staff from its headquarters to expedite the process of issuing travel document to returnees and provide any other support

services needed. The National Steering Committee for Saudi Returnees is overseeing transport and shelter services as returnees arrive at Bole International Airport. As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Meles Alem, has noted in successive briefings to the press about the repatriation process “collective efforts are being exerted to bring back the citizens and reintegrate them with (their) community”. He has pointed out that various institutions and non-governmental organizations have been making pledges and preparations to welcome and reintegrate returnees. MIDROC Ethiopia, for example, pledged 10 million birr for returnees, in addition to granting scholarships for 100 citizens at Unity University and providing education for 100 children from kindergarten to grade 8 as well as jobs for 100. Similarly, the Ethiopian Athletics Federation, the Ethiopian Olympic Committee, and the Ministry of Youth and Sport similarly pledged 5 million birr. Addis Ababa City Administration has provided 700 volunteers and Ministry of Health 11 hospitals to assist those in need of immediate support.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has similarly called on all stakeholders, families of returnees, regional and federal government institutions and civic society organizations to continue their efforts to sensitize undocumented Ethiopians residing in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to use the remaining days of the grace period to return home. Some 20 people from the Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray Regional States were sent to Saudi Arabia to mobilize Ethiopian migrants living in Saudi Arabia to return home. Ethiopian Airlines scheduled a whole series of extra flights to transport Ethiopians returning from Saudi Arabia as of June 1. Various other institutions and non-governmental organizations have continued to make pledges and preparations to welcome and reintegrate returnees. It is still not enough.

Ethiopia has also been making more long-term efforts to resolve problems arising from unregistered workers and the way many are recruited by illegal human traffickers, both in reference to Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East. In this connection, at the end of May, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia signed a long-expected agreement over the recruitment of domestic workers for work in Saudi Arabia. This guarantees that Ethiopians can work in Saudi Arabia after concluding proper agreements with authorized employment agencies licensed by both countries. The agreement will help to protect the rights of Ethiopian domestic workers in the Kingdom and it obliges both governments to commit themselves to ethical recruitment, to apply legal remedies against those who violate the law and also provide equal protection for Ethiopian workers. Ethiopia has also been working to sign memoranda of understanding with neighboring countries to provide joint border management to include repatriation assistance for the victims of human trafficking. The government enacted a comprehensive anti-trafficking law two years ago, renewing existing legislation to define and punish trafficking offences and to expedite measures to support victims of trafficking. It has also passed an overseas employment proclamation, which when fully operational will penalize illegal recruitment, improve oversight of overseas recruitment agencies, and extend greater protections to potential victims. All this will go a significant way to help limit the problem in the future.

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### ***The World Heritage Committee considers two sites in Ethiopia***

The World Heritage Committee decides on sites to be listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and it is responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention of 1972

which provides for identification, protection and preservation of the world's outstanding cultural and natural heritage sites for the international communities and future generations. The Committee meets annually to consider the practical application of the Convention. This year it convened its 41<sup>st</sup> Session in the historic city of Krakow in Poland, from July 1–12, to take decisions relating to the World Heritage List as well as to review and evaluate protection of already inscribed sites.

Ethiopia has 7 tangible heritage sites and 3 intangible heritages inscribed on the World Heritage List. Two of these, the Lower Valley of Omo World Heritage Site and the Simien Mountains' National Park were on the agenda this month as items on the 'State of Conservation of World Heritage Sites' and 'State of Conservation of World Heritage Sites in danger' lists respectively. An Ethiopian delegation led by Mrs. Hirut Zemene, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, including delegates from the Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, and the Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change, participated on the meeting.

The Simien Mountains' National Park was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1978 and was placed on the list of heritage sites in danger in 1996 because of problems of human encroachment and environmental damage. Ever since then, the State Party of Ethiopia has been engaged in conservation measures targeted to meet the benchmarks set by the Committee and has held a series of discussions with the advisory body, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as part of efforts at adopting the recommendations made for conservation of the Park. The implementation of these has meant the requirements to remove the Site from the danger list have been met. The delegation provided evidence of the commitment of the State Party to best conserve the heritage site. A Committee Member, the United Republic of Tanzania, sponsored Ethiopia's concern and activities, and, as a result, the Committee Members removed the Simien Mountains' National Park from the list of World Heritage Sites in danger.

On the State of Conservation of the World Heritage site of the Lower Valley of Omo, the Committee had prepared a draft decision in March 2017, ready to be adopted at the 41<sup>st</sup> session. The draft did not show the commitment and efforts of the State Party of Ethiopia to conserve and protect the site. It also proposed the Lower Valley of Omo should be covered by the Strategic Environmental Assessment study of the Lake Turkana National Parks. Ethiopia was clear this would be unsatisfactory, mixing two different inscriptions covering different locations under two separate State Parties (Ethiopia and Kenya) with different attributes of outstanding universal values and different criteria.

Ethiopia, after discussions with the International Council for Monuments and Sites, prepared an amendment to the draft recognizing the State Party's efforts to conserve the site and underlining its commitment to the conservation of World Heritage Sites as a whole. Speaking at the meeting, State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene emphasized that Ethiopia would continue to strengthen its efforts to protect heritage sites and discharge its responsibility in caring for world heritage sites by working in partnership with UNESCO. With the aid of the Republic of Angola, Ethiopia's case was presented to the session. While reiterating a request to the State Party to provide additional information, Committee members accepted Ethiopia's amendment and decided to replace the Strategic Environmental Assessment by an environmental assessment impact study.

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***President Trump delays a decision on Sudan sanctions for three months***

US President Donald Trump has given himself an additional three months to decide whether to cancel the US economic sanctions on Sudan. On January 13, shortly before he left office, former President Barak Obama decided to cancel permanently the sanctions on Sudan. However, he decided to delay the implementation of the decision for six-months to encourage Khartoum to take further actions on the resolution of armed conflict and other political processes in Sudan. An interagency team led by the State Department has been assessing the progress made and offering President Trump the options of approving the lifting of sanctions or of reinstating them.

The President's order noted Sudan's "positive actions" and suggested the US was still on track to mend relations, but the delay was needed to better assess the "policies and actions of the Government of Sudan, including additional fact-finding and a more comprehensive analysis of the Government of Sudan's actions". A Spokesperson for the State Department said later that the Administration was committed to the lifting of sanctions within three months "if the Government of Sudan sustains the positive actions that gave rise to" the initial decision taken by former President Barak Obama.

The five-track engagement process covered cessation of hostilities in the conflict areas, humanitarian access to civilians in the war zones, cooperation to address regional conflicts and support of US counterterrorism efforts. The Spokesperson added: "Beyond these key areas connected with the potential revocation of most sanctions on Sudan and the Government of the Sudan, the Administration is also committed to intensifying engagement on a broader range of vital issues, including on-going dialogue on improving Sudan's human rights and religious freedom practices, and ensuring that Sudan is committed to the full implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on North Korea."

Indeed, the Government of the Sudan has made significant progress in taking positive action in such score. It is to be recalled that the United Nations did welcome the U.S decision to lift some of the sanctions imposed on Sudan. Back in January, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Marta Ruedas, said in a statement that the decision was "recognition of steps taken by the government of Sudan during recent months in a number of important areas." She congratulated the government and people of Sudan "on the implementation of these steps which have led to the improvement of relations between the Republic of Sudan and the United States and include key decisions that will facilitate humanitarian actors' efforts to deliver aid to those in need in months to come." She also emphasized that the decision would provide a solid platform for sustainable development in Sudan.

In fact, following the current decision; both the US State Department and the US intelligence community, which in recent years have worked closely with Sudan on opposition to extremism in Libya, Somalia and elsewhere, will have been disappointed. Equally, a statement from several UN agencies working on development, emergency, recovery and transition activities, urged the US to take "a positive decision on US sanctions relief". They cited "a marked improvement in humanitarian access over the past six months" and a decline in conflict since some of the sanctions were lifted. The United Nations Country Team

(UNCT) in Sudan acknowledged there had been a marked improvement in humanitarian access over the past six months as a result of improved engagement between the Government of Sudan and humanitarian actors.

The sanctions have imposed a heavy toll on the Sudan, making it impossible to trade or carry out transactions with the US and cutting Sudan off from much international finance. Before the delay was announced, the Sudan Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour, called on Washington to meet its commitment according to the engagement process saying the American side continued to underline that the Sudanese side has met its commitments. He stressed that Sudan looked forward to seeing the right decision to lift the sanctions permanently, and noted Sudan could then “become an active partner to achieve desires of both nations to see a safe region” and promote cooperation for the benefit of the two countries. He pointed that Sudan and the U.S. had enjoyed strong relations before the imposition of the sanctions, expressing the desire that relations could return to normal. Mr. Ghandour said: “Sudanese haven’t been allowed to transfer a penny in or out of Sudan for more than 20 years — the penalties inflicted on the people have been enormous.” He added: “We haven’t had spare parts or important imported drugs against HIV; businessmen used to take large amounts of cash in suitcases.” He noted that the US government was quite satisfied with the implementation of the five-track plan and “this is why we are expecting a positive outcome.

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### ***South Sudan marks its sixth anniversary without celebration***

July 9<sup>th</sup> is the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence for South Sudan, which became the 193<sup>rd</sup> member of the UN and the 54<sup>th</sup> state of the African Union in 2011. The occasion was welcomed by South Sudanese and foreigners alike, as they remembered the liberation struggle and as well as the expected future glory from hopes in dividends of the land of great abundance united in peace and harmony.

This year South Sudan marked its sixth year independence anniversary, with no official celebration. For a second time, South Sudan was not able to celebrate its 9 July anniversary of Independence Day celebration. The government announced the cancellation of festivities due to a lack of funding and the country’s ongoing conflict. Indeed, six years after liberation, South Sudan’s humanitarian crisis is worse than ever, with accusations of grave violations of human rights and a lingering and exceptionally brutal civil war. South Sudan is also suffering from one of the world’s worst refugee crises, tens of thousands have been killed and famine and food shortages threaten the lives of millions more.

In a message on the occasion of the anniversary South Sudan President Salva Kiir said his administration was forced to call off celebrations of the Sixth Independence Day because of the economic crisis that the country has been battling against since the eruption of the armed conflict in December 2013. The President said: “We did not feel that it was appropriate to spend whatever little funds we may have to celebrate when our people are hugely affected by the economic crisis that has made it difficult for many people to afford even one meal per day.” He added: "Although the famine, which was declared in some parts of our country, has now been contained, still thousands of our citizens are under threat of food insecurity."

The President called on the international community to support the national dialogue which he declared last year. He said this was the only option for the country to address the differences which caused the war. He said: “ I want to appeal to all our international partners, the IGAD countries, East African Community, the African Union, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly, to support the National Dialogue process in South Sudan.” The President insisted “the only viable option is for us to implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, which was signed in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on the 17th of August 2015 and in Juba, South Sudan, on the 26th of August 2015. “That, he said, was why it was important for the parties to the Agreement to persevere in its implementation. He also called armed groups and “disgruntled entities” to get on board “and embrace the national dialogue as a forum to make their case.”

Referring to the Agreement, the President said about 90% of the sections on the Transitional Government of National Unity had been implemented but only just over 50% of the elements dealing with the Permanent Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements. He attributed the challenges to progress in the security sector to lack of funding and establishing the Cantonment Areas and threats by “anti-peace elements” against those who want to report to the cantonment areas. The President rejected any renegotiation of the Agreement. He said: “We have the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan as well as the SPLM Reunification Agreement. These agreements form the governing framework of the Transitional Government of National Unity. In light of this, it is our considered opinion that any further renegotiation of these agreements would be counterproductive.”

Some government officials have rejected the involvement of armed opposition groups to negotiate implementation of the Agreement. They have, however, expressed readiness to fast track implementation of provisions that have not been implemented in accordance with the implementation matrix. The Deputy Minister of Information Akol Paul Kordit said on Friday that the Transitional Government of National Unity had reiterated its commitment to continue to implement the peace agreement. It had also said it was not ready for renegotiation of the peace agreement.”

The AU Summit welcomed the launch of the national dialogue and the unilateral declaration of a ceasefire by President Kiir but it also expressed serious concern about the security and humanitarian situation caused by the proliferation of armed groups in the country. In addition, an Extraordinary IGAD Summit also called upon all the parties to take urgent steps to draw concrete plans and a timeline to revitalize the full implementation of the Agreement. IGAD said it would urgently convene a High-level Revitalization Forum of the parties to the peace agreement.

At the beginning of the week, the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC) for South Sudan, Festus Mogae, also held discussions with President Kiir and First Vice President Taban Deng Gai. He urged the two leaders to propose concrete measures for a sustainable ceasefire. He said that success would depend on the willingness of all parties to make concrete proposals and make compromises for the sake of peace in South Sudan. The JMEC Chairperson, who held separate talks with the two leaders, outlined the objectives of the High-Level Revitalization Forum, saying it needed the parties to propose “concrete measures” to restore the permanent ceasefire, to return to full implementation of the Agreement and develop a revised timeline towards democratic elections. He stressed it

was not a re-negotiation of the Agreement but “a window of opportunity” for all parties and other estranged groups willing to return to or join in implementation within the framework of the Agreement.

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### ***Somalia’s National Security Council meeting....***

Somalia’s National Security Council met in Mogadishu last week, July 5-10. President Mohamed Abdullahi chaired the meeting, attended by Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Kheyre; Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Mohamed Guled; the Regional State Presidents - of Puntland, Dr. Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gas; of Jubaland, Ahmed Mohamed Islam; of South West Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan; of Galmudug, Ahmed Duale Gelle; and of Hirshabelle, Ali Abdullahi Osoble; the Benadir Regional Administration and Mayor of Mogadishu, Thabit Abdi Mohamed; and the Ministries of Justice, Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Defense and Internal Security, as well as Army commanders and the National Security Advisor.

High on the agenda was the issue of establishing a national army. Earlier the regional presidents agreed that the new army should be composed of some 18,000 troops in total, with three thousand being drawn from each of the regional states. There was considerable discussion over the method of implementing this and whether the 4.5 clan formula should be used. There was, however, agreement, on the need to deal with national security issues swiftly and create a national federal army.

The communiqué issued at the end of the meeting said the Council has reviewed the security deal reached on 16-17 April 2017, observed the recommendations presented by the parliament committees on Defense and Security, respected the different views of the public, and those recommendations had been added to the National Security Plan. The Council also agreed on the establishment of a technical committee to work on the completion of the National Security Framework. This will include the structure of security agencies, police, NISA and custodial corps. The committee’s members will be drawn from the Federal Government, the Regional States and the Benadir region. Overall the Council assessed the security situation in the country, and agreed on the necessity of strengthening the fight against Al-Shabaab and against anyone who supports Al-Shabaab financially, protects it or helps spread its ideology.

The National Security Council also recognized the need for agreement and political unity on the development of the federal system, and on the constitutional review as well as on the one-person one-vote election in 2020. It agreed that the Council should meet regularly, on a quarterly basis, to consider these issues. It praised the good work done by the central government on security issues, particularly in the stabilization of Mogadishu and in strengthening political relations between the central government and regional states.

On a practical level, the Council agreed that the law establishing the Council should be presented to Parliament in accordance with the provisional constitution. It also adopted a code of conduct for its meetings and its Implementation Plan.

This week, President Mohamed had a phone conversation with the US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, on Tuesday (July 11). The State Department said Mr. Tillerson had affirmed America’s commitment to support Somalia’s development goals, and cooperate on the efforts



to tackle the threats of the extremist militia groups in Somalia. Secretary Tillerson was in the Middle East leading US efforts to ease the tension between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Gulf. President Mohammed's Office said that Mr. Tillerson had made clear Washington's commitment to back Somalia and cooperate on Somalia's efforts to eradicating the threats posed by terror groups. President Mohammed said later: "The US has been a committed ally and a friend of Somalia, and has recently aided the Somali Special Forces to take out various Al-Shabaab hideouts", adding, "Our top priority is security sector reform to ensure our security institutions are able and accountable. We need to embark on the fight against Al-Shabaab with renewed urgency".

The number of operations carried out by US Special Forces assisting Somali security forces in the fight against Al-Shabaab has been increasing since President Trump's Administration announced it was sending additional U.S Navy SEAL members to Somalia in March. The White House has also given the U.S. military broader authority to carry out strikes in Somalia against Al-Shabaab militants.

*.... and the IMF agrees a new Staff-Monitored Program for Somalia*

The IMF carried out its first Staff-Monitored Program (SMP) with Somalia between December and March, and with the continued commitment to policy and reform implementation, the IMF completed its second and final review in June. An SMP is an informal agreement between a country and IMF staff to monitor implementation of the country's economic program. It does not involve financial assistance or endorsement by the IMF Executive Board. During this first SMP the IMF encouraged Somalia to avoid new domestic arrears and to implement reform measures. After it ended in June, it asked the IMF for a new Staff-Monitored Program for May 2017-April 2018, which the IMF has now approved.

The IMF said the new program would help Somalia maintain macroeconomic stability; rebuild institutions and capacity for macroeconomic management and governance; and implement the necessary measures to lay the foundation for achieving debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative.

The new SMP is founded on three pillars: fiscal policy and reform, monetary and financial sector policies and reforms, and governance and capacity development. The first of these will concentrate on improving budget activity and avoid accumulation of domestic arrears as well as trying to broaden the tax base and improving public financial management. The second area will take further steps towards currency reform, financial sector development, and the establishment of effective regulations for money-transfer businesses. Improvements to the legal and operational framework, covering issues related to money laundering and preventing financing of terrorism, will help facilitate the flow of remittances. The third area, capacity development and reforms to improve governance, will be central to the program. All this will also be strongly supported by technical assistance from the IMF, financed from a donors' Trust Fund.

Then IMF has indicated that the program will face difficulties from the fragile security situation, weak institutional capacity, and the major refugee and humanitarian crises. Equally, it believes the continued commitment to the program and sustained and coordinated international support, should mitigate the risks.

The international community and key donors of Somalia have welcomed the commitment of President Mohammed to continue with strong policies, rebuild economic institutions and lay the foundations for inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction. They reaffirmed their support to Somalia at the roundtable held in April in Washington, and at the Somalia Conference in London in May. These meetings underlined the continued fragility of the Somali economy with its lack of resources and capacity, as well as policy instruments such as social safety net programs. Meeting the humanitarian needs resulting from the drought continues to weaken economic activities and push up food prices. Wages and salaries will take up most of the government's budgetary expenditure this year, with donor grants projected to finance about 40% of the budget for 2017. The trade deficit will be covered by grants, remittances, and foreign direct investment from the Somali Diaspora.

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### ***EU MEPs repeat criticisms of the Ethiopian government***

Thirty-eight Members of the European Parliament sent a letter to the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, last week complaining that Ethiopia has refused to allow an independent investigation into last year's demonstrations and protests. The MEPs, whose concern appears to be that the investigation of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) did not support their views, alleged, without any evidence, that the impartiality of the EHRC was "questionable" and described its report as "highly controversial for significant reasons: not only does it underestimate the number of casualties, but it also considers the security measures taken as mostly 'fair and proportional.'" Their letter, unsurprisingly, provided no evidence for their assertions.

In fact, as the Government noted last month in response to concerns expressed earlier, the EHRC investigated in detail the allegations of the numbers who died during the protests and whether the force used had been proportional. The EHRC found this had been proportional in most cases, but not all; the report called for action to be taken in cases where this had not been the case. The Government also noted the changes being introduced in response to the legitimate concerns raised by protesters last year. Although the MEPs took no notice of these, they included *inter alia* talks with some 17 opposition parties, consideration of proportional representation in voting and the launch of the country's second National Human Rights Action Plan.

In addition to claiming the casualties last year must have been higher than the report finds, the MEP letter also demanded those detained for exercising "their legitimate freedom of expression" must be released. In fact, as the MEPs might have noted, many of those involved in the demonstrations were detained for a short time and given training courses in the responsibilities, and duties, of citizens. They have all been released. Those still detained are facing charges for violence or other criminal activities. The killing of people and the destruction of property hardly fall under the rubric of "legitimate freedom of expression" even in today's Europe.

The MEPs letter also refers to the case of Andargatchew Tsige which they describe as "a UK citizen and father of three from London. Andy is a campaigner who had previously addressed the European Parliament on the need for freedom and democratisation in Ethiopia." The

MEPs fail to mention that Andargatchew was Secretary-General of Ginbot7, a political organization based in Eritrea, publicly committed to overthrowing the government of Ethiopia by armed force and by “any means possible”. They also failed to note that Ginbot7 has been declared a terrorist organization by the Ethiopian parliament because of the dozens of terrorist activities it has committed against civilians in Ethiopia, including the bombing of hotels and other public places, the planting of mines on roads, and blowing up buses and lorries as well as carrying out a program of kidnapping people from villages close to the Eritrean border to try and recruit supporters. As Secretary-General to Ginbot7, Andargatchew was closely involved in these activities.

The MEPs signing this letter, as might be expected, include at least one very well-known opponent of the Ethiopian Government, Ms. Ana Gomes, who does not seem to have declared her interest in the subject. She is a close friend of the Chairman of Ginbot7, Dr. Berhanu Nega, and she has been repeatedly and openly linked to opposition movements that avow armed intervention in Ethiopia. Indeed, as noted, Ginbot7 has been frequently involved in terrorist activity. Ms. Gomes has made no secret of her dislike of the government of Ethiopia ever since her report as Chair of the EU Observer Mission to the 2005 elections in Ethiopia was comprehensively and critically dismissed as inaccurate and unprofessional.

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### ***EU parliamentary resolution demands action over human rights in Eritrea***

The European Parliament passed a detailed joint resolution on the EU’s relations with Eritrea on Thursday last week (July 6). Sponsored by 6 different parliamentary groups and well over a hundred MEPs, the resolution underlined support for the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Eritrea, demanded action from the Eritrean Government to implement democratic reforms, release prisoners, respect human rights, and called for close controls to ensure any EU funding did not benefit the Eritrean Government. It demands the Commission should obtain guarantees from the Eritrean Government that it will actually implement democratic reforms and ensure respect for human rights. It also calls on the Council to reassess the relationship between the EU and Eritrea as well as its development aid assistance to the country in response to the country’s poor human rights record.

In its preamble, the resolution noted previous parliamentary resolutions, various UN Human Rights and other reports on Eritrea as well as UN Security Council resolutions imposing sanctions on Eritrea. It said: “Eritrea has one of the worst human rights records in the world, with routine human rights violations taking place every day and no improvement recorded in recent years; [that] the Government of Eritrea has undertaken a widespread campaign aimed at maintaining control over the population and restricting fundamental freedoms, under the pretext of defending the integrity of the State; [that] the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea has found that the violations in the areas of extrajudicial executions, torture (including sexual torture and sexual slavery), national service as a form of slavery, forced labour and the shoot-to-kill policy at the border may constitute crimes against humanity.”

The resolution noted there was only one legal political party and that the People’s Front for Democracy and Justice and the military were in practice the only institutions of political significance in Eritrea, and both entities were strictly subordinate to the President. It pointed

out there was no freedom of press “as independent media is forbidden in Eritrea” and Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index has ranked Eritrea last out of the 170-180 evaluated countries for eight years in succession; that the elections planned for 1997 never took place; that the country has held “no national elections for 24 years, and has virtually no independent judiciary, no functioning national assembly and no civil society”.

It also noted that Eritrea was ranked 179th out of 188 countries in the Human Development Index for 2016; that Eritreans fleeing their country accounted for the fourth-largest number of people risking the perilous journey to Europe in 2016 and that an estimated 5 000 Eritreans left the country every month due largely to “the persistence of severe human rights violations”. Indeed, it said, “many young people have fled the country to escape the repressive government and mandatory military conscription, which often starts at a very young age, with most Eritreans serving indefinitely; [and] the majority of those in national service (an estimated 400,000) remain in a situation of slavery, in which any work, job applications and the possibility of having a family life are controlled.” The resolution also emphasized that discrimination and violence against women were present in all areas of Eritrean society.

It noted the way the regime “extends its totalitarian grip to the diaspora community via a 2 % expat income tax, and by spying on the diaspora and targeting family members who remain in Eritrea”. It drew attention to the fact that the regime denied there was any risk of famine in 2011, and noted that today, with drought affecting all East Africa, there is growing concern about the situation in Eritrea which according to UNICEF 1.5 million Eritreans affected by food insecurity in January 2017. It reiterated its deep concern about the current devastating climatic conditions in the Horn of Africa, including Eritrea, and calls on the EU to scale up its support to affected populations.

The resolution noted the EU was an important donor for Eritrea in terms of development assistance and it denounced the resumption of major EU aid to Eritrea and in particular the signing off of a new National Indicative Program (NIP) for Eritrea under the 11<sup>th</sup> EDF for 200 million euros. This, it said, had been done despite the “Parliament’s serious concerns and opposition.” It called on the Commission to review its scrutiny arrangements with Parliament, to carefully consider the concerns and suggestions expressed by Parliament and to guarantee that they are communicated to the EDF Committee. It called on the Commission to ensure that “the funding allocated does not benefit the Eritrean Government but is strictly and transparently assigned to meeting the needs of the Eritrean people for development, democracy, human rights, good governance and security, and freedom of speech, press and assembly. “

The text of the resolution condemns in “the strongest terms Eritrea’s systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations; calls on the Eritrean Government to put an end to detention of the opposition, journalists, religious leaders and innocent civilians; demands that all prisoners of conscience in Eritrea be immediately and unconditionally released, notably Dawit Isaak and the other journalists detained since September 2001, and Abune Antonios; and demands that the Eritrean Government provide detailed information on the fate and whereabouts of all those deprived of physical liberty.”

It also called “for fair trials for those accused, and the abolition of torture and other degrading treatment such as restrictions on food, water and medical care”, and reminded the Eritrean

government that “many of its activities constitute crimes against humanity.” The resolution noted its support for the recommendations by the UN Commission of Inquiry for a thorough investigation into the allegations of serious violations of human rights and crimes against humanity committed by the Eritrean authorities. It expressed full support for the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea and calls on the EU, in collaboration with the UN and the African Union, “to closely monitor the overall situation in Eritrea and to report all cases of violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms”. The resolution demanded Eritrea fully respect and immediately enact the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

It recalled that the EU’s partnership with Eritrea was governed by the Cotonou Agreement which includes respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law and it, therefore, called on the EU to ensure that the Eritrean Government respects its obligations to protect and guarantee fundamental freedoms. It called on the government to allow the creation of other political parties. The resolution demanded the Commission obtain guarantees from the Eritrean Government that it would implement democratic reforms and ensure respect for human rights. It underlined that Eritrea must allow international and regional human rights bodies, including special rapporteurs, unhindered access to the country.

It urged EU Member States to take appropriate measures against the application of the diaspora tax to Eritrean nationals living on their territory, in line with the UN Security Council resolution (2013 (2011)). It called on the Eritrean government to stop collecting the diaspora tax from Eritreans living abroad and urged it “to end ‘guilt-by-association’ policies that target family members of those who evade national service, seek to flee Eritrea or do not pay the 2 % income tax the Eritrean Government imposes on Eritrean expats.” The resolution called on the Eritrean Government to adhere to the legal period of national service, to “desist from using its citizens as forced labour [and] to stop allowing foreign companies to use such conscripts for a fee”. It “condemns foreign companies who are complicit in using forced labour and asks all those who are operating in Eritrea for better accountability, due diligence and reporting systems.”

The resolution did note the EU’s attempts to cooperate with Eritrea in the area of migration, and in this context it urged Member States not to return Eritreans seeking asylum in Europe; demanding EU Member States adhere to the concept of non-refoulement, reminding them “that returning asylum-seekers are likely to be arbitrarily detained and tortured as a result of their attempts to flee.

Overall, it called for Eritrea to engage with the international community in the field of human rights, demanding all Eritrean citizens be treated fairly and equally before the law. It stressed the need to prioritize the justice deficit in Eritrea, democratic governance and restoration of the rule of law. It called for an end to authoritarian rule imposed through fear of arbitrary and incommunicado detention, of torture and of other human rights violations, some of which may amount to crimes against humanity. In conclusion, it instructed that this resolution should be forwarded to the EU Council, the Commission, the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of the African Union, the East African Community, the Secretary-General of the UN, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the Eritrean authorities.

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### ***Drought continues to threaten millions in the Horn of Africa***

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) issued a regional outlook for the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region for the period April-June, at the end of last week. This highlights the fact that East Africa is facing one of the biggest humanitarian crises in its history. The number people in need of food assistance has increased significantly to 26.5 million - a 62% increase over the 16.4 million needing help a year ago in May 2016.

The report said conditions in South Sudan continue to deteriorate with 5.5 million people expected to be severely food insecure in July as this is the peak of the 'lean' season. Equally, the situation in Somalia has deteriorated and is of particular concern, with 3.2 million people facing Crisis and Emergency levels of food insecurity, up from 2.9 million. In addition, continued severe drought, rising prices, continued access limitation, and depressed rain forecasts suggest there will be an elevated risk of famine in Somalia in 2017. The food insecure population in Ethiopia has increased from 5.6 to 7.8 million following a poor start to the rainy season, with a further increase projected for the second half of the year; and in Kenya the number of acutely food insecure has reached 2.6 million.

The report underlined that record unmet financial requirements were putting lives at risk. Refugee appeals were particularly underfunded, which the report said was hampering the on-going humanitarian response. Nevertheless, a couple of days later, U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday (July 7) promised \$639 million for people affected by drought and conflict in Somalia, South Sudan, Nigeria and Yemen. His pledge came during a working session of the G20 summit of world leaders in Hamburg. This new funding brings to over \$1.8 billion the aid promised by the United States for fiscal year 2017 for the crises in these four countries. USAID said in a statement: "With this new assistance, the United States is providing additional emergency food and nutrition assistance, life-saving medical care, improved sanitation, emergency shelter and protection for those who have been affected by conflict."

Similarly, the European Commission recently announced additional humanitarian assistance of \$68 million to help drought-affected people in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. This raised the EU's humanitarian aid to the Horn of Africa to nearly \$297 million since the beginning of the year. The EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos Stylianides has noted: "The situation in the Horn of Africa has drastically deteriorated in 2017 and it keeps getting worse. Millions of people are struggling to meet their and their families' food needs. The risk of famine is real. The European Union has been following the situation closely since the very beginning and progressively increasing aid to the affected populations. This new package will help our humanitarian partners scale up the response further and keep bringing lifesaving assistance to people in need."

Despite these pledges, OCHA said that, overall, funding requirements have now increased to US\$8.3 billion, and they are less than 25% funded, leaving US\$6.3 billion unmet. Funding requirements also increased after a revision of the Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan and of the South Sudan Refugee Response Plan and the launch of the Kenya Flash Appeal; the

Ethiopian humanitarian funding appeal had received the highest levels of funding, although a significant part were carry-overs from the previous year.

The report noted nearly 640,000 people in the region had sought protection since the start of 2017, making a total of 4.4 million refugees and asylum seekers now in the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region. The majority of the newly displaced are from South Sudan, the fastest growing refugee crisis zone on the global scale. Almost 2 million people are internally displaced in South Sudan, and more than 1.9 million South Sudanese have fled the country as refugees and asylum seekers since the outbreak of the fighting in December 2013. Intensified clashes, between Government and allied forces and other armed groups, affected large areas of the country throughout 2016 and into 2017, including Greater Equatoria, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states. In addition, OCHA said massive human rights violations and conflict were triggering large scale refugee outflows, primarily to Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia but also to Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. According to the UNHCR, nine, primarily South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries are women and children and there were more than 75,000 South Sudanese refugee children unaccompanied or separated from their parents by March 2017. It was this that led to a revision of the South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, which now anticipates the number of South Sudanese refugees will reach 2.13 million by the end of this year.

The recent rainfall across the Horn of Africa region has been insufficient to compensate for the delayed start of the rainy season, which brought below average levels of precipitation in March and April. Indeed those levels were largely comparable to the October to November 2010 period that peaked in 2011. The result is continued grave humanitarian needs. Extensive growing season failures and record low vegetation are being observed across Somalia, south-eastern Ethiopia, and south-western Ethiopia although with more moderate consequences, and in coastal and northern and western Kenya. April field reports from Somalia indicate that, due to distress selling and livestock deaths, households in northern and central areas have lost 40 to 60% of their livestock, and households in southern regions 20 to 40% of their herds, since the Deyr 2016/17 assessment. A major factor is that consecutive droughts, failed harvests and livestock losses have eroded the coping capacity of the most vulnerable households in the region. While government response capacity is much greater than in 2010/11, especially in Ethiopia and Kenya where the governments of both countries have allocated significant funds to meet humanitarian needs, the scale of the recent crisis has still exceeded the current increased capacity. In addition, food insecurity is set to worsen due to continued conflict, another possible El-Niño and Fall Armyworm infestation across the region. According to the World Meteorological Organization the probability of El-Niño occurring again in the autumn is at 50 to 60%. This would certainly affect south-western South Sudan, Somalia, parts of Ethiopia and northern Kenya.

The levels of food insecurity across several parts of the Horn of Africa region have inevitably caused acute malnutrition, where, among refugees and children under five, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers remains a major concern in many parts of South Sudan, Darfur, Kordofan region, and in Eastern Sudan. In South Sudan, 5.5 million people are in Crisis (IPC 3), Emergency (IPC 4) and Famine (IPC 5) levels of food insecurity. Global Acute Malnutrition rates in South Sudan are now above the 15% emergency threshold in two-thirds of the states, reaching 33% in northern Bahr el-Ghazal. Over 1.1 million South Sudanese children under five are acutely malnourished. Kenya is also facing a nutrition crisis with Global Acute Malnutrition rates exceeding 30% in its arid and semi-arid areas. In Somalia, the projected number of acutely malnourished children has shot up by 50% since the

beginning of the year to 1.4 million. There will be over 275,000 who have or will suffer life-threatening severe acute malnutrition in 2017. OCHA regards the prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition, especially among children below five years, pregnant and lactating mothers and other vulnerable groups, as worryingly high. It is above emergency thresholds in Somalia, and severe acute malnutrition is also above critical levels. In Kenya, the Turkana North, and North Horr in Marsabit regions all have very critical nutrition situation, while East Pokot, Isiolo and Turkana west, south and central counties have also reported critical nutrition levels.

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